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KU, Kansas Athletics team with ESPN for 'Green Game' on Dec. 19

LAWRENCE — The University of Kansas and the city of Lawrence already are on the forefront of sustainability. Now Kansas Athletics Inc. and cable network ESPN are jumping on board to do their part to make KU an even greener place in the midst of all the crimson and blue.

Kansas Athletics and ESPN will collaborate with KU and Lawrence to host a “Green Game” at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 19, when the KU men’s basketball team faces Michigan at Allen Fieldhouse. The game will air on ESPN.

ESPN approached Kansas Athletics several months ago about highlighting KU and Lawrence’s sustainability efforts. Kansas Athletics, KU, the city of Lawrence and ESPN soon began planning ways to feature those efforts on the telecast and in Allen Fieldhouse.

ESPN has produced two short features about green initiatives on the KU campus, both of which will air during the broadcast. The first highlights the 15 elliptical machines in the David A. Ambler Student Recreation Fitness Center that convert kinetic energy created by individual workouts and feed it back into the building’s electrical grid. The center is one of the only student fitness centers in the nation to house such machines.

The second feature focuses on KU’s Biodiesel Initiative. Those involved with the initiative collect used cooking oil from campus dining halls and convert it into biodiesel fuel. This fall, the converted fuel was used to power campus lawn mowers and to help kids have fun in an eco-friendly way at KU home football games by powering generators in the HyVee Kids’ Fun Zone.

KU student athletes also are jumping on board to help spread the word about recycling. Matt Baysinger, student athlete development assistant and former KU student athlete in track, has produced a 30-second video that features student athletes recycling a water bottle by passing it among members of KU’s sports teams. The video will air during the game on the video board in Allen Fieldhouse.

As part of the Green Game effort and to highlight its commitment to clean, renewable energy, the city of Lawrence has purchased 8,000 kilowatt hours of the Bowersock Mills and Power Co.’s certified renewable energy certificates. This is enough energy to cover the estimated total electricity used in Allen Fieldhouse during the game.

Also during the game, KU will recognize the five winners of its Sustainability Leadership Awards. The awards, presented by the Center for Sustainability, recognize outstanding leadership and creativity in addressing issues of environmental, economic and social responsibility on the KU campus and in the broader community. This year’s award recipients are

— Margaret Tran, a senior from Derby majoring in environmental studies, for her commitment to a campus garden that provides fresh produce for those in need.

— Easan Selvan, systems specialist for Student Success Technology Services, who developed a policy requiring computers to shut down when not in use.

— Simran Sethi, associate professor of journalism, whose commitment to sustainability and service-learning help students make real-world connections to environmental issues and support the local community.

— The Potter Lake Project, a student-led initiative to improve the quality of Potter Lake and restore the campus icon. Matthew Nahrstedt, a St. Peters, Mo., junior in architectural studies, and Melissa Allen, a Chesterfield, Mo., senior in architecture, are representing the project.

— EcoHawks, a design project led by Chris Depcik, assistant professor in mechanical engineering. The project applies engineering principles to create more fuel efficient, environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

In addition to raising awareness through video campaigns, Kansas Athletics has come up with its own creative eco-friendly initiatives. Coca-Cola has provided 30 additional recycling bins in Allen Fieldhouse, and during the game, green footprints on the floor will lead people to the bins.

Even the concession stands have gotten a green face lift. Centerplate, Kansas Athletics’ concessionaire, is now using biodegradable popcorn bags and recycling all used popcorn oil, and many of its paper products are now made from recycled materials. Oil used in cooking will be picked up by Darling Industries, which recycles 100 percent of the oil it collects.

Other highlights of the Green Game include

- Kansas Athletics' facilities crew has switched to eco-friendly cleaning products.
- During pre-game activities, Baby Jay and Big Jay will wear green T-shirts promoting recycling.
- Both basketball teams and the KU Spirit Squad will warm up in T-shirts made from 100 percent recycled material with a special Green Game logo on the back.
- ESPN will highlight the energy-efficient lighting used throughout Kansas Athletics' renovated facilities.
- ESPN will air sports-related eco tips during the game.
- Tables will be set up in Allen Fieldhouse to provide information on sustainability.
- Educational signage will be placed in Allen Fieldhouse restrooms.
- All bottles recycled will be taken to the Wal-Mart Recycling Center after the game. The mascots will collect bottles during time outs.

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The University of Kansas is a major comprehensive research and teaching university. University Relations is the central public relations office for KU's Lawrence campus.

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