

# Heilbron Addresses Stony Brook Athletics Future in Virtual Town Hall

By **Kenneth Fermin** - April 10, 2020



*Stony Brook AD Shawn Heilbron being awarded the Stuart P. Haskell, Jr. Commissioner's Cup by America East Commissioner Amy Huchthausen. Heilbron addressed the future of the Athletics Department in a virtual Town Hall Thursday afternoon. Photo credit: STONY BROOK ATHLETICS*

Stony Brook Athletics Director **Shawn Heilbron** hosted a Town Hall across social media platforms Thursday afternoon, exactly one month after the **NCAA** canceled the Spring season.

Heilbron discussed several topics ranging from scholarship awards to broadcasting on **SNY**. While much of the future remains uncertain, it was confirmed the Athletics program is planning for the Fall 2020 season.

"We are going to plan as if there is going to be a fall sports season. But, we will have every single scenario that we are planning for."

One of these scenarios included playing Fall sports including Football, Soccer and Volleyball with no crowd. The **America East Women's Basketball Championship** game was going to be played with limited fans in attendance last month, prior to its cancellation. Conversely, the school will also set up season ticket plans for fans.

"We will do whatever is necessary. We also just want to make sure that we will have games. I'm expecting that we will but, we will have some sort of plan as far as tickets for the fall. I can assure you that"

Heilbron discussed the impact returning senior student-athletes on scholarships will have. Although each sport has a different limit of scholarships allowed, every returning senior spring-sport athlete will not count towards the totals due to a blanket waiver. However, rising seniors will be counted against the limit in Spring 2022, making it unlikely for every athlete to retain their scholarship through graduation.

"A lot of those are going to be done on a case-by-case basis. We'll have some decisions to make and discussions with student athletes. But all of those athletes do get a year."

Some Stony Brook coaches have had issues adapting to communicating through online conferences. Strength coaches, in particular, have been unable to directly train with student-athletes due to social distancing. NCAA legislation forbids strength coaches from running team workouts off campus.

"It's been very difficult for them [adapting]. Right now, there are mandates on what they are able to do. It is very difficult for them to run practices."

School recruiters have faced issues due to the extended recruiting dead period put in place last month. The NCAA ruled potential recruits are not allowed to have face-to-face contact with recruiters through May 31st.

This has led to some transfers selecting schools without visiting campuses.

However, three recruits announced their intentions to play for Stony Brook Basketball on social media. **Nairimar Vargas Reyes** announced her intention to join the women's program on Saturday, March 21st, while **Omar Habwe** and **Juan Felix Rodriguez** announced they would commit to the men's program last week.

Heilbron also confirmed the America East awarded the **No.1-seeded Women's Basketball** team the 2019-20 conference championship.

"The good news is we are going to hang a banner [for] the women because the championship was not completed. They are the America East Women's Basketball Champions for the first time ever."

He also reflected on the immediate reactions after deciding to give every spring-sports athlete another year of eligibility, the day after the Spring season was canceled.

"I have seen quite a lot of negative reactions from administrators and coaches who thought we jumped the gun. From an NCAA standpoint, there are certainly financial unknowns. But that really didn't matter from my standpoint. The right to do was to give the spring athletes their year back and ultimately that's what we did."

Heilbron recalled he and the marketing department were set to have an in-person meeting with SNY representatives, prior to the spring season cancellation. It is still likely that SNY will continue to air Stony Brook Football and Basketball home games for the upcoming season.

"That is something we felt was very important from the messaging and branding standpoint. We talk about the 'three R's'; Recruiting, Revenue and Recognition. SNY from a recognition standpoint was key. SNY is excited to continue those conversations."

As for the immediate future, Heilbron is planning on working alongside University leaders to assist in their efforts battling COVID-19, as well as planning ahead for the Athletics department.

"What we are going to do during this time, and beyond, is figure out with [University President **Maurie McInnis**] is how do we position ourselves for greater things in the future? Status quo and being content is not the way we operate around here. That's the way our athletes run too."

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### Kenneth Fermin

<http://accesssports.net>

Kenneth is a junior Journalism major at Stony Brook University in Long Island, NY. Kenneth is currently a broadcast commentator for Stony Brook Athletics and WUSB 90.1 FM, covering the Football, Basketball, Baseball, Volleyball, Soccer, Swimming and Diving, Track and Field and nationally-ranked Lacrosse programs. Kenneth also has experience working behind the camera, as an audio engineer, and over three years of newspaper reporting. Kenneth loves covering breaking news and writing captivating articles with his compelling storytelling.

Contact: [Kenneth.Fermin@stonybrook.edu](mailto:Kenneth.Fermin@stonybrook.edu)



