America East Conference Reveals New Logo and Identity

The conference sought an updated look, symbolizing student-athlete determination and Northeastern roots.

Meredith Hohnbaum, Staff Writer

The America East Conference recently revealed a new brand identity on Feb. 21 with a revamped logo and tagline.

The updated logo features the iconic I-95 route emblem as its backdrop with red, white and blue as the prominent colors. At the top of the logo, an orange hue symbolizes a sunrise.

“[The I-95 shape] was intentional, and that actually came as a suggestion from a prominent media member, Tony Kornheiser, who was a Binghamton alum,” said Sean Tainsh, America East associate brand commissioner.

The conference’s new tagline, “Where Champions Rise,” along with the symbolism of the sunrise, signifies the Northeast’s status as the first region where the sun rises and the determination of the student-athletes of America East to rise with the sun and work hard.

“Our student-athletes are incredibly hard workers and are striving for excellence in everything they do,” said Allison Rich, director of University of New Hampshire (UNH) Athletics.

As for the colors, “the red, white and blue is intentional back to our Americana roots from when this conference started 45 years ago,” said Tainsh.

The brand identity was developed in partnership with Legend Labs, a brand strategy consulting firm located in Austin, Texas. Tainsh said that the rebranding process took almost two years and went through consistent collaboration from administrators, coaches and student-athlete groups.

“Really, it’s not just about the logo. It’s about our story and who we are, who our student-athletes are, and really trying to tell that story the best we can,” Tainsh said.
Senior Ande Allison, a former player turned student coach for the UNH women’s soccer team and president of UNH’s SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Committee), said she was involved in the decision-making process for the rebrand, but felt that there wasn’t much follow-up about the final decisions.

“It kind of just felt like it was out of nowhere,” Allison said.

She said she participated in a Zoom call last spring where the presidents of each SAAC organization in the conference were invited to give their opinions about the six logos they currently had in the process.

It's unclear whether a greater number of student-athletes were asked for more feedback for the brand's continuing development.

“It could have been a really uniting thing, and I feel like it was not that. I feel like we missed the mark,” Allison said. “That's why we were invented, to be that student-athlete voice.”

Georgios Koliniatis, a Greek graduate student on the UNH men's soccer team, provided an international student perspective on the rebrand.

“Honestly, for me, I don't like it at all. They have this nice design, then the new logo, it makes sense because we are in New England so it’s like the colors of the US with the star and stuff, but I think it goes a little bit political,” said Koliniatis. “It's subjective, but from what I've heard, people don't like this as much as the old one. They felt like the old one was nicer, much more neat. This one is kinda old school.”

The directors acknowledged that the new logo may not be universally liked yet, but stressed its significance in accurately capturing the conference’s identity.
“Typically you look at a revamp of the logo either if things feel a little outdated, or if you’re trying to accomplish a different messaging opportunity with your logo,” said Rich. “I think it’s new, so some people need a little time to get used to it.”

Rich emphasized that the goal of the rebrand was to communicate the core values and characteristics embodied by the student-athletes of the America East Conference, while clearly defining the conference’s identity to a wider audience.

“One of our struggles was our people not knowing our name or calling us ‘American East,’ so the bold ‘America East’ is intentional,” said Tainsh.

Previously, the logo was an integrated A and E with colors blue, navy and white, and the tagline read “Building the Complete Student-Athlete.”

“If nobody can get it right then something’s wrong with what we’re doing,” said Rich.

The plans for rolling out the rebrand included utilizing the America East Conference men’s basketball playoffs for exposure. Tainsh explained the launch in late February was intentional to align with the timing of the championship.

The previous conference logo and taglines were covered in the schools’ gyms that hosted the playoff and championship games, and participating teams had patches that replaced the logo on their jerseys.