University of Dayton Starts Construction of Major Addition to UD Fieldhouse

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UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON STARTS CONSTRUCTION OF MAJOR ADDITION TO UD FIELDHOUSE

DAYTON, Ohio, May 11, 1989—University of Dayton officials today broke ground on a major expansion of the UD Fieldhouse that will modernize the entry and provide additional offices, classrooms and training rooms for intercollegiate sports and the health and physical education department.

The $3.5 million project, expected to be completed in August 1990, is the first of seven major building projects envisioned for campus between now and the year 2000 when UD celebrates its 150th anniversary.

Besides the Fieldhouse addition, other building projects in the "Campus 2000 Plan" include: remodeling of Sherman Hall, one of the major science buildings on campus; expansion of the Virginia W. Kettering Residence Hall; construction of a Humanities building and a School of Law Library; a 450-car parking garage and multi-purpose facility; and either a new building on new property for the expanding Research Institute or an addition to Kettering Laboratories.

During a short groundbreaking ceremony at the Fieldhouse, UD President Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., turned over the first spade of dirt with a shovel donated by NCR for the original Fieldhouse groundbreaking 40 years ago on May 3, 1949. Also participating in the ceremony were Thomas J. Frericks, vice president for athletic programs and facilities, and local businessman Jerry Miller, chair of the facilities committee of the UD Board of Trustees. According to University officials, the Fieldhouse expansion will be financed through fund raising and bond issues.
The Fieldhouse design proposed by architects Edge & Tinney--brick with sandstone detailing--is consistent with the design of the newest buildings on campus, the William S. Anderson Information Science Center and the Virginia W. Kettering Residence Hall. The large Ionic columns envisioned for the Fieldhouse's new, more attractive entrance were chosen to symbolize the Greek and Roman athletic tradition and match the classical look of the columns on nearby Albert Emanuel Hall, the School of Law. The most striking visual change will be a glass atrium-style roof over the entrance lobby. The lobby will be used as a "showcase" to exhibit trophies and plaques that celebrate UD's achievements in athletics. In all, 28,000 square feet will be added to the western part of the Fieldhouse. Butt Construction of Dayton is the general contractor.

"We see the Fieldhouse improvements as very important for UD's academic and athletic programs, particularly in our efforts to recruit top athletes," said Frericks, a major mover behind the expansion project as well as the UD Arena construction in 1969.

UD used the Fieldhouse for Flyer basketball games from 1950-1969, a time former "Journal-Herald" sports editor Ritter Collett described as one filled with "excitement, heartbreak and tension." When the Flyer games were moved to the twice-as-large UD Arena, it evoked a rush of nostalgia from the late Si Burick, former sports editor of the "Dayton Daily News:" "This is the place that an Eastern writer once described as a gathering-place for well-dressed men and women, of all persuasions, as the spot to go when you're out on the town... the building in which to be seen on any given night on the UD schedule... the arena where your presence even added to your social prestige. When you said, 'I was there,' it was like a New Yorker telling guys in the office that he'd attended a Broadway opening the night before."
At the Fieldhouse's preliminary dedication a month before the 1950 Flyer basketball season opener, more than 3,000 fans turned out for what official scorer Jack R. Brown described as a "brilliant" start. "At one point in the program he (the master of ceremonies) told the crowd that all the lights in the Fieldhouse would be turned off and asked that each fan light a match or cigarette lighter at the given signal," Brown wrote in a Flyer program article. "This was done and it sure made a beautiful sight. He then ordered the Fieldhouse lights turned on and there, in all their glory, was the 1950-51 basketball team complete with new uniforms."

The Flyers went on to compile a 27-5 season record that year, receiving their first National Invitation Tournament (N.I.T.) tournament bid.

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