

THE CASE FOR QUALCOMM STADIUM FOR AZTEC FOOTBALL

I. Introduction:

A. College athletics has been a part of the history of San Diego State University for nearly 80 of its 105-year existence, and football has been the staple of the athletic program for most of that period. The program is steeped in tradition, starting with legendary coach Don Coryell whose teams often out drew the San Diego Chargers in attendance, and extending to recent former players such as Marshall Faulk, LaRoi Glover, Kyle Turley and Az Hakim. Since 1988 San Diego State has had 33 players drafted into the National Football League, second only to BYU's 35 in the Mountain West Conference. Other NFL players who have played for the Aztecs include Ephraim Salaam, Darnay Scott, Haven Moses, Fred Dryer, Dennis Shaw, Willie Buchanon, Isaac Curtis, Brian Sipe and Gary Garrison. Although the University of Miami (Ohio) claims to be the cradle of coaches, San Diego State has also developed more than its share, including Brian Billick, Herman Edwards, Ron Dowhauer, Joe Gibbs, Claude Gilbert, Jim Hannifan, John Madden, John Fox, Ernie Zampese, Bob Breitbard, Ed White, Ted Tollner and now Tom Craft. Like both the Padres and the Chargers, the Aztecs have been an important asset to the community of San Diego and a good citizen of Qualcomm Stadium, paying fair rent for over 40 years. It is estimated that over 7M San Diegans have seen an Aztec football game in Qualcomm Stadium. Millions of others have watched San Diego State football on television with audience shares that usually exceed that of PAC-10 games that are beamed into San Diego County. In the last 4 years alone, 33 of the last 46 Aztec football games have been televised throughout the West and across the nation (including 23 national

cable or network games since 1996), bringing tremendous exposure to the city and surrounding areas. In short, Aztec football has contributed to the life of the city and to the civic pride that comes in being a community with a Division I-A athletic program.

The existence of a football stadium in San Diego, whether Qualcomm or not, is absolutely essential for San Diego State University to remain a Division I-A football-playing institution. Without Qualcomm or a replacement stadium, San Diego State University would not have an adequate facility to meet Division I-A criteria, which requires a home stadium that seats a minimum of 30,000. Without Division I-A football, San Diego State University cannot be a member of the Mountain West Conference or even the old Western Athletic Conference.

Without a stadium San Diego State might well drop football altogether, which would mean the elimination of 100 male athletes and 85 athletic scholarships.

The cascading effect of dropping the sport could mean eliminating an equal number of women's scholarships and participants, and the abolition of five to six women's sports programs. Without the revenue generated by football through ticket sales, donations, corporate sales and television monies, San Diego State would become a much smaller intercollegiate athletic program that would leave the community without a Division I-A college presence.

II. **How the stadium is used for Aztec games.**

- A. San Diego State plays an average of six home games a year in Qualcomm Stadium.

- B. The football games at Qualcomm Stadium are the primary venue for the university to provide hospitality and entertainment for alumni, donors, boosters and corporate sponsors.
 - C. The football games provide a setting for students, alumni, faculty and staff to gather in mutual support of the university. The Aztec Athletic Ticket Office for all events (save some game-day sales for men's and women's basketball) is housed at Qualcomm Stadium.
- III. **San Diego State's view of the stadium and its amenities:**
- A. Qualcomm Stadium permits SDSU to qualify as a Division I football-playing institution and allows for membership in the Mountain West Conference.
 - B. The scoreboard and the Sony Vision replay system enhance fan entertainment at the games.
 - C. The condition of the playing surface is generally good.
 - D. The parking and traffic flow at Qualcomm Stadium is good, especially given access to the freeway and the trolley (which will soon also have a major presence on the SDSU campus).
- IV. **The negative factors:**
- A. The seating size of the stadium (72,000) is too large for the Aztecs' average crowd size and dampens the desired atmosphere for Aztecs games. Ideally, the Aztecs would welcome a football-only stadium, which seats 45,000.
 - B. Because of the priorities enjoyed by both the Chargers and the Padres, the Aztecs are not able to personalize the field or sell significant stadium signage around the field. This equates to a significant lost revenue opportunity for the Aztecs.

- C. The Aztecs have no permanent locker room in the stadium, thus creating a sterile environment for the team on game days.
 - D. The Aztecs have limited skybox availability in the stadium and are not able to sell suites to generate additional badly needed revenue. The current lease with the city allows SDSU to use certain skyboxes for entertainment purposes only.
 - E. The main ticket office and box office for the Aztecs have no real presence at the stadium.
- V. **Do you feel any improvements are necessary?**
- A. The Aztecs need the ability to sell suites for home games and have access to better corporate box locations.
 - B. The Aztecs need substantial improvement of its locker room.
 - C. The Aztecs must be able to personalize the field for home games with appropriate designs and signage that declares the field the “home of the Aztecs” for that evening.
 - D. The Aztecs must be able to sell corporate signage around the stadium for its games.
 - E. The box office location and space must be significantly enhanced.
 - F. The Aztecs need storage areas for game day items.
 - G. The stadium needs more and improved restrooms.
 - H. If and when a new stadium is on the horizon, the Pittsburgh model should be considered where both the University of Pittsburgh and the NFL Pittsburgh Steelers have been mutually accommodated in the same facility.

In summary, while Qualcomm Stadium is far from the ideal setting we would like for Aztec football, it is adequate for us to retain our Division I status. The most frightening scenario for

San Diego State would be for the city and the Chargers to fail to reach an agreement causing the Chargers to leave town. Without knowing, but given the value of the land upon which Qualcomm rests, one must wonder whether the city would continue to maintain the stadium in the absence of an NFL franchise. Thus, if the stadium was eventually razed and, assuming there would be no replacement stadium to accommodate Aztec football, San Diego State would likely drop the sport. Again, without football we could no longer remain a member of our league and would likely be relegated to a Division I basketball playing institution in a conference that would have us playing the likes of Cal State Fullerton and UC Irvine as opposed to Wyoming, Utah and BYU. In this scenario, then, the City of San Diego would not only have lost an NFL franchise, but probably a Division I athletic program as well.

I am hopeful that the city and the Chargers can agree to study the concept of a new football stadium before decisions are made that will permanently determine the future of professional and college football in the San Diego community.

Thank you for your attention.