



TEXAS A&M HOSTS ESPN COLLEGE GAMEDAY

Texas A&M University was selected to host ESPN College GameDay for their football season opener against the Florida Gators. The parking operation isn't considered when making decisions about hosting Game Day, but those administering the parking program do play an integral part in making the event go off without a hitch, including finding parking for related equipment, buses, on-air talent, and 50 crew vehicles that is close enough to the sold-out 87,000 seat stadium to be in the middle of the buzz without being in the way.

The process for Texas A&M University began weeks in advance, putting together a mock "Midnight Yell" for promotional ads. Between 3,000-5,000 fans participated. Texas A&M Transportation Services put together a parking plan, then communicated and executed it.

Set up for ESPN College GameDay begins Thursday before the game and remains until the scene magically evaporates before the final play. The additional costs to parking operations include signage and communication for customers who will be displaced from their usual parking areas, plus staff to secure and hold the designated parking lot used by the crew. These needs are piled onto staff who are already significantly taxed with all the regular duties required for preparing for a home football game, but the benefits to the university far outweigh the costs. Texas A&M Transportation Services noticed an influx of fans coming onto campus earlier than

usual in order to be a part of the ESPN College GameDay broadcast. They also parked more than 2,500 additional vehicles over the usual 22,000 normally seen on a game day.

The publicity awarded by ESPN to the host team is significant; Texas A&M University was featured in commercials in the weeks building up to the game and broadcast live on national television beginning Friday and through the game on Saturday. The athletic department reported a \$6 to \$8 million increase over normal revenue that weekend. Although ESPN College GameDay may not bring more fans to campus, it certainly excites those who already planned to attend and fires up those watching on television.

—**Debbie Hoffman and June Broughton**
Texas A&M Transportation Services

