It’s a Beautiful New Day in the Neighborhood

Mr. Rogers would fit right into University of Dayton Arena, where it’s all about the neighborhood. A surprising number of season ticket holders have sat in the same seats every year, surrounded by the same people since the arena opened 50 years ago. When it came time to transform the arena with new comfortable seats and wider aisles, the toughest — and most important — problem became, “How do we keep the neighborhoods together?” If given the choice between a more comfortable seat or staying next to their neighbor, fans opted for staying put.

Sure, it might have been simpler to tear down and start over rather than retrofit wiring and plumbing and accessibility needs into a half-century old structure, not to mention upgrades like clubs and Wi-Fi. And air conditioning.

But then, Dayton — the university, the city and the community — would have lost the “soul of the bowl.” It’s LOUD and it’s tight. EVERYBODY in Dayton goes to UD games.

Dayton’s ability to pack the arena has so impressed the NCAA that it has awarded UD the First Four games of March Madness for two decades running. UD Arena has hosted more NCAA Men’s March Madness games than any other venue.

The $76-million transformation was completed in three quick, tightly coordinated off-seasons and included adding about 25 percent, or 50,000 square feet, to the building by expanding the footprint. The transformed arena’s opening game was November 9, with the Flyers defeating Indiana State, 86-81. The 13,000-seat arena was sold out.

Before touching a thing, the University of Dayton reached out to its fans and the wider community to find out what everyone wanted to see in the renovation.

“You’re lucky if you get 20 percent of people to respond,” said Scott DeBoit, executive director of the arena and senior associate athletics director. “We got 70 percent. That’s
the level of passion our fans have. And the overwhelming response was ‘Don’t mess with the soul of the bowl.’ That became our mantra.”

But people also wanted wider, padded seats and cupholders. They wanted wider concourses along with restrooms and concessions spread throughout the building. The facility desperately needed Wi-Fi upgrades, new sports lighting and air conditioning and had to meet new codes for aisle widths and handrails.

For a moment, all the upgrades meant the neighborhoods of the lower bowl were going to split apart, shuffling 6,500 fans to new positions. “But we said, we can’t have that! These folks have sat next to each other for 50 years. People look forward to basketball season so they can see the friends they’ve made over the years. We can’t break up the neighborhoods,” said DeBolt.

Architect firms Perkins + Will and Hastings & Chivetta, along with the rest of the team, worked hard with the city of Dayton to keep the bowl intact, while fully modernizing the space and expanding the footprint.

“In the end, we were able to keep the seat layout exactly the same and no one lost their neighbor,” said DeBolt. The University of Dayton and the wider area are dedicated to that sense of neighborliness, to community. The community’s spirit has helped it weather a year marked by deadly tornadoes and a tragic mass shooting.

The private university — founded in...
1850 and home to about 8,500 undergraduates — and the arena play a central role in the small city.

“Basketball is an iconic thing to do in Dayton,” said DeBolt. “The fans and students are passionate. Once recruits see one of our games, they say, why go anywhere else?”

“Expect a first-class basketball experience. Our facility is a platform for championship-caliber play,” said Neil Sullivan, vice president and director of athletics. “The consistency of our fans and supporters inspires players. The people and the relationships are the differentiators. It’s what’s inside the building that matters most — whether that’s people who have run the shot clock for 30 years or been ushers for 30 years. We want to be an anchor for this city for NCAA tournaments and large-scale events. It’s bigger than the university. Think about this: fully half our fans are not alumni. They are people who believe that Dayton basketball is vital to our local ecosystem. And our goal is to continue building on that. We want people to say that, from the moment they arrive to the moment they leave, from parking to their seats, that University of Dayton Arena is the best place to watch basketball.”

“The transformation is a signal that we really believe in our program,” said Eric Spina, president of the university. “And that we believe in all basketball, not just the Flyers. We’re consistently in the Top 25 for attendance.”

“Every year, those games are sold out. Players always remember playing here,” said Spina.

The Dayton community rallies around The Big Hoopla, a volunteer organization that welcomes the First Four teams by playing fight songs when they pull up to their hotels. Daytonians participate in the Four-Miler, a race on Selection Sunday. They raise money so that the Big Hoopla can donate 3,000 tickets to military members stationed at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

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show up. They get it done.”

The First Four games generate $4.6 million in direct spending for Dayton.

“Beyond the revenues, the NCAA generates significant media attention for us, showcasing University of Dayton and our community,” said Jacquie Powell, president and CEO of the Dayton Convention and Visitors Bureau. “UD Arena has long been host to significant events for our area, but with the addition of climate control, we’ll be able to expand our market even further.”

“A lot of what the building needed isn’t visible to fans,” said Lindsey Peckinpaugh, Perkins + Will’s managing principal for the project. “Asbestos abatement, flooding issues. We switched to geothermal heating and LED lighting for cost reductions.”

And the building was in critical need of better accessibility. The team added the building’s first elevator and added more ADA seating. The ADA seating was also spread throughout the arena to give those fans more options for vantage points, including access to the lounge space now built in the upper deck.

The team pushed the building out 25 feet in every direction, creating 18-foot wide concourses, said Chris Chivetta of Hastings & Chivetta, and clad the new exterior in red brick and glass to reflect the design of the rest of 169-year-old campus. “The exterior is so much more engaging and fan friendly,” Chivetta said. “It’s important for everyone to get excited before they walk in the door. It adds to the energy of the

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UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON ARENA TRANSFORMATION

**UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON ARENA | The Epicenter of College Basketball**

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- **1969**: Year arena was built
- **50**: Years that season-ticket holders have been “neighbors” in the lower bowl
- **2001**: Year Dayton began hosting NCAA Men’s Basketball First Four games
- **125**: Number of NCAA Men’s Basketball First Four games played at UD Arena
- **$4.6 million**: Direct spending the First Four games bring to Dayton area annually
- **Top 25**: Consistently ranked for NCAA attendance
- **$76.2 million**: Total renovation cost
- **3**: Off-seasons needed to renovate
- **13,407**: Seats after renovation
- **50,000**: Square footage added to the arena
- **0**: Number of club seats before renovation
- **244**: Number of club seats after renovation

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The arena now boasts five clubs, including two concourse clubs that serve 122 club seats on each side. The Courtside Club for major donors is attached to the media room so that fans can watch post-game press conferences.

The Upper 400, open to all fans, has a sweeping view of campus and the Miami River.

“We replaced the corner videoboards with a center-hung board and used those spaces to create four specialty suites with viewing platforms,” said Don Dethlefs, principal at Perkins + Will. “Those suites sold really quickly. We were also able to turn a mid-level storage mezzanine into additional amenity space for the lower level and the press. We also added a lot of glass at the top of the building because it was so dark. The hospitality lounge we have there now really lights up the area at night and becomes more of a party space.”

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Retrofitting an iconic building like UD Arena is one reason we’ve created a system that can adapt,” said Mike Quilano, director of business development and product marketing for Ephesus. “Our system is flexible and technologically innovative so you get a great outcome no matter what the obstacles. We’re purpose-built to bring the best to players, the media and the audience. Our Lumadapt enhance arena operations, such as monitoring traffic flow throughout the space.

“Connectivity was very poor but we were able to bring technology into the 21st century,” said Jason Praeter, president of entertainment and communications for Cincinnati Bell. “We’re very proud to be part of a strong partnership to preserve such an iconic space, while bringing it up to modern standards and expectations.”

UD Arena is the first facility to use the fourth-generation technology of Ephesus’ LED lighting system.

**CONGRATULATIONS**

Dayton Flyers on a Transformational Project!

We appreciate our partnership with the University of Dayton and acknowledge their outstanding leadership, athletes, and fans!

**CONGRATULATIONS FROM**

Perkins&Will

**HASTINGS•CHIVETTA**

**PHOTOS: SHAWN McLAWS / ROOTED MEDIA HOUSE**

**SEE ARENA, PAGE 7A**
technology allows UD to meet its current needs, adjusting colors and angles and light temperatures for every possible event, from sports to graduation. And UD can adapt the system to its needs change over time.

UD’s system is connected to our SmartHub, which allows us to monitor the system remotely and add software changes as we develop them. It’s cost-effective, long lasting and maintenance free.

All the construction was squeezed into three off-seasons. Even in the off-seasons, the arena had to open for several major events, such as graduation.

“Construction activity peaked in the summer of 2018 when construction crews put over $30 million of work in place in just six months,” said Cory Farmer, vice president of Danis Building Construction. “It was truly an amazing feat that everyone on the project team should be proud of. During each basketball season, our team still managed to continue work, while accommodating over 150 events within the arena. Over the entire
duration of the project, we never missed a required opening date, basketball game or major event."

"It’s been a long process for University of Dayton," said Chivetta. "It’s been a great, collaborative process with them, working to decide the best ways to spend for maximum fan experience and to ready the space for the next 50 years. Dayton did it in a progressive manner, transforming the arena into an engaging modern facility within a practical budget."

Raising funds for the project meant a combination of philanthropy and season ticket holders willing to pay extra, said Neil Sullivan, UD vice president and director of athletics.

"We view our supporters as authentic partners in our success," Sullivan said. "This is not about how much we can generate, but about how much value we provide. Our goal is to optimize revenue so that we advance our sports programs efficiently and effectively. But we ensure that pursuit of revenue does not infringe upon our relationship with our fans and the community, or compromise our values."

(Clockwise, from top left): The new Cronin Family Spirit Shop is the first brick and mortar team store at UD Arena; the majority of the transformation of UD Arena was funded by external resources; special care was taken to recognize the many noteworthy contributors; existing spaces, such as the 20- to 35-person Boesch Lounge suites were enhanced as well during the transformation; interior view of the new concourse east club.

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Building the Legacy

Danis is proud to have partnered with the University of Dayton as they continue to transform the future of Dayton basketball for generations of Flyers to come.

800.326.4701
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