

July 3, 2003

TO: Fans, Friends, and Supporters of LSU Athletics

FROM: Skip Bertman, LSU Director of Athletics

Last week's Cyber-side Chat generated the most responses to date. I'm excited to know that so many people are reading these e-mails and giving them so much consideration. That is evident from your thoughtful responses.

As I promised in my last Cyber-side Chat, this week I'm going to take you on a tour of a few Southeastern Conference schools so you can see facility development in the athletic programs with which we compete.

But first let me say this: I am a longtime believer that PEOPLE win games, not facilities. You can put a great coach with great players in a bad stadium and win games. You can have the best stadium in America, but if the coach or the athletes are not up to par, the team will not be successful.

However, to get those great coaches and great players, you have to be able to attract them to your campus. You do that in part with facilities. Then you have to give them the tools to succeed: proper funding for recruiting, travel, equipment and academic support.

And having good facilities is also about you, the customer. You should have a clean and safe place to bring your family to enjoy Tiger Athletics.

As we take an inventory of facility development among SEC schools, I think you will see that LSU has begun to fall behind our competitors. We must ask ourselves where we will be in 10 to 15 years if we don't begin to make improvements now. That's why we are in the planning stage of improving athletics facilities in keeping with our "Top-Five Vision."

So let's take a look around the SEC. The facility improvements below depict only some, not all, of the development around our league.

Alabama's facility improvements in recent years have included a \$38 million upgrade to its football stadium, \$6 million for a gymnastics facility and \$6.5 million for its baseball stadium. After completing a \$60 million planned project in its football stadium, the Crimson Tide will have spent over \$150 million since 1996.

Arkansas built a new basketball arena for \$36 million, a new baseball stadium for \$9.2 million, a new indoor track for \$9.6 million and completely renovated its football stadium for \$110 million, in all spending over \$170 million since 1993.

Arkansas has made such an investment that the oldest athletics facility on the Fayetteville campus that hasn't been either rebuilt or completely renovated is Bud Walton Arena,

Arkansas' basketball facility was built only 10 years ago, and 21 years after LSU's Assembly Center opened.

Florida renovated its basketball arena for \$10.6 million and built a stand-alone basketball practice facility for \$10 million. When they complete a \$50 million upgrade to its football stadium this year, the Gators will have spent well over \$100 million since 1991 on facility improvements.

Georgia has upgraded its football stadium three times since 1991 for \$21 million and just approved another \$21 million expansion that will make it bigger than Tiger Stadium. Meanwhile, it has spent over \$10 million on three renovations to an Olympic sports complex to give the Bulldogs over \$90 million in improvements since 1996.

South Carolina spent \$30 million on its football stadium and built a new basketball arena for \$70 million, giving the Gamecocks over \$106 million in facility upgrades since 1994.

And at Tennessee, over \$18 million was spent on the football stadium as the Volunteers were announcing \$50 million in other new facilities and renovations for a total of over \$100 million since 1987.

Meanwhile, LSU's facility improvements in the last 20 years have been comparatively sparse. While other SEC schools made major investments in their facilities during the 1980s and 1990s, LSU has spent less than \$70 million in major athletics facilities since 1979. If it weren't for the \$50 million for the east side addition to Tiger Stadium, LSU would have spent less than \$20 million in the last 24 years.

Most of LSU's current facilities were built in 1975 and before, and only Tiger Stadium has had any major renovation. So, while other SEC schools continue to generate more revenue and invest it in facility improvements, LSU trails the major schools in the league in this very important category.

Now that we've taken a look around the conference, I hope you will agree that, if we don't make some important decisions soon about our facilities, we will fall further behind our competition in this important part of our athletics program.

I encourage you to send your feedback to us at [LSUvision@etigers.net](mailto:LSUvision@etigers.net). Although I cannot guarantee a response to every e-mail, please know that they will all be read, so I hope you will participate in our plan. Thank you for your continued support of Tiger Athletics.