



## Could ETSU survive without the Mini-Dome?

**Lindsey Holman**, ETSU Journalist Reporter  
Published 12/07/2009 - 10:13 a.m. EST

**By Lindsey Holman**

The "Mini-Dome" has been the home to the Bucs athletic department, physical education classes and various activities since 1977. So, could ETSU get along without the dome? Or should it be replaced?

In 2005, the university announced a plan to tear down the Mini-Dome and build a new state-of-the-art facility for all of the varsity sports at ETSU.

But now as funds are low, those plans have come to a halt.

"They can't tear the Mini-Dome down until they replace all these functions in here," said Tom Trent, director of intercollegiate athletics.

"A lot of the facility plans are not moving along as fast because of the economy," said Trent. For now the university is planning on keeping the Mini-Dome around for a few more years.

"To tear it down alone is a couple million dollars," Trent said. He said that the university simply just could not afford those expenses right now.

The Mini-Dome, now be called the ETSU/Mountain States Health Alliance Athletic Center, houses all of athletics, which includes the practice facilities and locker rooms. It also provides office space for the athletic administration offices. Over on the east side is the physical education, sport sciences and sport management classes, as well as department offices for those programs.

Over the years, the Mini-Dome has become a landmark within Johnson City and the ETSU community. Construction on the massive facility started in March 1973, where it took the place of the university's football field. Four years and \$8.3 million dollars later, the multi-purpose facility opened on Sept., 10 1977.

Having a facility that covered 4.5 acres was rare back in the '70s, especially on a regional university's campus.

"This is actually one of the best indoor practice facilities in this part of the country," said Trent.

The Mini-Dome housed the ETSU Bucs football team up until Nov. 3, 2003 when the game was laid to rest in the mini dome. Many have claimed that the dome killed ETSU football.

*"I've seen people hate it in here when it was nice outside, then I've seen people love it when it was freezing and pouring rain outside."*

*-Tom Trent*

"I've seen people hate it in here when it was nice outside, then I've seen people love it when it was freezing and pouring rain outside," said Trent.

He also said that when the Bucs were winning consistently the Mini-Dome was packed every game.

ETSU is a commuter school, therefore most students are not living on campus. Most weekends the campus is like a ghost town with most students going home, so student attendance to games was down, Trent explained.

Another variable that must be considered is ETSU's dry campus policy. Other surrounding universities such as the University of Tennessee and Virginia Tech allow tailgating before their games, and ETSU enforced their rules and simply would not allow it anymore.

At one time the Mini-Dome did allow alcohol and smoking within the facilities. "Back when people could smoke and drink in here, this place used to be packed," said Trent.

Sara Hacker, marketing and promotions coordinator, says she would not vote to tear the Mini-Dome down.

"If the dome was to be torn down it would obviously create a vision for a better basketball facility. A more un

If the dome was to be torn down, it would obviously create a vision for a better basketball facility. A more up to date, state of the art, collegiate athletics arena, something that would appeal to the modern day fan," said Hacker. "The downfall is that the dome is such an important aspect of this university for so many other reasons."

Hacker said that she thinks the answer to all of this would be to keep the dome and just build a new state-of-the-art facility, because it is used for so many different functions and events. After all, the dome houses athletics, over 100 classes, concerts and graduation.

So for now, or at least the next few years, it looks like ETSU's landmark will be staying put and for many, that news comes with great relief.

Trent said that he does see the university coming up with some plan of new facilities around the campus, but if the Mini-Dome does eventually get torn down he doesn't see it happening within the next 10 years.

"I think that the Mini-Dome should remain at ETSU because it's a part of the school's history," said ETSU volleyball player Jamie Stancliff. "Without the Mini-Dome, ETSU wouldn't be the same."