

A champion's gift: Donation from former Sun Devil helps renovate softball stadium

By Scott Bordow, ASU News

April 1, 2025

Jackie Vasquez-Lapan can hear the words today as clearly as she did 17 years ago.

In 2008, Vasquez-Lapan was an outfielder on Arizona State University's national championship-winning softball team, and then-coach Clint Myers often motivated his players with a six-word exhortation:

"Greatness is a way of life."

Vasquez-Lapan digested those six words and understood: You can't be great if you're not giving back.

So, when Vasquez-Lapan and her husband, David Lapan, were approached by Sun Devil Athletics in 2021 and asked to help raise money for a facilities renovation at [Alberta B. Farrington Stadium](#), they didn't hesitate.

Their seven-figure donation resulted in the Jackie Vasquez Softball Center, a renovation that included a player's lounge, an expanded and updated locker room, coaches' offices and the Lapan Sunshine Devil Deck, a rooftop entertainment area stationed down the left field line.

"I think being an alumnus of a university is one thing, but being a student-athlete alumni is different," Vasquez-Lapan said. "You bled for the school. You cried for the school. You gave everything. ... I'm one of those people. ... I'll tell you: I would not be who I am if it wasn't for ASU

athletics.”

Scott Nelson, senior associate director of Sun Devil Athletics and executive director of the Sun Devil Club, said the upgrades were vital because Farrington Stadium was “not where it needed to be.”

“It was a complete gut-job renovation that improves the student-athlete’s experience, and the rooftop area is a vantage point for fans, a convening point to watch the game and improve the fan experience as well,” Nelson said.

“The upgraded facility will be crucial on our road back to the Women’s College World Series,” said softball coach Megan Bartlett. “It gives the team a space they can be proud of and certainly helps in the recruitment of top prospects. It has definitely enhanced our culture of excellence.”

The relationship between Vasquez-Lapan and the softball program is emblematic of a concerted effort by Sun Devil Athletics to reconnect with former players and coaches.

“I think we’ve been far more intentional about outreach,” said Deputy Athletic Director Lisa Young, noting that former football players Jake Plummer, Brock Osweiler and Todd Heap have become engaged with the athletic department. “We have really important people who are meaningful to our sports program, and I feel like they want to be here, too.

“They see the potential and spirit that’s out there right now, and I think we’ve been far more focused on making sure we are doing our outreach and really becoming more welcoming.”

Young also said that new football season ticket sales have tripled since the Sun Devils won the Big 12 championship last season and qualified for the College Football Playoff.

“We have this momentum,” Young said. “Activate the Valley (football coach Kenny Dillingham’s oft-repeated rally cry) is a real thing.”

Vasquez-Lapan’s passion for Sun Devil Athletics — and her desire to help others — has created a unique partnership.

In the spring of 2021, she and her husband provided NIL money for the entire softball team for a minimum of \$1,000 a semester. In all, they have contributed NIL funds for more than 65 ASU athletes — including softball, football, tennis and basketball players — and in return those athletes volunteer their services at the Lapan Sunshine Foundation, a Tucson-based nonprofit that provides students from underserved communities with college scholarship money, mentorship and other support. The foundation also has a Boys & Girls Club, 11 free after-school programs and a summer camp.

“They’ll come and paint, help out at a toy drive, or coach at camp or serve during, say, a Christmas drive,” Vasquez-Lapan said. “It really helps both of us. It brings recognition to our charity, helps the students we serve, and it really teaches the kids here at ASU what it means to give back.”

Vasquez-Lapan said that when she and her husband toured Farrington Stadium’s facilities in 2021, something he said stuck with her: “The fact that you guys won a national championship with these facilities actually makes it that much more impressive,” David told her.

“Which was true,” Vasquez-Lapan said. “It was about the great coaching, and the girls who were brought in, and the Sun Devil spirit.”

That said, Vasquez-Lapan knew that if ASU wanted to succeed in this era of NIL and the transfer portal, the softball stadium needed a makeover.

“When I came to him, he was so supportive of it,” she said. “He understood (ASU) made me what I am, and he understands my love for the maroon and gold.”

I would not be who I am if it wasn’t for ASU athletics.

Jackie Vasquez-Lapan

Former ASU softball player

It was David who insisted Vasquez-Lapan’s name should be affixed to the softball center with the hope of enticing other former ASU athletes to see that “it’s our job to give back.”

As for the Lapan Sunshine Devil Deck, well, that’s all about family and memories.

“I know my parents would have watched my games from up there,” Vasquez-Lapan said. “My dad would’ve been up there drinking a beer, watching me and yelling for me. So, it was just such a perfect fit.”

Vasquez-Lapan admitted that as she walks around the upgraded facilities, she sometimes thinks about how nice it would have been if members of the 2008 championship team had a players’ lounge and nice lockers and two refrigerators stocked with food.

But the thought lasts only for a moment. She’s appreciative that she’s in a place where she can provide for “her girls” and the school that helped define her.

“It was really a no-brainer,” she said. “It really feels like an honor, like it was my duty to give back. I know I wouldn’t be who I am without this place. If I can do that for some other student-athletes, then my job is done.”

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Former ASU softball star Jackie Vasquez-Lapan spoke on Wednesday, March 26, about the donation she and her husband, David Lapan, made to help renovate ASU’s Alberta B. Farrington Softball Stadium, where she played outfield from 2004 to 2008. The seven-figure gift includes a new locker room, coaches’ offices, player lounge and viewing deck. During her collegiate career, she earned All-American honors, All-Pac 10 and Pac 12 accolades, was named Student-Athlete of the Year in 2008 and led her team to the 2008 Women’s College World Series championship. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

Text image(s)



The renovated center includes a player's lounge, an expanded and updated locker room, coaches' offices and the Lapan Sunshine Devil Deck. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News