

Excellence in Masonry: January 2003

Autzen Stadium renovation makes a big “splash” for the Ducks!



Project: Autzen Stadium

Licensee: Central Pre Mix/Willamette Graystone

Mason Contractor: J & S Masonry, Inc

Architect: Ellerbe Becket

The success of the Ducks football program in the past decade compelled the University of Oregon to expand and upgrade the Autzen Stadium facilities to meet the demands of a top-level competitor in NCAA Division I athletics.

The University of Oregon initiated a competitive selection process in late 1998 and selected Ellerbe Becket of Kansas City, Mo., for their professional design services. Putting together a cast of expert consultants in sports facility design, Ellerbe Becket tackled this complex three-year design and documentation process. Coordination and development of multiple specialty building systems included food service facilities, audio/visual systems, television broadcast infrastructure, vertical transportation, fire protection systems, playing field system, landscaping, wayfinding signage, as well as other building systems including structural, mechanical, electrical and civil engineering.

The massive scale of the structure required materials that would provide the university with a facility that could be easily maintained for many seasons to come. Ellerbe Becket chose masonry for its longevity and aesthetic beauty.

J&S Masonry Inc. was selected as the mason contractor, which met the challenge of a demanding schedule while maintaining the highest level of craftsmanship for a building that will be utilized by more than 54,000 fans on any given Saturday. Not only was craftsmanship critical, but consistent materials delivered efficiently to J&S Masonry's crews were a necessity. J&S Masonry chose the proven performance of SPEC MIX® mortars produced by Central Pre-Mix through their distributor Willamette Graystone to make the Autzen Stadium project a success.

The exposed structure of the seating bowl is fabricated of structural and architectural precast concrete, forming a sinuous shape that effectively extends the existing seating bowl structure, and maintains an intimate “single bowl” concept. The upper press tower is constructed of insulated metal building panels, glass curtain wall systems and a fully retractable, moveable glass panel wall system to provide unimpeded views to the action on the field. Crowning the press tower is a spectacular roof canopy featuring wood glulam beams that cantilever almost 100 feet over the seating bowl, creating a dramatic focal point.

Extensive use of concrete masonry units is incorporated at public areas including the main concourse of the stadium, as well as at the perimeter operations buildings.

Concrete masonry was the perfect choice for these high traffic areas to produce a long-term, durable design solution that required minimal maintenance and helped maintain a “human” scale to the facility. The use of alternating bands of split-faced masonry units and ground-faced masonry units in an insulated, single wythe wall produces a subtle, horizontal banding that complements the overall stadium design concept. All the masonry on this project has been treated with a transparent anti-graffiti/water repellent coating providing weatherability and cleanability to the wall, while preserving the natural look of the masonry.

In addition to building enclosures, masonry units are used at freestanding masonry columns that serve as a base for perimeter site lighting and also as enhancements to approximately 3,000 feet of custom steel fence and gates surrounding the entire facility. These same columns are utilized at each stadium entry, providing an “up close and personal” experience upon entering this dramatic collegiate stadium setting.

Expansion and renovation also included the addition of 12,000 seats to the capacity of Autzen Stadium, consisting of approximately 6,000 bench seats, 2,500 preferred sideline seats at midfield and 3,200 premium club seats with access to The Club at Autzen, a private elevated club level with enhanced concession services, large public lounges and spectacular views to the Willamette River Valley. In addition, two levels of the new press tower contain 32 private suites, to accommodate key program donors and university officials. The topmost level of the press tower is dedicated to support of broadcast and print news operations.

The entire facility design provides the University of Oregon with one of the most magnificent football stadiums in the country. Oregon alumni, students, and all Duck fans can be proud to host opponents at Autzen Stadium for decades to come.