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Team Effort Funds Improvements for Ole Miss Baseball

Bullpen Club makes major gift to upgrade Oxford-University Stadium

JULY 14, 2017 BY [BILL DABNEY](#)



Ole Miss baseball players greet Rebel fans at Swayze Field. UM photo by Bill Dabney

OXFORD, Miss. – A ritual has emerged within **Ole Miss baseball** that compels the Rebels to pump their fists in unison to the beat of the 2007 hit song “Love is Gone.” Now, with a major gift, the sport’s fan base wants to show its players that the love is back.

The Ernie LaBarge Bullpen Club has committed \$150,000 toward Oxford-University Stadium enhancements primarily designed to benefit the student-athletes.

“As a former player and coach, I’m happy to see these improvements being made on behalf of the players,” said Matt Mossberg, associate athletics director for development and major gifts. “Everyone knows the allure of Swayze Field, and the previous enhancements to the stadium have been crucial to that fan experience.

“Personally, I am extremely excited to help in the effort to improve the space our talented coaches and student-athletes work in every day.”

Thanks in part to the Bullpen Club’s gift, players will soon enjoy a state-of-the-art locker room and team meeting room, new hitting and pitching facilities, weight room enhancements and more. The gift will also help fund the M-Club Rooftop Plaza, which utilizes space on top of the performance center for additional seating.

“When I arrived here in the summer of 2000, one of the first people I met was Ernie LaBarge, the president of the Bullpen Club,” said Mike Bianco, head baseball coach. “I knew I wanted Ernie and the Bullpen Club to be an integral part of the program.

“Ernie built the club to over 1,000 members before his passing and then the club was named in his memory. The ELBC has continued to be instrumental in our growth as a program, helping supplement our budget.”

A longtime friend of the university and Rebel fan, LaBarge died in March 2008.



Members of the Ernie LaBarge Bullpen Club present the Ole Miss Athletics Foundation with a \$150,000 gift to be used for stadium enhancements that will benefit student-athletes. Submitted photo

Of the Bullpen Club’s gift, \$100,000 was donated as part of the \$200 million Forward Together campaign, which was launched in 2011 to strengthen Ole Miss athletics in its continuous commitment to excellence. The additional \$50,000 is committed to support other baseball projects within the athletics department.

These team-related stadium enhancements are possible because of private giving, said Keith Carter, senior associate athletics director for development and executive director of the **Ole Miss Athletics Foundation**. Previous stadium renovations, such as the addition of the Diamond Club, were made possible by revenue-generating components, such as the sale of premium seats.

“While there are some new premium seats in this renovation, philanthropy is key to this whole project,” Carter said. “We needed people to step up and the Bullpen Club once again did that. I believe our players will be very grateful.”

For more information about the Forward Together campaign, contact Carter at jkcarter@olemiss.edu,

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OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates’

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call 662-915-7159 or visit <http://givetoathletics.com/forward-together/>. For more information about the Ernie LaBarge Bullpen Club, [click here](#).

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