

By: Brendan Pagel

What It's Like to Run a D1 Program

With the landscape of college athletics constantly changing, Athletic Directors not only need to be flexible, but also be able to pounce on new opportunities to help their university achieve college sports glory.

Steve Waterfield is the current Athletic Director at Oakland University and is responsible to lead Oakland athletics in the constantly changing landscape of college sports.

Waterfield, who has been Oakland's athletic director since 2018, got the job after serving in the athletic departments at Ohio State, Miami and Nebraska and finally got his opportunity to be the man in charge with the Golden Grizzlies.

While Waterfield has been with Oakland for a few years now, there are still some things he is learning about in running a Division One program.

When asked about what the adjustment was like going from a big time program like Nebraska to Oakland, Waterfield said "the budget is definitely different." With the smaller budget Waterfield said "you can't throw money at all of your problems."

Oakland is different from many other Division One programs because the Golden Grizzlies don't have a varsity football team.

For anybody hoping that a Golden Grizzlies football team could potentially be coming. they may be disappointed to hear that it isn't coming any time soon.

When asked about football Waterfield said, "\$5 million a year would be necessary for football a year alone." Waterfield also referred to adding football as "a business model nobody would ever sign up for."

College football is a huge market. However with rewards come consequences and it doesn't seem that Oakland has the budget to make football a priority at this moment.

It also doesn't seem Oakland is prioritizing adding another non-football sport either.

When asked about this Waterfield said, "I feel really good about what we currently have." He also stated, "If we were to add another sport we would look at growing sports like Lacrosse."

Waterfield also said "we would also focus on the women's side" if an opportunity arose.

Women's athletics doesn't get nearly the same amount of recognition that the men's teams do, so this is a nice job by Waterfield for prioritizing the potential options women's athletics could get.

Name Image and Likeness (also known as NIL) is becoming a staple in College athletics today.

While this may be more prominent for the top level universities in College athletics, it doesn't mean that it isn't something Oakland is looking into.

In fact Waterfield likes NIL saying "we should pay student athletes."

However there should be more regulation about what is going on with NIL.

To that Waterfield said "the NCAA needs to figure out revenue sharing."

Now NIL definitely has a bigger impact with bigger schools. This is especially the case for football as schools like Ohio State, Alabama, LSU, and others capitalized the most on players getting NIL deals throughout the football season (<https://www.profootballnetwork.com/top-10-nil-deals-in-2022/>).

There are lots to still figure out with NIL. However like at some other universities Oakland student athletes will have opportunities to cash in on their name image and likeness.

This year Oakland finished a home, home and away series in men's basketball with Oklahoma State University.

It is usually very rare for a school like Oakland to attract a power five school like Oklahoma State to play a game on the Golden Grizzlies court. However, Steve Waterfield and the Golden Grizzlies athletic department were able to do just that.

When asked how he and his staff were able to get this done Waterfield said "there is an art to scheduling." Waterfield gave a lot of credit to men's basketball coach Greg Kampe for helping finish the deal, while also saying that the COVID season had a lot to do with getting the deal done.

Oklahoma State needed another game on their schedule for the 2020 basketball season. Waterfield and Kampe told the staff at Oklahoma State that they would play Oklahoma State in 2020 and 2021 on their home court. However Oklahoma State would then also need to play a game at Oakland.

Oklahoma State ultimately agreed to the deal letting the series happen.

Usually to host a game like that the traveling school usually gets a really good pay day. However, due to the home, home and road series plus COVID Oakland got a really affordable deal.

This ultimately got the deal done and gave Oakland a great opportunity to host a power five opponent.

Being the Athletic Director at any university is difficult at times like these. However, if there is anybody for the job at Oakland it's Steve Waterfield.