



# Is Your Microphone the Right Microphone?

By Chad Niccum, P.A. Announcer  
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THE VOICE



Chad Niccum

This fall I will begin my 20th year serving as the Public Address Announcer for New Castle (IN) High School, which is the Home of the World's Largest High School Fieldhouse. The Fieldhouse can seat

9,325 people, so a good sound system is a must for an arena that hosts multiple highly attended sporting events.

This spring our local Boar's Head facility donated the funds to purchase a new sound system for the Fieldhouse, as they had done for two years before for our football/soccer/track facilities at Neal Field. Not only do I appreciate Boar's Head's donations, but I also appreciate Shane Osting, New Castle High School's athletic director, for letting me be involved in selecting the company to use for the purchase and installation of the equipment, including the type of microphone I wanted to use.

We chose to work with ESCO Communications, an audio, video, communication data and security systems integrator headquartered in Indianapolis. The decision was based on its reputation and client list, which includes many high school, college and professional sports venues. I also have experience working with its systems at Lucas Oil Stadium and Earlham College, so I am very familiar with what the company has to offer. Victory Field in Indianapolis, as well as venues at Notre Dame and Indiana State University also use ESCO.

While selecting loudspeakers for a venue is important, selecting the right microphone should not be taken lightly. One factor to consider when selecting a microphone depends on your workspace. If courtside or in a press box with an open window, a close mic with a cardioid pattern that minimizes the surrounding noises would be a solid choice. If you are located in an enclosed environment where ambient noise is controlled, then a microphone with moderate pattern



New Castle is home of the world's largest high school fieldhouse.

control would be the way to go. Other considerations are venue and announcers' preferences.

ESCO Technical Solutions Engineer Stephen Hill said, "I tend to gravitate to broadcast microphones; the frequency response is usually a bit brighter and still welcoming to the ear. The Shure SM7b and the EV RE20 are great, but sometimes a hard pill to swallow for school gymnasiums (due to cost). If that's the case, I'll look at the EV RE50 or the Sennheiser MD46. I've even used Beta 58s on more than a few occasions."

Sometimes the choice of microphone comes down to the announcer's preference. Senior Technician for ESCO Brian McCullagh has worked with Mike Collins, Notre Dame's football P.A. Announcer and Larry Schmitt, the voice of the Fort Wayne Komets hockey team. Collins has used the AKG/Crown CM311 headset mic with a push-to-talk interface for more than 20 years in Notre Dame's 80,000-seat football stadium.

When Schmitt announces for the Komets at Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, which seats 13,000, he uses a Shure BRH440 dual ear headphone/mic headset. It has a custom interface that allows communication between game operations and statisticians, as well as routing the mic to the P.A. system. It also affords him the ability to monitor himself

while announcing. This model is similar to the unit I have used while announcing for the Indiana Fever of the WNBA and Indiana High School Athletic Association State Basketball Finals at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

In previous projects, ESCO has used everything from a simple setup like a Shure SM585 on a gooseneck stand to a more elaborate setup with an EV RE20 broadcast mic. For noisy venues, a Shure BRH 441M or Beyerdynamic DT 297 have been used for both microphone and headphone feedback. For budget-conscious schools, the basic SM58S is a good choice for a well-controlled environment, while the Shure 522 is dependable in a noisy outdoor venue. It is interesting to note that most professional stadiums and university venues have leaned toward the higher end broadcast or headset microphones.

According to Kevin Watson, AVL Engineer for ESCO, choosing a microphone is a balance between sound quality, ambient noise and comfort for the announcer. Depending on the size of the venue, budget of the financier and preference of the talent, each project may see a different outcome. Thankfully, some great microphones, from Shure, EV, Sennheiser and others allow for one of these combinations to work successfully.

Just for curiosity's sake, some announcers

are very partial to their favorite brand of microphone. I personally am a huge fan of Shure microphones and that is why ESCO chose the Shure BRH 441M-LC as my new headset microphone for the Home of the World's Largest and Finest High School Fieldhouse.

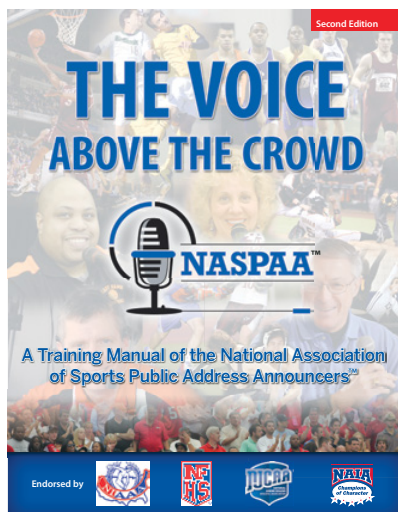
Chad has been announcing for 31 years. At the high school level, he has been the voice of the New Castle High School (IN) Trojans for 20 years, where he announces football, girls' volleyball, and boys' and girls' basketball. He has also announced boys' and girls' soccer, gymnastics, wrestling, softball, and track & field. For 10 years, he has announced Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) State Championships in girls' volleyball, boys' and girls' basketball and softball. At the college level, he announced women's volleyball and women's basketball for seven years at Ball State University (Muncie, IN), and was behind the mic for Earlham College (Richmond, IN) for five years, where he announced women's volleyball, men's and women's basketball, and baseball. In 2017, he was the announcer for the Indiana Fever of the WNBA.



At capacity, New Castle's Fieldhouse seats 9,325.

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