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Redhawks Basketball: Winning As Family

George Burquest, Staff Reporter

With a current record of 15-4 overall and 6-0 in the Western Athletic Conference (WAC), the Seattle University men's basketball team is having a historic start to their 2021-2022 season. The Redhawks have never in their team's history gone undefeated in their first six conference games. However, the team can't always win alone.

First-year guard, Vasja Pandža emphasized the importance of having fan support at the team's games.

"During home games, attendance plays a big role, it's like having a sixth man out there for us," Pandža said. "Obviously, we are a team and have our bench to motivate us, but when the crowd is involved, it puts us in a better place. When we are able to get the crowd going, it gives us more energy, which then gives the fans more energy, which we both can feed on."

Pandža expounded on the phenomenal record the team holds, and mentioned that their success is something students and fans should get excited for.

"We are winning games right now, so it is fun to come out and be a part of that. We would love to have everybody there when we play. We are not just representing ourselves, but the school which we all share," Pandža said.

After attending a thrilling win over Utah Valley University (UVU) at Climate Pledge Arena, Second-year Anthropology and Spanish major Luke Smytheman noted how the game lacked a student presence.

"I attended the Utah Valley game because I was told that it would be a good game given the good games that have taken place between these two teams over the past few years.. It did not disappoint. Interim Head Coach Chris Victor (Coach Vic) made several glances towards my friends and I as we sat in the front row right behind the bench and cheered for every shot, rebound and steal," Smytheman said. "Coach's message at the end of the game told us that he felt our presence and was really happy for all the support, but the handful of us that went to the game was not enough. Alumni, family and other community members seemed to be disproportionately present at the game compared to us few and far Seattle U students."

A great privilege that the men's basketball team and their fans have is the opportunity to play and watch games at Climate Pledge Arena this season. Alex Rider, the assistant athletic director for marketing and experience at Seattle U, noted how playing at Climate Pledge is both a wonderful opportunity for fans, as well as a challenge.



Jordie Simpson

Seattle U women's basketball players passing the ball with a watchful crowd.

Rider, as well as the other members in the athletics department, have made it their goal to make the games as accessible and entertaining as possible. Seattle U Athletics has offered rides on charter buses to and from the games at Climate Pledge Arena.

“Something which the Athletics Department has tried to make as convenient and as affordable as possible is attending games at Climate Pledge,” Rider said. “The buses are free as well as admission to every game for anyone with a Seattle U ID.”

Seattle U Associate Athletic Director Sarah Finney thinks that one of the strongest motivators to get people to go to games is simply the opportunity to be back.

“The biggest thing this year is [that] no one got to come to a game last year,” Finney said. “We’ve got a great group of players who are playing exciting basketball that is fun to watch. However, as we are going through classes currently being online, I think most people are still feeling stuck. What I’d say to those who are hesitant is that safety protocols are still in place and going to a game is a great opportunity to safely go out and simply enjoy life.”

Drawing back to when he was a student, Rider reminisced on the intermission that a school sporting event can bring to a busy schedule.

“Going to a game is a great way to blow off two hours of steam,” Rider said, “There is a lot going on in our lives, whether it be work or school, but going to a game is a good way to get together with friends and not have to think about that test coming up for a quick couple of hours.”

Seattle U Athletics are making efforts to attract fans whether it be through reach screens in the student center, or posts on their Instagram page. Students and faculty are being offered an opportunity to be a part of a winning and emphatically entertaining campus community through men’s and women’s basketball games.

Going to games provides opportunities including showing your support, maybe getting a free T-shirt, free pizza or even the chance to embarrass yourself in front of your friends by participating in the halftime show.

In the end, the Seattle U campus community is a family. Going to any Seattle U sporting event is more than just about supporting any one individual or team—it’s about being a Redhawk.

Women’s Basketball are on a tough road-trip currently, playing at home Feb. 3, at 6 p.m. against conference rivals Grand Canyon University. Another opportunity comes sooner this weekend, as the Men’s Basketball Team face off in a conference battle against Sam Houston State University, the current number two team in the WAC. The game will take place Saturday, Jan. 29, at 1 p.m., at home in the Redhawk Center.