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BGSU Men's Soccer Business Plan

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Bowling Green State University

Men's Soccer Business Proposal

By: Joe Sullivan

Honors Project

Submitted to the Honors College

**At Bowling Green State University in partial Fulfillment of the
requirements for graduation with**

University Honors May 2017

_____, Advisor

Dr. Christopher Harben, College of Business

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Executive Summary:

The purpose of this proposal is to closely examine the BGSU Men's Soccer team and to offer potential initiatives that the team can take in order to increase fan attendance, brand awareness, student-athlete performance, and the overall profitability of the team. I have played on the team for four seasons now and I believe that I have a strong knowledge of the program as a whole. There are many different initiatives that I believe the team can pursue in order to create a better program. Each of these initiatives focuses on a specific area that I believe has room for growth inside of the BGSU Men's Soccer Program. Furthermore, each initiative is designed to offer potential solutions to opportunities that I have identified. The first initiative is to create an online stream of home games that parents and fans can purchase in order to watch the games that they can't attend in person. The second initiative is to create an Instagram and Facebook page for the team in order to increase our social media presence and grow brand awareness. The third initiative is to post a nutritional guideline in the locker room that details what players should be eating and drinking throughout the week. The fourth initiative is to sell BGSU apparel online and at home games to fans in order to increase revenue and grow awareness. The fifth initiative is to host a Brown and Orange Game that is available for parents and future recruits on move in day during preseason. Overall, I believe that this business plan will help to positively affect the BGSU Men's Soccer Program and will increase the overall profitability of the team.

Business Description:

The Bowling Green State University Men's Soccer Team currently has 24 student-athletes on its roster. Head Coach Eric Nichols and Assistant Coaches Eric Reed and Zach Mason are the coaches for the BGSU Men's Soccer Team. This past season, the team went 9-6-4. In the regular season the team was able to go undefeated in the Mid-American Conference (2-0-3) and finished second in the MAC regular season standings behind their rival Akron. Furthermore, they went on to beat perennial powerhouse Ohio State in what was their largest non-conference victory of the season. The team was also able to qualify for the Mid-American Conference tournament where they fell to Buffalo in the semi-finals of the tournament in a very close overtime game.

This team and its players rely heavily on their ability to prepare for a game. This includes mental and physical preparation. On a regular week, the team will spend around 2 hours watching game film and performing mental strength exercises in order to have the proper mindset before the game. After taking care of the mental aspect of the game, the student-athletes must now prepare their bodies properly. This includes stretching, lifting, hydrating, and eating properly. If student-athletes on the men's soccer team eat a well-balanced diet over a long period of time, then they can expect to see their performance level increase. This is one of the

largest areas of growth that Head Coach Eric Nichols and his team have been focusing on over the past few seasons and I believe they can continue to get better at.

Currently, the team spends around 15-20 hours a week together training, lifting, watching film, and in culture meetings. Student-athletes on the team are also required to complete 12 credit hours in every semester and carry above a 2.5 GPA to be able to compete in the NCAA. In order to be able to practice and complete the semester requirements, many student-athletes are forced to schedule classes that finish right before practice begins. This schedule causes many student-athletes to go directly from class to the locker room without properly fueling their bodies. Currently, there are many players within the men's soccer team that have come to practice hungry or have not even eaten anything at all. It is essential that this issue be addressed and solved in order for the team to be able to perform at its full potential. Overall, I believe that this team operates in a very similar manner to a business and I believe that I can help apply some business principles that I have learned through BGSU to help improve the program as a whole.

Initiative Outline:

- 1.) Stream home games online and charge a season fee along with a single game fee in order to watch the game, which will help increase revenue and awareness for the team
- 2.) Create an Instagram and Facebook page which offers inside information on the progress of the team along with players themselves in order to increase awareness of the BGSU Men's Soccer program
- 3.) Create a nutritional guideline for student-athletes that live on campus and are using meal plan during the season in order to increase performance levels
- 4.) Sell BGSU Men's Soccer Apparel online and at games in order to increase revenue and awareness for the team
- 5.) Host a Brown and Orange Game parent social at the beginning of the season in order to increase the strength of the culture of the team along with creating relationships between the parents of the student-athletes

Proposals:

1.) Stream home games online:

I believe that streaming home games online next season is one of the largest opportunities that the team has the ability to capitalize on. When looking at the teams that we play during the regular season, the majority of these teams, especially in the MAC, offer a stream to the game on their website. For example, Akron, Western Michigan, and West Virginia all offer a stream to their home games. It is clear to me that something must be working for these schools to feel

the need to adopt and continue to use an online stream for their home games. So the questions must be asked about what benefits can we expect to see from an online stream and how can we make it work? Well let's first examine the benefits that the BGSU Men's Soccer Team can expect to enjoy if they create an online stream. When looking at the current roster of the team, it is clear that many players come from all around the world. Over the past few seasons, the team has had players from countries such as New Zealand, France, Australia, Jamaica, Guam, and Canada. Parents and friends of these players along with those from players in the United States that are not within driving distance of BGSU struggle to watch home games due to traveling issues. Many of these parents and friends have not and will not be able to ever see one of these home games live. I believe that offering an online stream to home games can be used as a recruiting tool for future players who come from these types of situations and will help more parents be able to see their kids play. Not only will it act as another recruiting tool but it will also drive the awareness of the program up because more people will have access to watching games.

The second benefit is an increase in revenue from charging people to view the stream. The large majority of people that will want to watch a men's college soccer game online are parents and close friends of the student-athletes competing in the games. Furthermore, many parents and friends of the opposing team in each home competition will be inclined to want to watch the stream as well. This is why I believe it is very feasible for people to have enough desire to watch the game that they wouldn't mind paying a fair price to view the stream. However, we have to come up with some sort of pricing mechanism that allows for a season pass to all games, which is catered for BGSU parents and fans, along with a single game viewing option that is catered towards the opposing team viewers who only want to watch one game. That is why I believe the best pricing method that we can offer is a \$50 season-pass option along with a \$10 single-game pass option. As previously stated, I believe it to be very possible that a large number of BGSU parents and fans will be inclined to purchase a season pass and many fans of the opposing teams will purchase a single game pass. Overall, I expect stream-generated revenue to be around \$2,400 per season. The season pass total of 40 was based off of 10 current families, 10 BGSU soccer fans, and 20 alumni buying the season pass. The single game pass was based off of an estimated 5 people buying the single game and there being 10 home games next season. See *Figure-1* in the appendix with a visual representation of the revenue estimates.

Now I want to focus on the question of how to create and maintain an online stream. To answer this question, I have come up with an interesting approach that I believe will take the work out of the hands of the staff (who are focused on much more important things on game days) and put it in the hands of three students at BGSU. What I mean by this is offering three unpaid internships for current BGSU students. The first two internships would be offered to computer science, computer/electronic engineering, and visual communications technology students here at BGSU. The computer interns would be responsible for creating a platform that allowed for the stream to be accessible and charge money along with making sure the camera,

internet, and computer are all working appropriately for each game and for actually following the game with the camera. This means that they will be in the press box each game in order to make sure that things run smoothly and that the camera is following the play on the field. Not only will they have a lot more knowledge on how to create a link to an online stream but they will also be able to provide the equipment needed such as cameras and computers for free. The third intern would come from the Sports Management Program here at BGSU and would be in charge of being the announcer of the game and giving play-by-play calls to everyone tuning into the stream. Overall, I think that this solution is the best because it puts utilizes students who have more knowledge in these particular areas than those on the staff and it provides them with the incentive of creating a stronger resume. Furthermore, it cuts the equipment costs of creating a stream, of which can be extremely expensive, to zero.

2.) Create an Instagram and Facebook Page for the BGSU team

I believe that this is one of the easiest initiatives in this plan but it could also be one of the most rewarding ones as well. Currently, the BGSU men's soccer team has a twitter page that has over 2,300 followers and this number continues to grow on a daily basis. So why do so many people follow our page? I think that the answer is simply that people want to know what is going on with the team on a regular basis and that they enjoy any updates that are provided. This is a very exciting number for the team and Coach Nichols continues to promote this page. However, I think that there is a large opportunity for the program to transition and create a larger social media presence. It is true without question that social media plays a large role in the modern day American culture. Students, fans, and parents are very active with social media and this offers a large opportunity for the program. It is because of this that I believe we need to have a larger social media presence. In order to create a larger presence, I suggest creating an Instagram and Facebook page for the team.

On the Instagram page you can post pictures and videos of the team on a regular basis. Fans of the team are dying to see more of what our team does on a regular basis and Instagram is the perfect platform for it. For example, there are many times after training sessions that the team performs some challenging soccer task that would be extremely impressive to show our fans and followers on Instagram with a video. Another use of Instagram would be posting pictures of the team at culture meetings, bus rides, inside the locker room, and warming up before games. These are all valuable opportunities for the BGSU Men's Soccer team to take advantage of and increase the overall awareness of the team.

Creating a Facebook page on the other hand will offer what I believe to be a completely different but also just as valuable opportunity for people who follow BGSU soccer via social media. The first benefit that I can see comes from utilizing the feature of Facebook Live. When someone activates Facebook Live they are basically turning their camera phone into a live stream to anybody online that follows BGSU soccer. This is an amazing feature that Facebook offers and would allow fans to see a live video of what the team is doing. I could see this

featuring being used when the team is doing stuff on the road such as going go karting, warming up before games, or doing other team related activities. The other main benefit that I see of using Facebook would be the large amount of adults that have Facebook and not an Instagram or Twitter page. One of the biggest demographics of fans at BGSU Men's Soccer home games is the families of the kids that the team helps coach at summer camps. I think it is quite possible that creating a Facebook page and encouraging the parents whose kids come to the camps to follow the page could actually increase the amount of fans we get at games from the camps.

Overall, I believe that creating a Facebook and Instagram page would be extremely beneficial in growing the social media presence of the team. I also believe that by growing this online presence we can expect to increase the overall awareness and support of BGSU Men's Soccer which will lead to more fans and a larger following of the team. *Figure -2 and Figure-3* show the types of pictures that would be ideal to post online to Instagram and Facebook.

3.) Create a nutritional guideline for players on meal plan to follow

In order to understand this initiative, I think it is first important to talk about the idea of "Iron Sharpening Iron" or ISI. ISI means that if the person below you and above you on the depth chart isn't playing at their absolute best, then the team will never be able to succeed. In a handout given to the team during a meeting, ISI is discussed when saying, "Team members must buy in and be a part of the ISI ethos. They must seek out and appreciate the opportunities to be sharpened by those around them as well the opportunities to sharpen others. Knowing that the sharper they become, the sharper they will make others, who in turn will make them sharper." The BGSU soccer team lives by this idea of ISI and the players and coaching staff have truly bought into it. They apply the ISI ethos in everything and anything. This ranges from training, weight lifting, running, and studying. Overall, it is an absolutely critical piece of the team and I believe there is an opportunity to improve it.

It is no secret that in order to train the best athletes need to fuel their bodies with the essential amount of vitamins and nutrients. By fueling your body appropriately, you can expect to get better performances in training and games. On the other side of the spectrum, if you don't fuel yourself properly your performances will begin to worsen and your body can deteriorate over time. I conducted a quick survey of the team and I found that an overwhelming majority of the team has come to a practice hungry at some point during this year. It is this lack of proper fueling at times that scares me. How can we fully buy into the iron sharpening iron mentality if players aren't fully prepared to train? I think the answer is that we can't. It is because of this issue along with the overwhelming amount of data that supports a direct correlation between what you put in your body and how that affects your performance that I believe we should create a meal plan that people on campus can follow on a daily basis.

I think that a perfect example of how to fuel soccer players can be found when looking at the United States Men's Soccer Team's guidelines. Their guidelines are to eat 4-6 times a day. These

portions are small but spreading them out throughout the day allows for optimal performance. Furthermore, they say to “eat the rainbow” at each meal. What this means is to eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables throughout your meals in order to get all of the proper nutrients that your body needs. I believe that current players should follow these guidelines along with drinking an entire gallon of water on a daily basis. However, the actual food that is offered by BGSU dining services can sometimes hinder this goal.

Keeping these guidelines in mind, I think that it is a good idea to create a list of possible items that you can get at BGSU’s dining locations in order to increase performance. The main goal of this list is to offer players an idea of some options that they can buy on campus that are healthy for them because many players might not fully know what is on all of the menus. The following is a list of the places that players go the most with options that they can select in order to properly follow the guidelines mentioned previously.

- 1.) *Chickendipity*: Grilled Chicken Wrap that is customizable with what vegetables you can put inside the wrap coupled with a salad and or fruit
- 2.) *Panda Express*: Brown rice bowl with grilled chicken or steak coupled with a salad and or fruit
- 3.) *Dunkin’ Donuts*: Veggie Grande Burrito (tortilla, eggs, rice, beans and vegetables) coupled with an egg white snack wrap
- 4.) *Steak Escape*: Grilled chicken sandwich that is customizable with a large selection of vegetables coupled with a salad and or fruit
- 5.) *Smokin’ Jalapenos*: Grilled chicken bowl coupled with whatever fresh vegetables and salsas that the player would like
- 6.) *Mondo’s*: Grilled chicken or tuna salad sandwich/wrap that is customizable with vegetable coupled with a salad and or fruit
- 7.) *Salad Bar in the Union*: Large grilled chicken salad with vegetables coupled with fruit

Overall, I believe that this list would be really useful for players to have in order to figure out what meals are the most beneficial for them on campus. It could be a good idea to just pass a similar list out to the team with whatever other guidelines you want to include. As you can tell, there is not a very wide selection of healthy options that can be purchased using meal plan so giving players an idea of what is available could be very beneficial (especially for the new freshman coming in each year who don’t know what is offered).

4.) Sell BGSU Soccer Gear Online

I believe that there is a large market of BGSU soccer fans. In my opinion the largest market of these fans resides in the Bowling Green community. These are students who go to games, local fans, and parents of current players on the roster. However, not only do we have this large market of fans in the local community, but we also have many fans across the United States.

These fans range from alumni of the program to parents who live too far away to attend games. Regardless of where these fans live geographically, I firmly believe that they have a high level of demand for BGSU soccer gear. This high level of demand leads into two very important questions. What products do we offer to these fans? And are we doing enough to satisfy the demand? I believe that there is a large opportunity to improve on both of these questions.

Let's first look at the current situation of how we are tackling this problem. Currently, the majority of our gear sales happen at sales tables set up at kid's soccer camps and home games during the fall. Parents and fans of the team can go up to these tables and buy BGSU soccer gear for pretty cheap. Although I believe that this is a great idea and something that we should continue, I think that there are two problems with it. The first problem with this is that there are people who want to buy our gear but don't go to either of these two events. It is very hard for these types of fans to get their hands on BGSU gear. The second problem that I see is the actual gear we sell at games. The majority of the gear we offer is cotton t-shirts that have the BGSU soccer logo on them. The reason that I see this as a problem is that I believe we have an opportunity to offer more exciting products to our fans. Cotton t-shirts can be our lower end items still, but I believe we can offer some higher end items as well. Some of these items include Nike dry-fit shirts, polos, long sleeves, rain jackets, and sweatshirts. So how do we implement a change like this to our spirit wear sales?

Based on my previous experiences and research, I believe that BSN Sports offers the perfect solution to this problem. BSN Sports online offers a great selection of gear that can be customized for any team in a very easy way. Their website can be found at www.bsnsports.com Under the "My Team Shop" tab on their website, you can easily customize any type of gear that you want. What this means is putting your own logo, words, and designs on Nike gear. I have used this website in High School to help develop our own gear and it worked great. They let us do a lot of the design work ourselves and we were very hands on in the development of the gear. For our particular gear, we created short sleeve shirts, long sleeve shirts, hats, and sweatshirts that anybody can buy. Furthermore, the actual purchasing of the gear is easy. All you have to do is send out a link to the store that you created with your gear and people can choose what they want and where they want it to be shipped. This solution allows people who have limited access to BGSU soccer gear to have the ability to get whatever they would like simply by logging on to a computer. Overall, I believe that this initiative will do two things. The first is to improve the BGSU soccer brand and image by allowing people to go online to purchase whatever they would like. The second is that this initiative will increase team revenue. Due to these two benefits I firmly believe that this is a great option in order to help improve our program.

5.) Brown and Orange Game Family Social on Move-In Day

Every year the BGSU soccer team plays in what is known as the Brown and Orange Game during the preseason. The Brown and Orange Game features everyone on the roster in a game between the starting players and the reserve team. The Brown and Orange Game is also played on Cochrane Stadium. This is the first game of the year on the game field and the field always looks extremely well taken care of at this time of the year. However, in the past this game has been closed to just the coaching staff and the players. I believe that we have a great opportunity here to strengthen team culture and the overall experience for both the players and their families.

I believe that there is a great opportunity to put the Brown and Orange Game on the same date that the freshman and sophomores move into their dorm rooms. On this day, most of the underclassmen's parents are on campus already to help move their sons into their dorm rooms. I think that this is a perfect day to play the game on because we could open it up to any of the families that want to come watch the game. Then after the game we can have some sort of team meal where the players get to interact with the parents of the team and vice versa. This change could offer several benefits to the players, the parents, and the team as a whole.

The first benefit that I see is in terms of the parents and more specifically the parents of the new freshman players that have just joined the team. For many of these parents, they have never seen what a BGSU training session looks like nor have they met any of the other players on the team along with any of the other parents of the team. By inviting them to watch the Brown and Orange Game along with a team meal after the game, we are creating relationships that we haven't been in the past. This allows for parents and players to get to know each other in a lot more natural process than running into one another after games throughout the season. By building these relationships between the coaching staff, players, and parents I believe we can expect to see an even stronger team culture.

Another large benefit that I see from creating a stronger culture in the method we are is that it can be used as a recruiting tool. I firmly believe that the parent's opinion of a school plays a large role in determining where a recruit decides to commit. As previously stated, I believe that this event will help to strengthen the culture of the team which is a huge advantage in getting parents on board with the BGSU Men's Soccer Program. Furthermore, if we tell prospective recruits and their families that we have this awesome event at the beginning of each season then I think this also helps to nudge them in the direction of committing to BGSU. If we tell people that the BGSU soccer functions like a family, then I think this allows us to practice what we preach.

Lastly, this remodeled Brown and Orange Game allows the BGSU Men's Soccer Team to showcase their amazing facilities. At the beginning of the season, Cochrane Stadium is in absolutely pristine condition. This presents a great opportunity to really show off how well the program treats its players and I think would be an ideal situation to invite recruits and their

families to as well. This could be used as another recruiting tool to help showcase how the program operates on a regular basis. Overall, I believe this remodeled Brown and Orange Game offers many benefits to the BGSU Soccer Program as a whole and would be fairly easy to coordinate.

Appendix:

Figure-1

	Total Expected Customers	Price	Revenue
Season Pass	40	\$50	\$2,000
Single-game Pass	50	\$10	\$500
		Total Revenue	\$2,500

Figure-2



Figure-3

