

Loyola University Maryland's new \$62M sports complex a revenue boost

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Loyola University Maryland's new \$62 million sports complex is expected to grow sponsorship revenue in the school's athletics program by as much as 75 percent.

The centerpiece of the 71-acre Ridley Athletic Complex, on Cold Spring Lane in North Baltimore, is a 6,000-seat stadium for the school's lacrosse and soccer programs. The venue boasts a 15-by-30 Daktronics scoreboard featuring a video screen, allowing the university to sell custom sponsorships for the first time.

Loyola's soccer and lacrosse teams currently play at Diane Geppi-Aikens Field, which only allowed the school to sell signage along the sidelines for \$1,000. Dave Gerrity, who heads business affairs for Loyola's athletic program, said the school is preparing new deals for businesses to spend \$25,000 to \$30,000. Those deals would encompass the soccer, lacrosse and basketball teams.

The new stadium can also accommodate more than double the fans that Diane Geppi-Aikens Field holds. The stadium also houses three corporate suites.

Gerrity declined to disclose current sponsorship revenue figures but said those numbers could grow dramatically, an estimate of 50 percent to 75 percent, with the new stadium.

"It's kind of a new era for their sports program, and that gets people excited," said John Moag, a sports banker with Moag & Co. in Baltimore and former chairman of the **Maryland Stadium Authority**. "Even for a college it means a lot. That's new revenue; that scoreboard alone really helps out a lot."

The school is waiting for Jim Paquette to take over as athletic director April 1 before preparing the exact scope of marketing packages, Gerrity said. Paquette comes to Loyola after working in the business department of **Boston College's** athletic program.

The Ridley complex, on the site of a former city landfill, was financed through fundraising and a bond from the Maryland Health and Higher Educational Facilities Authority.

Loyola's men's soccer program will christen the stadium, a little more than a mile from Loyola's main campus, March 10 with an exhibition versus Crystal Palace Baltimore. The men's lacrosse program will host Duke at the complex March 13.

The facility will help enhance the image of the 3,600-student school and boost recruitment efforts, said Joseph Boylan, who is retiring after 19 years as Loyola's athletic director.

"This was a dream of Father Ridley's," Boylan said of Loyola's late president, the Rev. Harold Ridley, for whom the complex is named. "For us to compete at the national level with our lacrosse and soccer program we needed something better."

Meanwhile, the site of Diane Geppi-Aikens Field eventually could be used to build a second academic quad, said the Rev. Brian F. Linnane, Loyola's president. The project could include a building for the school's science department and a new student center, he said. Linnane doesn't anticipate movement on the quad project for at least five years.