

Donations turn dream into reality

■ Athletic director acknowledges Pickens made deluxe west-end project possible.

BY BILL HAISTEN
World Sports Writer

STILLWATER — When Mike Holder became Oklahoma State's athletic director in September 2005, there was no firm plan to construct anything at the west end of Boone Pickens Stadium.

There had been talk of building a hotel there — just something to fill the space.

"We had used everything we had to build the north- and south-side structures. There wasn't any money left," Holder recalls. "We mortgaged everything we had to build the north and south side. You couldn't borrow any more money, and we had already tapped all of our donors out.

"To do something in the west end zone — it was just a dream. Boone Pickens' big gift allowed us to do more than dream."

After Pickens donated \$165 million to the OSU athletic department in January 2006, Tulsa architect Gary Sparks was commissioned to design a grand new complex for the football program.

The result — a \$180 million, 633,130-square-foot addition to the stadium.

"In the past, people would recruit against us by talking about our stadium, by talking about our failure to win and by talking about us not being in the Top 25," OSU coach Mike Gundy said. "Slowly but surely, we've been countering all of that. Our stadium is

as good as anybody's, we've been winning and we've been ranked."

By the end of the summer, and before Georgia visits for the ABC-televized season-opening game on Sept. 5, Oklahoma State will have completed its six-year stadium renovation project. The final cost amounts to \$283 million.

When Cowboy players report next week for the start of summer conditioning, they will occupy a new locker room in the west-end building — a 14,000-square-foot locker room that may be the largest and most impressively appointed in college football.

Gundy and his assistant coaches move into their new offices on July 13. Gundy's office is located on the fifth floor of the eight-level complex, and it provides a panoramic view of the stadium.

"It's a spacious office. Very workable," Gundy said. "It's very nice, but I didn't need it to be a palace. I have an area to meet with recruits and their families, and I have a work station. It's perfect."

The stadium's south-side renovation was completed in 2004, while the north-side suites and club seats were open for business in 2006.

To complete the west-end project, Holder says, the athletic department borrowed \$35 million from the OSU Foundation. During the 2008 football season, Holder raised an additional \$10 million in donations.



The new locker room is one of many interior improvements made to Boone Pickens Stadium. Pictured below is the new sports medicine area. At right, Ryan McCaslin, an Oklahoma representative for Performance Surfaces, installs flooring. CORY YOUNG photos/Tulsa World



"Within the next year, we hope to sell some bonds and we'll use the proceeds of those bonds to pay off the foundation," Holder said.

Contained within the west-end complex are 36 luxury suites, 18 of which have been leased for the 2009 season. As recently as 2003, the



entire stadium had only 16 suites. By the start of the 2009 season, Boone Pickens Stadium will be outfitted with 99 suites. Eventually, OSU may

add 30 more suites on the club level at the west end.

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HEAD COACH MIKE GUNDY

Fingerprints of OSU alumni on design of stadium

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STILLWATER — David Reed was given an assignment: design a façade for the south side of Lewis Field.

The year was 1990, and Reed, a Union High School graduate, was a freshman architecture student at Oklahoma State.

Looking back on his concept for the then-hypothetical stadium renovation, Reed says it was "pretty crude. It was nothing like the reality of what we have here now."

As fate would have it, Reed has been involved in all three phases of the Boone Pickens Stadium renovation. A Sapulpa resident, he is employed by the Crafton Tull Sparks architecture firm.

While standing at the center point of the Cowboys' new 14,000-square-foot locker room, Reed said, "Most of the people on my team are OSU grads. The interior designer on this level was actually a spirit-squad girl here at OSU."

"When we got around to doing the stadium, we had a blank canvas. There was the opportunity to do something really nice."

Overseeing the overall stadium design, and most recently the design of the 633,130-square-foot football complex, has been Tulsa architect Gary Sparks, a 1966 OSU grad who also was responsible for the Gallagher-Iba Arena renovation design.

"At least a dozen or maybe 15 of our people worked on the west-end stadium project, and most of them are OSU graduates," Sparks said. "Their fingerprints are all over this project. They took a special pride in doing an exceptional job. It's something they can show their children and grandchildren."

"Go back as far as you want to go, and OSU never had a stadium that we could brag about. We all wondered whether we would have the money to even make it look decent. When we started designing it back in 2000,

we didn't know whether we would have \$10 million or \$50 million or \$100 million to work with. We came up with several different models, but when more money became available, we ended up with what we have now. It's fantastic."

During the design process, Sparks, Reed and others visited facilities at several schools, including Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska, North Carolina State, Oregon and Oregon State. In designing the new Cowboy locker room (which doubles as a plush lounge for

the players), Sparks and his team borrowed heavily from the concept of the N.C. State locker room.

On the field level of the eight-story, \$180 million west-end building are the locker room, a 20,000-square-foot strength-and-

conditioning facility, a 7,600-square-foot sports-medicine facility, a 9,000-square-foot equipment room and a 5,500-square-foot team theater outfitted with leather seats.

"We're about to finish the best facility in college football," Gundy said. "I've talked

to a lot of people who travel all over the country and see a lot of stadiums, and that's the opinion they have — that there isn't a better stadium in college football."

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