

Ohio State Athletic Director Gene Smith Expresses Interest In Expanding Woody Hayes Athletic Center



Ohio State, led by the efforts of athletic director Gene Smith, has successfully utilized NIL to attract some of the top transfers and recruits in the nation this offseason. But in order to continue capitalizing off these benefits and keep up with the changing landscape of college football, Smith said there may still be some significant changes that need to be made within the program, including renovations to their practice facility.

Speaking with the media following his hour-long conversation with Rivals' Doug Lesmerises at Ohio State's Fawcett Center on Thursday, the outgoing athletic director stressed the importance of renovating the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to make the facility and program more appealing to both coaches and players working within the building.

"You go into the Woody Hayes, and you see how beautiful it is," Smith said. "But we're putting lipstick on it right now," Smith said. "When I came in '05, we didn't have a recruiting department, and we didn't have a creative services department. We didn't have the sports science people that we have (now). We didn't have all the modalities and the training. We need more square footage. That's practical. That's not like an arms race. It's not because Alabama's got it. It's just the practical reality."

Smith continued to highlight the importance of expanding the entire facility during the breakout session with media, saying that the facility has become overcrowded with multiple new roles being added to the Buckeyes' staff in recent years, such as creative services, positional specialists and quality control coaches, among others. He mentioned that the program has even tried to address this problem by converting certain closet spaces into offices for staff members.

Smith mentioned that there are ongoing talks about expanding the Woody Hayes Athletic Center — which currently sits at over 13,000 square feet — a task that will likely be led by incoming athletic director Ross Bjork, who is slated to assume Smith's role upon his retirement on June 30.

The Buckeyes have called the "Woody" their home since 1987, which at the time was considered one of the more extensive indoor facilities of its kind. Ohio State most recently renovated the 37-year-old

facility in 2019, when the university spent \$19.5 million to add amenities such as a new dining and kitchen area, a new lounge, a new basketball court with arcade games and a hallway that features memorabilia related to the success and history of the program.

Ohio State has yet to provide information on a timeline or cost of renovating the facility, while it did say in its "Framework 3.0" that it plans on including an "ice arena and Woody Hayes Complex addition" to its future renovations.