

# Best Practices for Maximizing the Development Impact of a "Big Win"



Jim Wills, MD, MPA  
CEO, CaringCent



Jeff Pivic  
Assistant AD



Derek Shook  
Associate AD

Supporters are most likely to donate and engage with organizations they care about during “focusing moments.” Timing is critical to fully maximize the opportunity presented by these moments to capture new donors, raise additional donations from existing supports as well as generate new leads for major gift opportunities.

In college athletics, these focusing moments primarily include “Big Wins,” that are either expected or, in many cases, unexpected. These moments can occur on the big stages of football or basketball but they also occur throughout the athletic season with Olympic programs. Different supporter audiences are activated by football and basketball success versus Olympic program success. Taken together throughout the year, these successes can have significant impact across your annual development efforts.

Big Wins create an opportunity for philanthropic giving, as these successes stir pride and appreciation among your supporters which can be further optimized with a transactional hook. Our experience has proven that these moments create an incredible opportunity to capture new donors who reside out-of-market through philanthropic giving along with an opportunity for existing donor stewardship and major gift cultivation.

Big Wins in football, basketball or other flagship programs create immediate opportunity for donations but also create pathways for new annual fund members, season ticket holders and major gift contacts. Big Wins in Olympic programs create the opportunity to super-charge funding for these programs that tap into a different support group which includes family, alumni and supporters. These supporters can then be cultivated into annual fund donors.



Big Wins, should they occur in the early part of the season, not only create opportunity for immediate donations and new leads but also offer the possibility of recurring donations as the team continues to have success. These moments are time-sensitive and require pro-active positioning, turnkey deployment and ongoing optimization. With the right technology, you can convert these moments into immediate support and recurring donations that celebrate continued success.

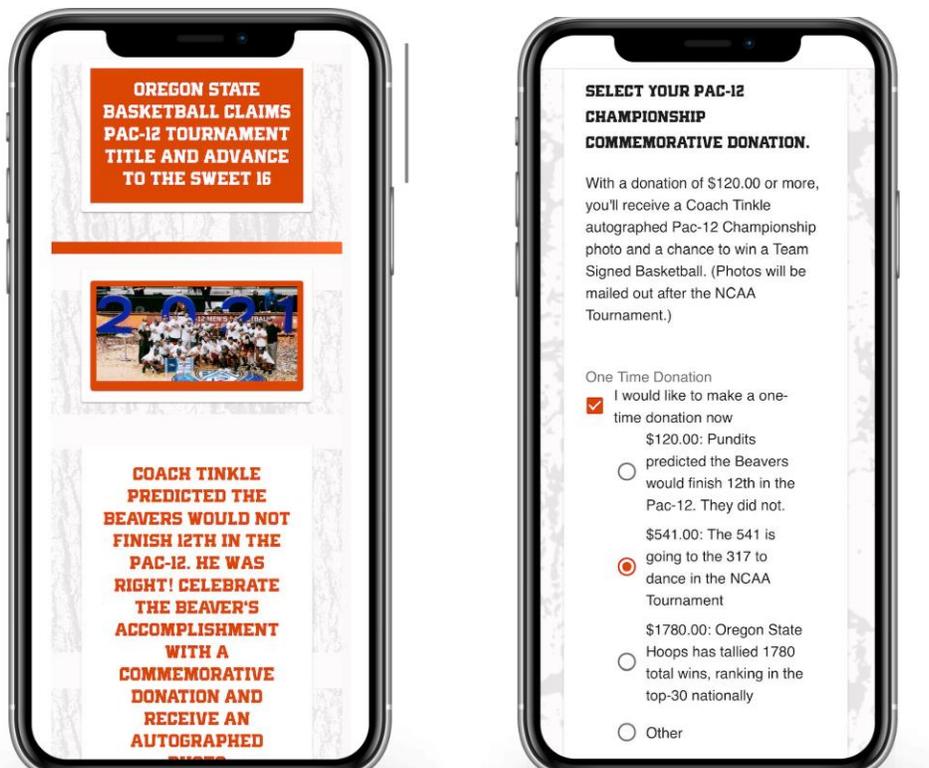
Fully activating these moments is hard. Development staff are incredibly busy managing the core tasks of annual fund management, major gift cultivation and ongoing stewardship. During a Big Win, development staff typically are stewarding donors while marketing staff is stirring excitement on social media. Activating these moments requires time, the right technology, proactive planning and expertise. We've included some best practices along with examples that you can add to your playbook for the 2021-22 athletic year.

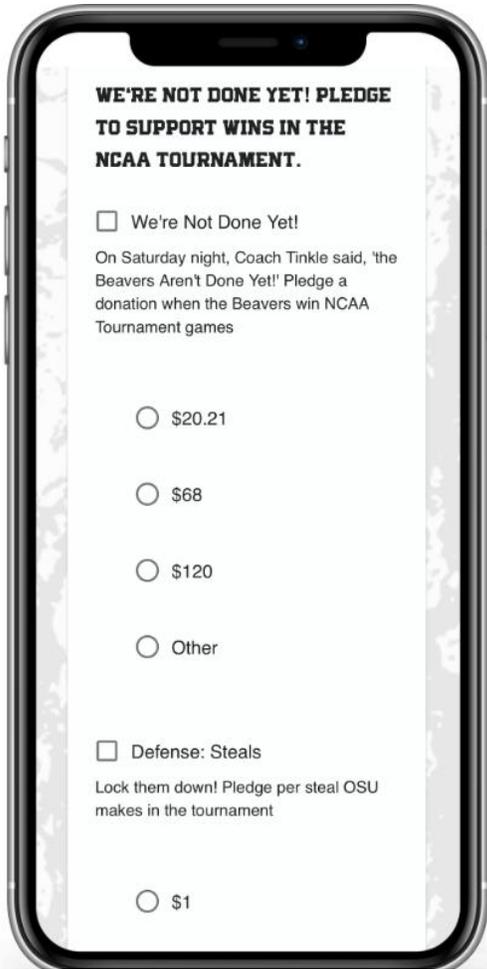


## OREGON STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL MAKES HISTORIC MARCH RUN

When the Oregon State Men's Basketball program won their first two Pac-12 tournament games, we proactively developed a Big Win/RallyGive program geared at capturing the historic excitement around the Beavers PAC-12 Tournament championship and NCAA appearance. We focused on campaign messaging and donation levels that tied to the early season predictions of Oregon State Men's Basketball along with their current success.

Importantly, we included ongoing donation pledge metrics for future success in the NCAA Tournament, that included tournament wins but also game statistics such as made 3pt buckets and steals. Within hours of the Beavers cutting down the nets at the PAC-12 Tournament, we launched this campaign via email targeted at basketball supporters and via social media (view email example [here](#).) **Click image to view donation website.**

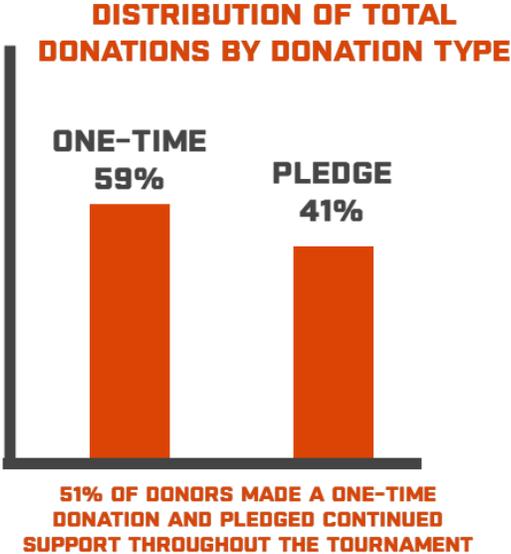




More than 50% of supporters who selected a one-time donation option ALSO chose a recurring donation pledge option through the RallyGive component of the campaign. These donors continued to support the Beavers by selecting the metrics of success they cared about most during each Oregon State game. The RallyGive metrics included wins, steals, rebounds and made 3-pt buckets. Donors pledged an amount per selected metrics and had the option to “cap” their maximum donation.

Oregon State Athletics converted this moment of excitement into not just a one-time donation burst following a big win but also leveraged this focusing moment into ongoing support as the Beavers advanced to the Elite 8.

While the Oregon State Athletics team continued to manage the responsibilities associated with supporting a historic NCAA Tournament run, we collaborated to promote this campaign via email and social media before and after each NCAA Tournament victory.



"Big wins provide an opportunity to activate new supporters who live out-of-market as well as further steward existing donors.

We've learned that developing a plan in advance, that includes the right technology, messaging and focus is critical in maximizing the impact of these moments in terms of donations, new lead generation and follow-on engagement.

These moments also provide the opportunity to give supporters meaningful options to support the student-athlete success that they specifically care about.

We're excited to continue the momentum of this campaign into new season tickets, out-of-market support and major gift lead cultivation."

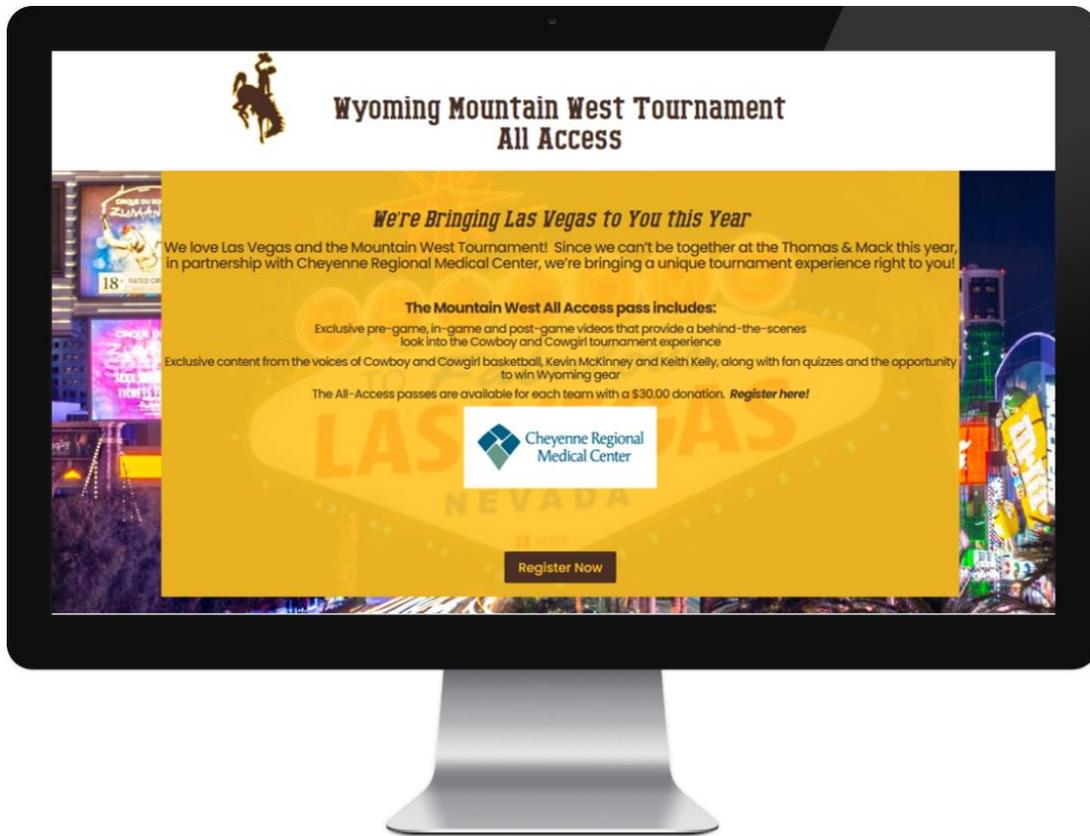


**JEFF PIVIC**  
**ASSISTANT AD,**  
**INTEGRATED REVENUE**  
**STRATEGIES**



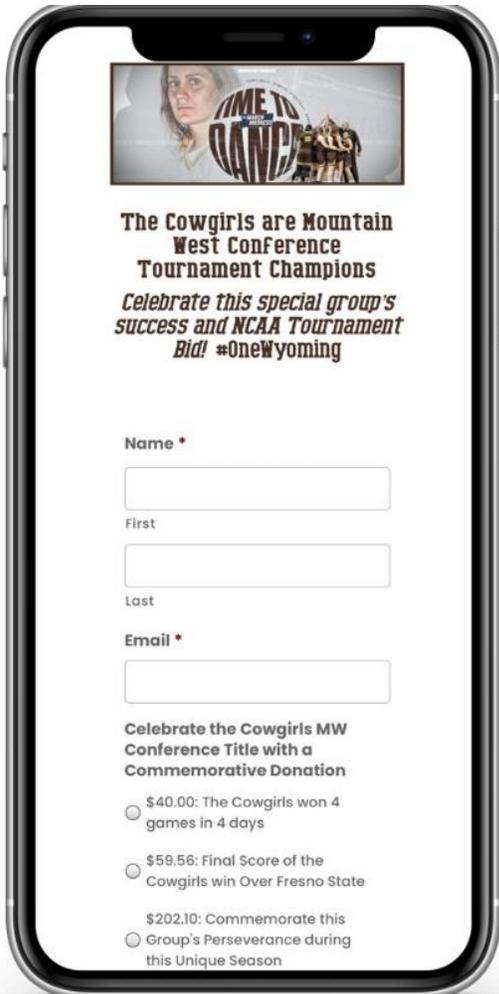
## Women's Basketball Surges to MW Conference Tournament Win

The Wyoming Women's Basketball program entered the MW Tournament as a #6 seed. Wyoming fans have a tradition of packing the Thomas & Mack Center for the MW Tournament. Since fans were not allowed for this year's event, we innovated to create a donation-based virtual MW All Access experience targeted at past MW Conference Tournament attendees and the supporter list of both the men's and women's programs. The MW All Access experience included daily engagement that included exclusive videos and fan quizzes delivered via email. You can view an example [here](#). **Click images below to view donation website.**



This initiative “primed the pump” for possible success in the tournament. Following, the Cowgirls first tournament win – an upset over the #3 seed – we created a playbook for a possible Cowgirls MW Tournament Championship.

Within hours of the Cowgirls championship, we launched via email and social media a custom “Big Win” donation experience that included donation values that highlighted the Cowgirls success. This campaign continued leading up to their first round NCAA tournament game.



"We know that our fanbase is wide and far beyond our ticket-base radius.

The Cowgirls MW Tournament run provided us with the opportunity to reach new donors and further steward existing donors, specifically those who fervently support women's basketball.

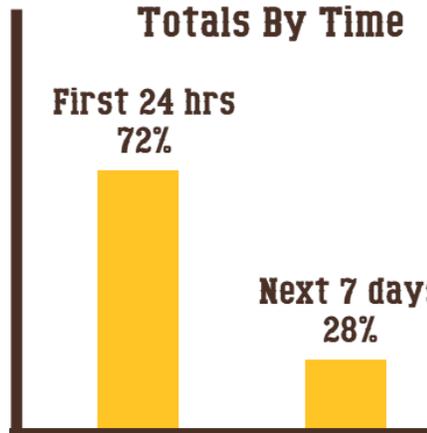
Big Win campaigns allow our development team to activate new donors and demonstrate our support of all our programs.

The turnkey process is a new play in our development playbook throughout the year, not just for football and basketball but also for our Olympic sports. These campaigns create a filter for the Cowboy Joe Club."



**Derek Shook**  
**Assoc AD,**  
**Development**  
**Wyoming Athletics**

### Distribution of Donor Totals By Time



Timing matters! 72% of donors made a contribution within the first 24 hours of the Cowgirls MW Tournament championship



# Big Win Campaign Recommendations

We've developed "Big Win" campaigns for all of our partners during the course of the past athletic season. From these experiences, we've distilled the following recommendations to help you maximize the development impact of these focusing moments.



## Define Your Audience

Depending on the program, you may wish to focus your campaign on program-specific donors and leads or include annual fund/at-large donors and leads. Big Wins by basketball or football programs are incredible opportunities to move non-responsive leads into donations and on to your annual fund filter. You will be surprised by the percentage of "out-of-market" donors you'll capture through this approach. Visible success creates a nostalgia for alumni with your campus and athletic events!



## Create a Templated Approach

Develop a templated donation experience that can easily be updated for each sport along with templated emails and social media posts. Instead of generic donation values, such as \$25.00, \$50.00, \$100.00, use meaningful numbers that tie to the victory. These values, such as a final score, should include small, medium and large donation levels that are slightly higher than your standard values. This approach allows you to educate donors and increases the donation amount.



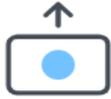
## Be Proactive: Expect Victory!

The rallying cry of the 1995 Northwestern Wildcats (my alma mater) during their Rose Bowl season was Expect Victory, which applies to Big Win campaigns. The most unexpected victories create the most opportunity! By expecting success and developing a turnkey plan, you will be positioned to maximize the impact of a big win. Timing matters and if your big win campaign does not get launched until 48 hours after a win, you'll lose the majority of the "momentum of the moment."



## Consistent Communication Plan

Determine the timing and follow-up communication plan supporting an initiative. Ideally, initial email and social media launch of a campaign occurs within three hours of a win, with custom follow-up to unopens and opened email. Three communications are needed to maximize the impact of any campaign. And, keep in mind, social media is not a viable donation channel, as supporters are 12x more likely to donate via email.



## Advance Donor into Further Engagement

If possible, give donors the option to continue to support follow-on success. For example, if your team just won a conference tournament and earned an NCAA bid, we recommend including the option to support success in the tournament. CaringCent's RallyGive offering includes follow-on donation pledge options that convert one moment into ongoing support. Additionally, use the moment to step the donor into another level engagement following donation, such as sharing their support on social media.



## Use the Data for Ongoing Advancement

Our experience demonstrates that Big Win campaigns will convert new donors or perhaps bring lapsed donors back onto your donor rolls. Be sure to weaponize these data! For example, you can create a process that includes wealth screening these new donors to identify if they should be placed into a major gift pathway.

## About the Authors We're here to help!

**Jim Wills, MD, CEO, CaringCent.** CaringCent College Athletics supports athletic departments across seven DI conferences with technology, service and expertise that converts new donors and leads. Dr. Wills is available at [jwills@caringcent.com](mailto:jwills@caringcent.com) or 312.505.4123.

**Jeff Pivic, Assistant. AD, Integrated Revenue Strategy, Oregon State Athletics.** Jeff is responsible for the growth and maintenance of the annual giving efforts in support of scholarships as well as heading up individual sport-giving. Jeff is available at [jeff.pivic@osufoundation.org](mailto:jeff.pivic@osufoundation.org) or 541.737.5565

**Derek Shook, Associate AD, Development, University of Wyoming Athletics.** Derek is responsible for the continued growth of the Cowboy Joe Club and major gift cultivation across the athletic department. Derek is available at [dshook1@uwyo.edu](mailto:dshook1@uwyo.edu) or 307.766.6152