

ROSS[®]

Ross Production Services
and Ross Robotics
Customer Success Story
SEC and NCAA Gymnastics (2021)

Published October 2021

ROSS PRODUCTION^(S)
SERVICES

ROSS ROBOTICS



SEC AND NCAA GYMNASTICS — CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

2021 SEC GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONSHIPS
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

2021 NCAA GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONSHIPS
FORT WORTH, TEXAS, UNITED STATES

The Southeastern Conference (SEC) is an American college athletic association that consists of member institutions located throughout the Southern and Southeastern United States. Every year, the SEC hosts its annual Gymnastics Championship which features competitors from eight programs within the conference.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is an American non-profit organization that regulates student athletes from 1098 colleges and universities in 102 athletic conferences. The NCAA hosts 90 championships in 24 sports across three divisions, including gymnastics.

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THE CHALLENGE

What was the problem Ross was brought in to solve? Was the client looking to be the first in their field to do something? Were they looking at a long overdue upgrade? Why were they making the move from a business standpoint?

In March of 2021, the SEC was preparing to host its 2021 Gymnastics Championship at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Due to restrictions put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, no camera operators were to be allowed near the gymnastics apparatuses on the competition floor. The SEC had put a “bubble” in place to keep the athletes safe, so no outside personnel were allowed to get close.

The following month, the NCAA would be hosting the 2021 NCAA Gymnastics Championship at the Dickies Arena in Fort Worth, Texas. Much like the SEC Championship, the camera crew would have to remain outside of the athlete bubble, which would be even larger than that of the SEC event due to the larger venue size and the increased number of athletes competing.

In order to provide television coverage of the two gymnastics events, the SEC and NCAA looked to use robotic cameras instead of traditional camera operators to comply with the social distancing regulations.



THE SOLUTION

What was the final solution from a Ross standpoint? Who were our partners who helped make this happen? What was the timeframe from first engagement through the install? What are the PCR elements, and DC elements (list them in bullets if possible)

After examining the different options available, the SEC and NCAA turned to Ross Video's in-house production and rental services division,



Ross Production Services (RPS).

By March of 2021, RPS had produced a number of events during the COVID-19 pandemic by using Ross robotics to adhere to social distancing regulations. The robotics systems allow cameras to be positioned in prime locations in the venues while the operators control everything from a safe distance, ensuring they don't come in contact with athletes or on-air talent. The RPS team's proven track record of high-level broadcast quality made them the ideal production partner for the SEC and NCAA, and the distancing provided by the robotic cameras would ensure the athletes' safety.

For the SEC Championships in Huntsville, RPS

sent four combinations of the Ross robotics lineup to test and compare their capabilities. This included two pan bars, one paired to a VR600 head with a truck camera and one paired to a Live head with a Ross ACID Camera. The other two systems were joystick-controlled: one was a Live head with Live joystick controls and the other was a VR600 controlled through the Ross SmartShell control system.

From the feedback gathered during the SEC event, the conclusion was that both pan bar systems produced more natural shots and were preferred by the camera operators. With this knowledge, the producer for the NCAA event decided to send four pan bars with VR600 heads to the championships in Fort Worth. The broadcast would use truck cameras, so the heavier payload capacity of the VR600 over the Furio Live made the choice easier.

RPS only sent one robotics technician to the event, but he was able to deploy all four systems in about four and a half hours – a testament to the simplicity of the system as a tool in a fast-paced sports TV environment. The standard CAN control distance of 50m made it easy to stay out of the athlete bubble. Three of the systems were operated by the director's preferred camera operators and the RPS team member filled in the fourth position. Each VR600 excelled as a pan bar-controlled head, nailing shots consistently and even turning to assist with coverage of other apparatuses while keeping the operator position compact thanks to the Pan/Tilt Disable switch, which gives the camera operator the ability to shoot in almost any direction without having to spin the pan bars all the way around.

THE IMPACT

Has there been positive press? Has ownership been happy? Did the client achieve the solution to their initial issues?

Camera operators at both the SEC and NCAA events commented on how easy it was to control the cameras using the pan bar systems. It was quick and straightforward to set them up, and the footprint of the pan bars was smaller than other control options. This gave the operators more flexibility and options for camera

locations at the events, which was a necessity given the restrictions put in place by the athlete bubbles. The operators felt that these benefits would not only be impactful during the pandemic, but would continue to be useful once we return to normalcy.

One of the major advantages of using Ross Video's pan bar control systems for events like these is that the producer doesn't need to hire specialty camera operators like they would if the cameras were using joystick controls. A typical robotic camera operator in the sports world is a more expensive hire than their non-robotic counterpart. With the pan bars, no special experience with robotic cameras is necessary to step up and shoot a great show, so there's no increase in crew budgeting.

Furthermore, the pan bars are not only an excellent option for COVID-related solutions, but situations in which producers need to save space on the event floor as well. The pan bars provide added flexibility given their small footprint, which will continue to be useful once the world returns to "normal" post-COVID.



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