



Currently in design, the new DeVos Fieldhouse for Hope College in Holland, MI, will be home to men's basketball, volleyball and women's basketball. Other uses will include: intercollegiate athletic events; sports events for local high schools; graduations; concerts and community events. Design team members include: Ellerbe Becket & Acoustic Dimensions.

IMAGE COURTESY OF ELLERBE BECKET

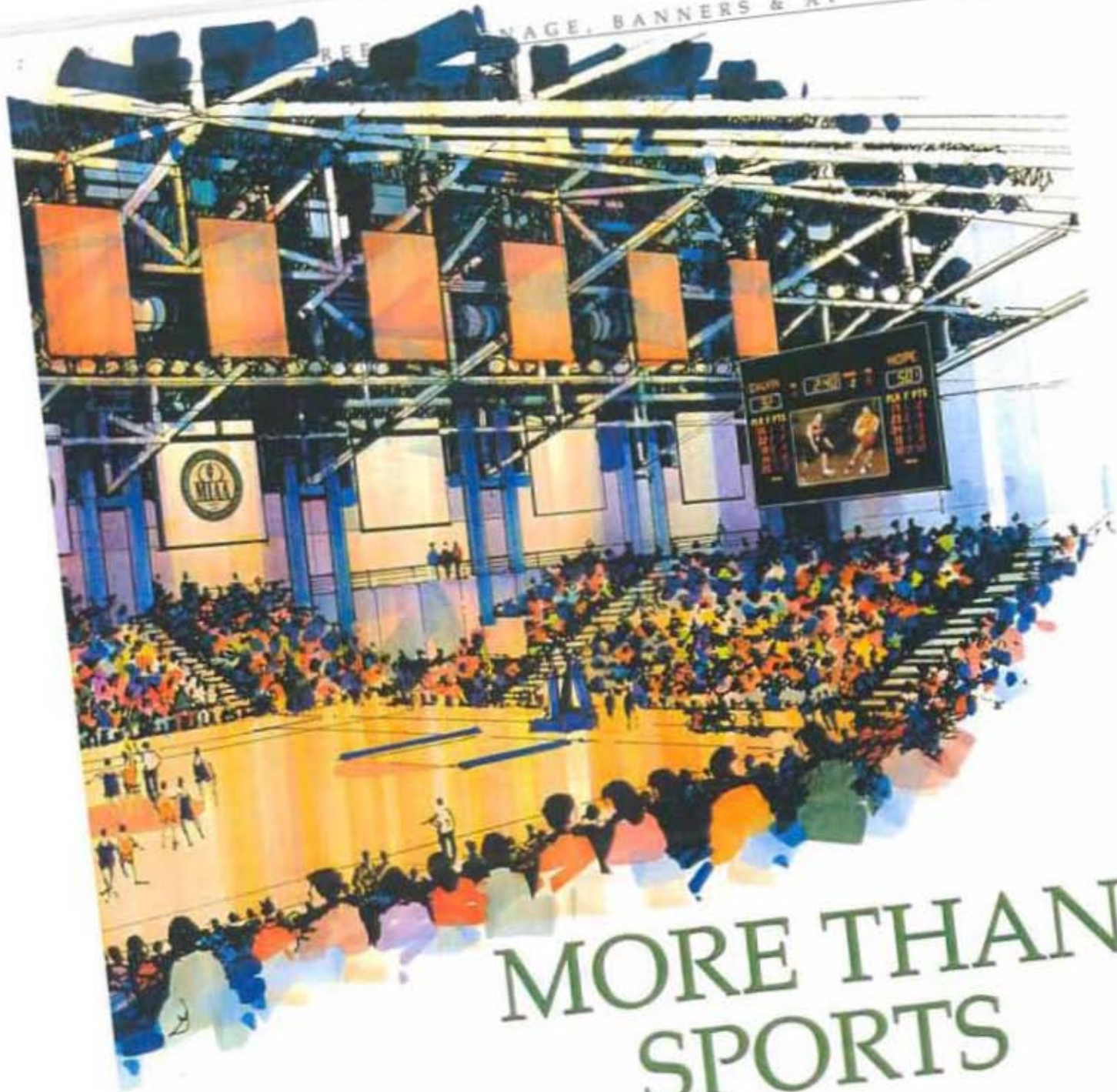
Question: What is on the screens of the premiere US designers at the moment? Answer: Most likely collegiate stadiums and indoor arenas.

Like the pro teams, universities are realising that they have to construct facilities to not only enhance their profile, but also to generate revenue streams — however, unlike pro teams, they cannot plan single-purpose venues. The new wave of college athletic facilities have to meet the needs of athletics, concerts, presentations and convocations. Not only do the facilities have to support different user-groups, but they are also used for training in marketing, kinesiology, wellness, coaching and sports education. Add to that a budget

often provided by a donor base and you get a sense of some of the challenges for which designers have to develop solutions.

Multi-purpose and Multi-user

"I think the economy is driving the need to have as many uses for facilities as possible," explains Doug Beichley, Senior Project Manager at Ellerbe Becket in Kansas City. "Many of the indoor arenas we are designing for basketball and commencements are labelled, 'convocation centres'. Just the sheer meaning of the name elicits the thought of multiple uses." The majority of the indoor arenas currently in design are programmed to support basketball,



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volleyball, convocations, conferences and concerts, as well as a host of training and educational purposes.

"The incredible pressure for universities to spend capital dollars wisely usually requires that these buildings are used for a range of activities that often have contradictory needs," says Steve Shull, who leads Acoustic Dimensions' sports division in Dallas, Texas. "Of course, unless the building can successfully support intercollegiate events, it will never be viewed as a success. In collegiate arenas, that means creating a signature sense of experience or the old 'home court advantage'. We design performance technologies to connect the crowd with the athletes

in a concerted effort to defeat the opposing team. In contrast to that, we have the requirement for commencements and concerts for which we have to control that energy."

Home court advantage isn't just about the energy created by the acoustics. It can also be about the feeling of being 'sold out'. Reichley of Ellerbe Becket continues, "At the Tyson Event Center in Sioux City, Iowa, we have seating needs ranging from 4,600 to 10,000. By blocking out the upper decks, we can create the feeling of a 'full house' even with a lower seat count. We are also using a lot of portable and retractable seating in our university athletic designs."

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on the entertainment
experience at
collegiate stadia.*



The new AIMcGuire Center, currently in design for Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, will support women's intercollegiate basketball, men's basketball practices and women's volleyball. Design team members include: NBBJ and Acoustic Dimensions.

IMAGE COURTESY OF: NBBJ

The multi-use requirement is playing a role in outdoor facilities as well. Stadiums that were traditionally used for American football now are being renovated to accommodate soccer and lacrosse. With the pressure to generate revenue, many of these stadiums host motocross events and concerts during off-season.

"Most of the clients we are working with want to make sure they get as much use out of their facilities as possible," comments Chris Lamberth, Business Development Manager for HKS, in Dallas, Texas. "They need to house not only traditional users such as fans and players, but also have to include administration and training for multiple athletic programs. We get as much input from user groups as possible. You don't want to do a building then find you've left people out."

Revenue Generation vs. Campus Culture

"I think the term 'prolegiate' is valid," adds Beichley. "Colleges and universities are seeing what the pros are doing and they are designing for revenue-driven facilities."

With the increasing pressure to be self-sustaining, universities are exploring both traditional and non-traditional options for revenue streams. One idea copied from professional facilities is the concept of suites. However, there is a price tag involved in adding them to the space and universities shouldn't explore the concept without first evaluating whether or not it works within the parameters of their culture.

"There are a few smaller schools where the thought of having suites is looked on

as elitist. Club seating is a good alternative," elaborates Beichley.

Another option for revenue generation is in sponsorships and advertising dollars. "The Audio/Video (A/V) component of the facilities provides an opportunity to get advertisers in front of the people they want to reach, while generating revenue to help the programme," comments Shull. "However, much depends on the culture of the campus. For some of our clients, this isn't the correct approach."

"Every project is going to be different," explains Paul Becker, Project Manager for NBBJ in Maxella, California. "We've designed a 4,000 seat facility for Marquette University. Generating revenue was not their primary concern, the students were. We had virtually no conversations about advertising."

"Big market...small market, they all want different things," highlights Chris Lamberth of HKS. "Many times smaller schools want something more intimate, that revolves around the students. Other facilities are about TV contracts and seat licenses. Across the board, schools are building things with more amenities — catering to both donors and students alike. In some cases, they are community-based where people in the area are very big backers of the programmes."

Facilities Used to Recruit Talent

"Sometimes a key reason to build a new facility doesn't revolve around revenue generation. In many cases it is about being able to attract desired recruits," says Becker of NBBJ. The 'prolegiate' landscape is creating stiff competition as universities

compete for talent. Due to the fact that they don't have the option of using material incentives to draw players, often the facilities and amenities themselves become the 'hook'.

"Future world-class athletes are looking for programmes that will give them the ability to reach their full potential," delineates Shull. "Effective coaching video systems are now an essential tool for improving personal performance. Universities are investing in systems that develop talent."

What Drives the Choices Behind the Design?

The end goal for all of these designers is to create facilities that are enjoyed by all the user groups and meet the needs of the universities themselves. However, with all the conflicting needs, what are the biggest factors in determining what actually gets built?

Chris Lamberth of HKS responded, "It depends on the campus culture. Sometimes the administration is more involved...sometimes the athletic departments...recreational programmes etc. Donors play a big part too. Probably the biggest factor is that the financial feasibility guys are getting involved more and more up front, frequently before anyone else, which lets you know what you can build and when you can build it."

"You try to understand what the client wants to get an idea of the size of the facility. Most typically, the university will have a site or two selected. Our job is to find out if the site can accommodate what they want to achieve. Once you determine what a site will and won't support, you go

back to the university to edit the program," says Becker.

"I think it is important to mention that where there is collegiate competition, then there is wellness. The athletic department may be the first priority, but there is this whole other programme that includes nutrition, physical fitness and sports medicine, which campuses are trying to balance. One is about training an individual to peak performance and the other is about introducing physical fitness to the greatest number of people possible. Not every campus has the ability to have two separate facilities, and a lot of the design decisions are based on the priorities of the programme," adds Shull.

It Helps that the Work is Fun...

Steve Shull sums up the uniqueness of the design process for collegiate facilities: "There is a certain magic to designing for universities. Intercollegiate athletics is about seeing raw talent play for the joy of playing. These kids bring all the heart in the world to the court. I love that about college sport."

Perhaps the best thing that university facilities have going for them therefore is the enthusiasm of their design teams! ■

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The Regional Development Center for Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA, incorporates an 8,000-seat arena, a conference centre, a 400-seat auditorium and support spaces that accommodate a variety of athletic and academic functions. Design team members include: Ellerbe Becket and Acoustic Dimensions.

IMAGE COURTESY OF: ELLERBE BECKET

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