

Lourdes Park

Pavilions provide fans with a special place at 'the Tigie'

WHEN THE 2007 BASEBALL SEASON cranks up in February, fans will have a new place to gather at M.L. "Tigue" Moore Field.

Lourdes Park features nine pavilions and some open areas that are surrounded by a wrought iron fence. Each pavilion has a steel roof, concrete floor, lighting and electrical outlets. Built-in barbecue pits could be added.

One pavilion measures 30 feet by 30 feet; two are 20 feet by 20 feet; and six are 10 feet by 10 feet.

UL Lafayette is the only university in Louisiana that has such a park at its baseball stadium.

Head coach Tony Robichaux said the addition is intended to enhance an environment that promotes "clean family fun."

"We'll officially open it for our first home game on Feb. 13. From there, we'll probably rent the pavilions on a seasonal basis," he said.

The coach saw a similar facility for the minor league Mobile Bay Bears about five years ago. "When I'm on the road, I always try to visit other facilities to get ideas that might work here," he said, adding that minor leagues make an extra effort to provide ballparks that are "fan friendly."

Robichaux and John T. Landry, development officer for UL Lafayette, first explored obtaining a matching grant to pay for part of the cost of constructing the park. But one of the grant's stipulations was that the park would have to be open to the public at certain times.

The university preferred to maintain complete control of the park, so it allocated half of the necessary funding. Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center provided the other half. Home Bank donated the park's fence and sidewalks.

Berch Stelly, community relations director for Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center, said it wanted to participate in a project that would improve the university's athletic facilities "but, just as importantly, would generate badly needed revenues for the baseball program."

"Spring sports," such as baseball and softball, rely heavily on self-generated funds.

"Lourdes Park will give us a unique way to not only generate revenue but also to maybe increase season ticket



The new pavilions feature concrete floors and electrical outlets. They are surrounded by a wrought iron fence.



1979. Moore, who died in 1994, has been described by sportswriters as “Acadiana’s ‘Mr. Baseball’ for decades.”

“With our fan support, we have one of the best home field advantages in the country,” Robichaux said.

Since 1999, UL Lafayette’s baseball program has consistently ranked in the top 50 nationally in total and average home attendance.

Here are other improvements made at the stadium recently.

- New stadium bleachers were installed by the university on the first- and third-base sides.
- Brick wall borders were added on the first- and third-base sides, from the dugouts to the outfield. Supplies for the project were donated by Acme Brick and Angelle Concrete.

sales, sell more products at the stadium and bring kids out to the ballpark. So it just works in several ways,” Robichaux said.

At presstime, details about pricing and scheduling for use of the park had not been worked out. But Robichaux said the baseball program may rent the pavilions for tailgating at Louisiana Ragin’ Cajuns® home football games next year and during Mardi Gras. “Companies might want to have corporate picnics there on days that our baseball team isn’t even playing. So we have a lot of opportunities,” he added.

Gerald Hebert, development officer for athletics, said the pavilions offer naming opportunities, as well, for companies and individuals who want to show their support for UL Lafayette athletics.

Bill Crist, an architect who is director of UL Lafayette’s Physical Plant, said the design of Lourdes Park gives it flexibility. “There’s a fence on all four sides, so the park is self contained. It can be opened from the baseball stadium side. Or, the gate on the stadium side can be closed, while the park can be accessed from the Reinhardt Drive side.

“So, the park can operate independently of baseball, but it can also be operated as part of the baseball stadium area.”

M. L. “Tigue” Moore Field is acknowledged as one of the best collegiate baseball facilities in Louisiana. It opened in 1978 and was named in Moore’s honor in

LOUISIANA’S RAGIN’ CAJUNS BASEBALL HOME GAMES IN 2007		
Feb. 13	Nicholls State	6:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	Illinois	6:30 p.m.
Feb. 24	Illinois	2 p.m.
Feb. 25	Illinois	1 p.m.
Feb. 27	Louisiana Tech	6:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	Northwestern State	6:30 p.m.
March 9	South Alabama*	6:30 p.m.
March 10	South Alabama	2 p.m.
March 11	South Alabama	1 p.m.
March 20	McNeese State	6:30 p.m.
March 23	Florida Atlantic*	6:30 p.m.
March 24	Florida Atlantic*	2 p.m.
March 25	Florida Atlantic*	1 p.m.
April 3	Lamar	6:30 p.m.
April 6	Western Kentucky*	6:30 p.m.
April 7	Western Kentucky*	2 p.m.
April 8	Western Kentucky*	1 p.m.
April 17	Southeastern Louisiana	6:30 p.m.
April 27	Arkansas State*	6:30 p.m.
April 28	Arkansas State*	2 p.m.
April 29	Arkansas State*	1 p.m.
May 11	Arkansas-Little Rock*	6:30 p.m.
May 12	Arkansas-Little Rock*	2 p.m.
May 13	Arkansas-Little Rock*	1 p.m.

Lourdes Park is one of two facilities that will enhance the athletics complex beginning in the spring. The other is a \$4.3 million indoor practice facility for Ragin’ Cajun teams that is expected to open in time for football spring drills.

- A pavilion on the first-base side was donated and constructed by Ideal Steel. That company is also donating and building a pavilion on the third-base side.
- New light fixtures for the playing field were donated by Jim Prince, Joe Klutts, Pete Canty and Stone Energy. Installation of the lights was donated by the Lafayette Utilities System.

All Ragin’ Cajun teams benefit when improvements are made to an athletic facility, Robichaux said. “If my next door neighbor takes care of his house, it enhances mine. It’s the same here. We’re all linked together. The tennis facility leads to the baseball stadium, which is next to the new track and soccer field. The softball stadium is close by.”

Lourdes Park is one of two facilities that will enhance the athletics complex beginning in the spring. The other is a \$4.3 million indoor practice facility for Ragin’ Cajun teams that is expected to open in time for football spring drills. It will be used by football, baseball, basketball, softball, soccer and track.

At presstime, concrete footings had been poured for the prefabricated building, which will be located near the intersection of Reinhardt Drive and Cajundome Boulevard. The structure will be assembled at the site.

The new facility will feature a 120-yard practice field with drop down batting cages and a separate wing for a basketball court.

Robichaux said the new indoor practice facility will be an important element for recruiting athletes. “It’s going to be so impressive when you drive through here. It shows a commitment to providing competitive athletic facilities and that’s something that student-athletes and parents look for when they come onto campus to visit.” ■