



PRIDE NIGHT

IN A BOX



ATHLETE ALLY

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL PRIDE NIGHT?

This is a question we have been asked so many times by different stakeholders in the Athlete Ally network. We created Pride Night in a Box to answer that question and to provide a set of resources so you can plan and execute your own Pride Night.

What you'll find in the toolkit:

- **The History & Significance of Pride Nights:** This brief background can be made into talking points if you're trying to pitch a local team or even your own team on the importance of hosting a Pride Night.
- **Key Considerations for Planning a Pride Night:** This section outlines everything you need to know about hosting a successful Pride Night, including pre and post game events and activations.
- **Seattle Case Study:** We have included an example of a particularly powerful coordinated Pride Night effort in Seattle that can be replicated in other markets.
- **Sample Fan Code of Conduct:** We have included a sample Fan Code of Conduct to ask a team or venue to adopt before hosting a Pride Night.



HISTORY & SIGNIFICANCE OF PRIDE

The first Pride march in 1970 commemorated one year since the Stonewall riots in New York City, during which police raided the Stonewall Inn and LGBTQ patrons—with trans women of color Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera front and center—actively resisted.¹ The march was a celebration, and also an act of resistance in itself, presenting LGBTQ people with the opportunity to be unapologetically visible and to find community and solidarity.



The use of the word “Pride” is significant, because often LGBTQ people are subjected to shame for who we are. It can take tremendous courage to push back against discriminatory social norms around how we should look, act and love, and deciding to be proud of ourselves for our differences is a bold act of resistance.

LGBTQ people who play and love sports face a unique set of barriers. 80% of athletes report having witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports, and LGBTQ athletes are nearly twice as likely to drop out of sport as a result. Pervasive stigma and a lack of LGBTQ education causes homophobia and transphobia in sports to perpetuate. Inversely, when athletes, teams and leagues educate themselves on LGBTQ respect and inclusion and commit to standing for LGBTQ equality, they help pave the way for a sport community that truly welcomes and accepts us all.



Pride Nights in sports are relatively new, launching about twenty years ago predominantly among Major League Baseball teams, with the Los Angeles Dodgers, Philadelphia Phillies and Chicago Cubs among the first. In years since, Pride Nights have spread across sport leagues, and play a powerful role in demonstrating to all players and fans that we are all united through love of the game, and we all deserve respect.

In addition to demonstrating support for the LGBTQ community, Pride Nights are also strategic investments that can foster and strengthen team loyalty. LGBTQ fans who feel recognized and respected are more likely to come to games and proudly wear team clothing. If the LGBTQ community were a country, it would be the world’s fourth-largest economy, with a GDP of **\$4.6 trillion.**²

¹ Worten, Meredith. "Stonewall: The People, the Place, and the Lasting Significance of 'Where Pride Began'". Biography, <https://www.biography.com/news/stonewall-riots-history-leaders>. Accessed 25 March 2019.

² Kubota, Ben. "Launching the LGBT Foundation." Medium, <https://medium.com/lgbt-foundation/launching-the-lgbt-foundation-fe82c0751f72>. Accessed 25 March 2018.

PLANNING A PRIDE NIGHT: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Pride Nights shouldn't be focused entirely on selling tickets. The most successful Pride Nights -- including those that sell the most tickets -- are those that are done in partnership with a few different departments at a franchise (e.g. community affairs team, the team or a player's foundation, the communications team), not only those responsible for group sales. There should be true buy-in from the sports organization as to why creating an intentional space for LGBTQ fans is important and will ultimately help their business.



Deemphasizing ticket sales is an extremely important consideration that takes into account the community's perception around why a team is hosting a Pride Night. Too often, when centered around ticket sales, the local community views Pride Night solely as a mechanism to make money off of a community that otherwise may not attend games. Through a robust, 360 degree activation that takes into account marketing, community outreach, communications, foundations and more, you make it clear that your Pride Night is an authentic activation that's being hosted to celebrate your LGBTQ constituents and demonstrate your commitment to LGBTQ equality.



Make sure there's a clear, concise and implementable Fan Code of Conduct ahead of the game. LGBTQ fans often experience discrimination at sporting events, even if a Fan Code of Conduct is in place. It's important to not only have a clear Fan Code of Conduct, but a way that fans can report discriminatory, dangerous or violent behavior and ensure those people can be removed from the stadium quickly and safely. For an example of a Fan Code of Conduct, see the last page of this guide.



Get coaches and players involved. One of the greatest opportunities for growth with Pride Nights continues to be player and coach involvement in the effort. Far too often, players and team representatives are silent around Pride Night activations. Look for strategic and natural ways for your players, coaches and representatives to show support for the Pride Night and highlight the importance of your team hosting a Pride Night.



Have a nonprofit partner of the night. Every Pride Night should have a nonprofit partner of the night -- an organization who is receiving a percentage of the ticket sales to support their work with the LGBTQ community. This is important to reiterate the team's support of LGBTQ players and fans and the community as a whole. It also makes visible the important work that's being done in the local market.

PLANNING A PRIDE NIGHT: WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE GAME



Pre-Game Activations

There are all kinds of pre-game activities and activations you can plan ahead of a Pride Night that will engage the community and amplify a team's commitment to LGBTQ respect & inclusion, including:

- A pre-game panel discussion with athletes, coaches and local organizations where you discuss the state of LGBTQ respect and inclusion in sports, progress made, and opportunities for a continued commitment;
- A pre-game happy hour hosted at your venue by an LGBTQ employee resource group of a local company; or
- A pre-game keynote by an LGBTQ athlete or advocate followed by a reception.

In-Game Activations

When people come to any sporting venue for a Pride Night, it should be very clear it's a Pride Night. Here are some examples of how a team can visually show its support for LGBTQ fans:

- Ensure venue staff, cheerleaders and dancers, have Pride t-shirts or accessories (e.g. a hat or a shirt with the team's logo in Rainbow colors);
- As people enter the stadium, all boards, jumbotron, etc (anything that can display messages or media) should be rainbow;
- With each ticket, there should be a giveaway that's branded in the team logo with rainbow colors as this ensures people will wear the merch far beyond the Pride Night;



When jumbotrons identify coaches, special guests, etc, include pronouns;



Inside the venue, all scoreboards, jumbotrons, etc should be rainbow;



Launch a PSA on LGBTQ Respect & Inclusion featuring players & coaches;



Consider who's singing your national anthem, and look to identify a community member associated with the LGBTQ community to perform it;



Partner with a local LGBTQ nonprofit focused on LGBTQ youth to bring them to the game for halftime celebrations, and other on-court/field activations;



Consider donating a suite or number of nice seats to your nonprofit of the night to attend, cultivate their partners, supporters and donors as a show of support for their efforts;



Find space for LGBTQ nonprofits and community organizations to table at the game to spread awareness of their work.

Social/Digital Activations

Social and digital amplification of Pride Night efforts allows a team's commitment to LGBTQ respect and inclusion to be visible outside of just those who attend the physical Pride Night. There are a series of ways teams can use their social and digital platforms to spread a message of acceptance around Pride Night including:



Sharing a message of acceptance across the team's official social media handles. Outside of posts encouraging ticket sales, consider sharing at least one message that just discusses your team's commitment to LGBTQ respect and inclusion, and why you're proud to be hosting a Pride Night.



Provide resources and sample posts to players and coaches encouraging them to amplify the Pride Night and spread your message of acceptance.



Consider shouting-out LGBTQ nonprofits and organizations doing great work in the space and sharing their resources and messaging to help support organizations doing this critical work.



Publish a blog post or news bulletin on your website that discusses why you're hosting a Pride Night, and why it's important these nights are happening. If you have an LGBTQ athlete or coach, consider giving them the opportunity to write a guest post about what these nights mean to them.

Media Activations

Pride Night demonstrates your team's ongoing commitment to LGBTQ equality. Ensure this message is heard widely and strategically through targeted media engagement.




Writing and placing an op-ed is a great tactic to help drive awareness of your Pride efforts, and your overall commitment to these issues. This op-ed can be written from an LGBTQ athlete or coach, or an allied team executive who can speak authentically to these topics.



Audit and invite local LGBTQ media outlets or reporters to your Pride Night, and provide them access to any side programming and spokespeople to talk about your effort.



Sports Illustrated 
@SInow

Following



The LA Kings featured five same-sex couples on their Pride Night kiss cam



Post-Game Follow Up

Your Pride Night effort shouldn't be a one and done activation, but rather one moment in the calendar year where you celebrate and commit to LGBTQ respect and inclusion. Consider other opportunities for ongoing engagement, such as:



Marching in your local LGBTQ Pride parades as a team or league;



Partnering with LGBTQ nonprofits to hold LGBTQ respect and inclusion trainings for players, coaches, administrators and staff;



Collaborating with state-based advocacy organizations by posting statements of support for pro-LGBTQ legislation or statements against discriminatory legislation; mobilizing athletes to sign on to open letters; participating in lobby days and press events;



The Athlete Ally Ambassador Program consists of over 200 Olympic, Paralympic and Professional athletes who have committed to using their platform to advocate for LGBTQ equality. As part of your Pride Night and post game efforts, considering socializing the Ambassador Program with your athletes, and encouraging them to join the program;



Athlete Ally @AthleteAlly · 18 Apr 2018

So thrilled to announce that [@OrlandoCitySC](#)'s [@SachaKljestan](#) will join Athlete Ally as a Professional Ambassador. **Sacha** continues to be an outspoken advocate for LGBTQ equality, and we can't wait to work with him to continue making sport inclusive and equitable for LGBTQ people.



There are a number of LGBTQ nonprofits who need the financial support to continue their critical work. Consider donating a percentage of Pride Night ticket sales to your nonprofit partner of the night, or a local LGBTQ nonprofit. Not only will this help advance their work, but will be a powerful demonstration that your Pride Night was about community involvement and support, and not just ticket sales and profit.

SEATTLE SPORTS COORDINATED PRIDE NIGHT: A CASE STUDY



In 2017, Athlete Ally – in partnership with Seattle professional sports teams (Seattle Sounders, Mariners, Reign, Seahawks and Storm) – coordinated and executed a collaborative Pride activation that kicked-off with a Pride week press conference where representatives from each team spoke about their commitment to LGBTQ respect and inclusion.



Following the press-conference, each team's Pride Nights (for those teams in-season), were held back-to-back, and culminated in the teams joining together and marching in the Pride parade together. The effort included a number of promotional assets, including a joint PSA played at each game that highlighted players from each team; a Pride "passport" that encouraged fans to attend each team's Pride Nights; and a robust social/digital toolkit for teams and players to drive awareness of the effort. This was the first moment where all professional sports team collaborated on a joint Pride effort, and resulted in significant national media attention and online engagement.

SAMPLE FAN CODE OF CONDUCT

Adapted from [The Alamo](#)¹– Feb 2019

[VENUE] is an inclusive, safe and fun environment for all. This Code of Conduct applies to everyone at the venue and all participants in our social media channels. Guests, staff, volunteers, vendors, and press will be held to the same standards. [VENUE] staff reserves the right to remove or ban any person who does not adhere to the Code of Conduct. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated, including:

- Intimidation or threats, verbal or physical;
- Inappropriate disruption of events;
- Abusive language;
- Physical assault of any type;
- Inappropriate physical contact;
- Unwanted sexual attention;
- Unwanted photography or video recording;
- Bullying or stalking.

Especially in connection to:

- Race or ethnicity;
- National origin;
- Sexual orientation, gender identity or expression;
- Age
- Disability, medical condition or pregnancy
- Religion
- Citizenship status

What to Do:

- If you are asked to stop any harassing behavior, STOP immediately.
- If you experience or witness any form of harassment, please contact the nearest staff member to address the situation.
- To file a formal complaint, email [ADDRESS]. All complaints will be investigated, so please provide detailed information and your contact information.
- If you feel unsafe in your immediate situation, alert our staff, move to a safe location and dial 911.

