



## **Auburn Athletics Committee OKs Stadium Expansion**

October 11, 2001

By Brian Russell, Auburn Plainsman

The Auburn University Board of Trustees Athletic Committee cleared the way for another expansion to Jordan-Hare Stadium at its Oct. 4 meeting.

The committee made its decision after receiving a marketing study conducted by Brailsford and Dunlavey over the past four months.

"There is clear evidence of unmet demand for premium seating," said Chris Dunlavey of Brailsford and Dunlavey.

Among the recommendations from the consulting firm were the addition of 25 12-seat luxury suites and 3,500 club-level seats, which would push Jordan-Hare's capacity to about 90,000.

The seats would bring in an additional \$ 5.8 million each season.

The study surveyed current demand for premium seating at Jordan-Hare Stadium and identified an appropriate level of pricing.

"Those were really the questions we had to go out and answer," Dunlavey said.

Representatives from his firm met with a number of individuals on campus and many interest groups.

"We met with everybody, from coach Tuberville to those involved in the Athletics Department in the marketing efforts, and those in the ticketing office," Dunlavey said.

There have been seven expansions to Jordan-Hare Stadium since it was built in 1939.

Its capacity was 7,500 then. The latest addition to the stadium occurred in 1987 when the eastside upper deck and luxury suites were added.

"The only real, physically practical location to add capacity is in the end zone locations because of the configuration of the stadium," Dunlavey said.

Dunlavey said individuals, not corporations, would be the target audience for the expansion seating.

"The bottom line at this point is we did not find a whole lot of unmet demand among corporate users out there," Dunlavey said. "What that means is your athletics department is already doing a very good job of reaching the potential corporate market out there."

Brailsford and Dunlavey compared the projected capacity with additions to other stadiums around the SEC and college football.

What they found was a wave of development to add premium seating at college football stadiums around the country.

"There are a large number of successful additions of club-level seats at collegiate stadiums around the country," Dunlavey said.

If Auburn follows the consulting firm's recommendations, Jordan-Hare will have 94 suites, fewer only to Tennessee's Neyland Stadium, which has 120 suites.

Athletics committee chairman Robert Lowder asked that University move ahead with the recommendations and begin discussions with the stadium-design firm HOK.

The athletics committee also received the results of a feasibility study for a possible capital campaign, which would serve to fund the stadium addition.

The study, performed by J.F. Smith Group, took seven months to complete.

About 100 possible "influential and affluent" donors were surveyed during the study, according to Jerry Smith of J.F. Smith Group.

Of the people surveyed, 94 percent said the image of the Athletics Department was excellent, very good or good. Ninety-six percent ranked the leadership of coaches in the same area.

"Based on just those two questions, we think that that is a pretty good indicator for a good climate for a possible athletics campaign," Smith said. "Those are very high numbers."

The Athletics Department is looking to raise a total goal of \$ 75 million to fund 15 projects, including the stadium addition.

J.F. Smith Group recommended a five-year comprehensive campaign. The firm's tentative goal was to raise a total between \$ 80 and \$ 90 million.

Before a fund-raising campaign can begin, Interim President William Walker, Athletics Director David Housel and Jay Jacobs of Tigers Unlimited will have to meet and discuss a game plan.

"We will have to meet and make a timetable before any such campaign can begin," Housel said. "We intend to take the initiative, seize the opportunity, and get this project under way."

The renovations are expected to be ready by the 2004 season opener.