2017

Start the Ruckus: The Influence of Fan Organizations

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The importance of a strong student presence at basketball games is well known, however URI’s student section needed improvement. Throughout the years, there have been attempts towards making a formal student section for Rhode Island Athletics. In the Fall of 2013, the Rhode Island Athletics launched a campaign to rename the student section in the Ryan Center, formally known as “The Mob”. “Rhody Ruckus” was the voted winner, but it was never a formal organization until June 2016.

The goal of the Rhody Ruckus is to create and establish a student supporter section for Rhode Island Athletics. For purposes of its launch, I focused on men’s basketball. I utilized a paid membership program to incentivize students to attend more games and assist in creating the home court advantage the program seeks.

**MARKETING STRATEGY**

I utilized 3 main marketing channels to promote the Rhody Ruckus. They were:

- **Social Media**
  - Updates and information communicated through social media handles (@RhodyRuckus)

- **In-venue**
  - PA announcements were read at all home games (football, volleyball, soccer, and men’s and women’s basketball)

- **Tables/promotional booths**
  - These present games for purposes of picking up membership packages or registering to become a Ruckus member.

- **On-campus**
  - Tables/promotional booths will be held in popular places on campus, including Hope Commons, Butterfield Dining Hall, and the Memorial Union.

**OVERVIEW**

**START THE RUCKUS**

**THE INFLUENCE OF FAN ORGANIZATIONS**

by Taylor Kohler

Average Student Attendance

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<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
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<td>2015-16</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
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</table>

**Fig. 1 Student Attendance**

This chart highlights the trend of student attendance from Coach Dan Hurley’s first season at URI to now.

**Fig. 2 Members by State**

This chart shows the by-state breakdown of the 795 Ruckus members.

**Fig. 3 Advertisement**

This is the original advertisement used in print and social media campaigns.

*The registration link changed when changes to gorhody.com occurred

**Fig. 4 Home Schedule**

This table outlines all men’s basketball home games, including attendance, promotions, and opponent.

**YEAR IN REVIEW**

Total Members: 795

- **Overall Student Attendance:** 12%
  - **Conference Games:** 23%
  - **Non-Conference Games:** 31%
  - **Break Games:** 7%

**Engagement**

- **Social Media**
  - Over the course of the inaugural year (June 2016 - March 2017), the Rhody Ruckus Twitter account, the main social media channel, received 455.5k impressions
  - Facebook Likes: 341
  - Twitter Followers: 2,363

**Improvements to Student Section**

- We had 2 students lead the section in chants.
- We purchased new costumes (squirrel, panda, crab, etc.) for students to wear.
- New big noggins were voted upon by Ruckus members and purchased.
- We created a new banner that read “Start The Ruckus” for prior to tip-off.

**MOVING FORWARD**

The Rhody Ruckus thrived in its inaugural year. For its launch, it increased student attendance and brought back the excitement of being at a basketball game. Next year, the Rhody Ruckus will focus its efforts on retaining the members it has gained, as well as recruiting new members, and enhancing the game atmosphere with new chants, more props, and more costumes.