



**Lucas Morgan**

**LSU Shreveport**

Director of Athletics

## The Power of Morale During a Pandemic

"We're in hell right now, we can stay here and get the crap kicked out of us, or we can fight our way back into the light, we can climb out of hell." This is from the speech Al Pacino gave to his team in the movie *Any Given Sunday* before their final game of the season. It gave me goosebumps, and I'll be honest, I love a good sports movie speech, but it is the reality we are facing right now in college athletics. Are we going to lay down and die under the uncertainties and the pressures of the pandemic, or are we going to rise to the occasion and find a way to win this battle?

I see it in my own athletics department. Coaches and staff are concerned, they are tired, they are nervous about what to tell their student-athletes, and for the first time in many of their lives they've lost control and are unsure

what the future holds. This is why morale in an athletics department is so important. It motivates you, it drives you, it brings you together with your athletics family members and it's the push that makes the difference between winning and losing. It's the will to fight when things have become their toughest, and the ability to get up off the mat and keep fighting after getting knocked down.

We have been knocked down as a society. This pandemic has tested us, it has brought us to our breaking point, but it's the individuals and the departments who are willing to be creative and to scratch and claw to find their way through the storm that will prevail. Those are the departments who will be standing when the dust clears, ahead of those who didn't make it, and those that will triumph when this is over.

I have been a part of both types of departments. I have been there when coaches are constantly coming in to the office asking when things are going to improve. That's a helpless feeling. It's helpless because you know that they have lost hope. There are departments out there right now that have lost hope, and aren't sure what tomorrow may look like.

I have also been on the other side where there is fight during adversity. This is the time when we as administrators have to find the positive dog living inside us. This is the time when we need to lead our people out of the darkness. As Al Pacino said, "You've got to look at the guy next to you, look into his eyes, you will see a guy who will sacrifice himself for this team because he knows when it comes down to it you're going to do the same for him, that's a team. Either we heal now as a team or we will die as individuals." It's time for us to lead. Are you a team or an individual?



**Joe Jennum**

**Mt. San Antonio College**

Dean/Director of Athletics  
2020-21 President

As we enter the 2020-21 academic year, I reflect on the last several months and stop to imagine how my life as a collegiate student-athlete would have been during these unprecedented times. Would I have been able to overcome the challenges our young students are currently facing with the resources, support and guidance our institutions are providing during this difficult time?

A global pandemic, a worldwide social justice movement, national unemployment at an all-time high, along with a polarizing election year; any one of these occurrences alone would have been significant. Add them together and the weight of it all will rest firmly on the shoulders of our younger generations.

With the cancellation of the 2020 spring sport

seasons and the NATYCAA Convention, the pandemic's impact at our level has been tremendous. The effect on our future seasons has ranged from minimal fall sport offerings and delayed sport seasons, to full season suspension of sport programs.

Utilizing technology, we have been able to adapt, adjust and fulfill the needs and goals of our organizations. We adjusted and adapted the Convention, providing virtual seminars and sessions across NACDA. Our colleagues have quickly developed response plans and return to campus guidelines/protocols to meet the various mandates by county and statewide departments of public health.

Stepping into the role as President of NATYCAA, I envision a tumultuous time ahead. One in which colleagues will need to rely on each other more than ever.

The NATYCAA leadership representatives in the CCCAA, NJCAA and NWAC will continue Association efforts to further professional development, networking and support. We will continue to work together on future Convention planning, strategies/planning of upcoming

seasons and developing effective practices for our regional and statewide programs.

I want to thank the NACDA staff and NACDA Vice President, Jason Galaska for their immense support of our organization. I would also like to recognize and thank the 2020-21 NATYCAA Officers who continue to serve this Association and step up when needed: 1st Vice President Rob Chaney, Tallahassee Community College; 2nd Vice President Kevin Salisbury, Community College of Rhode Island; 3rd Vice President Christina Hundley, Paradise Valley Community College; our long-standing Treasurer, Gary Broadhurst, Mohawk Valley Community College; and Secretary Tammy Davis, Western Texas College. Your efforts are noticed and appreciated.

I wish all our colleagues in athletics administration, at all levels and affiliate groups, the strength to see our programs and stakeholders through this challenging time ... in our lives and profession. Together we will overcome this defining moment of our careers and provide the support and opportunity our students need.