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FINLEY STADIUM ANNOUNCES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MERRILL ECKSTEIN

Chattanooga, TN (March 31, 2009) – At a media conference today, Merrill Eckstein was named the new Executive Director of Finley Stadium/Davenport Field. He will move to his offices at Finley on Monday, April 20, 2009.

Eckstein has served as the President for the Greater Chattanooga Sports & Events Committee since its inception in May of 1992. Before moving to Chattanooga, he was the Executive Director of the Sports Foundation of Metro Tulsa, OK (1989-92); the Sports Programming Director of TEMPO Television (1986-89); President of Oil Capital Sports (a sports promotion firm in Tulsa, OK) (1984-86) and spent fifteen years as a minor league baseball general manager in Quincy, IL (1970-73), Lodi, CA (1974), Anderson, SC (1975), Asheville, NC (1976-79) and Tulsa, OK (1980-83).



“Merrill brings many years of experience in the sports world and we’re excited to have him as the new Executive Director. During the championship games and other key events, we’ve seen how dedicated he is and how hard he works to make sure the events are successful. He’s very familiar with the logistics of the stadium and we’re confident that he will continue to make it an ideal location for events. He already has great relationships with our partners and key players so this transition will be seamless. This comes together perfectly and is a win-win for the Stadium, city, county, UTC, Sports Committee and Chattanooga,” said Bryan Patten, Chairman of the Board, The Stadium Corporation.

While Max Finley Stadium has been used predominately for local activities, Eckstein has three primary goals to make it more of a multi-use facility for regional events. He wants to generate revenue and put the stadium on sound financial footing by adding new events, opening up marketing and advertising opportunities and working with existing partners and patrons to increase attendance. Second, he wants to strengthen the relationships with current users and patrons, including skybox holders, and find out what their needs and concerns are to make their visits to the stadium even better. And third, Eckstein wants to create a greater awareness in Chattanooga and regionally of the stadium’s attributes.

“Seventeen years ago, I was the first person on the Sports Committee staff. After so many years and numerous achievements, it’s very difficult to leave this organization. However, I feel the timing is right and I’m really looking forward to this new challenge, especially knowing that I’m leaving the Sports Committee in capable hands with Scott Smith. We’re about to see some great successes with our stadium events and partners and that really excites me,” said Eckstein.

Eckstein currently is a member of the Rotary Club of Chattanooga; is a member and former President of the Chattanooga Quarterback Club; and is a member of the National Association of Sports Commissions, where he served on the Board of Directors and as Chairman of the Board in 2003-04.

“I’ve enjoyed working with Merrill and will miss seeing him every day. But we will continue to work closely together to bring sporting events to Chattanooga. In his 17 years at the Sports Committee, Merrill has helped bring an estimated economic impact of over \$250 million from sporting events. That’s a significant impact to our city,” said Bob Doak, President & CEO of the Chattanooga Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “He is competent and has thorough knowledge of the tourism industry which makes him an even greater asset to the stadium, Sports Committee and Chattanooga. By increasing the number of events, we will see more visitors and a higher economic impact to the city.”

Some highlights of Eckstein’s career at the Sports Committee include bringing events like the NCAA Division I National Championship Football Game (12 consecutive years); US Olympic Team Softball Exhibitions; Golden Gloves National Tournament of Champions; NCAA Men’s Division I National Golf Championship; SEC Women’s Basketball Tournament; World Cup of Freestyle Wrestling; Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association “Spring Fling” Championships; National Softball Association Youth Fast Pitch World Series; AAU Girls’ National Basketball Championships; National Association of Sports Commissions’ Annual Sports Event Symposium; NCAA Women’s Basketball Championships 1st and 2nd Rounds; Southern Conference Men’s and Women’s Basketball Championships; NCAA Women’s Basketball Championship Regional and was instrumental in the US National Women’s Rowing team moving their training headquarters to Chattanooga for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

Merrill & Wanda have been married for 31 years and live in Hixson, TN. They have two grown children, Angie and Dan, and have four grandchildren, Chris, Kyle, Hannah and Emma.

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