

NMSU coach signs on as spokesman for Cruces company

By Brook Stockberger Sun-News Business Editor
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LAS CRUCES — New Mexico State University's athletics department hopes to reach an operating budget of \$20 million within the next five years.

Athletics Director McKinley Boston said that such a budget would allow NMSU to be competitive in the Western Athletic Conference.

"That will put us about third or fourth in the WAC in terms of commitment to quality and excellence as it translates to economic investment," he said.

Boston said that, along with a growth of the season-ticket base in football and basketball, the university needs to reach out to the business world.

"One thing that has become obvious in the last year and half is that we really have to grow our corporate sponsors," he said. "We made the decision that we have to bite the bullet and quit trying to really nickel and dime ourselves."

To that end, NMSU has announced levels of support that companies can sign on to with the university. Those donating up to \$100,000 will be at the Branding Iron level while those in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range will be called Ropers.

Boston said that seven companies have already signed on in the Branding Iron level. One Las Cruces company that has committed to the Roper category is Steinborn GMAC Real Estate which announced Tuesday that NMSU men's basketball coach Reggie Theus has become a spokesman for the company.

Steinborn CEO John Hummer said the coach will give motivational talks to employees as well as appear in radio commercials and print advertisements.

"This kind of situation is not unique to the rest of the country, to have someone like Reggie Theus as a spokesperson for an individual company," Hummer said. "I think this is some of the best advertising dollars in business, to support your local university."

Theus told Steinborn employees Tuesday that he is a good fit as a spokesman.

"You have a big mouth in me," he said.

The coach added that, as the Aggies win on the hardcourt, his connection with the company will continue to grow in value.

"As the team grows in visibility, that can be synonymous with best real estate agency in the area," he said.

Boston said that he realizes the school has to reach out beyond Las Cruces as well. He said the department seeks corporate sponsorship all over the state.

"There's just not enough economic value in this city alone to support the program at the level we want to be," he said.

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