

Rotary Club 99: Tuesday, September 20, 2022

Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey on "The State of College Athletics"



Greg Sankey became the eighth Commissioner of the Southeastern Conference on June 1, 2015, and has successfully built upon the SEC's recognized success, strong foundations and rich traditions.

Sankey has effectively introduced change and innovation for the conference while respecting the institutional traditions that make the SEC unique. With an understanding of the highly competitive environment of college sports, he has fostered the collaborative culture of the SEC that sets the conference apart and supports its continuing success.

Sankey brings a big picture approach to his position through continuing focus on a vision that positions the SEC to leverage its athletics success and reputation for a greater overall cultural and economic impact on the region, the nation and the world.

Sankey has built upon the foundation set in his first major address as the conference leader in 2015 when he stated, "Educating scholars and supporting champions provides the platform for developing leaders who will influence the world." His relentless focus on providing resources for student-athlete success continues to make the Southeastern Conference a leader in college athletics.

LEADERSHIP IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

As the NCAA has sought to navigate a changing landscape for college athletics, it called on Sankey to co-chair its Division I Transformation Committee, a body of college sports leaders tasked with addressing the most significant challenges in college athletics, to support student-athletes more effectively, and even reimagine the future of college sports.

Sankey's recognized abilities made him an appropriate leader for this critical endeavor to modernize and transform Division I college sports, and it cast him at the forefront of myriad issues facing college athletics leaders today.

But it is not the first time Sankey has stepped forward at a crucial time for college sports. Sankey's leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic served the SEC well as the league prepared for a return to action in the fall of 2020. Sankey fostered a culture of collaboration among the leaders of the Conference in order to allow the SEC's 14 schools to move together in lockstep through difficult and unprecedented decisions.

And while the pandemic had a devastating effect on the finances of college athletics programs across the country, Sankey kept focus on the long-term financial vitality of the SEC. In 2020, Sankey and his team finalized a milestone 10-year agreement with the Walt Disney Company that grants ABC and ESPN exclusive broadcast rights to premier SEC football and basketball events beginning in 2024-25 and continuing through 2033-34.

Sankey ushered the University of Oklahoma and University of Texas through membership discussions and announced the two leading universities will join as members with the SEC's nationally prominent member institutions.

ADVOCATING FOR STUDENT-ATHLETE OPPORTUNITY

Throughout his career, Sankey has established himself as an advocate for the student-athlete, creating a framework to provide young people in the Conference with challenging leadership opportunities and expanded resources to succeed at the highest levels of academic and competitive success. Student-athlete focused initiatives introduced under Sankey's leadership include:

- Creation of a leadership position in the SEC office for Student-Athlete Engagement, a role focused on offering student-athletes the opportunity to participate in Conference leadership.
- Introduction of Student-Athlete Leadership Councils for Football, Men's Basketball and Women's Basketball which provide student-athletes with enhanced opportunities to engage with campus leaders and Conference office staff.
- Introduction of a Student-Athlete Career Tour which provides groups of student-athletes with opportunities to engage in career exploration with high level corporations and businesses in major metropolitan areas.
- Expansion of the student-athlete role at the annual SEC Spring Meetings when student-athlete leaders participate in a robust agenda of interaction with administrators and coaches to provide their perspectives to Conference leaders.

ADVANCING THE CONFERENCE

Sankey has been intentional and diligent in addressing issues critical to college athletics, with an emphasis on integrity, ethics, sportsmanship and diversity including:

- Development of updated Conference policies governing conduct expectations for student-athletes, including the adoption of a serious misconduct policy governing transfers that has served as a model for similar policies adopted by other conferences. The policy was later expanded to include all incoming prospective student-athletes.
- Creation of the SEC Council on Racial Equity and Social Justice, a league-wide body consisting of a diverse group of student-athletes, administrators, coaches and SEC staff. The Council identifies resources, outlines strategies and assists with implementation of efforts that promote racial equity and social justice, fosters diversity and helps overcome racism and pursues non-discrimination in intercollegiate athletics.
- Crafting a new SEC bylaw aimed at encouraging, facilitating and assisting member institutions in attracting and hiring individuals in historically underrepresented groups in leadership positions of their athletics programs.

Another priority under Sankey's leadership is growing exposure for the Conference and effectively publicizing success stories of the SEC. Strategies pursued to achieve this objective include:

- Ongoing collaboration with the SEC Network to create unique exposure opportunities for Conference universities, teams and student-athletes, including behind-the-scenes programming, expanding live championship coverage for Olympic Sports and other unique programming.
- Engagement with a national marketing agency to develop and maintain a comprehensive branding campaign. The theme – "It Just Means More" – communicates the history, legacy and overall positive impact the SEC has on its region, the nation and the world.
- Introduction of the SEC Graduate Patch, a logo placed on the uniforms in every sport to provide recognition of SEC student-athletes who have earned their undergraduate degree and are continuing their participation in intercollegiate athletics.

A CAREER IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS

On March 12, 2015, the Presidents and Chancellors of the SEC announced Greg Sankey would succeed Mike Slive as Commissioner of the SEC.

Sankey, 58, first joined the SEC staff in 2002 as Associate Commissioner for Governance, Enforcement and Compliance and later added supervision of the league's championships staff to his responsibilities. He was elevated to Executive Associate Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer for the league office in 2012, becoming responsible for the day-to-day operation of the SEC Office.

Before moving to the SEC, Sankey served as Commissioner of the Southland Conference for nearly seven years. He joined the Southland Conference staff in 1992 where he served as both assistant and associate commissioner before he was named its commissioner in 1996 at the age of 31.

Prior to his term at the Southland Conference, he was Director of Compliance and Academic Services at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA, as well as coach of the Demons' golf team. Before his tenure at Northwestern State, he was the Director of Intramural Sports at Utica College in upstate New York.

A native of Auburn, NY, Sankey earned his master's degree from Syracuse University and his undergraduate degree from the State University of New York College at Cortland. Sankey and his wife, Cathy, reside in Birmingham, AL, and have two adult daughters, Hannah (and her husband, Rod) and Moriah.

Did You Miss Showtime's The Circus Contributors Mark McKinnon and Jennifer Palmieri?

Illuminate the Rock



Showtime's *The Circus* contributors Mark McKinnon and Jennifer Palmieri entertained and enlightened us at Rotary in a joint program the Clinton Presidential Center and Political Animals Club. Clinton Foundation executive director and Club 99er Stephanie Streett moderated the conversation and began by asking Palmieri if she knew her bio was incomplete. Palmieri looked a little baffled until an Oval Office picture of Streett and Palmieri with President Clinton appeared on the screen and was reminded of her early days in the Clinton Administration as deputy scheduler to Streett. Palmieri may have referred to Streett as one of the most feared on the Clinton staff. It was a lighthearted beginning to the conversation. McKinnon provided insight on the creation of *The Circus*. After running campaigns for several prominent politicians, including President George W. Bush, he realized the public rarely saw what went on behind the scenes. So he pitched the idea for a real-time documentary, "never showing anything on Sunday that happened later than Monday" to several studio heads. It took several tries and 10 years to bring his vision to life. Thankfully, with the advances in digital technology, he got the green light just before the 2016 election was ramping up. The pair made predictions for 2022, discussed their favorite political eateries (yes, Doe's made the cut!), and shared why they are so optimistic about our nation's democracy. You can check out the meeting recording [here](#).

Illuminating the Rock Story: Colonel David "Davy" Crockett's visit to Little Rock

Did you know Colonel Davy Crockett visited Little Rock in 1835 on his way from Tennessee to Texas? After a rowdy night in Memphis, Crockett and his men came down the Mississippi River and up the Arkansas River to Little Rock. They stayed in the Jefferies Hotel, where they were impressed by its larder of "a fine fat bear cub, several haunches of venison, a wild turkey as big as a young ostrich and small game too tedious to mention." Crockett gave a rousing speech on Texan independence, but following 13 rounds of whiskey toasts, few recalled any of the details. Crockett also entered a shooting contest and, following a perfect shot through the center of the target, he fired off a second round. When a second bullet hole could not be found, Crockett pulled two slugs from the same hole and proclaimed with a wink the second shot perfectly followed the trajectory of the first. Crockett departed Little Rock on horseback along the Old Southwest Trail to Texas. It was four months before the Battle of the Alamo.

Welcome to Club 99, Jessica Burrow, and Welcome Back, Chad Kauffman!

Membership chair Molly McNulty introduced us to new Club 99er Jessica Burrow, account director with Unite Private Networks, and extended a welcome back to Chad Kauffman, director of business development with the



CFO Network. Amy Meins sponsored Burrow, while Mitch Bettis encouraged Kauffman to return to Club 99. It was our ninth straight meeting introducing a new member!



In Memory of Maxwell Joseph "Mac" Lyons, II
We lost another one of our long-standing members this week with the passing of Maxwell Joseph "Mac" Lyons, II. A more than 60-year Rotarian, Mac joined Club 99 in 1961 and remained a member until his death on September 9. He was 96. Named a Paul Harris Fellow in 1992, Mac served on numerous committees and was an active volunteer on many projects. Services were held on

Monday, September 12.
[view full obituary here](#)

Club 99 Dinner Parties Are Up Next...

We are preparing for Rotary's big night out on September 27. Event Chair Ellon Cockrill has secured several amazing homes for Rotarians and guests to gather for intimate dinner parties. Don't miss this unique opportunity to socialize and dine with friends in fellow Club 99er homes. This evening event will replace our regular Tuesday meeting. Please let us know your plans no later than Friday, September 16: [RSVP link]



SAVE THE DATE

Club 99 Dinner Parties

Small dinner gatherings hosted by members

Tuesday, September 27, 2022

Evening Event | No Noon Meeting

Upcoming Programs

September 2022

- 20 Commissioner Greg Sankey, Southeastern Conference
- 27 Club 99 Dinner Parties (evening social replacing Tuesday noon meeting)

October 2022

- 4 CEO Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, Feeding America
- 4 Dunbar Bobcats Tailgate (evening service)
- 11 Annual Little Rock Fire Awards Presentation
- 16 Camp Aldersgate Fish Fry (afternoon service)
- 18 District Governor David Menz, Rotary International District 6150
- 25 Author Sam Quinones, *Dreamland* and *Least of Us*
- 27 District 6150 Foundation Banquet featuring Club 99 Farmers Feed the Children project in Romania (with partners Ovidu Spinu and Viorel Bunea from Cluj-Napoca Romania) (evening social)

November 2022

- 1 Arkansas Cinema Society's Filmland program (TBD)
- 8 Election Day Panel with Rex Nelson, Robert Coon, Charles Blake and moderated by Roby Brock
- 15 Mary Streett, Senior Vice President, BP America
- 22 No Noon Meeting / Off for Thanksgiving Week
- 29 Angie Cooper and Blake Woolsey of Heartland Forward

December 2022

- 6 Broyles Award / Fireside Chats (option)
- 13 Steve Williams, Chairman and CEO, Maverick Transportation
- 20 Holiday Program
- 27 No Noon Meeting / Off for Holidays

Zoom login for September 20, 2022

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81112403883?pwd=eW5tR0lLNDRJiU0MzUWgzK1E1Wml5UT09>

Meeting ID: 811 1240 3883

Passcode: 043905

One tap mobile

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Dial by your location

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+1 386 347 5053 US

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+1 719 359 4580 US
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Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kbwcCMYnIU>

Club Leadership



President Denver Peacock
The Peacock Group



President Elect Natalie Ghidotti
Ghidotti Communications



President Nominee Jason Chacko
The Chacko Group at Morgan Stanley



Past President Kristina Bolhouse
Arkansas Financial Group, Inc.



Treasurer Leigh Ann Biernat
Stephens Public Finance



Treasurer Elect Don Cole
Methodist Family Health



Secretary Tammie Davis
BancorpSouth



Sergeant At Arms Greg McCarroll
Centennial Bank



Foundation Chair Bill Booker



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Arkansas Business Publishing Group



Ellon Cockrill



T. Martin Davis
Davis Law Firm



Lena Hayes
Baptist Health Foundation



Wanda Hoover
Bowen Law School



Tanya James
Arvest Bank



Kevin Newton
CBM Construction



Jessie Wilson
Dale Carnegie Training



Kenny Gibbs
Assistant District Governor