

Crews start Autzen demolition

■ A webcam will capture all the action of the construction

by Marty Toohey
for the Emerald

Autzen Stadium is closed and the Duck home schedule is finished, but fans can still watch the action taking place inside the arena.

The stadium expansion starts today after a three-month hiatus, and a live-feed webcam will provide continuous footage of the construction work, including the demolition of the press box and south end seating canopy, according to Assistant Athletic Director Steve McBride.

The University has received all necessary construction permits and awarded the contracts for the work, and the expansion is still scheduled for completion in Spring 2003.

Construction crews finished basic structural work during the season, but "the major work is about to start," McBride said.

Demolition of the canopy and press box will finish in two weeks. Contractors will begin demolishing the south side seating, he said.

The remodel calls for at least 32 luxury boxes in a new three-story luxury suite/press box, which will be constructed along the top of the south rim of the stadium above a 20,000-square-foot all-purpose lounge. At least 3,000 of the stadium's 12,000 new seats will be located in a covered section for preferred ticket holders, and 2,000 preferred sideline seats will be adjacent to the covered area.

The luxury boxes lease for \$30,000 a year, and Larson said they are nearly sold out.

McBride said that "there will be significant demolition done before the end of the school year," and that when students return from winter break, "there will be very noticeable changes in the stadium."

The construction can be viewed at <http://autzen-webcam.uoregon.edu>.

John Poston, the project's lead architect, said that aside from the renovation of the south end, the most significant part of the project will be a noticeable entrance added to the stadium.

"The hallmark of the design is that for the first time, Autzen will have strong public image — a 'front door,' if you will," Poston said. "This new image will be especially strong for those approaching from campus and entering from the south."

Poston's firm, Ellerbe Becket, designed the Rose Garden in Portland and has done renovations for football stadiums at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Missouri and Southern Methodist University. He said that from a design perspective, renovations and expansions are more challenging than designing new buildings, because "to be successful, there is a need to carefully study the existing stadium."

With construction crews working into darkness six nights a week, Autzen Stadium's parking lot will be enclosed by a fence and will be off-

limits, according to McBride. The lot entrance at the Kinsrow Avenue-Centennial Boulevard traffic light will also be closed for the first part of the construction, meaning that people using the Autzen Stadium footpath, including students who walk or bike to the University from nearby apartments, will have to circumvent the lot entirely to get to the footpath.

The total expansion cost is now estimated at \$89.7 million, an increase of \$9.7 million from the original budget. The \$9.7 million increase will be covered through donations, according to Tom Larson, director of finance and contracts for the Athletic Department.

The University also recently received \$29.4 million in state bonds to pay for the project, which will be repaid by donations over the next 10 years, Larson said.

The University will host a school-record eight home games in 2002 and averaged a school-record 45,093 fans each game this season. In all, the seating stadium's seating capacity will increase from 41,698 to 53,800. The average stadium attendance has exceeded seating capacity for five of the past six years.

Marty Toohey is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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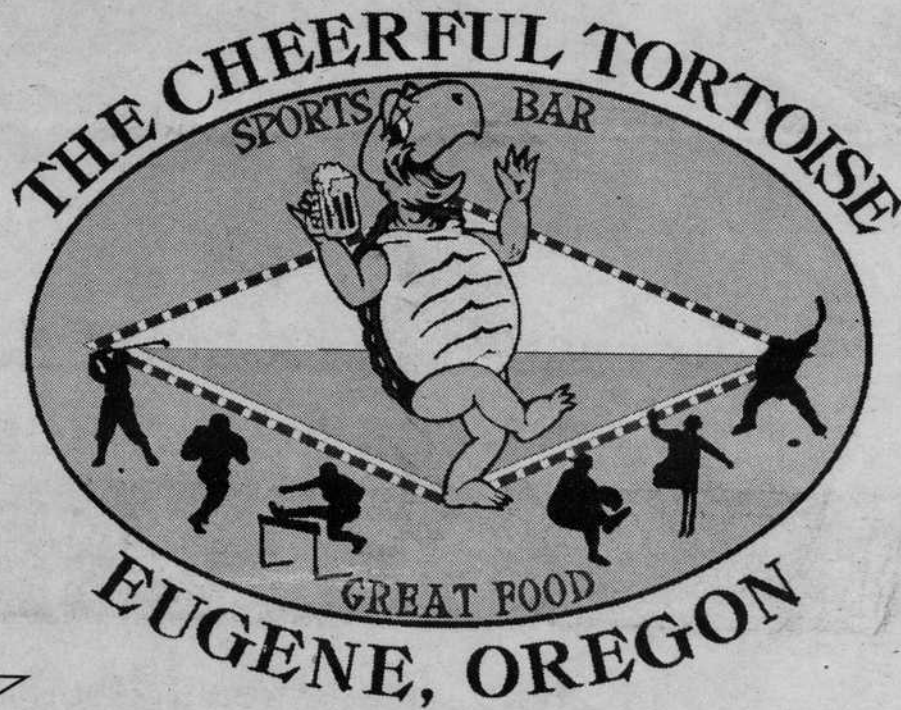
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