

## **Buffalo Sabres owner Golisano donates \$4 million for athletic complex at Ave Maria**

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**AVE MARIA** — It will be easier to get a seat at Ave Maria University athletic events thanks to billionaire Tom Golisano.

Golisano donated \$4 million for an athletic complex at Ave Maria. A native of Rochester, N.Y., Golisano made his money as the founder of the Paychex payroll processing company and also owns the Buffalo Sabres.

“People call this type of thing a gift or a grant. In my opinion it’s an investment,” Golisano said Thursday at a press conference in the university’s student union. “This is such a unique institution. You guys are setting a pace and a direction that is so unique and so important and today so needed, it was actually a very easy decision.”

Golisano, who has long history in New York state politics, changed his official residence to Naples earlier this year in order to save more than \$5 million dollars a year in taxes. He wrote an editorial about the move in the New York Post.

Ave Maria’s future Tom Golisano Field House will include a gym, training rooms, weight training center, locker rooms for home and away teams and offices for coaches, said Tom Monaghan, the university’s founder. It will seat about 950 people.

The university is applying to Collier County for permits to begin construction, and they hope to start in early 2010, said Nick Healy,

the university's president.

The gym is the university's most important missing piece right now, Monaghan said. The university's teams currently practice at the town's prep school and space and schedules are tight. Spectators spilled out into the hallway at the last men's basketball game.

Minutes before the press conference started, women's basketball coach Bob Batson pointed out the new gym's features to members of his team, all dressed in Ave Maria athletic gear.

"Oh, that's a big weight room," one girl exclaimed, excited.

"It's going to be fantastic," another said.

The donation came about because someone told Monaghan that he should speak with Golisano about a donation, Monaghan said. So the university's founder contacted Golisano, and they set up a time for him to visit Ave Maria.

"He did his basic sales work," Golisano said. "You prospect, then you present and then you close."

Golisano is an active philanthropist with his own foundation, but the \$4 million for Ave Maria was a personal grant, he said. His foundation has supported many causes, from hospitals and universities to the William J. Clinton Foundation.

Volleyball players Megan Arago, 18, and Lauren Nelson, 20, sat through the press conference and applauded when Golisano and Monaghan spoke about the new sports complex.

"The schedule of the gym is so crazy right now," said Arago, a freshman. "It doesn't diminish the quality of play, but it's hard to work around. I think this will help recruitment, because there's something about having your own facility."

Nelson, a sophomore, agreed. The new building will be a better representation of the school, she said.

“I think it will give all the teams more confidence,” she said.



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