

D2 ADA



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Intercollegiate athletics facilities have long served as the cipher for departments and campuses to deliver the impression that they care about athletics and overall excellence. They serve as the ultimate brick-and-mortar answer to the “say without saying” challenge we see on social media nowadays: “Say you care about winning without saying you care about winning.”

However, as administrators, we know that much more goes into establishing and stewarding a culture of excellence that persists. Other financial and material resources, proper processes, and of course, the right personnel often far outweigh the importance of facilities.

Yet, we can’t escape those expectations. We often can’t control how our constituents decode the implied messages around

facilities. And to be fair, they certainly do matter. The ability to efficiently and effectively program spaces for our student-athletes, coaches, and fans is vital. So, for the sake of time, let’s agree that facilities are overstated for now, but they cannot be ignored.

Let’s also accept, for the sake of argument, if nothing else, that we live in a time where there is a diminishing opportunity to locate funding (public or private) for massive new facility projects. So how do we move the needle in this area of our field when the fever for more is higher than ever? I think we have to be committed to the long but consistent push. The old school “bring your lunchbox” approach to doing our work as administrators. Too often in our industry, we wait around until we can get something done that is enormous in scale (and cost).

The problem with taking the shock-and-awe approach is that those of us operating at institutions with more moderate resources may be waiting several years or even decades before we have the right opportunity to make something happen.

We are facing that now with one of our on-campus facilities. Where we have arrived at in our pursuit for elevation is to be very

intentional about taking a phased approach. We are seeking to make critical investments that can be inspirational for potential supporters of future enhancements. Those future enhancements are already identified and ready to be supported. However, we are willing to approach these initial steps of the project as if those next steps might not happen. Along with that flexibility, we are committed to not spending excessive dollars on anything structurally that might not exist should the next phase come to fruition.

I will admit that this simultaneous optimist/realist approach does not always make headlines or translate well onto your resume. But I think, for most of us, the phased approach to facility development is worthy of our intentional time.

In the face of all these competing needs, we must keep facilities in the right perspective and approach their enhancement with intentionality. Small, purposeful improvements matter over time. Who knows when that new turf in Phase I might lead to a donor being inspired and choosing to fund the video board in Phase II?

I challenge all of us to bring a “lunchbox” and do the work, one step at a time. The realities of today and our roles as stewards of our departments demand it.

D2 CCA



Patrick Britz

South Atlantic Conference

Commissioner

As conferences wrap up the winter championship season and transition to spring events, it may surprise some that conference offices must manage facility issues. While they are not as frequent or at the same level as our colleagues on campus, the selection and management of facilities that will host our conference championships is a very important aspect of our jobs.

With the Make Game Day Yours initiative at the forefront of Division II, it is paramount Division II conference offices make certain the facilities they select for championships are able to provide a positive game day experience for participants and fans. A key component of the facility selection process should be one that ensures the safety and wellbeing of the student-athletes and others, while also providing a memorable experience. For

example, would you want to participate in a conference soccer championship that had plenty of seating for the fans and a great press box; however, the pitch was in such poor condition, it becomes a safety hazard? Likewise, if you have an amazing surface to play the games on, but the facility is lacking adequate seating for the spectators and/or not enough restrooms or concessions, would that be an overall positive game day experience? Even more important is ensuring there is an emergency action plan that is accessible and clearly visible in the event you have an unforeseen situation like bad weather or a fire.

Another facility issue conference offices must handle at championships is locker rooms. This is especially true when there are multiple games in one day and as many as eight teams moving in and out of locker rooms. Making sure the locker rooms are large enough for the teams and are properly cleaned after each use is imperative. Both can be huge impacts on the overall game day experience for the participants and should not be overlooked. While we are on the topic of locker rooms, it is just as important to ensure the officials have an adequate and secure space to change, meet and go to at halftime and at the end of the game.

A lot of these concerns are easier to address when a championship is held on campus at a member institution; however, it becomes more difficult when the event is conducted at a neutral site. For the past several years, the South Atlantic Conference (SAC) and other Division II conferences have trended toward neutral site venues for our conference championships, which can bring with it additional challenges. One of those challenges is making sure the staff at the facility is aware of our expectations since our small staff (five individuals) can’t manage everything and the facility staff may not work many collegiate events. Communicating to the facility staff what the expectations are to provide a positive game day experience is critical because their involvement and assistance will be needed.

We all want to provide the best experience possible for conference championships and the facility in which these events are held can make or break that experience. The D2 CCA is aware of this challenge and tackles it head on with each and every championship.