

Hockey, football and soccer benefit from new Weber County Sports Complex

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OGDEN — County and Weber State University officials on Tuesday night threw open the doors of the new Weber County Sports Complex, welcoming area athletes and the general public to an open house for the new space.

Free ice skating and sports demonstrations were on the schedule, along with an official ribbon cutting and a thanks to the many project donors.

“It will provide an increased opportunity for the public to come up and participate with the Ice Sheet, there’s such a demand there,” said Jerry Bovee, Weber State athletic director. “For Weber State, the indoor facility allows our students to train year round in a covered environment. And once we are able to gauge usage, we will be able to allow access to those areas to the community. There are just not a lot of indoor facilities around town that allow young people a chance to get specialized training. It’s exciting for Ogden and for Weber County.”

The complex, just west of the Dee Events Center, includes a two-story addition to the former Weber County Ice Sheet, adding a new NHL-size ice rink. Training and locker rooms are on the ground floor. There’s also an indoor practice field and state-of-the-art strength and conditioning complex for university athletes.

The complex also includes the newly constructed Robert L. and Annette Marquardt Field House and the George S. Eccles Field.

The university and the county shared the cost of the year-long, \$9.2 million remodel. WSU provided \$3.4 million for the construction of this project with the support of approximately 80 percent coming from donors, including the Marquardt family, the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation and former WSU football athlete and alumnus Roger Trincherro.

Weber County, in conjunction with WSU, received a \$2 million grant from Weber County RAMP.

“The biggest thing for Weber State is the increase in effectiveness of our programs,” Bovee said. “It will allow student athletes to train indoors, year-round, and to grow and craft their skills. And the fact that it was funded primarily through donors is huge for us.”

Bovee said the new facility, especially the 60-yard George S. Eccles Field, will be a huge recruiting tool for prospective athletes. The synthetic turf field is marked to accommodate football, soccer and softball, and also has drop-down batting cages for softball.

“More than anything, I think it shows our commitment to the programs and the commitment of donors to see them succeed,” Bovee said. “It shows our student athletes that we care about their opportunity to perform at their peak.”

The soccer team is also excited about the indoor space.

“Our soccer players have been practicing in January on a field we have to plow. It’s so much more effective for their training to be able to control the environment.”

Todd Ferrario, director of the Ice Sheet, said the addition allows the county to provide services it has not had enough space and time to accommodate previously.

“Now we can have 300 people participating during free-skate time and still have ice hockey practice,” he said. “We used to try to wedge a group in here and there between everything else. Now we can work to expand in ways we’ve always wanted, while also expanding economic opportunities for Ogden.”

The complex also will serve as the new home of the Ogden Mustangs hockey team.

“It’s good for the city to have a Junior Hockey (WSHL) team here,” Bovee said. “Hockey is a well-known and established sport in many parts of the world, but it’s emerging in northern Utah.”

Weber County’s involvement and support means the facility will be open to residents, although exact details and schedules are still being worked out.

Ferrario said about 200,000 community members used the Ice Sheet in 2012, and he expects more than 300,000 will access the complex by the end of 2013.

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