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The \$256 Million Gamble

Geiger Leading Charge On Arena, Stadium Projects

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

As the final months of construction begin on the Jerome Schottenstein Center and Ohio State braces for a mammoth renovation project at Ohio Stadium, Andy Geiger is enjoying himself.

Geiger, OSU's athletic director, is overseeing these two major projects, which combined will cost at least \$256 million.

That is big money, even for one of the nation's largest universities. But Geiger is convinced Ohio State is winning big by planning so well for its future.

"I'm like a child in a candy store," Geiger said. "I'm having the best time I've ever had. By and large, I'm really pleased with the staff. The human infrastructure is in great shape as far as coaching and the administration.

"This is a terrific athletic department right now. And the physical projects we have going right now are going to set the place up for the next half-century. It's very clear that we're heading in the right direction."

Geiger admits there is some risk involved. The OSU athletic department will be on the hook for over \$200 million in long-term bonds, a debt planner says will be paid off primarily with revenues from luxury suites at both facilities as well as other fund-raising efforts.

"There is concern that if the people don't want suites, aren't going to buy club seats, aren't going to pay a premium for 50-yard-line seats or aren't going to pay \$40 for tickets, then, yes, it's not going to work," Geiger said.

"But, frankly, all the surveys and market studies we've done indicate we're in good shape. The program has got to pay for itself.

"If we generate enough \$8-10 million a year at the stadium through incremental income through the new facilities and ticket prices, we will maintain the program we've got and pay our bills.

"If we have enough activities in the Schottenstein Center, it will take care of itself. We'll do fine."

Ohio Stadium, which will host its 77th year of football this fall, is in desperate need of a face-lift. However, some have questioned the viability of a renovation that costs \$150 mil-



CAMPUS MARVEL — Motorists at the Olentangy River Road-Lane Avenue intersection can't help but notice the imposing Schottenstein Center. This view from the southeast explains why officials think four years of toil and \$106 million have been well spent.

lion but adds only about 6,000 seats.

And although OSU's men's basketball program has been far from a box office smash during five consecutive losing seasons at St. John Arena, Geiger hopes the Schottenstein Center will help lift that program — as well as the women's basketball and hockey programs — to a new level.

"The cost of doing nothing is incalculable," he said. "I accept the criticism that comes to anybody that takes action. But I think it will be appreciated after I'm gone.

"That's not why I'm doing it. I don't care if it's appreciated or not. I know it's the right thing. It's not a legacy thing.

"I was brought here to jump-start this thing and I'm doing the best I can with it. Frankly, I think we're making terrific progress."

In particular, pundits have torpedoed part of the stadium renovation plan that calls for the removal of the running track. Geiger argues, though, that pain sometimes comes with progress.

"They are writing columns about how sad it is they can't have the state high school track meet there," he said. "That's two days a year.

"We spend half a million a year putting up and taking down the south stands so we can have a track. (That generates) zip. In fact, it costs. That's a loss leader.

"It will have the comforts it is supposed to have and the legalities it is supposed to have for

a facility that lives in the 21st century.

"It will meet the needs of the department — as long as they keep reinvesting in it after I'm gone. If this all stops after I leave and they go back to wringing their hands and not doing anything about it — and I don't mean Jim Jones didn't do anything, they weren't allowed to do anything — then we're in trouble."

The enormity of the 19,500-seat Schottenstein Center has also been a reason for pause, especially since attendance has regularly lagged below 10,000 for OSU men's games in recent years.

But again, the rationale is in the bargain. "No other college has an arena this size that can accommodate hockey and basketball or one that is this nice that will be economical in arena terms," said OSU associate athletic director Jim Smith.

"People in this business will see this building and say that we got a real value for \$105 million."

Smith, in charge of OSU's marketing efforts, likes Geiger's aggressive approach.

Moreover, none of these projects have been thrown together overnight. The arena project came into fruition in 1994 and has been marked by careful planning. Likewise, OSU's architects began studying the stadium as early as 1995, giving them a solid head start going into the

Continued On Page 2

This Is Second Monthly Issue For Summer

This is the second monthly issue of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* planned for the summer. *BSB* will return with the August issue, which will be mailed on Tuesday, Aug. 4.

After that issue, *BSB* will begin its 18th year of publication with the annual Football Preview issue.

That issue, dated Sept. 5, is tentatively set to be mailed on Wed., Aug. 26.

COVER STORY: THE \$256 MILLION GAMBLE

Geiger: Time Was Right For Massive Projects

Continued From Page 1

active phase of that project after this football season.

"What we're doing is investing in success. Look at the Schottenstein Center, the Ohio Stadium project, the baseball stadium and the coaches Andy has hired," Smith said.

"The philosophy Andy has brought has been to invest in the future. We want to have a program that competes at all levels and in all sports, and we begin doing that by investing in facilities."

Paying The Freight

Only a handful of colleges have incorporated luxury suites into their facilities. OSU is on the cutting edge, though, of what many believe will be the rage throughout college athletics.

And it's not just a fashion statement OSU is making by including suites in both the arena and the stadium. They are needed to defray much of the cost.

"If we had to shut sections of the stadium down or if we had to take out 15,000 seats to put in 2,000 handicapped seats or to widen the aisles or put in bathrooms, there would be no way to pay for those changes and we would have to drop a significant portion of our athletic program because of the decrease in revenue," Geiger said.

OSU has commitments for 44 of the 46 luxury suites at the Schottenstein Center and will offer approximately 80 at Ohio Stadium. Price tags on the suites vary from \$45,000 to \$70,000 a year.

"I think some people, when we roll out the football plan and they see how hard it's going to be to qualify to buy a suite at Ohio Stadium, will be all over the Schottenstein Center," Smith said.

"This is going to be such a fantastic facility with more events than this community has ever seen. It will be one of the best values of any arena in the country."

Likewise, seat licenses have been used to boost fund raising for the arena project.

"I don't know who else as a college model has tried (seat licenses) before," Geiger said. "We're not sold out, but it has worked out really well."

"Our first experience of mailing order forms

to our seat license holders for the Bulls-76ers game worked extremely well. We have not gotten one negative comment."

An interesting twist OSU is adding for the seat license holders is providing them free tickets to the women's basketball and hockey games. That could be as many as 28 extra events a year free of charge.

"Arena Circle seat license holders will get tickets to those events," Geiger said. "We are doing that to get more people involved and get the lower bowl filled at those events."

More On The Way

These projects, while they are the most expensive and most noteworthy, will not be the last ones Geiger attempts.

With the track set for removal from Ohio Stadium, OSU is already working on a new track/soccer stadium on the old Troutman Field site.

The existing soccer practice fields have been replaced by Schottenstein Center parking, so new fields will be built adjacent to state Route 315 at the old water tower site.

Geiger is also studying ways to fund a new aquatic center, indoor tennis facility and the Success Center, an on-campus facility where the department's academic counseling staff will be housed.

Plus, Geiger has designs on erecting a new practice rink for the men's and women's hockey programs.

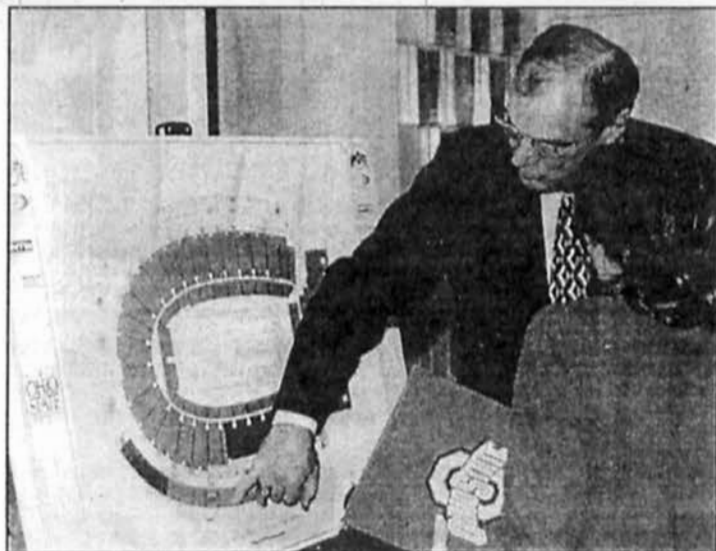
"Renovating the existing rink is an option, but I would prefer not to do that," he said. "I would like to turn that building into practice facilities for the gymnastics, wrestling and fencing teams. I want to get those teams out of Larkins Hall."

With all of these projects pending — plus the day-to-day operations of OSU's \$36 million, 34-sport program — how does Geiger juggle it all?

"Focus is hard because we have so many things going," he said. "It's human nature to work off the top of the list."

"We've got to get the Schottenstein Center, the stadium project, the parking lots and the track stadium all finished and get the Success Center under way."

"Other than that, it's quiet."



JEFF RAPP

STADIUM PROJECT — OSU athletic director Andy Geiger discusses a facet of the school's Ohio Stadium renovation project during a press conference last fall. OSU will spend \$150 million to renovate the facility, which will host football for a 77th season this fall.

Bonds Pave Way For OSU Building Efforts

When Ohio State needs some money to build, say, a new basketball arena or to renovate its football stadium, the university does not exactly pull the cash out of the clear blue sky.

Rather, the state has provisions where universities can borrow hundreds of millions of dollars for major projects such as these.

For instance, the athletic department will tap into a total of about \$205 million of the school's bonding capacity to obtain the cash needed to pay the various architects and contractors on the stadium and arena projects.

Because there are limits on what universities can borrow, schools carefully plan these bonding packages.

"We had to go down and get the approval of the Board of Regents to issue bonds," said OSU associate athletic director Paul Krebs.

Krebs said OSU goes to established financial institutions to get the capital needed to get major projects like these off the ground.

"We work with a brokerage firm to issue the bonds," he said. "On the arena bonds, we worked with Shearson Lehman Brothers."

"It is much like a debt service payment on a house. We make payments on a monthly or yearly basis to pay down the debt like a mortgage."

"As an academic institution with tax-exempt status, we qualify for a lower interest rate than you would get if you were borrowing for a commercial enterprise. Some of them are at a variable rate while some of them are at a fixed rate."

There is a cap on the debt service a public institution like OSU can have. However, with its massive assets, that figure for OSU is well into the hundreds of millions.

"Before they issue the bonds, they look at the bonding capacity of the institution," Krebs said. "Obviously, as you take on more projects, your bonding capacity is decreased. And the university isn't going to tie up all of its bonding capacity on athletic facilities."

"It's almost like a line of credit. They constantly figure it and refigure it because it changes all the time as the assets of the university change."

OSU has borrowed roughly \$55 million to help finance the \$106 million Jerome Schottenstein Center. The rest of the price tag comes from \$15 million in state grant money and whatever OSU

raises in seat licenses, luxury suite sales, sponsorships and naming rights fees.

That bond total was slightly higher than initial estimates, Krebs said.

"We chose that amount because we had some cash flow issues with some of the commitments like sponsorships and naming rights coming over a period of years," Krebs said. "We bonded a little more to allow for the time and cash flow of those gifts."

OSU plans to pay off \$10 million of the arena bonds in five years, another \$10 million in 10 years and the rest over 30 years.

The school received no state grant money on the stadium project and any fund raising on that project will be incremental. Because of that, the school is borrowing the entire \$150 million price tag of that project.

"The bonding plan on the stadium is still being finalized," Krebs said. "It will be around \$150 million, and we'll pay that off out of the increased revenue. We'll use those funds to pay off the interest and the principal."

"The term has not been decided. The inclination is they will be 20- or 30-year bonds."

Through luxury suites, club seats, a ticket surcharge and increased concession revenue, OSU figures to bring in \$8-10 million in extra revenue. Roughly 75 to 80 percent will come from the suite sales and club seats. This excess revenue will be used to service the debt.

Krebs stressed that Ohio State doesn't take issuing bonds for building projects lightly. Years of research helps the school lessen the risk.

"There are a series of factors that come into play," he said. "One is need — is there a real need for these projects? One is the market in terms of interest rates. Another is the construction market. This is a good time to be in it with availability of labor."

"Then you have time value of money. The longer you wait, projects this size will only grow in cost."

"You also have to take into account the environment, the economic climate of the community and the state — is this a good time for this project?"

"Probably the most important thing for us is knowing we have the support of our alumni and the board of trustees."

— Steve Holwagen

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COLLEGE ATHLETIC ISSUES

Decisions Change Face Of College Athletics

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The month of June was quite a month for observers of college athletics, and it wasn't entirely for what transpired on the playing field.

A wide range of events have happened, from the announcement of the criteria the Bowl Championship Series will use to determine the teams for its national championship football game to Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany's call for sweeping changes in the business of college basketball.

At the same time, the Big Ten and Notre Dame continued their public courtship of one another, the NCAA contemplated further football scholarship cuts as a cost-cutting move, OSU athletic director Andy Geiger wondered aloud about the future of the NCAA in the wake of a major courtroom defeat, and even the Rose Bowl — which many felt would be the last bastion where commercialization would rear its ugly head — knuckled under and accepted a presenting sponsor.

As you can see, it was quite a month. The following is a quick rundown on each of these situations, except for the Big Ten-Notre Dame story. For more on that, please see Big Ten Notes on page 31.

Bowl Championship Series

SEC commissioner Roy Kramer, chairman of the Bowl Championship Series, held a press conference June 9 to reveal the criteria that will be used to determine the teams selected for the BCS' designated football national title game.

Kramer outlined a four-part system where points will be assigned to schools based on their standing in each part.

They include:

- An average of each school's rankings in The Associated Press media poll and the *USA Today* coaches poll.

- Each team's win-loss record for the season with one point assigned for each loss.

- Each team's strength of schedule quotient, taking into account the records of the teams your team plays and the records of the teams your opponents play.

- An average of each school's ranking in the three major computer polls (Jeff Sagarin, *The Seattle Times* and *The New York Times*).

The two teams with the two lowest point totals after the conference title games in early December will automatically be matched in the national title game. Plus, any independent team or team from a conference not affiliated with the BCS (WAC, MAC, Big West, Conference USA) would gain access as an at-large team by placing at least sixth or better in the BCS rating system.

"Now the two best teams are going to play," Kramer said.

Kramer said the BCS would not begin publishing its standings until after the second Saturday in November.

"Because strength of schedule is used, it would be pointless to do it until teams have played seven or eight games," he said.

Because of the decimal points assigned in the strength of schedule ranking, Kramer said, "We believe it's almost impossible to have a tie."

Bowl tie-ins will still be used for the bowls not hosting the title game. Big Ten and Pac-10 champs not selected for the title game will still play in the Rose Bowl. Big 12 champs would play in the Fiesta, SEC champs would play in the Sugar, and the Big East and/or ACC champs would be in the Orange.

Those champions would be placed in other

Bowl Championship Series Selection Criteria

Here is a look at the four main criteria the Bowl Championship Series will use to select the nation's top two teams for its annual national championship bowl game:

- **Polls:** The ranking of each team in the Associated Press media poll and the *USA Today/ESPN* coaches poll will be added and divided by two. Using Ohio State as an example, if the Buckeyes are No. 1 in the AP poll and No. 2 in the coaches poll, they would receive 1.5 points under this category.

- **Computer Rankings:** An average of the three major computer rankings (Jeff Sagarin, *The Seattle Times* and *The New York Times*) will be taken, with a 50 percent adjusted deviation factor included in case of major differences. For example, if OSU is ranked No. 3 and No. 5 on two computers and 12th in the other, the highest ranking of No. 12 would be adjusted to sixth before calculating the average, which in this case would be 4.67 points.

- **Strength Of Schedule:** This will be calculated by determining the cumulative win-loss records of each school's opponents and the cumulative win-loss records of the opponents' opponents. The formula will be weighted two-thirds for the opponents' records and one-third for the opponents' opponents record. When all the calculations are complete, the number is divided by 25. For instance, if OSU has the nation's 27th best schedule, the number 27 is divided by 25 to produce 1.08 points for OSU in this category.

- **Team Record:** Each loss will represent one point. All games are counted, including preseason classic games and conference championship games. If OSU goes 11-0, it would receive zero points in this category.

- **Summing Up:** Obviously, the goal is to earn the fewest number of points as possible. The two schools with the lowest point totals will automatically be matched in the BCS title game. As an example, here are what the final rankings for 1997 (after the conference title games were complete) would have looked like:

Team	Poll Avg.	Computer Avg.	Schedule Strength	Losses	Total
Michigan	1.0	2.33	0.84	0	4.17
Nebraska	2.0	1.75	1.56	0	5.31
Tennessee	3.0	2.92	0.08	1	7.00
Florida State	4.0	2.92	0.68	1	8.60
Florida	7.0	4.08	0.12	2	13.20

bowls if their tie-in game hosts the title game.

"The remaining bowls will still be able to select teams depending on what best fits their needs," Kramer said. "If a bowl loses its host to the title game, it would get the first selection (of at-large teams)."

Kramer believes this system will strengthen the regular season.

"This is where it differs from college basketball," he said. "Every game counts and it elevates the importance of every game. You can't lose a series of games and expect to be included in the championship game at the end of the year."

At face value, Ohio State could be in good position for challenging for a berth in the 1998 title game at the Fiesta Bowl Jan. 4, 1999.

Obviously, OSU will need to finish 11-0 — including an elusive win over Michigan — to merit serious consideration.

But the other factors stack up in OSU's favor. Non-league foes Toledo, West Virginia and Missouri all figure to win a substantial number of games — and no differential is used to discount Toledo's wins in MAC games. If the Rockets go 10-1, it counts as a 10-1 for OSU.

Likewise in the Big Ten, opponents Penn State, Michigan State and Michigan figure to be strong.

"When you play in the Big Ten, you don't worry about strength of schedule," OSU coach John Cooper said.

Plus, an 11-0 Big Ten team figures to be No. 1 or No. 2 in the subjective polls (AP or coaches).

"I think it came out about how you thought

it would," Cooper said of the criteria. "It's pretty clear — you better win your games. If you lose one game, you're sort of out of it."

Geiger also shared his feelings on the BCS announcement, which he feels, for now, staves off the movement toward a college playoff system.

"This move was not made in favor of a playoff, but I think it is the next step toward one," Geiger said. "We are making (the selection process) precise, but I think we are still getting further away from the bowl system."

Future Of Men's Basketball

Delany held a media conference call June 22 to discuss the state of men's college basketball and the changes he and the Big Ten would like to see made to rectify certain problems.

"College basketball is in need of a systemic, cohesive change," Delany said. "Simply stated, the sport is 'too hot' and needs cold water."

"There is a great deal of concern about the sociology of basketball. It's our intention to seek support among the other major conferences to support a systemic change in Division I basketball."

While the NCAA's wildly popular tournament each March is still thriving, Delany finds there are a lot of things wrong with the current state of college basketball.

"The NCAA Tournament's success obscures some of the fundamental problems we are having in men's basketball," he said.

Among the problems Delany sees with college basketball are the proliferation of summer basketball camps and competitions, the so-called "sneaker wars" shoe companies are waging over top prospects, and compromises in the system such as point shaving, gambling, player runoffs, low graduation rates and high rates of attrition.

Delany cited figures to show that graduation rates for men's basketball lag behind football by 25 percent and behind women's basketball by 50 percent. The attrition rate in basketball — figuring those who fail to complete their full four years of eligibility for whatever reason — is 44 percent in men's basketball, compared to 22 percent in football.

"The low number of scholarship spots, the

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COLLEGE ATHLETIC ISSUES

freshman eligibility standards, the current state of summer basketball, and the success of the NCAA Tournament mix together to create a product that is too hot," Delany said.

"There are too many cases that are not compatible with the academic objectives we are hoping to achieve."

Among the remedies Delany and the Big Ten plan to propose are:

- Making freshmen ineligible for competition in men's basketball. This would make these athletes students first, Delany said. Freshmen would be allowed to practice with the varsity team after Jan. 1 and would be allowed to play a limited schedule of freshman games on weekends. Players would have four years of eligibility after their freshman year.

- Initial grants-in-aid would be for two years, a move designed to stem the tide of "quick runoffs."

- Junior college transfers and four-year college transfers would be treated as freshmen, meaning they would have to sit out a year.

- The scholarship limit would be raised from 13 to 15.

- All recruitment would occur during the school year with a ban on summer "observation" at camps and tournaments.

- The NCAA would ask high school associations to more closely monitor the off-season activity of students. Plus, shoe and equipment companies would be encouraged to withdraw participation from summer events. And, finally, the NBA would be encouraged to adopt draft rules similar to those in force in baseball to stem the tide of players leaving colleges before their third year of eligibility is complete.

Delany knows he has an uphill battle on his hands, but he feels drastic times call for drastic measures.

"I am less concerned about the marketability of college basketball than I am about the health of college basketball," he said.

Football Scholarship Cuts

A recent report in *Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal* discussed how the NCAA could be close to proposing that major college football programs cut 10 scholarships.

The cuts would be used to alleviate gender-equity problems that many Division I schools face. This move would cut scholarships for major college programs from 85 to 75.

The move comes after the National Women's Law Center alleged last year that as many as 25 Division I schools were in violation of Title IX requirements.

An NCAA committee exploring the problem could recommend that scholarships be added to women's sports such as crew, lacrosse, track and field hockey.

However, football coaches are expected to use their extensive clout and media exposure to oppose the move.

"We've made it clear that anything below 85 will be detrimental, not just to the physical well-being of the players, but to the intensity and level of play," said Grant Teaff, executive director of the American College Football Association.

"We've brought down the number of scholarships from where at one time it was unlimited, to 120, then to 85. If you drop to 75, the studies show that you'll drop to 70. The attrition rate is clear on that."

It may take time for this legislation to take hold, though.

NCAA leaders must decide whether to make a formal presentation on the proposal. Then, an NCAA cabinet decides whether to sponsor it, with a vote by member schools ultimately deciding it. Legislative changes could be made by August 1999.

While Ohio State has worked hard to avoid cutting men's opportunities to come into compliance with Title IX regulations, other prominent universities have not been as fortunate.

For instance, the University of Cincinnati recently announced plans to eliminate men's tennis, men's indoor track and the coed rifle team. Scholarship levels for other men's teams were capped at UC.

The Demise Of The NCAA?

The NCAA found itself on the wrong end of

a \$67 million court judgment this spring when a U.S. District Court judge in Kansas ruled against the collegiate athletic governing body for restricting the earnings of some assistant coaches.

The judgment, deemed as an antitrust violation, was in favor of 1,900 coaches who were called "restricted earnings" coaches. By NCAA rule, these assistants' salaries were held down to \$16,000 a year.

As a result, NCAA member schools may be asked to foot part of the bill for the settlement — a move that could spell the beginning of the NCAA's demise.

"This is how college athletics continually have trouble with regulations, when we're talking about legislating at the lowest common denominator," Geiger told *USA Today*. "You sort of reduce the issues to what the poorest schools can afford, and there's the trap."

"Because by passing such legislation, you can be restraining trade and restricting commerce, and the legal system says you can't do that."

Geiger sees a scenario where the nation's major-conference football schools could secede from the NCAA and create their own governing body.

"I can't see things holding together forever the way they are now because there's going to come a time when I don't want to be told how many scholarships I can and can't have," he said.

"Maybe it's time to find another division. It's a very, very cruel thing to say, but maybe that's what you're looking at."

This judgment, some fear, could open the floodgates for challenges to everything the NCAA legislates, including the recently enacted \$2,000 limit on athlete earnings, scholarship and competition limits, and NCAA tournament television contracts.

But NCAA general counsel Elsa Cole isn't ready to concede defeat yet.

"We have to always go back to the touchstone of the purpose of the association — that sports are an integral part of the collegiate experience and that there is a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate sports and professional sports," Cole said.

"It's a tough job, but if we don't hold the line, who will?"

Rose Bowl Presented By ...

The Rose Bowl, which many felt would never have a title sponsor, agreed to the concession of having at least a "presenting sponsor."

In a deal arranged through ABC-TV, the Rose Bowl has become the "Rose Bowl presented by AT&T."

ABC's arrangement provides \$19 million to televise the Jan. 1, 1999, game. It was unclear what AT&T is paying to have its name linked to the college game's most storied bowl game.

"We have Ma Bell joining the Granddaddy of 'Em All," Tournament of Roses chairman Harriman Cronk said.

While other bowl games have accepted title sponsors in recent years — witness the Nokia Sugar Bowl and the FedEx Orange Bowl — the Rose Bowl withstood pressures to fall in line. In fact, the Tournament of Roses committee insisted that ABC find a corporate sponsor willing to accept second billing.

"We violently were, and still are, against a title sponsor," Cronk said. "We asked that it be like the Masters brought to you by Cadillac. I feel it will be done that way."

Asked about logo placement at the Rose Bowl, Cronk replied, "It's not going to be AT&T all over the field, AT&T in every nook and cranny."

Rose Bowl officials also announced a 46 percent ticket price increase. Beginning with this season's game, tickets will jump from \$75 to \$110.

"We still won't have enough seats for everyone who wants to come," Cronk said.

As part of the BCS rotation, the Rose Bowl will get its first crack at hosting a national title game after the 2001 season. After the Fiesta Bowl hosts it this year, the Sugar will get it after the 1999 season and the Orange after the 2000 season.



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JEROME SCHOTTENSTEIN CENTER

Officials Believe Arena Will Be Done On Time

By **STEVE HELWAGEN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

As the Jerome Schottenstein Center's completion date nears, reports continue to surface regarding the \$106 million arena's completion.

Most notably, a recently published report said the building's projected Oct. 28 completion date — in time for an Oct. 30 NBA exhibition game with the Chicago Bulls — was "iffy."

However, OSU officials continue to speak with a stiff upper lip. They believe they will be able to host their full schedule of events, including an Oct. 28 student welcome session and that Bulls-Philadelphia 76ers exhibition two days later.

"The Schottenstein Center will be ready for those events, according to the people who are building the building," OSU athletic director Andy Geiger said.

"We will have the building open when it's supposed to be open."

Moreover, Geiger is tired of dealing with these continued status reports, some of which he believes have bordered on irresponsible journalism.

"It's a media thing," he said. "We would like to go forward with the concerts and be able to deliver on what we've promised the seat license holders and the suite holders."

"We have dealt with a television channel in this town that went on the air and said the roof wasn't meeting properly. After they were told by everybody that everything was fine, they still reported it because they had this 'source.'"

"We have a terrific construction site. I'm confident the contractors are trying to get the job finished."

Associate athletic director Jim Smith said the furor is to be expected at Ohio State.

"This is the biggest building project in central Ohio, and The Ohio State University has a high profile," he said. "So when you say you're two weeks behind, it

becomes a big story.

"But internally, we expected a late-October opening. It is really not impacting us, our sponsors or our suite holders."

A recently published report said there had been internal strife between the various contractors over missed completion dates on various projects, including the roof.

However, Schottenstein Center director Xen Riggs told *BSB* the roof is near completion and other aspects of the project have moved ahead of schedule.

"I don't think they're completely done with everything they need to do on top," Riggs said of the roof's progress. "There may still be some vents they need to work on. But in terms of keeping the building dry, we're in pretty good shape there."

"The biggest thing they are working on is the monstrous bowl duct. It is about eight feet in diameter. They have three of the four sides done."

Riggs also outlined some of the major projects scheduled for the next several weeks.

"Today they were supposed to start digging out the floor for the ice," he said on July 1. "They will lay a substructure of about 1-1/2 feet of stone. Then the subcontractor, the ice expert, will come in and install all of the equipment used to make the ice."

"Within a couple of weeks, we'll have the scoreboards in. Later this month, probably the first part of August, we'll have part of the seats in."

"There are two kinds of seating. The fixed seating is in the permanent seating areas and then we have the portable, retractable seating in the lower bowl. That is pretty critical. We'll probably have that done sometime in September to early October."

In addition to these major projects, a lot of the detail work is moving ahead.

"They have poured a lot of terrazzo on the floors and in some of the bathrooms," Riggs said. "There is a lot of painting and finishing work that needs to be done. They are also making good progress on the cabinetry in the suites."

"Three of the rotundas have been bricked. There is one more that needs to be bricked. The rest of the exterior is pretty much done."

OSU officials admit that some work on the special terrazzo floors in each of the corner rotundas, the arena gift shop and work on some locker areas and conference rooms will be completed after the building begins hosting events.

For more on the special terrazzo floors, see Ohio State Insider on pages 4-6.



STEVE HELWAGEN

MULTIPURPOSE FACILITY — Construction workers have much to do inside OSU's new arena as a plethora of events already have been scheduled for the fall and winter. This view from the upper bowl shows the concrete base for the seating.

Calendar Filling Up

OSU did not build the Schottenstein Center solely for men's and women's basketball and ice hockey.

To the contrary, Riggs and his staff are preparing to announce a full schedule of entertainment events to augment the schedule of OSU athletic contests.

"We will be releasing our family show package," Riggs said. "Some of those things have been announced like the Bulls-76ers game and the high school tournaments. That will include 13 or 14 events."

BSB has learned that both of the country's major professional wrestling compa-

nies, World Championship Wrestling and the World Wrestling Federation, already have tentative dates — including plans for a special pay-per-view event — in the new arena.

After the NBA exhibition, the month of November figures to be a busy one.

"As of today, we only have four open dates in the whole month and three of those are in the first week," Riggs said. "Between the 8th and 30th, we only have one open date."

Ice hockey and ice-related events are not part of the schedule for the arena's first two months, though.

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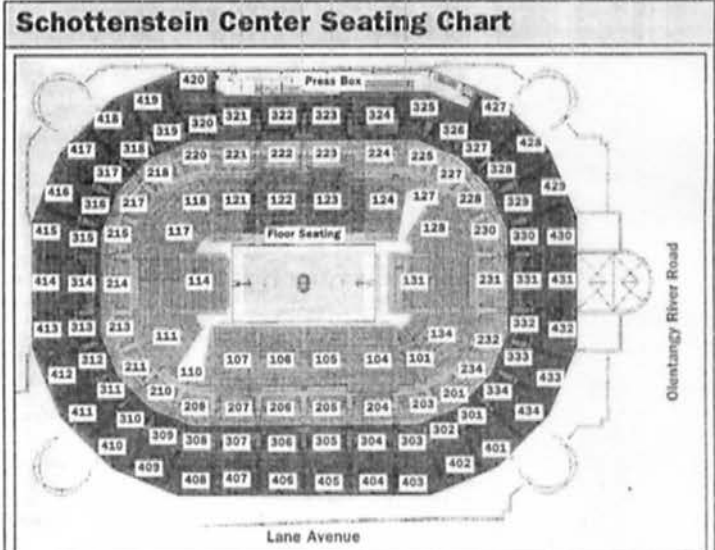
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Here is a look at the seating breakdown for the Schottenstein Center:

- **Floor Seating** — Endowment Club seat license holders.
- **Sections 121-124** — Center Court seat license holders.
- **Sections 101-121, 124-134** — OSU students, faculty and staff.
- **Sections 201-234** — Arena Circle seat license holders.
- **Sections 301-334, 401-434** — Season ticket holders.
- **Luxury Suites** — The suites are located on the level between the 200 and 300 levels.

JEROME SCHOTTENSTEIN CENTER

"Fitting hockey in is the trickiest part," Geiger said. "It's a two-part thing. First, the concrete floor has to cure so we can make the ice. Then we have to have some time to just practice our conversions so we can do hockey at noon and basketball at night."

"We have to practice it several times. We don't want our first experience to be under the gun with an actual game."

According to Riggs, OSU has blocked off time in December to make ice and practice conversions.

"We've kept a week and a half open in late December so we can make ice for the first time," he said. "That will help us get ready for their first game Jan. 2 against Michigan. That should be a real nice debut."

Because of league demands, OSU's new arena has been booked for multiple sporting events in the same day at least three times this winter.

"We will have hockey, basketball and concerts — some twice in the same day," Geiger said. "It is terribly exciting. It really is stunning."

Riggs winces when he thinks about how tough some of these conversions could be.

"We will have several tough conversions," he said. "We'll be going from basketball to hockey and hockey to basketball. It will be a tremendous learning curve. The people at Gund Arena in Cleveland had experience from the Richfield Coliseum, and it took them 14 hours to do their first one."

"We need to get down to four hours. The United Center has a full-time conversion staff of 16, and they won't even bother trying to do same-day events because it's so risky."

Riggs pointed to two hectic weekends in January. During one, OSU will host hockey on Thursday, women's basketball on Friday, men's basketball at noon on Saturday, a hockey game on Saturday night and a concert on Sunday. On the other, OSU again hosts hockey on Thursday, a concert on Friday, men's basketball at noon on Saturday, hockey on Saturday night and a women's basketball game on Sunday.

"We will probably have 100 to 125 people working on those," Riggs said. "Part of it is getting the floor up or down and getting ready for the next event."

"But another part of it is getting the building clean in three or four hours and cleaning the bathrooms."

OSU is searching for a conversion supervisor, Riggs said.

"When we open, we'll have a conversion nearly every night," he said. "With that person working at night, we may not know who that person is for the first few months."

Getting OSU's three major athletic tenants and a full schedule of entertainment dates to mesh will be quite a task.

"The biggest challenge facing this athletic department is getting the Big Ten and the CCHA to work with us on scheduling," Smith said. "That is going to be the hardest part, getting everybody on the same page."

Point System Established

OSU has put together an intricate point system to relocate men's basketball season ticket holders — those who did not purchase seat licenses — from St. John Arena to the Schottenstein Center.

Non-seat license season ticket holders will find their seats in the Schottenstein Center's Terrace or balcony level, regardless of their previous position at St. John Arena.

That's because the entire lower bowl has been assigned to students, faculty and staff, Varsity O basketball members and seat license holders.

"There will be many more students and faculty/staff in the lower bowl at the Schottenstein Center than there were at St. John Arena," Geiger said. "We want our students involved. We want the university community involved and down close to the action."

The season ticket point system has two main parts, accumulative points and fixed points.

"We will use a combination of factors," Geiger said. "A lot of research was done, and

The Schottenstein Center Tour

BSB editor Steve Helwager joined OSU associate athletic director Jim Smith and one of his marketing assistants, Doug Levin, for a recent tour of the Jerome Schottenstein Center.

Here are some of the highlights from that tour.

We entered the building on the northwest side, near one of the building's four round corner rotundas.

Upon entering the main arena concourse through one of these rotundas, visitors will encounter four large murals depicting a great moment in Ohio State sports.

Similar to the wall portraits at St. John Arena, the OSU Athletic Hall of Fame will be contained around the outside wall of the main level and the inside wall of the upper level.

"On the lower level, we'll have exhibits and photos depicting the great people and the great teams in the history of Ohio State athletics," Smith said.

"The upstairs level will be more of a time line depicting the great moments in OSU history."

From the main concourse, we head down to the floor level. We end up on the side where the visitor's locker rooms and star dressing rooms will be located. Near that area is a 5,000-square-foot kitchen where OSU will be able to cater to all of its luxury suites and also handle large banquets.

"We won't have to go downtown for the football banquet or the scholar-athlete banquet," Smith said. "We'll have those events here and handle them easily."

The next stop was the weight room that will be shared by the OSU basketball and hockey programs. It is impressive by its size, roughly 70 feet long by 30 feet wide.

"Can you imagine? This is a weight room for 50 people," Smith said.

Moving to the OSU side, we encounter the basketball digs, complete with a gigantic lounge and classroom. A video room, manager's room and gigantic locker room are also impressive.

The men's facilities on this level are actually larger than the women's, but Smith has an explanation for that.

"The women's offices will be larger than the men's," he said. "We did that to assure equity of space between those programs."

The OSU hockey locker room is next. This, too, includes a lounge, prompting Smith to joke

to Levin, "This is a lot different size than the lounge they have now."

For the uninitiated, the OSU hockey program has no lounge in the Ice Rink.

"In fact," Smith adds, "their current locker room at the Ice Rink will be the size of their new lounge."

Another neat aspect of the hockey locker room is the ventilation units that will be placed over nearly every locker.

"That will help suck the moisture and the bad air up off their equipment, which never dries out," Smith said.

"For a recruit coming into this locker room — I don't care if they go to Michigan or Michigan State or wherever — this is going to be impressive."

"You can go into a lot of pro buildings and not find a locker room like this."

We move back into the shower area, where we find scarlet and gray tile in the showers.

"A little detail like this, we could have gone all white and had it be a little cheaper, but this is what sets us apart," Smith said.

We then take the stairs — the escalators are in but not working yet — up two levels to the donor concourse. The first thing we encounter is the Huntington Club, a lounge area behind the luxury suites that will circle the donor level. This will be a nice area to meet and greet friends and colleagues on game nights.

We also look over the railing into one of the rotundas, where the outline of one of the special terrazzo floors has been carefully placed.

"This is another thing that sets us apart from any other building," Smith said. "When you walk in here, you'll be walking on top of a piece of art."

We step into one of the luxury suites, which appear to have a good view of the playing area. Each of the suites will have one television when the building opens with another likely added later.



STEVE HELWAGER

PENTHOUSE VIEW — OSU officials Jim Smith (left) and Doug Levin take a peek at a future luxury box suite during a tour of the Schottenstein Center. All but two of the 46 suites had been sold as of press time.

It does not appear that any of the work has been done to finish these suites, although we note there are levels for two rows of seats in front of them and a sliding glass door will be installed to provide privacy and ambiance during certain events.

We head upstairs to the upper level and move up to the highest reaches of the seating area, although no seats have been installed yet. The view from upper level isn't bad. Having been to the United Center — where it seems like you are in another county — it seems like you are a lot closer here.

Smith notes one of his favorite features: a terrace off the upper level for fans to go outside during games if need be. It will also be a perfect place to entertain before football games with a great view of the city and Ohio Stadium.

We then head down to the main level to see areas where OSU will locate its arena store as well as a Hall of Fame room, which will house trophies and exhibits.

We end the tour back down on the floor level. As Levin points out, from the outside the arena looks very imposing. However, from this viewpoint it looks very intimate.

— Steve Helwager



the format will be similar to what the university has done with the football-based seating priorities."

Accumulative points will be assigned for years of continuous purchase of basketball season tickets, commitment years as a donor to the athletic department, and continuous years as a Varsity O member.

Fixed points will be assigned for Varsity O, President's Club, Alumni Association and Athletic Committeeman membership, as well as participation in annual giving programs and the ticket holder's cumulative giving record.

Seat license ticket buyers will pay \$20 for their seats in the Endowment Club, Center Court Club and Arena Circle.

Smith said tickets for students, faculty and staff and general season ticket holders will be reasonably priced. Those seats will start at \$7 for students and seating in the upper reaches of the balcony. Balcony seats on the side will be \$16, while those in the ends will be scaled at \$12 and \$10.

"The average ticket price will actually be less than it was at St. John Arena," Smith said. "There, every seat was \$17.50. Because we have more tickets available, we're able to lower some of the prices. At the same time, we're charging more money for the better seats."

OSU offered roughly 4,500 seat licenses for sale. Only 500 of those remain, all in the Arena Circle. Seat license holders will descend on the building for receptions Oct. 12-16 to select their actual seats.

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OHIO STADIUM RENOVATIONS

Renovation Designed As Facelift For Stadium

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Andy Geiger came on board as Ohio State's athletic director in the spring of 1994.

In fact, he was hired in time for then-OSU president Gordon Gee to give him a guided tour of Ohio Stadium during that April's spring football game.

The tour only whetted Geiger's appetite for what he waited for all that summer — an actual football game day at the venerable Horseshoe.

And the Buckeyes won Geiger's first home game as the AD, whipping Pittsburgh 27-3.

But, after months of anticipation, Geiger was anything but impressed.

"I saw lines outside bathrooms," he said. "It was awful. It was the Pittsburgh game my first year here. I thought to myself this was shocking."

"I was impressed — with the problems."

Gee had mentioned during the interview process that the stadium, nearing its 75th birthday, would need some work. After all, it had been neglected during the 1970s and '80s as OSU tightened its belt.

But in his first visit — and many more since then — Geiger got a firm grasp of the problem.

"How many seats do we sell on those funny little bleachers that sit on top of the track? You can't see anything from those seats," he said.

"How about those seats beside the scoreboard? If you sit next to the scoreboard on the

top row of the south stands, all you can see is our bench.

"If you sit in the upper levels of B-deck, you can't see. You can't see the scoreboard or the other sideline. What kind of place is this?"

"Not one bathroom on C-deck? Not one? Have you ever seen those people hobble up and down those stairs?"

For these reasons and many others, Geiger is spearheading OSU's massive three-year, \$150 million renovation project at the stadium.

The first phase of the project began quietly this summer as \$2 million was spent to relocate the utility connections in the stadium.

The project will begin in earnest, though, immediately after the upcoming football season and will continue through the summer of 2001.

The first major phase will be the removal of the track after the 1998 season. That will allow workers to construct the slurry walls that will insulate the playing field. Then, after the 1999 season, the field will be lowered 14-1/2 feet.

The project calls for the inclusion of 82 luxury suites, club seats and a new press box. An estimated 8,000 additional seats will be added, some in new seating areas created by lowering the field and others in additional rows added to the top of C-deck.

Those additions will bring capacity somewhere close to 98,000. Geiger predicts the crowd could eclipse the magical 100,000 mark at some games.

In addition, modern restrooms (including

Ohio Stadium Project Timeline

Here is the tentative timeline for the Ohio Stadium renovation project, due for completion in time for the 2001 football season:

Activity	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Design and Review	****	*****			
Purchasing, Awarding and Mobilizing		*****			
Utilities Relocation		***			
Lower Field (+4,500 seats)			*****	*****	
West Buildout (+4,600 seats)			*****	*****	
East Buildout (+7,000 seats)			*****	*****	
Bowl Renovation (East, North)			*****	*****	
Bowl Renovation (West; -2,700 seats)			***	*****	
Expansion Joints, Waterproof and seats (-8,000 seats)					*****
Team Facilities				*****	
Band					*****
Athletics Offices					*****
Site Development					*****
Scoreboard Work (+2,100 seats)	**	*****	*****	*****	
Hazardous Material Abatement			*****	*****	*****
Athletic Events		***	****	**	****

some on C-deck), widened concourses and aisles, expanded concessions, improved disability seating and several elevators will increase the comfort level for the average fan.

According to OSU literature on the project, the school currently spends over \$250,000 a year on plumbing, wiring and structural concerns at the stadium. Another \$500,000 is spent each year just to construct and tear down the south stands.

OSU officials say they are committed to retaining the Horseshoe look. In fact, an external shell will be built around the existing stadium and the south stands will continue to be temporary seating. The south end will not be permanently enclosed, preserving the original Horseshoe design.

When asked whether it is wise to spend money on an aging stadium or start from scratch, Geiger replied there really was no alternative.

"I think it was the thing to do because we're rebuilding it," he said. "All of the plumbing, electrical and structural issues will be addressed as a part of this. We wouldn't be doing this if all of the X-rays didn't reveal that it was sound."

"We have to take out a lot of A-deck because the concrete is crumbling. There is a lot of retrofitting that has to be done as a part of this," he said.

OSU officials say starting from scratch could have cost twice as much and would have involved tax dollars and significant increases in student fees and ticket prices. No tax dollars or student fees will be used on this project.

Finding a new site for the stadium would also be a problem on the sprawling OSU campus.

"We priced a new stadium," Geiger said. "That would have been \$400 million. If you look at the new pro facilities, nobody is building 100,000-seat stadiums."

"We're trying to take a 75-year-old deal, keep it intimate, accommodate 100,000 people and have it work."

"If you build a modern stadium that size, the footprint would be huge and the seats in the upper bowl would be eight miles away from the field," he said.

The 1999 and 2000 football seasons will fall during the project's main work phase, but Geiger said OSU will not miss any home games.

"We will try and minimize the discomfort," he said. "The biggest hit people will take is the parking inconvenience. Obviously, we aren't going to be able to park right next to the stadium as we're working on it."

"But the fan watching the game should not be inconvenienced."

Paying The Price

Many OSU fans have argued that the stadium simply needs a face-lift — not a major

overhaul.

But, in actuality, just getting the stadium up to existing building codes and bringing it into compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act would cost between \$40-50 million.

OSU officials say that plan is a non-starter because doing that would actually result in a net loss of seats. Plus, there is no existing revenue stream to offset these costs.

Instead, OSU is turning to luxury suites and club seating to offset roughly 80 percent of this project's cost. Additional funds will be raised through a ticket surcharge.

"Those things — the club seats and luxury suites — are a product of what we're doing, not why we're doing it," said OSU associate athletic director Jim Smith.

OSU will issue \$150 million worth of bonds to pay for the stadium project. The athletic department will raise roughly \$9-11 million each year through luxury suite leases, club seats and the ticket surcharge to service the debt.

"All of that revenue — the suite fees, club seat revenue and at least 50 percent of the ticket increase — will go to pay down the debt," Smith said. "The balance of the ticket increase goes into inflation and to cover the increased operating costs of a department like this."

There will be approximately 82 suites at the stadium with price tags ranging from \$45,000 to \$70,000. Some of the suites, which will replace B-deck on the stadium's west side, will seat 30, while some will seat 11.

These boxes have already been offered to the 44 firms that purchased luxury suites at the Schottenstein Center.

"We have some commitments for those," Geiger said. "We are starting to sell suites at the stadium."

There will be roughly 2,500 club seats on the west side of A-deck, which will sell for \$2,000 a year.

The first \$3 of the ticket surcharge for all ticket holders goes into effect this year with \$2 added next year and another \$1 the following year.

Track Stadium Progress

One byproduct of the stadium project is the removal of the track. OSU's track programs will share a new stadium with the soccer programs on the old site of the Trautman Field baseball facility.

Work has begun on that stadium, which will probably open with a seating capacity in the 4,000 range, with an eye on having it ready for next spring.

"What we're doing is giving our track program a track for 12 months a year," Geiger said. "The track stadium has been started. You would see the storm drainage part of it has been done."

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COACHES CORNER

Coaches Sell Merits Of Schottenstein Center

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

One of the better "people persons" when it comes to recruiting, Paul Biancardi often uses his flair for interpersonal communication to attract people to his basketball program.

But Biancardi has a new ace up his sleeve these days at Ohio State — the Jerome Schottenstein Center — and the power of that imposing structure has forced even the smooth-talking Biancardi to bite his tongue.

"That's one time you keep your mouth shut," Biancardi said of touring recruits through the arena site. "It's almost that they stand there with their mouth open for a few seconds and they don't know what to say. You just give them that moment."

"We've taken a lot of recruits through there and they are in awe of the facility. But to tell you the truth, I am, too. When you go up to it from the outside it looks so big, and then once you go inside and look up, it's just mammoth. You start to get goose pimples all over your body and you start to envision 20,000 seats and coaching in it."

The building is not scheduled for completion until October — and the university will have to push the envelope to reach that goal — but just the sight of the exterior is enough to cause lightheadedness.

Basketball recruits like Yugoslavia native Slobodan Savovic and Laura Ingham of Alaska have been mightily impressed to the point they were almost sold on the spot. To help recruits soak in the grandeur of the building, coaches strategically house them at the nearby Fawcett Center during visits.

"There's a nice view of it from the Fawcett Center. They just happen to get those rooms," Biancardi said with a wink.

Women's coach Beth Burns also makes sure to have recruits and parents stay at the Fawcett Center hotel.

"When you walk out the front door of the Fawcett Center, the arena almost hits you in the face," she said. "There's no way that doesn't affect you."

"The four that we signed this year certainly were impacted. The immediate immense size of the building just driving up to it is almost breathtaking for a 16-year-old, especially when they imagine playing in it."

Hockey coach John Markell has reaped the most immediate benefit as the Schottenstein Center has come into view. The new arena, which will seat 17,500 for hockey, barely even compares to the antiquated and almost embarrassing OSU Ice Rink, which would cram in about 1,500 on benches for big games.

"Now the first place we will take them is to the rink, as compared to the past, when the last place we would take them to was the old rink," Markell said of hosting recruits.

"I would not even keep them at the Holiday Inn across the street in case they would be able to walk over on their own and without us being there to soften the blow."

"Now they can come over and peek — and dream — any time they want."

Enjoying The New Digs

The coaches are getting antsy to move

into the Schott.

"I know how we felt at Wisconsin when we went into their new arena," said men's basketball head coach Jim O'Brien, whose Boston College teams played at the 7,884-seat Conte Forum that catered more to hockey. "We walked in there and were very impressed with that, and they tell me ours will be better than that."

The basketball coaches especially like the fact that the Schottenstein Center includes an auxiliary gym that will give the Buckeyes their own court any time they need it. And considering the university would like to have events booked on almost a daily basis, the basketball teams figure to get quite cozy in the practice gym.

"For some reason, no one had ever had the foresight to build a practice gym in a new arena," said Burns, pointing out that even the world champion Chicago Bulls have to head off from the United Center to practice.

"Now Coach O'Brien and I can tell a kid, 'Hey, if you want to shoot, you can come here at 3 o'clock in the morning if you want to.'"

Added Biancardi, "I think there's a privateness to it so we can get our work done every day, and it's also great for the kids. They can come here and know it's their facility. If they want to come in and shoot around or hang out in the locker room to get away from things or sit in the video room, they have a place they can call their own."

Markell said he has assurances from athletic director Andy Geiger that he will get full use of the ice whenever possible.

"We just met the other day and his No. 1 priority is that any time the ice can be down in the Schottenstein Center, it will be down and we will be the team to practice in the main building," he said. "He knows we need a larger ice surface in order to practice on because we'll be going from a smaller to a larger ice surface."

Seat License Holders Could Be Key

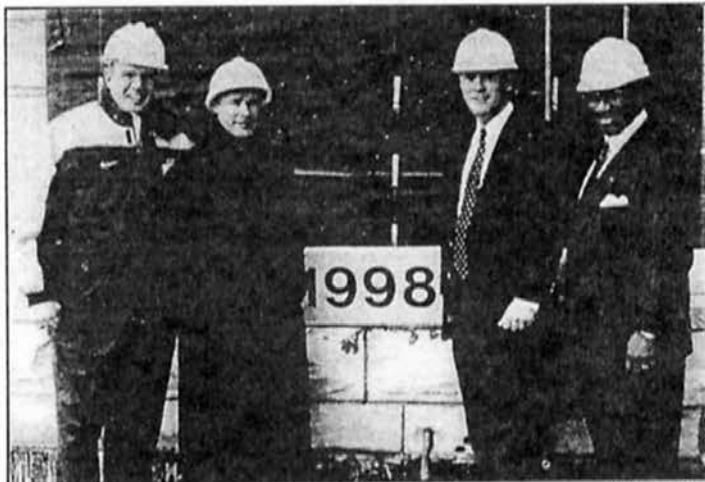
The Schottenstein Center is already proving unique, but it won't be labeled a success unless the three OSU teams calling it home draw fans en masse.

It's been proven in years past, when fans were turned away in droves during the Jim Jackson era, that men's basketball has the potential to fill the new house.

That's not realistic for women's basketball and hockey, of course, but school officials believe the Schottenstein Center could greatly improve attendance for those sports as well. Both Burns and Markell are counting on a new legion of fans who are intrigued by the arena. Many such newcomers could be personal seat license holders who will receive free tickets to hockey and women's hoops, according to OSU policy.

"I paid for my basketball tickets as a head coach here and when I'm away on recruiting those basketball tickets will go to somebody else so they can use them," Markell said. "My feeling is with the seat licenses, that's what's going to happen. The hockey tickets will be sitting there and they'll give them to somebody and somebody will probably use them."

"I don't think it's a bad thing at all." Markell estimated games that were shifted to the Fairgrounds Coliseum in



STEVE HELWAGEN

FOUR HORSEMEN — Pictured at the cornerstone ceremony last winter at OSU's Schottenstein Center are, left to right, athletic director Andy Geiger, hockey coach John Markell, men's basketball coach Jim O'Brien and OSU board of trustees chairman Alex Shumate. Markell, O'Brien and women's basketball coach Beth Burns are all excited about moving into the new structure.

recent years drew around 2,500, with probably not more than 500 of those patrons being students. With that in mind, and with over 4,000 PSL holders, Geiger's original and possibly once-dreamy goal of 5,000-6,000 for hockey home games could be attainable.

"People are going to come just to see the place, plus it's a lot easier to park and get into," Markell said. "It's a better facility and the value is great."

"I think we're going to have a great chance of building a nice following."

Burns said she was not aware of the PSL freebie policy, but she's all for it, too.

"Our No. 1 goal is for our fans to get to see us play, and I can't reassure them enough that moving from St. John to the Schott is a very positive thing," said the second-year coach. "There aren't going to be any bad seats in there. It's the same kind of bowl feeling St. John has. It's going to be fantastic."

Eventually You've Still Got To Win

But as much excitement as the new arena has cooked up already, it could have even more pull after a solid season in it.

"It is becoming a reality, but I don't think we've seen the full force of it yet," O'Brien said. "I think we may be one (recruiting) class away from seeing its real impact. But you still have to make sure what you're selling is a good thing."

Burns saw the construction of a new 12,000-seat arena at San Diego State and

reeled in her highest-rated recruiting class as a result. But she also had built the Aztecs into the league's dominant team.

"The product has to draw the people," she said. "Central Ohio and Ohio State have such a loyal fan base. Nowhere else in America can you be a first-year program and have the kind of support we did last year, the men and the women."

"We were not presenting a product that was going to win the Big Ten or play in the (NCAA) tournament. We knew that and our fans knew that, but they came nonetheless."

"If we put on the floor a first-class, high-flying, pressurized, fun-to-watch product, then I have every faith the people are going to come out and see it."

While O'Brien and Burns are trying to build winners, Markell has pressures of a different sort. His 1997-98 team was one of college sports' great stories, rising from the doldrums of the CCHA and advancing all the way to the NCAA final four.

"Everybody is saying the same thing, that this is really going to help the recruiting," Markell said of the Schottenstein Center. "Well, we're going to see that if they produce on the ice."

"But it certainly has helped. Now it's up to (the fans) to come out and support us. Of course, it's nice we had a winning season, but they have to become hockey fans just like they are football and basketball fans."

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THE FANS SPEAK OUT

Fans Behind Building Projects

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Between the Jerome Schottenstein Center and Ohio Stadium, Ohio State is spending better than \$250 million on facilities — and, by and large, the immense building plans meet the approval of Buckeye fans.

BSB used its Internet site recently to conduct a poll of OSU fans regarding the two major building projects. We posed a series of questions to BSB Plus subscribers and received some interesting responses.

For instance, 100 percent of the those responding approve of the general direction of athletic director Andy Geiger's building plans.

Just as many believe the \$150 million price tag on the stadium renovation project is justified, and a like number say the use of seat licenses was needed to fund the Schottenstein Center project.

"I am in favor of a campus which provides state-of-the-art facilities for all — students and athletes," said David Koch of Gainesville, Fla. "This attracts the talent which OSU needs."

George Sladoje of Glenview, Ill., likes not only the athletic projects, but others on campus as well.

"I'm generally pleased with the massive construction projects under way," he said. "This includes the Fisher business school, law school addition, Hagerty Hall renovation and the athletic facilities. OSU needs to present a modern image to compete in this high-tech age."

Two other respondents credited the efforts of OSU's leadership for building for the future.

"Facilities and programs do not stay the same," said Donald McPherson of Woodstock, Ga. "They either get worse or they get better. A tip of the hat to Andy Geiger, Gordon Gee and many others to their vision, determination and talent."

Added Roger Davis of Morristown, N.J., "This administration is not resting

on OSU's great tradition. It's driving for a great future."

Here is a look at the questions we posed to BSB Plus subscribers with some of their responses:

• Are you in favor of the Ohio Stadium renovation project? Do you believe it is necessary?

This was a unanimous "yes" on both counts.

"I have been concerned for years about the lack of investment in the stadium," said John Esselburn of Naperville, Ill. "It is a historical site, and preservation as well as fan convenience must be considered."

Ed Driscoll Jr. of Burbank, Calif., agrees the stadium renovation is necessary, but he questions permanent sprawling south stands.

"I'm glad they're renovating the stadium, especially things like the restrooms," he said. "I'm not sure of sinking the field like the Titanic. Ten feet seems like a lot. I'm wondering about the view from C-deck at that point."

"I've felt for the last 10 years or so that the shape of the Horseshoe is slowly being compromised the more we build onto the south stands."

A respondent who asked to remain anonymous added, "The B-deck has too many seats with obstructed views."

• What is your opinion on the \$150 million price tag to renovate the stadium? If, as OSU officials indicate, the cost will be borne by ticket increases and luxury suite sales, is it money well spent?

Once again, all of the respondents agreed this project is justified.

"It seems high, but without all the facts it's hard to judge," Esselburn said.

"It's very high, but reluctantly yes, it is justified," McPherson added.

Koch took a more cavalier approach to the spending.

"Who cares how much it costs?" he said. "It's not real money anyway. Ticket holders will gladly pay the increase."

But if the project accomplishes every-

thing currently on the drawing board, Sladoje said it would be worth it.

"The price tag makes sense given the magnitude of the effort," he said.

• Do you feel the stadium addition will alleviate the scarcity of tickets?

Seventy-one percent of those responding believe an additional 6,000 or more seats will not alleviate the demand for football tickets.

"Even with expansion, I do not expect ticket availability to improve," McPherson said.

Sladoje sounded a cautionary note that OSU must follow through with its plans to expand the stadium.

"If this renovation project doesn't expand seating capacity then there needs to be changes in athletic leadership," he said.

• Do you feel Ohio Stadium will become an elitist place by adding luxury suites to the stadium? Moreover, is there a place for this in college athletics?

Forty-four percent of those responding said they were against luxury boxes or truly concerned with their impact at Ohio Stadium.

"I really oppose this on many grounds," Esselburn said. "It will 'corporatize' the crowd even more and compound the ticket availability for the students, alumni and faculty, who should have priority."

This question drew the largest range of responses.

"It's already elitist," said Jack Stone of Stillwater, Okla. "Try getting tickets or a parking space. If you have enough money, the university will take care of you."

"I personally don't think there is a place for luxury boxes in college athletics. If the governor or a company president wants to watch an Ohio State football game, let them plop their butt down on a regular stadium seat along with the rest of us."

Koch also struck a realistic tone.

"OSU is a professional college football team," he said. "It takes money, and plenty of it, to run a program like this one."

And, likewise, Davis chimed in, saying, "These types of questions are ruses by people who would rather live in the past or who don't realize what it takes to win on a continuing basis. We must move with the times. Luxury boxes will attract the people with the money, brains and influence to provide the resources to help keep us on top."

Driscoll is optimistic that the changes will not affect the character of the stadium or the fans.

"Any place where people wear giant plastic Buckeyes on their head is in no danger of becoming snooty," he said.

• In regards to the Schottenstein Center, what are your feelings on the seat license program? Do you accept the explanation that such a program was necessary to help fund that project?

Once again, everybody who responded agreed that the PSLs were a necessary evil.

"I don't like the PSL, but I accept the argument that it is the only way to fund a major project like this," said one respondent who wished to remain anonymous.

• Do you feel the Schottenstein Center will open on time?

This was also a hot topic of discussion. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents felt it will open on time, 28 percent were not concerned by the opening date, and 15 percent said it would not open on time.

"It will be ready for the first event," Koch said. "The administration will find a way to open on time, no matter what it takes."

Richard Stimson of Henrico, N.C., added, "It will open on time with some things that still need to be completed."

Two other respondents took a "big picture" view on the opening date.

"So what if it opens on time?" Esselburn asked. "Even if it opens in January for the league season, it's OK. This is a long-term project. October is a non-issue to me."

"Who cares?" Davis asked. "So what if it's a month or two late? While that wouldn't be good, this project is about the next 50 years."

• Does Ohio State need the Schottenstein Center?

Eighty-seven percent of those responding believe it is necessary, although 13 percent cast a dissenting opinion.

"To remain on the cutting edge and in the forefront, Ohio State surely needs the Schottenstein Center," Sladoje said. "It's too bad because St. John Arena was one of the finest facilities ever constructed."

Koch likes what the building will do for the Buckeyes on a competitive basis.

"This center can turn a lot of stagnant programs around," he said.

A respondent who requested anonymity believes OSU is putting its eggs in the wrong basket with the arena project.

"I think OSU will always be a football school," he said. "If I were the AD and the president, I would use my resources to build the best football program I could have."

"Then, if we win a national championship in football, it would be easier to raise funds to build a basketball arena."



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THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Polls, Verbals, 'The Schott' Top Query List

I usually have a pretty good idea of what's on the minds of Buckeye fans by the questions I am most frequently asked.

The three I have been most frequently asked lately are, "What do you think of the football team's lofty preseason rankings?", "What do you think about Ohio State getting so many early verbal commitments?" and "Do you think the Schottenstein Center will be finished on time?"

My thoughts on these questions?

As far as the preseason polls, there is only one poll that matters to me and that is the one that will be released on Jan. 5, 1999. These preseason polls are just meaningless speculation. No one knows what freshman will produce this season, who will be injured, or even what teams will get lucky or unlucky in 1998.

One negative to being rated so high is that you become a marked team, with everyone else gunning for you. However, when you are Ohio State, it's already like that every week anyway.

One good thing about a high early ranking is that it's often easier to try to maintain a high position in the polls than to start way back and move up. And how-high you finish becomes more and more important with Big Ten teams now eligible to play in college's championship game.

As far as Ohio State locking up so many recruits early, that's the direction football powers have been heading over the last few years. Until one of the powers proves that it is more beneficial to wait before offering, that trend should continue. I do think this trend penalizes players who are late-bloomers. By the time these players prove they are major-college caliber, many of the spaces at the good schools have already been taken.

I also worry that if Ohio State does make a run at the national championship this season, it won't have enough scholarships left for some of the big-name talent from out of state who might suddenly become interested in the Buckeyes. Some of the kids OSU has already offered this year probably would have been just as interested in Ohio State if they were offered in November or later.

But I must admit that recruiting is one area where I seldom quibble with John Cooper and staff, so I will assume they know what they are doing.

As for the Schottenstein Center, I think it will open on time, but the question is what condition it will be in at the time of opening. It's unfortunate that the magnificence of this building is being overshadowed by questions about its timely completion.

Ohio State has to take some responsibility for all the speculation. In hindsight, athletic director Andy Geiger's continued and adamant insistence that the building would be completed on schedule while there were still huge holes in the roof as recently as early June,

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

was probably a mistake. Now that the athletic department has acknowledged that some things would not be finished at the time of opening, the discussion seems to have died down.

If you haven't seen the Schottenstein Center yet, you will be amazed at the sheer size of the building. It's huge. I am a little surprised at how close it is to Olentangy River Road and Lane Avenue. It will be interesting to see pedestrian flow when 20,000 try to enter the building. I've yet to see the inside of The Schott, but I can't wait.

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On The Charts

A couple of interesting charts con-

cerning draft picks in football and basketball have crossed my desk recently.

Lindy's Football Annual rated the overall No. 1 picks in the NFL drafts from 1970-97 as far as how they ended up performing as pros. The three first overall picks from Ohio State — Tom Cousineau (1979), Dan Wilkinson (1994) and Orlando Pace (1997) — did not fare well in the rankings.

Pace, drafted by the Rams, was ranked 19th of the 28 top picks, with the notation that it was a conditional ranking because it is still early in his career. "Didn't come remotely close to dominating opponents as he did in college," it says.

Wilkinson, who recently ended a sometimes stormy tenure with Cincinnati, the team that drafted him, was ranked 22nd. "Washed out with the Bengals; getting second chance with Redskins," it says.

Cousineau, drafted originally by the Bills, was ranked 27th. "Never signed with the Bills and flopped with Browns after three seasons in CFL," it says.

Only Walt Patulski, also drafted by the Bills out of Notre Dame in 1972, was ranked lower than Cousineau. "One of all-time, overhyped, colossal busts," Lindy's said of Patulski, a defensive end.

Don't totally discount Buffalo's use of the top pick, however. They also had the highest rated overall pick in Bruce Smith, a defensive end plucked out of Virginia Tech in the 1985 draft. "Ten-time Pro Bowler, perhaps NFL's greatest top overall pick ever."

Some pretty good players round

out the top 10. They are Terry Bradshaw (1970), John Elway (1983), Earl Campbell (1978), Ed Jones (1974), Lee Roy Selmon (1976), Troy Aikman (1989), Jim Plunkett (1971), Drew Bledsoe (1993) and Steve Bartkowski (1975).

Other notables at the loser end of the chart include Jeff George (20th, 1990), Vinny Testaverde (21st, 1987) and Ki-Jana Carter (24th, 1995).

Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal, a rather unique publication that recently hit the streets, listed the players making the highest and lowest salaries in the NBA during the 1997-98 season based on where they were selected in the first round of the league's draft.

The player drafted 14th overall making the least amount of money last season was none other than OSU's Herb Williams, who was selected in that slot by the Indiana Pacers way back in 1981. Williams was paid \$766,667 this past season by the New York Knicks, according to the chart.

While Herbie made far less than, say, the player selected third overall with the highest salary last year (Michael Jordan at \$33,140,100), the big guy from Columbus is doing OK for himself. When you consider that Williams has been in the NBA since 1981, you have to figure he's made quite a bit of money through the years.

The player selected 14th overall making the most money last season was the recently retired Clyde Drexler (1983, Portland), who pulled down \$5.5 million last year.

The highest-paid overall No. 1 pick last year was the Knicks' Patrick Ewing (1985), who earned \$20.5 million. The lowest-paid top draft pick active last year was Pervis Ellison (Sacramento, 1989), who made \$2.09 million for the Boston Celtics.

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