

# NEW ERA AT NOTRE DAME: Campus Crossroads Redefines College Video

A highlight is the new Rex and Alice A. Martin Media Center, which will support the university's video and multimedia efforts

By Karen Hogan Ketchum and Ken Kerschbaumer

**S**ince the days of Knute Rockne and “The Gipper,” the University of Notre Dame has forged a football program steeped in history, tradition, and victory. Over nearly a century, the school has continually leveraged the overwhelming success of its athletic program to benefit its academic and faith-based missions. That tradition continues with the Campus Crossroads Project, the university's most ambitious building campaign in its 175-year history.

✓ An aerial shot of Notre Dame Stadium as the Campus Crossroads Project neared completion in August 2017





At the heart of the Campus Crossroads Project is Notre Dame Stadium, an iconic venue fully used only a handful of times per year. The project will change that: it will add a structure to each of the west, east, and south sides of the stadium, transforming it into a year-round center of student activity.

On the west side, the Duncan Student Center will house a student sports and recreation center as well as a wide variety of student lounges, offices, and retail dining options. On the south, O'Neill Hall welcomes the Department of Music and the Sacred Music at Notre Dame program.

The pièce de résistance, however, has taken shape on the east side of Notre Dame Stadium: Corbett Family Hall will house the new 18,000-sq.-ft Rex and Alice A. Martin Media Center, which will support all university video-content- and multimedia-creation efforts for the future. From digital content in support of academics and faith-based initiatives to production of videoboard shows in Notre Dame Stadium, Purcell Pavilion, and Compton Family Ice Arena, it will be a resource for students, faculty, and staff.

"There's a quote sitting right outside my door that I look at every day, all day, and it says one of Notre Dame's greatest assets has been the boldness of its vision, the ability to see possibilities and connections where others saw only obstacles and fragmentation," said University of Notre Dame Director, Broadcast Technology, **Scott Rinehart**, referring to a statement made by University President Rev. John I. Jenkins, CSC. "I look at that, and it hits me everyday that this place is willing to accept calculated risk. It's what it does; it's in the DNA of the university system to do that. And, luckily, we had essentially a greenfield possibility here to do that."

The Rex and Alice A. Martin Media Center will be called home by Fighting Irish Media — the video-production, storytelling, and communications arm of Notre Dame's athletics department — as well as the university's Marketing Communications Video Group, Office of Digital Learning, and Catholic Media. Providing the underlying support and operation of the Martin Media Center for these resident stakeholders is Notre Dame Studios, which will also support a wide variety of campus customers, including university relations, student affairs, and many more.



^ Wi-Fi transmitters in Notre Dame Stadium will keep fans connected on game day.

✓ Corbett Family Hall, which houses the Rex and Alice A. Martin Media Center

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## Creating a Video Philosophy for 'The House That Rockne Built'

**I**n the two years since the historic announcement that Notre Dame would add video to the football game-day experience, Notre Dame Stadium has been transformed. The university partnered with ANC Sports to install a 10-mm Mitsubishi Electric video display measuring 54 ft. high x 95.5 ft. wide to the stadium's south end zone and surround the bowl with a wealth of LED displays. To run all this video, the university turned to Mike Bonner, formerly with the Denver Broncos and New York Yankees, and Brock Raum, formerly with the Kansas City Chiefs and University of Nebraska. SVG sat down with Bonner, now executive producer, live events, and Raum, now supervising producer, prior to the Sept. 2 home opener to discuss how each found his way to Fighting Irish Media, the lessons they've learned in creating a video-production philosophy from scratch, and the importance of blending the old with the new when telling the story of Notre Dame football.

**Two years ago, Notre Dame announced plans to add a videoboard in Notre Dame Stadium and construct a new Media Center. At what point in the process were you both brought in?**

**Mike Bonner:** When I worked for the Yankees, we hosted a Notre Dame home game against Army. It was that game in 2010 that people were saying to me, You know, Yankee Stadium is an iconic place, and you guys have videoboards; you run your show the right way; you may help us get a videoboard. And I said, Well, if you do, let me know. I'd be interested in running it.

**Brock Raum:** I had known that Notre Dame had been looking to put in a videoboard [for a while], and I always thought it would be a great opportunity. I think Mike and I were familiar with each other's work when we were both in the AFC West, and so, when Mike got my name, I think it just made a lot of sense. When I heard it was Mike Bonner, I knew it was somebody I trusted and respected in the industry; when I heard it was Notre Dame, I knew it was a brand that is one of the most respected in all of sports, not just college football. It was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up.

**Walk me through the process from joining the University of Notre Dame to now. What do you have ahead before your first game?**

**BR:** One of the biggest differences between here and pretty much anywhere else in the country is, a lot of our screen time on the board isn't taken up by advertising. We don't have any sponsored features; we're just here to promote Notre Dame, the team, the brand, and the university. One of the big things has been identifying what different sorts of features look like and how we make them entertaining and engaging. Luckily, we have a [great] team of people here, many of whom have never worked on a videoboard before, but they're taking to it like fish to water. We have some great editors, great shooters, great storytellers, great producers who have never [edited] for a videoboard before but really want to try. It's helped us try to get a fresh perspective.

**MB:** We've been working for close to eight months now on



our graphic look. We wanted to make sure that the graphics we had fit with our brand, so there weren't going to be crazy graphics jumping off the screen. We used a lot of Notre Dame in the graphics that have been created — current buildings as backdrops, as well as iconic things like the Basilica, Golden Dome, and Touchdown Jesus — and used them as part of the scenery. It has come off looking very sharp.

**How have you handled building the video? I'd imagine that Notre Dame has a lot of video assets in its archive but not necessarily any clips that are videoboard-ready.**

**BR:** We definitely lean heavily on the history here, because it's important to the fans, it's important to the university, and it's important to the team. Our [approach to video,] between Mike and myself, is how do we blend the old with the new? That's the essence of this entire project. We still have the "House That Rockne Built," but it's got some new modern amenities. We want to make sure our content is the exact same way. We definitely leaned on that history, but we still want to show the current team.

**MB:** The last piece of content that we'll work on right up until our first game is the open video, because we want to make sure that no stone is left unturned. We want to make sure that it truly goes from Rockne to [current coach Brian] Kelly, so we've been delving into a whole lot of old footage.

**You've both worked for teams with established video productions. What lessons are you taking from your previous positions and using to build a video-production program and philosophy from scratch?**

**MB:** The way I look at it, the Yankees and the Broncos [are] both pretty big brands, and they have conservative approaches. They're big into their history — even though the Broncos [date] back only to 1960, they embraced a lot of their history — so, for me, that's what I know. I'm a disciple of that conservative approach and honoring the past in a lot of what we do. That's a lot of what we're looking to do here as well.

You're not going to see Kiss Cams, Awkward Dad Dance Cams. You're going to see a lot of appropriate content the way it would belong at Notre Dame Stadium.

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There's also been [the need to] explain to some folks who have never had the visual medium inside the football stadium how certain things are done. [For example,] you let the game dictate a lot of the things that you're doing. If you score a touchdown, you want to ride the momentum of the team with replays and music and great crowd shots. You're not going to bring the house down by going to a piece of content that maybe isn't the most exciting following a touchdown.

**BR:** [The University of Nebraska's] fan base and Notre Dame's fan base are similar in a lot of aspects: they tend to skew toward many different age groups, they're more national, and they have a huge reference for history. A lot of the lessons I learned at the University of Nebraska I carried over to the Chiefs and to Notre Dame. The Chiefs, on top of that, have a lot of history, too, so leaning on the history and having a reference for the history is nothing new to me. It's [seeing what works at other places] and asking, Is that going to work here? [We're] figuring out what that roadmap looks like.

**Building a video-production program for such an iconic football program must be pretty rewarding.**

**What most excites you as the season approaches?**

**MB:** First off, I am humbled and honored to be a part of the history of Notre Dame Stadium. Not many people get to open up a videoboard show in a place that has never had a videoboard show before. What I'm looking forward to is, when we run that replay, get the play overturned in our favor, we run a pump-up video, and the place goes crazy. There's such a rush that you get from that.

**BR:** For me, it's the fan reaction, it's the player reaction, it's that first replay on a call that maybe fans didn't have the best look at. I think it's really going to help win over our fan base. On top of that, I can't wait for [a student intern] to see her work on the videoboard for the first time; maybe that sparks something in her that sets her career path in a direction or another student sees that and says, I want to do that. That's another aspect that I'm excited about. — *KHK*

**This interview has been condensed and edited. To read SVG's full interview with Mike Bonner and Brock Raum, check out [www.sportsvideo.org](http://www.sportsvideo.org).**



^ In its stadium aesthetic and video-production philosophy, Notre Dame aims to blend the old with the new.

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"The scope of ND Studios [is not just] building cameras and control rooms and routing systems to support a videoboard show with football," Rinehart explained. "It's not like a pro venue, where that's the only thing that control room does. We had to think of control rooms that support performing-arts performances, lecture capture, and overseas research. And, as people start getting exposed to this facility, they see the technology and [say], I need to do XYZ, can you help me? Those conversations are starting to percolate now."

Entering the Rex and Alice A. Martin Media Center, visitors will be greeted by a 1.8-mm video wall that displays content from across the University. The 1,700-sq.-ft. main studio will be located in the northeast corner of the building, next to two control rooms, two dual-purpose audio rooms, and a green room. (Additionally, the existing facilities in the Fighting Irish Media Center, located in the Joyce Center, have been integrated into the Martin Media Center workflow and are now available for campus use.) The control rooms, integrated by BeckTV, feature a

Ross Video Acuity switcher and XPression graphics, Evertz EXE 23T router and DreamCatcher replay servers, Harman Soundcraft Vi3000 audio console, and Riedel Artist intercoms. All workstations will be connected via a fiber KVM system for added flexibility. In addition, the team will have Grass Valley cameras with Canon lenses.

The south end of the building will comprise a teaching studio, an academic-innovation space, six edit rooms, and open office space for the four resident stakeholders. To fulfill the demands of Notre Dame Studios, the university hired three full-time engineers, a media-asset manager, and a production manager and transitioned five academic digital-media positions to it.

Throughout the building of the Martin Media Center, a heavy emphasis has been placed on collaboration among the departments and on considering the needs of the athletic department as integral to — not separate from or more important than — the overall university mission.

"As an athletic department, it's important to reach out and work with the academic departments or communication department," said **Dan Skendzel**, executive director, Notre Dame Studios. "You fulfill that by making production space available or building a student program with them so that everyone wins; most importantly, students. It puts the academic aspect of their offering into real-life scenarios as well."





^ Inside one of two Martin Media Center control rooms

The central equipment room, which comprises around 25 racks and is based almost exclusively on fiber (with some coax, as needed), will also be located in the south end of the facility.

The University of Notre Dame, looking to the future of broadcast technology, decided early on in the process to pursue an IP infrastructure and relied heavily on BeckTV, as well as consultant WJHW, to design and install the IP production technology. Together, the group selected an Evertz EXE 23T router and Axia Audio with AES67 AoIP networking technology.

“There were some difficult conversations: do you go safe with baseband, or are we at enough of the tipping point on IP video that we could invest in that for the future? I looked at where manufacturers were spending their R&D dollars,” said Rinehart, “and it’s IP. It felt like there was this huge race to go IP. And once you start getting into it and you start trying to understand what’s possible with it, for a place like Notre Dame, it’s a great fit. Because we want to make Notre Dame Studios not just four walls within this one building and not just the edges of the South Bend campus. We want to take it global.” <

> Completion of the Campus Crossroads Project has transformed Notre Dame Stadium into a year-round center of student activity.

