NMSU ATHLETICS

Ags working on radio and TV deals for home games

By Jason Groves
jgroves@lsun-news.com
@jpgroves on Twitter

LAS CRUCES — The recent multimedia rights agreement between New Mexico State University and Learfield Sports, now named New Mexico State Sports Properties in Las Cruces, was a significant early accomplishment for Director of Athletics Mario Moccia.

It also created a sense of urgency as NMSU football kicks off the 2015 season Sept. 5 at Florida.

“The onus is on New Mexico State Sports Properties to find a local flagship station and affiliates around the state, and radio was one of the first things that they have done,” Moccia said. “Learfield is doing a lot of that in person or from their home offices in Dallas and Jefferson City, Missouri.”

Last week, Adams Radio Group of Las Cruces announced a one-year agreement to broadcast all home football and men’s basketball games on The Ticket 570-AM.

“If it’s a big, local game, you’ll hear it on FOX Sports AM 570 The Ticket this season,” Adams Radio Group of Las Cruces Operations Manager and Program Director Ernesto Garcia said.

Garcia said that Learfield has approached affiliates throughout the state about continuing to carry Aggie broadcasts.

At Tuesday’s NMSU football media day event, Moccia said the school will televise all five home football games live in Las Cruces.

“Prior to (New Mexico State Sports Properties) being in place, the athletic department, myself and (Associate AD) Steve Macy have had meetings with Comcast, Fox Sports Arizona and, I believe Fox Sports Southwest,” Moccia said. “We have plans right now to televise all home football games and a certain amount of men’s basketball games.”

AggieVision will produce the home game broadcasts live in Las Cruces, Moccia said.

Moccia said the guaranteed revenue ($1 million per year) created as a result of NMSU’s seven-year contract with Learfield does not detract from his staff’s effort to fill Aggie Memorial Stadium with fans this season.

“When we were selling the games ourselves, in my opinion, we were not maximizing enough revenue to justify a live broadcast,” Moccia said. “When you have a deal with Learfield that almost triples what we were making two and three years ago, as much as I want the stands full, I am taking a lot of money from a corporate sponsorship standpoint.”

Their job is to go out and sell and make a profit from our TV broadcasts. It’s not my favorite thing, but we desperately need the revenue.

“Our charge is to work double and get people off their sofas and sell the experience of a game.”

What the NMSU broadcasts will look like, who will be in the play by play booth and what station games will be available is yet to be determined.

“The timing was terrible,” said Chris Lahey, who was hired by Learfield as the general manager for New Mexico State Sports Properties. “It looks like there is a good base here of sponsors and partners. I think they are hungry for more success.”

Lahey has worked for Learfield Sports for less than two weeks. He came to Las Cruces after two years heading up corporate sponsorships at Saint Leo University in Florida, following 10 years at South Florida while ESPN held the USF media rights at the time.

Adams Radio Group will broadcast select postseason games for women’s basketball, volleyball, softball and baseball. NMSU student station 91.5 KRUX-FM broadcast spring sports last season and Lahey did not rule that out this year.

“The football program there was a start up, and here I’m hearing there is nowhere to go but up,” Lahey said. “We talk about football because it’s driving college athletics. The other pieces will fall into place, but football had to be taken care of fast.”

Radio and television broadcasts are likely to be streamed on NMSU’s website, which will also have a new look. It’s likely there will be a fee for streaming service.

“I don’t know what that will look like yet, but those will be conversations we have with Adams Radio,” Lahey said. “But that streaming service will be a piece of Learfield’s inventory. There is some merit to having that but there is a balance of how we generate revenue and making a partner happy in the community with Adams. It’s really important to have that.”

Sports Editor Jason Groves can be reached at 575-541-5459