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The Benko Briefing

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Georgia Southern University Athletics



The Benko Briefing

AD addresses Eagle Nation in letter form

General

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Eagle Nation,

The past 12 months have been unlike anything we have ever faced. When I reflect on April 1, 2020 - my first day officially in this role - I selfishly recall the excitement of accomplishing a lifelong dream of mine. I remember having more questions than answers. I recall a lot of uncertainty about what the next few months would look like. I also remember meeting so many great people here on campus, in our community, and throughout the state, both on that day and throughout these past 365 days. Your encouragement and continued support over the past year have meant a great deal to me.

We started our 18-stop Eagle Club tour last week and one question that gets asked a lot centers on what I am most proud of during the past year on the job. While my answer may seem premeditated, it is always the same – our student-athletes, staff, coaches, and Eagle Nation. Let me explain.

Our 400+ student-athletes toggled over from in-person to online instruction last spring. Our spring athletic competitions were canceled, and many of our competing senior student-athletes didn't know if the pandemic effectively ended their athletic playing careers. During this time, we asked our student-athletes to focus on three controllables: our attitude, our effort, and how we treat others. Despite all the unknowns, our student-athletes finished the 2019-20 academic year with a record-setting cumulative departmental grade point average of 3.08. It also marked just the third time in department history that Athletics has posted a 3.00 or higher cumulative GPA. Not to be outdone, we got off to a good start in the Fall semester with a cumulative 3.07 GPA.

From a competition standpoint, I am very proud that we participated in 13 football games this fall and that we were the only school in the country to play 12 regular-season games. There were times this summer when I didn't know if we were going to play football, better yet, complete an entire schedule of games. I am very proud of our student-athletes, coaches, staff, medical personnel, and our University leadership coming together to both devise and implement a plan that has served us well.

Eagle Nation – there are not enough words that adequately describe how appreciative and thankful I am for each of you. One of my fall highlights was walking the tailgates at Paulson Stadium and visiting with many of you. I enjoyed hearing stories of how Georgia Southern has impacted you and your family. I also loved trying all types of delicious food and delicacies and can even say I tried goat before the Appalachian State game. In venue, you helped us adhere to the "Triple Option" advisement of washing our hands, socially distancing, and wearing a mask. Thank you for everything you have and continue to do to make our game day environment the best in the country.

As we look at the next 12 months, our future is very bright! I am very proud of our coaches and staff as we look to blaze a new trail for Georgia Southern Athletics. We are currently working through a strategic planning process that I am excited to share with each of you in the next few months. Our fundraising and external efforts are growing by the day, and our plans for facility enhancement are making progress and taking shape.

On a personal note, my family and I built a house and have put down roots in the community. Growing up in Georgia, I always knew Statesboro was a special place, and the last 12 months have only proven to be an affirmation. I always tell others that "the people make the town," – and the people in Statesboro have been so very welcoming to my family and me, and we are excited about our future here.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, Eagle Nation for everything you have and continue to do for this great University we all love. Our best is yet to come, and I look forward to writing the next chapters of our journey together!

Hail Southern! G.A.T.A!



[Jared Benko](#)

Georgia Southern Director of Athletics