"Our app is one of the main ways we engage with avid followers of UW athletics."

Brian Lucas, Director of Athletic Communications, University of Wisconsin

University of Wisconsin, rallying sports fans.

Home of the Badgers promotes sports teams and events through Varsity app, created using Adobe Digital Publishing Suite.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOLUTION</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adobe Digital Publishing Suite, Adobe Creative Cloud</td>
<td>22,000+ DOWNLOADS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IN DEMAND</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avid athletic fans eagerly downloaded Varsity app more than 22,000 times</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>250,000+ APP LAUNCHES</td>
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<td></td>
<td>INSTANT AFFINITY</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Users launched app more than 250,000 times in the first eight months of its release</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5.1 MILLION CONTENT IMPRESSIONS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ENGAGED FANS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Delivered interactive experiences to keep fans enthusiastically engaged with beloved Badgers sports teams</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11+ RETURN VISITS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>REPEAT PERFORMANCE</td>
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<td>More than 22,000 Badgers fans each return to the app more than 11 times for news and statistics</td>
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Uniting sports fans

The University of Wisconsin (UW)—home of the Badgers—boasts a proud athletics tradition. From football and volleyball to basketball and hockey, excellence in athletics is a hallmark of the university. Communicating about games and athletes is one of the primary ways UW spurs loyalty and enthusiasm among students, alumni, and fans. Fueling the UW fan frenzy is Varsity, an interactive app built with Adobe Digital Publishing Suite (DPS).

"With more than 22,000 downloads and users powering up Varsity more than 250,000 times in the first eight months of its release, our app is one of the main ways we engage with avid followers of UW sports," says Brian Lucas, director of athletic communications, University of Wisconsin.

A focus on mobile users

Die-hard enthusiasts want to learn about sports trends, athletes to watch, and upcoming events involving their favorite UW teams. Until recently, at UW, this information was only available in a static flip book—the first iteration of Varsity—designed for consumption on desktop or laptop computers.

Badger fans could flip page by page through text and still photos, but there was minimal to no interactivity. Also lacking were media assets such as embedded video and audio to immerse enthusiasts in UW sports. Lucas and his team wanted to reach a growing audience using mobile devices and provide them with a mobile-friendly, rich-media experience.
"By the end of the 2013-14 school year, our readership was split 50/50 between desktop and mobile," says Lucas. "We were missing half our audience because although the flip-book version of Varsity worked on desktops and laptops, it didn’t engage audiences with a smooth experience on other devices."

When the Athletic Communications Department team saw that sports enthusiasts were increasingly using mobile devices, they recognized the potential. They could double the audience for Varsity by reaching users on smartphones and tablets in addition to desktops. And they could promote UW athletics in a digital magazine format.

Weighing the options

Lucas began looking for options to produce a fun, interactive, digital sports magazine, geared toward audiences using virtually any device. He talked with several other universities that had developed successful athletic digital apps created in Adobe DPS.

"We liked what the other universities were doing with their apps. We decided to move forward with Adobe DPS to go beyond our flip-book format and create something more immersive and interactive that would be tailored for audiences on desktops, laptops, smartphones, and tablets," says Lucas.

With a small creative staff, the department launched the Varsity app in August 2014.

Immersive fun

The Varsity app is comprised of two digital magazines called Varsity and Varsity Gameday. Varsity, distributed each Thursday, is an interactive digital magazine for multiple devices offering engaging content such as feature stories, videos, photo galleries, and athlete profiles. Varsity Gameday is the official digital game program of the Badgers. Issues are produced for all football games (home and away) as well as home games for volleyball, men’s and women’s basketball, and men’s hockey.

The Varsity app offers rich interactivity that helps Badger fans actively engage with the sports teams. Audiences can interact with videos, audio, and slideshows, rather than just reading stories or flipping through static photos. Viewers can even play the school’s fight song when UW scores a touchdown during game highlights and replays.

UW creates and distributes massive volumes of original material for Varsity and Varsity Gameday. For men’s basketball alone, the communications team produces 14 Adobe DPS folios to support each home game. During the athletic year, UW Athletics generates 37 feature-rich issues of Varsity to promote loyalty and garner attention. UW also delivers weekly updates within the Varsity app to keep fans continuously informed. The content is used to immerse UW students, alumni, and faculty within the Varsity app, and is also repurposed on the UW website and other venues.
SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

- Adobe Digital Publishing Suite
- Adobe Creative Cloud. Apps used include:
  - Adobe InDesign CC
  - Adobe Illustrator CC
  - Adobe Photoshop CC

Massively productive

UW keeps pace with material creation and app publishing through an intuitive workflow supported by Adobe DPS. One full-time writer produces columns such as “Ask the Badgers,” a short news item querying athletes about timely topics. One graphic designer produces assets using Adobe Photoshop CC and Adobe Illustrator CC and compiles the entire digital magazine. A managing editor designs the cover and oversees production. Everyone on the team stays efficient by using familiar software such as Adobe InDesign CC to finalize magazine layouts, and then publishes and optimizes the interactive app using Adobe DPS.

“We have a very small communications team, but we’re able to produce and publish an enormous amount of original content,” says Lucas. “The ability to leverage existing skills in Adobe Creative Cloud software to create digital magazines and then publish them through Adobe DPS lets just a handful of people get a lot done.”

Reaching fans

The UW Athletic Communications Department promotes Varsity and ensures users have the latest edition through the push notification feature in Adobe DPS within the app. The communications team also promotes the app through emails and social media. Audience members who opt in for social media communications receive tweets or are encouraged to download the app when they visit one of UW’s Facebook pages. UW also markets the app through traditional media, including newspaper ads.

Since launch, the Varsity app has been eagerly adopted. More than 22,000 fans have downloaded the app, launching it more than 250,000 times in the first eight months of its release. With the built-in analytics in DPS, Lucas and his team have insight into what fans like about the app and find that fans are returning to the app more than 11 different times. The app has garnered 5.1 million content impressions since launch.

Says Lucas, “Varsity has received terrific feedback from fans, students, athletes, and faculty. The fact that the app has been downloaded more than 22,000 times is fantastic.”