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## Saint Mary's new Athletic Director is committed to Gaels' winning legacy

By Nick Marnell



New Saint Mary's AD Mike Matoso at his introductory press conference. Photo Tod Fierner  
upgraded and added to the facilities, they started to stick around."

At the two previous universities that employed new Saint Mary's Director of Athletics and Recreation Mike Matoso, he left his mark with upgraded athletic facilities. Sure enough, in addition to successful sports programs and the welfare of student-athletes, Matoso said that improvements to the Saint Mary's facilities will become a major focal point of his athletic department.

Matoso arrived at Saint Mary's July 19 after a five-year stint as athletic director at Division II California State University, Stanislaus, where he spearheaded nearly \$7 million in facility upgrades, including the basketball arena, Warrior Stadium and the baseball and softball fields, with much of the money coming through private donations.

"Kids are used to playing in high-level facilities," Matoso said. "At Stanislaus, a lot of kids left because they thought we weren't committed to winning. When we

Prior to Stanislaus State, as Senior Associate Athletic Director at the University of San Diego where he oversaw all athletic facilities, Matoso played a key role in developing and planning Fowler Park, a \$14 million baseball facility ranked by Baseball America as one of the top five collegiate facilities in the country.

For Saint Mary's, Matoso hinted at a change to Louis Guisto Field, saying he would like to move the tables and concession stands onto a concourse so that regardless of whatever else they do, fans never lose sight of the baseball field. In McKeon Pavilion, he envisions renovations to the athletic department offices and also locker room upgrades.

It was the USD connection and a return to the West Coast Conference that drew Matoso to his new job. "One of my first college innings pitched at Cal Poly was on the diamond at Saint Mary's," said Matoso, who participated in the Division II College World Series. Matoso always wanted to return to Division I, and he joins men's basketball coach Randy Bennett and baseball coach Eric Valenzuela as former Toreros on the Moraga campus.

Matoso said his priority is to sit down with all of the coaches and see what they need to continue their highly successful programs. The Gaels boast 19 combined WCC championships and 30 NCAA Tournament appearances in their history, the men's basketball program is the winningest program in California over the last decade and the women's basketball team has won 20 games for six straight years. Plus, two Gaels were chosen in the June Major League Baseball Draft.

"How do we capitalize on the success?" said Matoso, who knows a bit about athletic program success himself. At Stanislaus State, 11 of his 14 teams competed in postseason play in 2105-16 and 2016-17, and under his leadership at USD the school captured the WCC Commissioner's Cup for five consecutive years. Saint Mary's has yet to win a WCC Commissioner's Cup - awarded to the school with the most success in conference play - in the Cup's 16-year history. (Neither has Gonzaga.)

The new AD insists he will maintain the high academic standards that define the 300 Saint Mary's student-athletes. "It's what makes the school - and the WCC - so unique," Matoso said. "Winning the right way is the only way to do it."

James Donahue, school president, concurs. "His commitment to the welfare of student-athletes and their academic success resonates strongly with the mission of Saint Mary's," he said.

Matoso was born in Belmont, and he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees from Cal Poly. "We are super excited to come to Moraga," said the married father of three. "My family and I are really excited about getting engrained into the community."

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