

[NEWS](#)

[LIFESTYLE](#)

[OPINION](#)

[SPORTS](#)

[POLICE & FIRE
PAPER](#)

[OBITUARIES](#)

[PLACE NOTICE](#)

[TODAY'S](#)

[Home](#) / [Sports](#) / [High School Sports](#) / Arslanian to launch post-prep, JUCO football in Utah; Jamie Martin to coach Ogden team

Arslanian to launch post-prep, JUCO football in Utah; Jamie Martin to coach Ogden team

By Brett Hein - Standard-Examiner | Jan 27, 2023



Photo supplied, Ogden Jets

This video still shows former Weber State football coach Dave Arslanian speaking about junior college football related to the launch of his new league and school system, USA Collegiate.

SOUTH OGDEN — Dave Arslanian’s tipping point came in December 2018.

Arslanian couldn’t stomach the disappearance of JUCO football in the West after all seven football-playing Arizona junior colleges dropped their programs to end that year.

“Just with a stroke of the pen,” Arslanian lamented.

The Arizona schools joined long-gone Ricks College (Idaho) and Dixie Junior College, after its ascendance in Utah to university and Division I status, to leave a

... to university and Division I status, to leave a hole between the Midwest and California where Snow College (Ephraim) is the only two-year college playing football.

Arslanian — a former junior college football player and coach who followed his father Sark’s footsteps to become head coach at Weber State University — has spent the last four years thinking of the thousands of kids who found academic and career success by getting a couple more years to play with the pigskin. Some need time to improve their grades, some just need a roster spot.



John Russell, Associated Press

New Orleans Saints and former Weber State quarterback Jamie Martin (10) evades Tennessee defender Antwan Odom (98) during a preseason game on Aug. 12, 2006, in Nashville, Tenn.

“My wife keeps asking me, ‘You’re retired, why are you doing this?’” Arslanian said to a small room of interested parties Thursday afternoon at Ogden Golf and Country Club. “I just need to make an impact one more time. ... We want that 18-year-old kid who will try college if they just get one more opportunity to play football.

“It’s about providing kids the opportunity, and about

It's about providing kids the opportunity, and about making an impact.”

So, through a multifaceted, hybrid model of privately funded football and accredited online education, Arslanian announced the launch of prep academy football in the West — a post-high school league that aims to provide access to the sports-education combo that was once found in the region’s wiped out junior college system.

Ogden will field what will be, at least at its launch, one of five teams in the nonprofit [USA Collegiate](#) league created by Arslanian.

Arslanian announced Thursday that the team, called the Ogden Jets, will be coached by Jamie Martin, the former Weber State star and NFL quarterback. Martin was not in attendance Thursday due to a business deal involving [his St. Louis restaurant](#).



File photo

This photo from around 1970 shows then-Weber State player Dave Arslanian (41) speaking with his father, head coach Sark Arslanian, at Stewart Stadium in Ogden.

St. George will host a team named the Eagles; that team will be coached by Greg Croshaw, the Weber State graduate and former 24-year Hall of Fame

coach at Dixie Junior College.

The league will initially round out with the Las Vegas Stars and two teams in the greater Phoenix, Arizona, area: the Scottsdale Drivers and the Goodyear Wranglers. High hopes aim for games to kick off this fall, depending on how many dominos the group can knock down between now and then.

HOW IT WORKS

Players will eventually commit to one of three academic tracks while playing post-prep football under the academic umbrella of the program. They may also be able to take online classes and/or attend courses in person through either Weber State University or Ogden-Weber Technical College.

Such an agreement has been reached between the St. George team and [Southern Utah University](#), and hopes are WSU and OTEC can partner up as well.

“We’re definitely outside the box,” Arslanian said.



Image supplied

A logo for the Ogden Jets, one of five teams that will be part of USA Collegiate, a new football league and school system.

Either way, USA Collegiate Online, licensed in the state of Utah, will provide accredited, online college courses.

One track is the post-graduate plan. Players who are good enough may simply play one year — which is often called the “gap year” in basketball, a sport in which post-prep academies now abound — and then be recruited to a four-year university. Those players will not use any college eligibility.

The second track would be to continue playing as a “junior college” player and earn an associate degree through USA Collegiate or in the program from the local university. The third track would be to continue in the program at the technical college or trade school.

Players in the second and third tracks would use college eligibility to continue playing. And while some may still play college football when they leave, the goal may just be to set a foundation for finishing a four-year degree elsewhere.

In the first year, players will pay their way at a cost Arslanian says is much lower than attending a four-year school — like walking on at a university, but cheaper and with many more available spots to play. That cost includes fees to pay for academic support and tutoring.

If players don’t find a college opportunity after the first year and continue to play and earn an associate degree (or continue in trade school), Arslanian says those players who remain will have scholarship funding available.

The head coach will recruit and evaluate players as any football program would. One longtime Utah high school coach told a member of the fledgling committee that convened Thursday that he currently has 10-15 players who aren’t quite ready for four-year football but who could play at a post-graduate or junior-college level. Currently, such opportunities are limited.

Each team in the league will have a minimum of 50 rostered players, though the goal is to gather 60 or more per team. Early feedback has those involved confident that 75%-80% of Ogden Jets players will come from Northern Utah.

Arslanian envisions local college coaches with far-reaching relationships in the community referring players to the Jets who they like but who need more

players to the jets who they like but who need more time to develop, or those who won't be recruited because, due to scholarship and roster limits, those coaches simply ran out of spots.

The first season would feature up to 10 games played on Saturdays and, if needed, Sundays, too.

EXTOLLING OPPORTUNITIES

Arslanian played two seasons at Dixie before finishing his playing career at Weber State in 1971. He coached defensive backs at Scottsdale Community College before taking the head coaching job at Snow College from 1975-1981 and was then head coach at Weber State from 1989-1997.

His father, Sark, was head coach at Dixie for 10 years before his successful run at Weber State from 1965-72. So a passion for football at a level lower than four-year universities runs deep for Arslanian.

As it does for Lon Hanson, who is on the Ogden Jets launch committee. Hanson told of his time being recruited out of high school in the late 1970s to play college football but, when signing time came, coaches were nowhere to be found. Then came the younger Arslanian with a lifeline: an offer to play at Snow College.

Hanson's football accolades were not particularly germane to Thursday's discussion, but what was: He described how he went on to finish his studies at Weber State and later rose through the ranks to directorships at Kimberly-Clark and vice president roles at other companies.

Hanson told those in attendance that the opportunity he had to play football at a level lower than a four-year university launched him into a life of hard work, resilience and success.

The meeting Thursday began with a video showing a few past and present NFL stars — Roger Staubach, Aaron Rodgers, Alvin Kamara, OJ Simpson, Cam Newton and Larry Allen among them — who played

junior college football, with commentary provided by Arslanian.

That video was produced by Phil Tuckett, a longtime (now retired) NFL Films producer and director who began his education at Dixie Junior College (and later Weber State) as a football player.

Arslanian told the group — which included as invitees WSU head coach Mickey Mental and development director Jerry Graybeal, Ogden School District Athletic Director Mitch Arquette and a few men from the local business community — of a few more people who turned non-four-year football opportunities into something.

Dutch Belnap, the former Weber State athletic director and Utah State basketball coach, was in the room Thursday. He played junior college football. Jay Hill played junior college football. [Roger Trinchero](#), the California wine empire builder and frequent Weber State football donor, played at a junior college before WSU.

“There are going to be 300 young men each year who, if they just had one more opportunity to play football, they could be the next VP of NFL Films, the next Hall of Fame head coach, the next successful businessman,” Arslanian said.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Money is where the rubber meets the road.

Each team must figure out where to play, where players can attend school and how to pay for it.

The Ogden Jets are seeking a few hundred thousand dollars to pay for equipment and uniforms, to pay coaches and secure places to play — as well as other types of donations to address various needs, like having a place for players to meet and study, a few offices for coaches and somewhere to store equipment.

These things may change and develop over the first

These things may change and develop over the next few years. The plan is that the program will be self-sustaining after initial fundraising that pays for the first year.

Hanson and his brother, Jon, helped pioneer the creation of the new Ogden Community Sports Complex. Nothing is set in stone for the Ogden Jets when it comes to location, but there's potential there to practice, play games, or perhaps expand and build a headquarters.

Ben Lomond High School's new athletic facilities also seem to be a possibility, and Arslanian will seek talks with Weber State regarding the use of its indoor practice facility, auxiliary practice field and, perhaps, even a game or two at Stewart Stadium.

There are a lot of ducks to put in a row between now and whenever games kick off, but Arslanian — the man with an abiding love of junior college football — doesn't seem to have arrived at this plan quickly or casually.

"It made a huge impact on me personally seeing what junior college football did for young men and the foundation it laid for them," Arslanian said in the promo video. "These young men had the opportunity to move on in their lives because of what happened in junior college, playing junior college football."

NEWSLETTER

Join thousands already receiving our daily newsletter.

I'm interested in (please check all that apply)

Daily Breaking News Obituaries

Newsletter

SUBSCRIBE

--	--