Major Renovations Announced for Williams Stadium

Liberty University

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Major renovations announced for Williams Stadium

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Liberty University is embarking on an ambitious multimillion-dollar building campaign to beautify, modernize and expand its football and basketball facilities.

Stadium construction will begin immediately after the conclusion of the 2009 home football season in early November. LU Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. said he anticipates Phase One improvements to Williams Football Stadium will be completed Sept. 1, 2010.
Phase One

Phase One will include the addition of 6,600 new seats and construction of a 34,000 square-foot brick- and glass-encased Jeffersonian-style tower on the west side of the stadium. It will have a majestic view of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and Liberty Mountain to the east. The three-story press box building will include club seating and room for qualified Flames Club donors, 16 permanent, luxury suites, a banquet room for up to 500 people, classroom space for up to 1,000, a high quality Division 1 press box and four elevators.

“I think this project will take us to a higher level of competition,” Falwell said. “It will put Liberty on the same level as other major universities in the state and in the region. I think it is amazing what we are accomplishing with God’s help. The sky’s the limit for Liberty.”

Phase One is only part of a multiphase plan to boost the stadium’s seating capacity from 12,000 seats to 30,000 seats over the next five years. The project will give the stadium a Jeffersonian look similar to other buildings on campus.

The expansion of Williams Stadium will have a monumental effect on Liberty University and its football program. Above all else this shows a great commitment from the university and when you have commitment, a lot of wonderful things can happen.

Jeff Barber, Director of Athletics
Phase Two and Three

Phase Two and Three will add a new 4,000-seat mid-deck for the east side of the stadium and 6,400 seats in a horseshoe-shaped area, in the end zone, surrounding the visitors locker room and the south end zone.

When all phases are complete, the stadium will have undergone about $22 million in improvements.

The renovated facility will ready the stadium for construction of upper decks on both the west and east sides in the future. The long-range vision is to expand the stadium to hold 60,000 fans.

“With some segments of the public, the perception of the university, rightly or wrongly, is largely determined by the success of the athletic program,” Falwell said. “Athletics is the only involvement most of the public ever have with a university.”

“You cannot ignore the importance of facilities in recruiting, as kids look for nicer facilities and to be in a program where they feel the program is important to the overall university. Above all, I think it just shows a great commitment from our University’s administration to get our program to a level of national prominence.”

Danny Rocco, Football Head Coach
Falwell said the stadium expansion is in keeping with LU’s overall growth pattern. Fall enrollment for residential students this year is expected to reach 11,900. Liberty had about 5,026 on-campus students just 10 years ago.

In addition to resident students, LU is expected to enroll more than 50,000 students in its online program this year.

“This stadium project is a natural step for Liberty in its progression from a small Bible college to a major university,” Falwell said. “That was the goal from the beginning – to be for evangelical young people what Notre Dame is to Catholics and what Brigham Young is to Mormons. Athletics and football in particular was always a big part of that vision.”

Falwell said the improved stadium will help recruit athletes and other students as well.

“Prospective student-athletes will see Liberty as a serious contender in NCAA Division I,” he said. “We’ll be able to better recruit the top athletes in every sport. Improvements like this will help us convey the message that Liberty is achieving excellence in academics and in all of our facilities and programs. I think this will provide a major boost to both our athletic and academic recruiting. My father always said, ‘If it’s Christian, it ought to be better.’”

Falwell said the revamped stadium will be an “invaluable” asset for Lynchburg and the surrounding counties.
“It will be available for events other than football,” he said. “I am sure it will attract events that wouldn’t have considered coming to Lynchburg in the past.”

For instance, the stadium’s new high-definition video scoreboard lends itself to playing outdoor movies.

LU is also planning a comprehensive fundraising campaign that will allow donors to name facilities at the stadium – Chancellor’s suite, locker rooms, the playing field, the Tower, club and banquet rooms – in exchange for contributions.

“Donors always play a key role in any capital improvement project,” Falwell said. “Most of the funding for our major facilities in the past 20 years has come from donors.”

Director of Athletics Jeff Barber said the stadium building program and a proposed expansion and improvement to the Vines Center give Liberty instant credibility as a major college sports program.

**Funding**

Your tax deductible gift (see your tax advisor) is payable over a five-year period and can result in having a room or facility named in your honor. Contact Director of Athletics Development, Bob Good, at 434-582-2178 or rgood@liberty.edu for more information.