News story: Rice-Eccles Stadium tour

What makes the Rice-Eccles Stadium the venue that it is today? Is it because the University of Utah is now a member of the Pac-12 Conference, or should credit be given to the 2002 Winter Olympics?

Dave Wakefield, Guest Services Manager for the Rice-Eccles Stadium, believes that both events played an important role in making the stadium one of the best in the country.

On Wednesday, November 9, Wakefield and his assistant Corey Lester hosted a tour for a sports reporting class at the University of Utah to show students the features and capabilities of the facilities.

Wakefield said the most recent addition to the stadium has been the audiovisual system that was completed this year. The project required 190 speakers and 100,000 feet of speaker wire to be installed along with over 100 cameras that are spread out between the concourse, perimeter and field.

To ensure the safety of stadium guests, Wakefield said the cameras are all monitored in the command center by multiple individuals during every event. Some of those individuals include UDOT and UTA employees, along with security personnel and the FanUP organization, which monitors fan behavior complaints through a texting service.

Wakefield estimated that 30 to 40 legitimate texts are received by the FanUp program during events, resulting in an average of five ejections per game. With the new system “some cameras on the roof of the stadium are capable of zooming in on a person’s face,” Wakefield said, making it easier to monitor people’s actions. “They probably kick-out 15-20 people per game for alcohol,” he added.

But the cameras and sound system were only part of the addition to the stadium. The summer project also featured a new 122-foot by 64-foot video board that displays over 2 million pixels. “The screen is the largest, true 16-by-9 screen in the country,” Wakefield said.

As the home of the Utah Utes football team, much credit can be given to the Pac-12 Conference for the new upgrades, but the 2002 Winter Olympics also brought a lot of prestige to the stadium. According to Wakefield, Salt Lake City was the largest city to host the Winter Olympics.

The stadium was renovated for the event and it now features one of the best press boxes in the country for journalists and media. Located high above the 50-yard-line, the press box contains 80 seats for members of the press to work during events, while enjoying the scenic background of the mountain skyline.