

# The Battalion Sports

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## Building from scratch

# UTSA finding success

*Editor's note: This is the second of a two-part series dealing with the development of the University of Texas at San Antonio's athletic department, and the men who worked to make major college athletics in San Antonio a reality.*

by John P. Lopez  
Battalion Staff

SAN ANTONIO — It takes a great deal of work to start and sustain a successful athletic department. It requires so much work, in fact, that many institutions don't dare take on such a demanding and expensive task. And those institutions that do build a program have a terribly difficult time trying to keep the team afloat. A prime example is an athletic department that is found the financial (as well as academic) dilemma too difficult to cope with is the University of San Francisco — a school which had always been feared as a basketball power and one that is given the National Basketball Association such talents as Russell and Bill Cartwright. In San Francisco recently was a need to drop basketball as a varsity sport.

So why would Rudy Davalos accept the job of athletic director at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and take on the task of building an athletic department from scratch at a commuter school of about 10,000 students?

"Eddie Sutton (Arkansas' head coach) said that if the administration is not for it, things just aren't going to happen with an athletic department," Davalos said. "And when you get here I found out in a hurry that we have an administration that is really behind us. San Antonio deserves a first-rate program because I know that there are a lot of sports fans here. I just felt confident about the job and I still do. San Antonio is ready for big-time athletics."

Basketball coach Don Eddy agreed: "You've got to have a lot of confidence and a lot of faith that things are going to work out. And you have to have really

good people on your staff. No matter how much expertise or recruiting talent the guy has, if he's not a good person he's going to get you in trouble somewhere down the line. I think we have some really good people here on our staff starting with the president of the university right on down the line. We have a great rapport within our staff and there's a good feeling here about what we're doing. The ingredients are definitely here for us to prosper."

But building a program from the ground up, Davalos said, can be tedious and time-consuming work.

"There are a lot of things that go into it that people don't know about," he said. "We had to get all the equipment, have the floor painted, come up with a media guide and generally do things that a lot of programs take for granted."

"When I first got here the school didn't even have a fight song or band to play the fight song."

The Roadrunners have a fight song and band now, but UTSA is still without dormitories — a fact that forces the athletic department to find other living conditions for UTSA's athletes on full scholarship.

"There are apartments right across from school where the athletes live," Eddy said. "They eat at the university cafeteria, so these guys have got excellent living conditions. Besides, the apartments are much nicer than any dorm."

One problem Davalos and Eddy do not have to contend with is finding a place for



UTSA's men's and women's basketball teams to play. The Convocation Center is an ultra-modern special events center which seats about 5,600 and is equipped with a tartan-surfaced basketball court. Eddy says the center, although relatively small, is impressive.

"I think our facilities are super. The capacity isn't a whole lot, but if we have a problem with over-crowding I won't mind," he said. "That's a good problem to have. Anyway, we can always go play at the (HemisFair) Arena where the (San Antonio) Spurs play."

Although the Roadrunners have still not filled the Convocation Center for a home basketball game, their constant improvement on the court has boosted sales in the ticket window considerably. But basketball isn't the only sport on the UTSA campus enjoying success.

During 1981-82, the first year the Roadrunners participated in Division I competition, UTSA fielded four varsity teams — Basketball, cross-country, tennis and outdoor track — all of which fared well against more experienced teams. One athlete in particular enjoyed extreme success on the cross country team.

Roger Soler, a transfer student with the Roadrunners, ran against every team in the Southwest Conference and never lost. And included among Soler's victories were three wins over last year's SWC champion.

"He is really good," Davalos said. "And besides him we have a women's runner named Wendy Norman who is another good one. We don't have the depth to

win a team championship, but those two runners do real well for us. My guess is that they both would have come in first if they ran in the Southwest Conference meet.

"I think we did all right for ourselves considering it was our first year. And I hope we do the same in the sports we added this year (indoor track, volleyball, golf and rifle)."

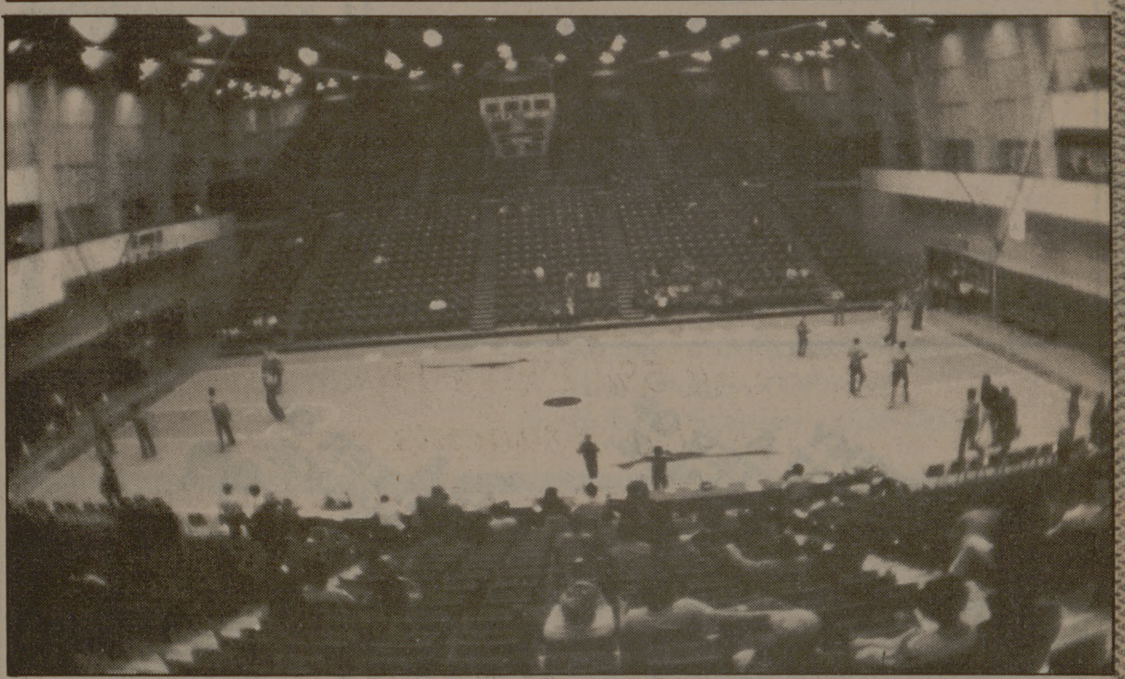
Davalos said the next so called "big-time sport" in the works for UTSA is baseball since starting a football program is too much of a burden financially for the athletic department.

"I would say that right now football is out of the question because of the money situation," Davalos said. "It's very hard to raise two or three million dollars to start a football program."

"But if the facility becomes available I think a baseball team would work out great in this community. It would be a while, of course, since we would have to build a stadium. But I think UTSA could eventually have one of the top baseball teams in the country because of the talent in this area. A lot of the players in San Antonio and South Texas would come here to play ball. The baseball players from this area are consistently the most sought-after players by college teams."

"I just really feel good and confident about this school's future. Things are really looking up. The former athletic director at the University of Houston told me that this school looks exactly like Houston did when it first started. He said the situation is almost identical. I just hope our program eventually does become as successful as Houston's."

From the looks of things, the Roadrunners are well on their way.



staff photo by John P. Lopez

The UTSA Roadrunner, at top, entertains the crowd during all UTSA home games. At bottom is a view of the Convocation Center, the Roadrunners' new arena.

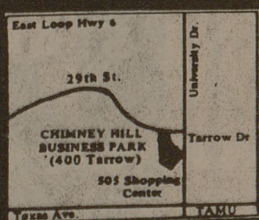
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