New athletics facilities on horizon at Clemson

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Clemson fans attending athletic events during the next several years are going to experience some vastly different venues than they've been used to seeing.

The Clemson University Board of Trustees recently gave preliminary approval to four projects and final approval for two others totaling around $146 million.

Littlejohn Coliseum, which has housed the men's and women's basketball programs since its opening in 1968, topped all projects with an estimated cost of $60 million-80 million. Included in preliminary plans are renovation of the playing area and seating bowl, reducing capacity from around 10,000 to 8,500 seats and incorporating all men's and women's basketball program operations. Those include coaches' offices, weight rooms, locker rooms, video editing and theater areas housed in a separate practice facility addition.

Athletics Director Dan Radakovich said Littlejohn Coliseum would follow a similar transformation as that which occurred at Georgia Tech's Alexander Memorial Coliseum.

The Hoke Sloan Tennis Center and Duckworth Pavilion will undergo expansion that includes six indoor courts so the men's and women's programs can practice simultaneously. The availability of six courts will also make it more feasible for the facility to host NCAA sanctioned indoor matches. Total cost of the project is anticipated to be in the $12 million range.

A new Football Operations Facility, whose total cost is estimated in the $30 million range, will consist of 60,000-80,000 square feet and located near the Indoor Football Practice Facility. Currently, the WestZone houses all football operational functions – including weight room, training room, equipment room, student-athlete and coach locker rooms, coaches' offices and team meeting rooms. Because of its distance from the Indoor Practice Facility, student-athletes and coaches must take a truck-pulled tram through a long parking lot and across Perimeter Road to access practice areas. The project is expected to begin construction in 2015.

Final conceptual plans for Doug Kingsmore Stadium, approved by the board, consists of a three-level facility with player amenities located adjacent to the current locker room area on the Stadium's north side directly behind the first base stands. The facility will include locker rooms, a lobby, team areas, training rooms, a player's dining area, meeting space, a gallery, catering kitchen, laundry, coaches offices and a player's lounge.

The facility will be integrated into the existing first base line spectators stands and add a viewing platform at the highest level. It will also move both the home team and visitor's dugouts closer to the first and third base lines and add approximately 150 seats to the stadium. The total project cost is estimated at $8.85 million.

The board also gave final approval to the third phase of additions to the WestZone Complex. Additions include a new pedestrian area that will create a safe and inviting way to navigate through the mid-level of the WestZone and construction of the Oculus that will be the signature vertical element of the stadium. The bridge will make a direct connection from the north to the south stands, alleviating congestion on the interior WestZone concourse and provide an overlook point to tailgating and Tigerwalk entrance activities.

Construction of the WestZone addition, which, at $6.5-$8.5 million is expected to be well within its original estimate of $15 million, is expected to begin in 2014.

The projects are being funded through a combination of athletic facility revenue bonds, operating revenues and gifts. The bonds will be debt serviced through the Clemson Athletics Facilities Trust, a Foundation quasi-endowment created through private gifts invested with the Clemson University Foundation.

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New and Improved:

- New Littlejohn Coliseum ..... $60-80 million
- The Hoke Sloan Tennis Center and Duckworth Pavilion ..... $12 million
- Letterwinner's Lounge ..... $5-$7 million
- Football Operations Facility ..... $30 million range
- Doug Kingsmore Stadium Addition ..... $8.85 million
- Memorial Stadium WestZone Component III ..... $6.5-$8.5 million