



Monday, June 23, 2003

Mid-Con names new league commissioner

Ron Bertovich, a former Atlantic 10 Conference commissioner who most recently served as the executive vice president of administration for the National Hockey League's Buffalo Sabres, has been tabbed as the fourth commissioner of the **Mid-Continent Conference**. He is scheduled to begin full time in the Mid-Con league office on July 14.

Bertovich fills the post formerly held by Jon Steinbrecher, who resigned as the Mid-Con commissioner in March to take the same job with the Ohio Valley Conference. Steinbrecher had served in the league's top job for nine years (1994-2003).

"I am honored and delighted to have been selected as the commissioner of the Mid-Continent Conference," Bertovich said. "The leadership of each and every member institution has pledged his or her commitment to the Mid-Con, as well as to the enhancement of the student-athlete experience. Collectively, we have a great opportunity to move this conference forward."

Oakland University President Dr. Gary Russi, the Mid-Con Presidents' Council chairman, believes Bertovich's wide range of experiences in the athletics world will serve the league well.

"We are extremely proud to recruit Ron Bertovich to the Mid-Continent Conference," Russi said. "He has spent the past 23 years in sports-related executive management positions, including eight years as the commissioner of the Atlantic 10 Conference. Thus, he is extremely well qualified to help the presidents and chancellors of the league's member institutions to position the Mid-Con as one of the best conferences in the country."

The 48-year-old Bertovich brings a wealth of experience in both collegiate and professional athletics with him to his new position. After beginning his career as the sports information director at Iona College, he went to the Atlantic 10 to serve as the director of communications. Within just four years, Bertovich was elevated to the commissioner's office, and his eight-year tenure (1986-1994) was marked with growth at all levels. He developed a comprehensive league-wide television package, including arrangements with ABC, CBS, ESPN and other numerous regional sports networks. He also initiated membership expansion plans, increased the scope of conference-sponsored championships, and managed an operating budget of more than \$1 million.

Bertovich moved on from the Atlantic 10 to become the vice president and general manager of the Empire Sports Network, the official rights holder of Buffalo Sabres broadcasts. As the top-ranking on-site administrator for New York's fastest growing regional sports television network, he managed Empire Sports as its subscriber base grew from 400,000 to more than 1,000,000 in just four years (1994-1998). Bertovich was instrumental in acquiring marquee live event programming, including Major League Baseball, Big East Conference basketball and football, American Hockey League and Professional Golf Association telecasts.

For the last five years, Bertovich has served as the executive vice president of Administration for the Buffalo Sabres and HSBC Arena. A member of the executive management team, he directed most non-hockey operations, including sales, marketing, broadcasts and college athletics. During his tenure, his efforts on behalf of the arena saw him serve as the primary administrator at both the 2000 NCAA Men's Basketball Championship First and Second Rounds and the 2003 NCAA Men's Hockey Frozen Four. He also spearheaded efforts to bring the 2004 NCAA Men's Basketball First and Second Rounds and the 2005 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship to HSBC Arena. Bertovich additionally served as governor of the National Lacrosse League's Buffalo Bandits.

A native of Bentleyville, Pa., he received both his Bachelor of Science degree in business management (1976) and master's degree in industrial relations (1980) from St. Francis (Pa.) College. Bertovich and his wife Cheryl have two daughters, Meghan (17) and Kimberly (15).

Bertovich becomes just the fourth commissioner in the 21-year history of the Mid-Con. F.L. "Frosty" Ferzacca served in the post from the league's inception in 1982 until 1988 and was followed by Jerry Ippoliti (1988-1994), who preceded Steinbrecher's league-record nine-year tenure.

Now in its 21st year, the **Mid-Continent Conference** is comprised of nine member institutions - Centenary College of Louisiana, Chicago State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), University of Missouri-Kansas

City (UMKC), Oakland University, Oral Roberts University, Southern Utah University, Valparaiso University and Western Illinois University. The league offers championships in 19 sports.

SUMMARY

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