



CEFMA | CORNER

It's cold in Minnesota. The winters are long and come April, cabin fever runs high. With winter only a couple of weeks away, it's time to review our indoor facility space and protocol for accommodating all of our sports who train and prepare indoors for the spring. With snow piled on the ground outside, our teams turn to the indoor football practice facility as a refuge training ground for their outdoor, competitive season just around the corner. Only one full-size football field awaits our programs and their demanding schedules, presenting challenges far beyond practice start and finish times.



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Baseball, softball, soccer, other Olympic sports and of course, football, all vie for time in our indoor facility. Add to the mix, revenue generating rentals in the late evening along with special events sprinkled in, and one gets a schedule that looks as chilly and unnerving as the weather outside.

Last year was particularly challenging with record snow fall in December and the spring in the Twin Cities. We hosted two NCAA soccer regionals in the snow. The Metrodome's roof collapsed, moving the Vikings/Bears Monday night game to our on-campus stadium. The deflated Metrodome also forced the baseball team's entire spring practice schedule into the indoor practice facility until the snow melted and the ground thawed. Softball moved out of the antiquated University Fieldhouse and its tartan surface to the indoor football facility as their primary practice space. This meant, at times, sharing.

To combat this programmatic nightmare, the athletics facilities staff stepped in and provided rationale for teams competing for the best time slot. That being said, we developed a scheduling matrix with specific rationale for teams based on their competitive season and number of student-athletes practicing. Also, we asked ourselves the questions: Is the indoor football facility their primary practice space and do they need the entire facility? We weighted the criteria similar to interviewing a candidate (the sport/team); giving the competitive season and primary practice space a weight of 0.3 points each versus number of student-athletes and their need for the entire facility a lighter weight of 0.2 points each. With all four criteria adding up to 1.0, we have a weighted ranking in place for priority times during each season.

Next, we scored the response to those questions — one point for little alignment, three points for moderate alignment, nine points for strong alignment and zero points for no alignment.

Competitive season weights were determined by looking at a team's primary competition schedule and their non-traditional season, handing out either strong alignment points or moderate alignment points. Teams in neither season received little alignment points.

Primary practice facility is quite easy to determine, handing out strong alignment points or moderate alignment points.

For number of student-athletes, we used the scale below to determine their alignment:

- 0 points (no alignment) = 5 or less student-athletes
- 1 point (little alignment) = 6-15 student-athletes
- 3 points (moderate alignment) = 16-40 student-athletes
- 9 points (strong alignment) = 40+ student-athletes

Each team's need for the entire facility is more objective. To determine each team's alignment, we had to look at the space requirements for practices (during traditional and non-traditional seasons) and workouts involved.

We put together four separate priority matrices for each season: Early Fall (August-Oct. 15), Fall/Winter (Oct. 15-Dec. 15), Winter (Jan. 15-March) and Spring (April-May). Below is an example of our current season.

Fall/Winter (Oct. 15-Dec. 15) Priority						
	0 = no alignment 1 = little alignment 3 = moderate alignment 9 = strong alignment					
	Competitive Season	Primary Practice Facility	Number of Student-Athletes	Entire Facility		
Team	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	Weight	Rank
Football	9	9	9	9	9	1
Soccer	9	0	1	3	3.5	2
Baseball	3	3	3	3	3	3
Softball	3	3	3	3	3	3
M Track	1	1	1	1	1	5
W Track	1	1	1	1	1	5
Golf	3	0	0	0	0.9	7
Wrestling	1	0	1	1	0.7	8

Critical thinking, problem solving and conflict management are requirements of every good facility manager. In most cases, we're able to step in and solve the scheduling puzzle very easily. However, in extenuating circumstances, we have to validate our decisions with hard rationale and concrete evidence. The matrix has provided us with validation when we need to justify our decisions to coaches and administrators. When we're creating the facility schedule and trying to accommodate each team's needs with limited space and time, we're not always going to please everyone. However, we're doing our due diligence in considering every team's requirement and needs.

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