



OPINION: Design reflected Coach Pete's philosophy in football and in life

By Janice Stevenor Dale

Introducing a new coaching regime at a university leaves an indelible mark on sporting and recreational facilities. The incoming coach brings in a team of people, often to affect change: to shake up a program and establish a new philosophy tipped toward winning. J S D A Inc. redesigned the office and adjacent conference space of Coach Chris Petersen at Boise State University shortly after his promotion to head coach in January 2006.

Coach Pete, a former quarterback, was a fastidious dresser, always formal with shirt tucked in. He was not a large man, perhaps petite by football standards. Yet he was entertaining large linebackers and sometimes their similarly proportioned families as he invited them to consider Boise State University as their college of choice.

The size and function of the seating was

not suit the purpose. The former coach was seated behind it, while his visitors were seated opposite, with recruits and their family members crammed into the width of the desk. The desk itself established a psychological barrier between the two.

Simply given the physical size of Coach Pete, and the size of his guests coupled with his philosophy, I immediately observed the opportunity to expose the coach to the positive benefits of the use of a round table. As he described his coaching style, it was clear to me that the traditional setup was at odds with Coach Pete's philosophy and intent toward human comfort. He was a man who enjoyed putting people at ease, offering a more democratic, egalitarian approach to his recruiting efforts.

Capturing the spirit of his interaction meant creating that sense within his office, and not in

particularly important to sport facilities. We sought to create an immediate human connection with the football candidates, capturing their innate sense of place and forming the trust bond they and their families pursue.

Research shows that when faculty participate in the design of university facilities, they tend to be happier in them. Coach Pete was highly involved in an integral way, considering the varied design ideas that most closely expressed his philosophy as well as elements that were customer service-oriented, such as the addition of in-office refrigerators that held bottles of water and a guest coat closet for visitor luggage.

We also stripped all of the previous elements of the office. A grey plaid featuring the Boise blue and orange accents set the professional tone for flooring, indicating to each visitor that there were strict rules to be followed. Millwork was added to create storage along the south wall. Lighting was changed to indirect. Floating in the center of the room was not a desk, but a 72" diameter conference table, in a durable white finish on a center pedestal base. We put the coach's desk to the side; it was decidedly not the most important element in the room. Coach Pete joined his visitors at the table. Flat screen technology with remote was visible from the table so everyone could review marketing materials and football footage together.

The key element was the right-sized table around which all were equals. With openness and access, the space that overlooked the blue turf aligned with the coaching philosophy and teed up the future wins.

The results: the years between 2006-2013 were the years in which Coach Pete - now head coach at the University of Washington - developed his record for most wins. As player Ian Johnson of 2006 Fiesta Bowl fame said: "We trusted him and knew he was going to take care of us. We knew he was a great person. He was going to recruit people just like himself?"

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Coach Pete's philosophy called not for a desk that served as a barrier, but for a round table that reflected his egalitarian, democratic approach.

critical. A sofa that seated three was too small. There are few commercial conference seating options that accommodate extra-large guests. Some come in an A, B or C-sized proportions that denote seat width and depth, as well as greater weight load mechanisms. We specified a "C" size seating system from Herman Miller for the individual conference seating, all on casters for easy movement.

The space that the coach inherited, a private office that measured about 15' x 15' with an adjoining conference room, was characterized by a traditional double-pedestal desk that did

a banal conference room elsewhere. We needed to make the magic happen in his personal space. Boise State repurposed the old desk, and we guided Coach Pete to a more modern desk system in an L-shape with overhead storage and a side chair. The new desk system was placed against the wall opposite the window. By prioritizing the table, the message was clear: it was all about the team.

Just as we did with Coach Pete, we begin each project by a strategic planning exercise, where the latest research on design is found and applied.

Understanding the science of territoriality is