

Meredith Bedford

Professor Kavon

EDPE-621-02

03 December 2024

Event Analysis

On Saturday, November 23rd, I stepped into the role of “facility director” and attended the NCAA DIII Football Playoffs at the Whitworth University Pine Bowl, where the Pirates faced the Pomona-Pitzer Sagehens in the first round. I arrived half an hour early, recalling how packed the Pine Bowl had been the previous weekend when Whitworth played their biggest in-conference rival, the Linfield Wildcats. However, this game had a much smaller turnout due to NCAA regulations limiting free tickets for Whitworth students to the first 100 who arrived.

Although the reduced attendance yielded a quieter atmosphere, I found the ticketing policy to be a strategic decision for this type of postseason, nonconference event. Offering a limited number of free tickets incentivizes students to arrive early, ensuring those who value the experience the most secure a spot inside the stadium. Yet, in a perfect scenario, I would fight for all students to receive free admission given the significant tuition costs they pay. The first-come, first-served system was certainly not without its benefits. For example, the cold November weather and early arrival required to claim a ticket made concessions more appealing—a strategy my friend fell victim to when she decided to buy a pretzel before kickoff.

Parking logistics for the Pine Bowl were also noteworthy. VIP parking passes are sold to season ticket holders, which is a smart move given the limited parking available near the

stadium. For those without VIP passes, finding parking elsewhere on campus is manageable due to the compact layout of Whitworth's campus. At most, attendees would face a ten-minute walk, which is more than reasonable for a college football game.

The flow of traffic at the ticketing gate was smooth and efficient. Two entry lines were available: one for attendees with pre-purchased tickets and another for those still needing to buy tickets online. As a staff member entitled to free admission, I found myself in the former line and was inside the venue within minutes. This efficiency was partly due to the absence of security checks at Whitworth sporting events. If I were in charge, I would strongly advocate allocating funds toward hiring a security company. Ensuring the safety of attendees should always be a top priority in my opinion, even for smaller-scale events.

One detail about the entry process stood out to me: Whitworth's head athletic director, Tim Demant, was personally greeting attendees, scanning tickets, and handing out programs at the gate. Generally, student employees oversee ticket-taking duties, but for a high-stakes postseason game like this, having the athletic director present likely added a sense of importance and hospitality to the experience. This detail was most likely appreciated by fans and potential donors, demonstrating a level of professionalism that reflects positively on Whitworth Athletics.

Shifting focus to the amenities, the concessions offered a typical selection for a Division III football game. In addition to the forementioned pretzels, fans could choose from a selection of hot dogs, candy, popcorn, and a variety of non-alcoholic beverages, including soda, Gatorade, and water. While not particularly extravagant, the options were sufficient to satisfy fans' cravings. For restroom facilities, Port-A-Potties were stationed along the outer edge of the Pine Bowl. Obviously not the most luxurious option; however they were conveniently located and

functional for the event's needs. I could not think of another, functional alternative to the Port-A-Potties so I believe I would make the same decision as the event manager.

As far as I could tell, all seating was general admission, with a distinct divide between the home team's fans and those supporting the visiting Sagehens. Despite this physical separation, there was no shortage of interaction between the two groups, which inevitably led to some entertaining drama (if I do say so myself). Sagehen fans used horns and cowbells while the Pirates were on offense, a clear violation of the NCAA's prohibition against artificial noisemakers. Even after a warning announcement over the PA system, jeers from Pirate fans, and a heated exchange involving Athletic Director Tim Demant, the noisemakers persisted throughout the game. As an observer, I fully expected those violating the rule to be removed from the venue (though I simultaneously wondered who would enforce this, given the lack of security). To my knowledge, however, no disciplinary action was taken, and the disruptions continued for all four quarters. I imagine it is hard to justify hiring crowd-management staff for such a small sporting event, but it certainly would have been useful in this scenario.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this event, especially given the Pirates victory over the Sagehens. As a spectator, I found the passionate crowd interactions amusing. However, viewing these moments through the lens of a facility director or event manager, I can only imagine the frustration they might have caused.

There were aspects of the event I was not able to evaluate fully. For example, while I noticed athletic trainers on the sidelines prepared to respond to player injuries, it was uncertain what additional healthcare staff were available to ensure the safety and well-being of all attendees.

One area where the event could have been improved was halftime entertainment or in-game promotions. Adding a fun or engaging element to the intermission would, in my opinion, enhance the overall experience for fans. If I were to host a similar event, this would be high on my list of considerations.

In summary, this game was a valuable learning experience, both as a spectator and as someone aspiring to work in sports. This event provided plenty of insights into the challenges and opportunities of hosting a successful postseason football game.



