A Philanthropic Facelift

Old Athletics Facilities are New Again Thanks to Dedicated Donors

BY JO ANN LLOYD | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURA DICKINSON

Cal Poly Athletics’ commitment to achieving athletic and academic excellence by developing state-of-the-art facilities got a major boost with more than $500,000 in donations to fund major renovations.

And Director of Athletics Don Oberhelman couldn’t be more pleased with the results.

“Our tennis courts were completely inadequate for a Division I program,” he said. “Now they are some of the best in the state. The change has been transformational.”

The seven courts were resurfaced and repainted, with the Athletics brand prominently appearing on every court. New windscreens and a new scoreboard that displays game, set and match were also installed. “That scoreboard is the crown jewel of the renovations,” Oberhelman said.

The strength and conditioning room also received a much-needed facelift, thanks to the generous donations of about 20 football parents. The once-dreary, severely outdated weight room has an entirely new look, feel and sound system. Football coach Tim Walsh said it was revamped for the benefit of all student-athletes.

“Every athlete needs to be bigger, stronger, faster, and this new space can deliver the goods,” Walsh said. “It got a total makeover. When the players first saw it, their jaws dropped.”

Head Strength and Conditioning Coach Chris Holder designed it with all Cal Poly student-athletes in mind.

“This room impacts the physical life of every one of our 500-plus student-athletes,” Holder said. “This state-of-the-art training facility gives them a place in which to lift and gives me all the tools I need to develop our programs. It’s also an invaluable recruiting tool for our coaches.

“I hope the parents realize what a massive impact their donations have made and will continue to make for years to come.”
The decision to donate to the project was an easy one for parents Mike and Michelle McMurtrey. Their son, Carson, was recruited by several schools to play football.

“We toured a lot of schools after his junior year, and the others had state-of-the-art athletics facilities, which Carson found exciting,” Mike McMurtrey said. “Ultimately, though, we decided that the type of education we wanted had to override the cool sports facilities.

“When we were approached about these renovation plans, we immediately knew we had to get involved. With the success of last year’s football, basketball and baseball teams, Carson and all of the Cal Poly student-athletes deserved better and needed something to be proud of.

“We appreciated that the project could be completed in a matter of months, not years down the road. It will also help in our future recruiting by matching up better against other institutions athletically.”

The student-athletes are especially grateful.

“All the years I’ve been here, student-athletes have been training in a sub-par facility but still winning championships,” said football player Sullivan Grosz, a fifth-year business major. “Our new weight room is a reward to those who have sacrificed blood, sweat and time to be champions. Cal Poly athletes now have a room that has everything they need to be the best.”

New tennis courts, a refurbished weight room, and upgrades to the women’s volleyball locker room have been completed, but much more needs to be done.

“Our facilities are behind the competition,” Oberhelman said. “Improved facilities will launch our programs into the next stratosphere of competitive excellence.”

Specifically, he said, upgrades are needed to Mott Athletics Center and Baggett and Spanos stadiums.

“We are working hard to connect with alumni, fans and friends to help us upgrade and remain competitive,” Oberhelman continued. “Our facilities are last in the Best West Conference. Our programs remain competitive, because we recruit to Cal Poly. Students understand the value of a Cal Poly degree — the value of Learn by Doing.

“Our student-athletes get thrust into a Learn by Doing lab every day when it comes to leadership, teamwork, group dynamics, and how to deal with success and failure. And they take it one step further by doing it all in front of an audience. They engage in Learn by Doing in a public fashion.”