

Youth sports facility scores AT&T connectivity for the win

Business needs

Internet access to help accommodate parents, athletes, recruiters, and other visitors so they can work or play while visiting Homefield facilities

Networking solution

AT&T Business Fiber® and AT&T Dedicated Internet can deliver copious bandwidth to meet your business needs, and AT&T Internet Backup helps ensure continuity in case of a power outage or cable cut

Business value

The ability to provide reliable connectivity for spectators and athletes

Industry focus

Sports and leadership academy

Size

2.5 million athletes served in first year of operation

About Homefield

Homefield offers state-of-the-art facilities to elevate the experience of amateur sports and training. The organization seeks to deliver an outstanding experience for athletes and fans, develop leaders on and off the field, and devote time and energy to its customers.

The situation

Parents, coaches, recruiters, and others who attend youth athletic events often spend hours at Homefield facilities. Many of them like to work on laptops or tablets while their athletes train. As part of its mission to provide a pro player pathway for athletes, Homefield recognized the need to deliver high-performance connectivity for its visitors.

Solution

Homefield chose AT&T Business Fiber® to deliver the connectivity its guests and staff require. The speedy AT&T 1 GIG internet delivers 1,000 megabits per second, enabling visitors to download films in seconds and extremely large video games in minutes. It also uses AT&T Dedicated Internet to provide users with fast speeds and a private lane to the internet. And in case of a power outage or construction-related cable cut, AT&T Internet Backup can automatically restore the internet connection by way of its 4G LTE wireless network.

A leap forward in amateur athletics

Homefield is a leadership academy disguised as a sports performance facility. The state-of-the-art athletic training and tournament property exists to help boys and girls develop and showcase their athletic prowess. Homefield focuses on player development and building well-rounded athletes, offering a positive learning environment and top-notch competition in amateur baseball, basketball, volleyball, football, and lacrosse.

The \$60 million indoor youth sports facility represents a significant leap forward in the field of amateur athletics. Young athletes receive training and guidance to help them reach their goals on the field and in life. The facility then turns into a tournament and event center on the weekend.

Kelce Ahern, Homefield director of operations, said Homefield's owners—some of whom own Kansas City's professional sports teams—have young athletes in their own families. Discouraged by the dearth of top-notch training opportunities for young athletes, the owners set out to improve the youth sports experience. They focus on five key audiences: the athletes, their parents, other spectators, youth sports coaches, and college athletic recruiters. "We spent three years getting feedback from these groups and used it to create this beautiful facility. It's exciting and so different from what's been done before in amateur athletics."

Changing the game

Athletics is hugely popular in the United States. A total of 242 million people in the U.S.—nearly 80 percent of all Americans six years and older—participated in at least one sports or fitness activity in 2023. And nearly 160 million people in the U.S. watch live sports at least once a month.

Despite such high interest in athletics, few organizations have focused on providing top-level training and coaching for youth. "Most youth sports facilities were held in Tuff Sheds or barns that had interior columns every 45 feet that parents had to look through to see their kids play," Ahern said. "Our owners have children who have gone through the ranks of sports and played all over the country. They decided that they could do better for the youth of Kansas City."

The owners set out to change the game for student athletes. "They started their passion project, which was Homefield Kansas City," she said. They began offering training in local facilities, but soon broke ground on the ultimate sports training facility, a 150,000-square-foot indoor sports arena that includes 10 basketball or 12 volleyball courts and features 4K cameras for live streaming events. With no interior columns, the facility offers 67,000 square feet of open surface.



It also features a restaurant with good food and great prices, Ahern said, which delights parents who formerly subsisted on pretzels and hot dogs at their kids' games. "We have our own in-house, Kansas City-style barbecue restaurant and we have a liquor license. Parents sometimes spend four or five days here, and a lot of times it's the family's vacation. We want them to have a good time, too, so we have really good food and local breweries in here." An athlete lounge offers video games, ping-pong, foosball, arcade games, and food and beverages that appeal to the young players.

Homefield also offers on-site medical treatment. "If an athlete is injured, we get them looked at by a physical therapist immediately. We can take them next door and get an MRI that day, and get a script for surgery the next day," Ahern said. "That's unheard of in amateur athletics. We're trying to provide a pro pathway for these kids. This has never been done before."

"The service has worked exactly the way our AT&T rep said it would."

**Kelce Ahern, Director of Operations
Homefield**

¹ Michael Popke, "A Record Number of Americans Participated in Sports, Fitness Activities in 2023," Sports Destination Management, March 16, 2024, <https://www.sportsdestinations.com/sports/all-sports/record-number-americans-participated-sports-33929>

² Julia Stoll, "Number and share of live sports viewers in the United States from 2021 to 2025," Statista, Nov. 9, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1310558/live-sports-viewers-us/>

Keeping customers satisfied

In addition to going above and beyond for athletes, Homefield works to make the parents' experience as pleasant as possible. "Parents are our customers, so our number one priority is to keep them happy. We want them to feel like their kid is having a better experience and being taken care of here better than anywhere else."

As owners planned the facility, they traveled around the country to venues to see what works and what they could do better. They talked with thousands of parents to learn what they liked and didn't like. "The top thing we heard over and over again is that there's never enough Wi-Fi, and they often can't connect to their phones," Ahern said.

"We want to have premium services. If we're going to provide this premium building and all these amenities, but we fall short and mom and dad come for the weekend and can't connect to their iPad or laptop to get any work done, we've failed."

Aiming to be the best

In keeping with its policy of offering the best for its athletes and other customers, Homefield selected AT&T Business Fiber to supply the bountiful bandwidth and fast internet speeds that its crowds demand. "The service has worked exactly the way our AT&T rep said it would," Ahern said.

It also uses AT&T Dedicated Internet service. "Our IT team knows how important that dedicated line is. Obviously, it's not the cheapest option, but we haven't done anything in this building to be the cheapest," Ahern said. "We want to be the best and the most reliable and we want to do what we say we're going to do."

"We don't have old school digital shot clocks or scoreboards. We barely take cash. In the world of amateur sports, this is mind blowing. Nobody does what we are doing, but the scary part of doing what nobody else does is that it has to work. And so having that AT&T Dedicated line really convinced us that this was the way to go; they said we would not have as many issues and that has been the truth."

"A lot of companies just tell you to go to their website if you have issues, but our AT&T rep gave me her cell phone number and told me to call if we need anything. That level of customer service is unique."

**Kelce Ahern, Director of Operations
Homefield**





Above and beyond

Homefield can go above and beyond due to the strength and flexibility of the network, Ahern said. When an elite youth basketball tournament used the facility over Memorial Day Weekend, its team realized it had made no provision for internet connectivity. “It was 11 p.m. the day before the event was supposed to start, and games started the next day at 9 a.m.,” Ahern said. “And our IT guys were able to create and run a dedicated internet line for them.

“They had two cameras per court for 10 courts, and it didn’t slow down anything within the facility. We were able to pull a service together for a client that they’re not used to being provided with,” she said. “Typically, venues don’t have enough capabilities, let alone being able to let other people use their dedicated line.”

At Homefield, everything works seamlessly no matter how many people are on their phones, laptops, and tablet computers. “It’s not something that most venues with 3,000 people in them are able to accomplish, so we’re very proud that we’re able to offer that service,” Ahern said.

Reliable backup connectivity

AT&T also recommended Homefield use the AT&T Internet Backup service, which automatically restores connectivity by way of its 4G LTE wireless network. Ahern learned the value of this backup service quite recently.

“Last Saturday we were at capacity with 10 courts of basketball and flag football going on; we also had people outside who were utilizing our Wi-Fi. Storms rolled through Kansas City and the power went out during prime time,” she said.

“It was a bad moment; we have all this technology in this building and it has to work. We have our scoreboards on television screens, we have shot clocks that run off that direct line. We have 15 points of sale in the building, so we cannot be down,” Ahern said.

She was thankful that Homefield’s IT director had planned ahead. “And lo and behold, 14 seconds later the internet backup kicked everything back on. Games resumed and nobody batted an eye. Everything was perfect—it worked out exactly the way we drew it up. That alone is worth what we pay for Wi-Fi.”



The experience is much different from what Ahern, who played basketball for four years at the University of Central Missouri, experienced as a youngster while playing CYO basketball in elementary school basements. “I still made it to play collegiately, but we’re giving these kids such a leg up and an opportunity that has not been provided before,” she said. “And so, I can’t wait to see the talent that comes out of Kansas City because they had such a great foundation of youth sports.”

As Homefield grows, Ahern anticipates that AT&T will continue to be an asset. The organization plans to open a second facility within the next five years, and possibly several more within the decade. “If we do this again, we’re going to take AT&T with us. We don’t have to find a service next time. We already have our person and it will be even easier the second, third, and fourth time we do this.”

Customers don’t hesitate to complain when they find something they don’t like. “Usually, they just speak up when things are bad, but we have gotten a lot of consistent feedback thanking us because the Wi-Fi works great,” Ahern said. “They thank us for providing that extra service because they know that it’s not always the case.”

New opportunities for young athletes

Ahern is pleased with the service she receives from AT&T. “Honestly, a lot of companies just tell you to go to their website if you have issues, but our AT&T rep gave me her cell phone number and told me to call if we need anything. That level of customer service is unique, especially in the digital world we live in. She has boots on the ground here and is kind of part of the team.”

“Having that AT&T Dedicated line really convinced us that this was the way to go; your downtimes are shorter and you’re not going to have as many issues and that has been the truth.”

Kelce Ahern, Director of Operations
Homefield