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Courts are now open -- let the games begin!

athletics

March 30, 2011

KOKOMO, Ind. – The wait is over. Indiana University Kokomo’s outdoor basketball and volleyball courts are officially open. Nearly 300 students, faculty, staff, and members of the community joined in the celebration Tuesday afternoon alongside the courts to be a part of this historic moment on campus.

“This court is a great addition to the campus,” said Skylar Bagwell, a sophomore majoring in general studies, who warmed up the courts just before the celebration began. “I couldn’t wait to get out here and play. Some buddies and I were out here when there was six inches of snow just to shoot some hoops and play ball.”

Chad Kirtlan, a freshman from Wabash, echoed Bagwell’s comments.

“I’ve been waiting for this day ever since I heard about it,” said Kirtlan, an elementary education major. “I have to admit, though, that I was out here before today, shooting hoops with friends. I really don’t have a good shot – in fact, I don’t have any, but I enjoy hanging out with everybody and look forward to making new friends here.”

While some students were compelled to try out the new courts, others simply enjoyed the atmosphere with upbeat music, free refreshments, and giveaways.

“I just finished class and came over for the ceremony and food,” said Ashley Spraker, a freshman majoring in elementary education. “I can see myself and others using the volleyball court. I think there will be enough people interested that we could have spur of the moment games. I know I’m excited to play on it.”

For seniors Alese Bennett and Nida Zia, as student organizers who helped make this a reality, they are very excited about what this can do for campus life.

“This is an exciting time for IU Kokomo to be moving forward and on to the next level. I honestly anticipate seeing a lot of student activities taking place out here on the courts,” said Bennett, student body vice president and psychology major. “There’ve been a lot of changes made over the years, and though it’s exciting to see these improvements and additions take place, it’s also kind of bittersweet, because I’m not going to be here to enjoy them. I am excited for younger students, though. I’m not really athletic, but I can see myself hanging around the courts and cheering others on.”

Zia, who addressed the crowd about the role of the Student Government Association in helping fund the courts, is glad she was able to be part of the planning.

“It was really exciting to see students outside on the courts earlier this year, even when it was really cold outside and there was snow on the ground,” added Zia, student body president and biology major. “There’s a lot of excitement on campus about a lot of the changes that have taken place and that are in the works. It’s just going to be sad leaving here, but I’m grateful I got to be involved in the planning and got to see the courts completed before I graduate.”

Adding to the excitement of the ceremony was the presence of several local celebrities, including special guest Jimmy Rayl, also known as “The Splendid Splinter,” who was named Indiana Mr. Basketball in 1959 while playing for the Kokomo High School Wildcats. Rayl also received the Arthur L. Trester Award for Mental Attitude in 1959, was a two-time All-American while playing for IU, and still holds the Hoosier single-game scoring record of 56 points. He is also a former Indiana Pacer and was inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in 1989.

“This court is really nice,” said Rayl, while sitting on the sidelines, watching free throw competitions between other local celebrities on both sides of the court. “I didn’t realize this facility was going to be as nice as it is. They did a really good job on the surface. I just think this is going to be good for the community as well as the IU Kokomo. I can see myself coming down and watching kids play down here. When I was a kid, I lived on places like this. Now, I just like to sit and watch from the sideline.”

Though Rayl chose to sit out during the free throw shootout, eight other local celebrities took their chances at the charity stripe.

“I’m really happy to see the new amenities at IU Kokomo and to be a part of today’s celebration,” said Allan James, radio personality at Z92.5 FM. “This is great and exciting to see and hear how much progress the campus has had and has planned with Chancellor Harris.”

Among the celebrities, the showdown came down to Lady Wildcat greats Tiffany Longworth-Boruff and Audrey McDonald, with the latter winning the match.

“This whole event – the court and celebration – is fantastic,” said McDonald, holding her prize, an IU Kokomo throw blanket. “The court is very nice and I know the students will love it. It’s great for the community and I hope to see it bring the community and campus closer together. I’m surprised I won. I haven’t shot a free throw in four months and then when I got here and saw Tiff, I thought, ‘Are you kidding me? There’s no way I can win against her!’ I just see a lot more people coming out and enjoying their time on these courts.”



Longworth-Boruff was all smiles after coming in second in the competition.

“I just really appreciate the opportunity to be here and be a part of today’s celebration,” said Longworth-Boruff. “IU Kokomo is doing great things academically and athletically, and it’s the students who win in the long run.”

Elementary education majors Matt Rasmussen and Matt Roller couldn’t agree more.

“I’m so looking forward to playing here, making new friends and having fun,” said Rasmussen, a junior. “I can’t wait for this summer. I’ll probably be here every day.”

“This just gives us more things to do on campus other than ping pong,” said Roller, a sophomore. “It’s a great opportunity for us to hang out with friends. I came out here this past winter and even scraped away snow from the surface, but it was still too cold and the basketball wouldn’t bounce. I was excited when I walked outside today and saw how nice the weather was.”

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