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Indoor soccer complex ready for action: Donor makes year-round athletic facility a reality

June 01, 2009 | Eric Brown

Indoor soccer officially joined Liberty University's gamut of activities on May 1 with the debut of the Thomas Indoor Soccer Center. Before opening the fields to students, Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr., donor Glen Thomas and others spoke and then christened the new facility with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"It is a dream come true from many years ago," said Thomas, an LU alumnus. "Nothing will make [my family] happier than to come by and see people in here at all times of the day and night."

"This is just an exciting day for us," Falwell said. "This is one more facility that Liberty can be proud of and can use to recruit students."



Ribbon cutting ceremony

Following the ceremony, players from local youth leagues and LU students kicked things off, taking part in the center's first set of exhibition games. The off-the-wall action continued on May 2 with two tournaments comprised of teams coached by players from LU's men's and women's soccer teams. The proceeds from each tournament went to both NCAA squads for mission trips.

"It was just a great grand opening," said Jeff Alder, Liberty men's head soccer coach. "Just to see the joy and fun that [the students] experienced during that first weekend was priceless. I was privileged to be a part of the event, and it was great for our men's and women's soccer players."

Connected to Campus North's LaHaye Student Union, the Thomas Indoor Soccer Center is comprised of two turf fields partially surrounded by transparent walls and netting. The facility also features a spectator section, sound system, multiple televisions and wireless capability.

The idea for building an on-campus soccer center began more than two years ago, when Thomas, owner of RST Marketing in Forest, Va., expressed a desire to establish a facility that would give area youth and Liberty students a chance to enjoy the sport year-round. He began talking with LU officials and a partnership was formed, making the dream a reality.



Entrance (exterior) to the new center

"I actually had a conversation with Dr. Falwell before he passed away, and he was very excited about finding a way to make this work," Thomas said. "This is the fruit of what we brainstormed about."

Soon after an agreement was made, Thomas and Alder started travelling to various indoor soccer arenas around the country, formulating ideas as to what features Liberty's complex should have.

"We tried to take the best of the best," Alder said. "Right away, it's got the wow factor when you walk in ... and with the walls and the netting, the ball is never really out of play. It's an opportunity for college students and the kids in the community to have a true professional soccer experience indoors."

In addition to hosting intramural soccer contests, the facility is also ideal for playing flag football or lacrosse. When not in use by the university, the center will be open to youth and adult leagues in the Central Virginia area. Thomas and Alder are overseeing a program known as Soccer Mania, which will use the facility to host community leagues during the summer and winter months.

The Thomas Indoor Soccer Center is the latest addition to Liberty's Ultimate LU program, an initiative designed to enhance club and intramural activities on campus. Falwell expressed much gratitude to Thomas and his family for their support of recreational opportunities at Liberty University.

"We deeply appreciate what the Thomas family has done," he said. "In the last decade [Glen's father] helped us out when the university badly needed it. Now, it's wonderful for the next generation to be building upon the sacrifices my father and Glen's father made to keep this school in existence during those difficult days."

For more information on Liberty University's Ultimate LU program visit www.liberty.edu/ultimatelu.