



# THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS: STEPPING UP THE GAME IN FAYETTEVILLE

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Better accommodations and flow for fans; better concessions and merchandise; and more and better premium seating were top of mind when the University of Arkansas tackled \$160 million in new construction and renovations for Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium.

"Back in the early 2000s, we were ahead of the curve in a lot of respects," said Justin Maland, Arkansas' associate athletic director for facilities. "By 2010, other people were catching up to us. We knew that we needed to look at the stadium and all of our facilities globally, rather than continue to take a piecemeal approach."

Originally constructed in 1938, the stadium held a capacity crowd of 13,500 fans. A few years later, the name was changed to Razorback Stadium. Piecemeal add-ons and renovations boosted the capacity to 72,000 by the mid-2000s. The stadium is a historical icon and an important point of pride for nearly every native-born Arkansan. But, from a practical standpoint, it just wasn't adequately serving the passionate Razorback fan base anymore.

The University of Arkansas began by creating a master plan for its athletic facilities, a massive undertaking, and then bringing the master plan to life.

"We started with football operations, then we did a facility for indoor baseball/track and field, a basketball

**"The vision was to create and extend the Arkansas brand into a modern, cohesive look to appeal to fans and top-level recruits."**

**RANDY BRAUN**  
Principal  
Walter P Moore and Associates

practice facility and a student success center," said Maland. "We've touched facilities for every sport and for all students."

He went on, "For the football stadium, we needed new athletic administration offices, a north end zone and a different mix of seating. But most of all, we had to address the deficiencies of a stadium that was

constructed in stages."

Walking from one side of the stadium to the other was a nearly impossible feat for fans. Going from one level to another was tough, especially for anyone with difficulty climbing stairs. Too narrow concourses, no views from the concourse into the stadium, a shortage of kitchens for catering and concessions, too long lines at too few points-of-sale for concessions and merchandise, logistical headaches for staff and the evergreen problem of too few restrooms.

And, of course, how to pay for it all.

The facilities team, which included architecture firms Populous, Polk Stanley Wilcox and structural engineers Walter P Moore and Associates, looked at the dilemmas from every angle, including saving the existing offices and building around them. And another option of tearing down the stadium and start fresh.

In the end, everyone determined the best — though not easiest option — was to build a new north end zone and renovate the existing stadium, bringing it into the modern era, while maintaining its historic look and feel.

"The design team's vision was to



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Fans explore new game day food options.

create a 'front door' to a historic facility," said Randy Braun, principal at Walter P Moore and Associates. "The vision was to create and extend the Arkansas brand into a modern, cohesive look to appeal to fans and top-level recruits. Our job, as structural engineers, was to bring the dream to

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## Proud Partners on the University of Arkansas Razorback Stadium Expansion

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reality. Arkansas is now on par with its competition."

Walter P Moore and Associates tackled challenges renovating the 80-year-old structure, including adding 16-foot glass walls on the club level and installing a new scoreboard on top of the existing structure that were wind resistant. Both aspects took "a lot of analysis and a lot of welding new steel beams" to accomplish.

AECOM Hunt with local partner CDI served as construction manager for the project. Over 22 months, the team demolished, expanded and rebuilt the existing north end to include a new game-day locker room, concourse, suites and offices.

The new north end zone fully completed the stadium oval, making it possible for east and west side fans to connect. In addition, the designers added eight new elevators, for a total of 18, to aid vertical circulation, including one dedicated to operations.

"Keep in mind that a fan may have parking on one side of the stadium and their seat on the opposite," said Matt Trantham, senior associate athletic director for capital projects. "The new 360-degree flow guaranteed that no matter where you came into the



The new 360-degree flow guarantees easy navigation to your seat from any direction entered.

stadium, it was easy to negotiate to your seat."

"In 2013, we also did a revenue analysis," said Brady Spencer, senior architect and principal at Populous. "We were already at 72,000 for the stadium and could have added more overall capacity. But the team wanted to add products they didn't already have."

Razorback Stadium ended with an additional 4,000 seats total, primarily in new suites, new clubs and club seats, and loge boxes — a new concept for the stadium.

The stadium added 40 new suites, larger than the existing ones, some featuring outdoor seating and sliding glass walls along the back that open into clubs.

The third-level SEC Club offers 1,200 club seats, six loge boxes and 10 suites.

"The loge boxes and the suites sold really fast," said Spencer. "The SEC Club is upscale; it's two-story, open and airy."

The Touchdown Club at field level, with 1,100 club seats and 20 loge boxes, also sold well.

"Players have always run onto the field through the arms of the Arkansas 'A,'" said Spencer. "We situated the Touchdown Club so that players run through the club and out through the 'A.' Fan enthusiasm is contagious. Players soak up that excitement and fans, in turn, feel part of the team."

A glass wall in the Touchdown Club allows fans to watch the postgame press conference.

On the second level, the team added the 64 Club, which serves 44 covered loge boxes and six new suites. The 64 Club is named in honor of Arkansas' 1964 College Football National Championship.

Above the SEC Club is the Southwest Conference Lounge with an additional 16 suites. There's also an outdoor viewing deck at the very top level of the end zone with patio lounge furniture that can accommodate up to 1,500 at pre-game functions.

Athletic director Hunter Yurachek said the roof deck can potentially be rented for private functions. The athletic department is formulating a plan for extended uses of the roof deck, as well as the new expansive suites and clubs.

The rest of the existing stadium

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# NEW FACILITIES & NEW FLAVORS

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received its own refurbishment, including the addition of the Cardinal Club, the Diamond Club and the Capital Club.

On the east side, a former academic center became the new prestigious Founders Club, which features eight new Founders Suites with upscale finishes and accommodations.

Existing suites were revamped with new finishes, seats, televisions and kitchen areas.

In a tribute to the history of the venue, the design team left open the "window into the stadium," a spot where traditionally fans without tickets could sit on the hill outside the northeast corner and sneak a peek at the game.

"It's a historical, iconic view," said Spencer. "I heard numerous stories of people proposing on that spot. So, even with the massive new north end building on that side, we wanted to make sure we preserved that."

In the north end is the Broyles Athletic Center, home to the athletic director and department offices. A prime feature is its fantastic views from the roof deck overlooking the field. The building is named in honor of Frank Broyles, who coached Arkansas to its only football national championship and served as the Razorbacks' athletic director for more than 30 years. Broyles died in 2017 at age 92.

"We've designed this building for more than seven Saturdays a year," said Yurachek. "We're thinking of it as a multi-use building and are looking for ways to monetize that. That could mean wedding receptions on the roof deck or corporate meetings in the clubs and suites. We expect to have a full plan in place by spring 2019."



Design decisions were made to encourage fan enthusiasm and make them feel part of the team.

**The Recruitment Edge**

Of course, University of Arkansas is part of the ultra-competitive Southeastern Conference, with competition on and off the field so fierce it's been likened to a knife fight in a ditch. The best football programs are in a clench for the best recruits.

The Broyles Athletic Center adds another recruiting tool to Arkansas' belt, with spacious brand-new locker rooms built for the team to gather on game day. The locker space is close to the recruiting room, which can house up to 150 recruits and their families.

The Hog Walk at home games starts with the team members leaving their buses, walking through throngs of Razorback fans gathered in the center of the parking lot just outside Broyles Athletic Center and entering the stadium. The renovation has given the stadium a wider, grander entryway to the stadium for the Hog Walk, near the locker room and recruiting room to

exemplify those traditions for recruits.

"When students walk through the stadium, there's definitely a sense of pride," said Maland. "I would put the package of what we've created against anybody. We've shown our recruits that we're committed to staying ahead of the curve and that our program is at a global competitive level."

**The Funding**

For the state of Arkansas, football IS Razorback football. It's the only Power Five school in Arkansas. And the state doesn't have a professional team of any sport to compete for fan dollars and rabid fan loyalty.

So, to generate the \$160 million needed, the athletic department used a mix of bonds and revenue-building premium seating.

"We're one of the few schools left that doesn't have a student fee for sports or operates with state or taxpayer funding," said Scott Varady,

executive director and general counsel of Razorback Foundation Inc. "The athletic department is self-sustaining, financially."

"This renovated and expanded facility is perfect for the University of Arkansas, the state of Arkansas and the constituents of this state," said Yurachek. "The evidence of that was made clear in the response we've had. For example, our goal for private fundraising was \$40 million and we've already reached \$44.3 million."

"Like everything Razorback, our alumni are passionate," said Varady. "Even before the renovations, we had a list of more than 100 people who wanted a suite. But we have very minimal turnover — hardly two or three a year. The renovations really opened up opportunities to those fans. We have a priority ranking system of members who've given the most over a lifetime. Starting in earnest in 2016, we went down that list, one by one. The response has blown me away."

It paid off. All the suites are taken. The loge boxes are full. The clubs are maxed out.

"The most common thing I've heard has been, 'This has exceeded my expectations,'" said Varady. "That's wonderful to hear from fans who've made a major financial commitment to us."

**The Concessions**

A virtually new stadium needed new food, new beverages and new merchandise. The department turned to Levy Restaurants for food and beverages and catering and to Dyehard Fan Supply for merchandise.

Razorback Athletics and Levy also

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teamed up with regional favorites, Slim Chicken's and Dickey's Barbecue Pit.

"When we came onboard, we saw opportunities for the stadium for gameday and beyond," said Molly Kurth, vice president of NCAA operations for Levy. "We now have an additional full kitchen in the north end, as well as four cooking pantries throughout the building. That's enabled us to produce more items on game day, shorten the wait times for fans and add more products for the suites and clubs."

New options on Levy's menu include a wooo pig sooie burger, named for the iconic Arkansas cheer, and pulled pork.

"We've been producing 2,400 pounds of pulled pork each game for the clubs, not including the concession stands," said Kurth.

But the hottest item? Strawberry shortcakes.

"We've been going through 2,000 shortcakes a game in the suites and clubs, which hold 2,500 people," added Kurth.

The newly finished upscale spaces are generating interest outside game day.



**Broyles Athletic Center, in the north end, houses the athletic director and department offices.**

"Those spaces will definitely be a growth opportunity for us," she said. "Arkansas fans are so passionate about their school that they want to host a special event at the stadium, whether that's a retirement party or a wedding reception. College fans, especially women, are more loyal than they are to the professional franchises. The additional kitchen space will really allow Arkansas to sell outside of game day."

Dyehard, based in North Carolina, is the 15-month-old progeny of private-equity fund, Teall Capital, owned by Ben Sutton.

"We operate the team store, we handle the online sales and handle the events," said Dyehard CEO Rex Hough. "It's our first year and we're excited to bring our 'better-best' line to Arkansas to extend the school's brand and bring the best shopping experience to fans."

Dyehard offers Arkansas-branded gear from apparel manufacturers such as Vineyard Vines, Columbia, Peter Millar and Nike. Fans can purchase work-worthy button-down shirts or weekend-ready T-shirts, hats, sweatshirts and quarter-zips. Fans can also purchase the same gear

coaches wear on the sidelines. Dyehard also handles everything from key chains to lighted signs worthy of a man cave.

"If a fan is wearing a button-down Vineyard Vines shirt with a nice little Razorback on the pocket, that fan is extending the Arkansas brand wherever he goes," said Hough. "Hunter [Yurachek] was really the spearhead of that. Our goal every day is to represent the University of Arkansas in a first-class way."

"We are honored to be a part of renovating the iconic Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium," said Monte Thurmond, executive vice president with AECOM Hunt. "We appreciate our strong partnership with the University of Arkansas and are thrilled to have provided sports construction expertise to deliver an exciting new facility that prioritizes the fan experience."

"We have such a passionate fan base," said Yurachek. "It's been incredibly rewarding watching everyone's faces when they see the stadium for the first time. The state of Arkansas has passionate fans who care about everything Razorback. I'm proud that we've given them, our students and our student-athletes a facility worthy of that loyalty."



**WE'RE IN HOG HEAVEN!**

Dyehard Fan Supply is pleased to be the official merchandise and retail partner of the Arkansas Razorbacks managing game day, e-commerce and the team store retail.

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