

# Ohio State To Debut Lacrosse Stadium Saturday



Ohio State's men's and women's lacrosse teams now have a 2,000-seat stadium to call their own.

In January the university completed the Ohio State Lacrosse Stadium, a \$21.5 million project that will serve both as the host to Ohio State men's and women's home games and training grounds for much of their work honing their skills. Saturday, the men's lacrosse team will break in the new field with a scrimmage against Lafayette. The women's lacrosse team gets its first spectated contest on the new field against Robert Morris Feb. 10.

"To have a place, a classroom, a home to call our own has been phenomenal," women's lacrosse coach Amy Bokker said. "I think you're able to focus a lot more and really feel like you're in your own environment. And just little things, like having our own lines, the lacrosse lines are on the field and our cages are already over there. Our balls are contained when we're doing different drills."

OSU's Board of Trustees approved plans for construction of the facility in August 2021, and just over one year later it has been completed. The stadium is situated directly between two other recent facility upgrades for Buckeye athletics, the Ty Tucker Tennis Center and Jennings Wrestling Facility, each built within the past three years. The men's and women's lacrosse teams had previously played their games in Ohio Stadium.

Bokker and men's lacrosse coach Nick Myers were involved in the process from the design stage. Their input into certain details was taken with great weight, from the look of the midfield logo to the color of field lines to other minutiae of the stadium.

"The approval of the Board of Trustees was obviously a big win for our programs, but I think we feel lucky because Coach Myers and I were involved in a lot of the decisions behind the scenes," Bokker said. "There was a lot of input from our end. Definitely a lot of in-person meetings, Zoom meetings just to make sure it really felt custom and intimate and a place that our student-athletes would be able to grow and thrive."

Myers stated there were a lot of people to thank for the completion of the project, from athletic director Gene Smith to deputy athletic director Janine Oman to the board and other university officials. One of his favorite parts about the new facility is the gameday experience it provides for fans. There was a lot of care that went into developing a unique atmosphere people of all ages would enjoy, he said.

"I have young kids. I remember going to games, kids don't want to sit in the bleachers, they want to run around. So we'll have a kids' zone in one area where they can shoot, throw around. To me that's really the exciting part, you have a spot for your alumni to enjoy, you have a spot for family, a spot for young kids that want to come to games. And certainly a spot for our student body to get excited and get rowdy."

There's upgrades there for the players, too, most notably an indoor shooting room. The stadium also features a press box with broadcast facilities for television networks. The field is both heated and lit. Both the men's and women's teams have been practicing there since Jan. 9.

"It's hard to pick just one part of the facility as my favorite," women's lacrosse attacker Jamie Lasda said. "Honestly, just the fact that we have our own stadium now, and the fact that it's so intimate, the experience with the fans will be so exciting and animated with the stands being so close."

The venue also affords the campus a chance to grow the sport of lacrosse by hosting outside competitions and camps. Myers said that the Professional Lacrosse League has already signed on to play games at the field in June. In the future he hopes that top Ohio high school programs get to compete for state championships in Columbus.

"We want young men and women growing up in the great state of Ohio dreaming of playing in that stadium," Myers said. "So if we can look at that, that would be exciting."

Lasda grew up in Ithaca, New York, an area of the country where lacrosse has been ingrained in the culture for much longer than the Midwest. Her father won two national championships playing the sport at Cornell and her two older brothers both played collegiately at the D-1 level.

"Coming out to school in Ohio, it's something that I didn't even know was big up here," Lasda said. "But having people on our team from Ohio and the new stadium, having the newest lacrosse stadium in the country is also something that really symbolizes that. Having the Ohio State shape in the center of a field, it signifies how (the sport) is growing, how it's getting more west, picking up speed."

Bokker, Myers and their teams are anxious for what lies ahead.

"We're super grateful," Bokker said. "The excitement is about putting our best foot forward and making everyone who helped make this happen proud, moving the program in the right direction and just representing Ohio State and lacrosse at a high level."

**For a more in-depth look at what the new stadium means for Ohio State's lacrosse programs, check out this week's edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.**