

# UAlbany unveils plans for athletics project

**\$24M undertaking will be largely state funded**

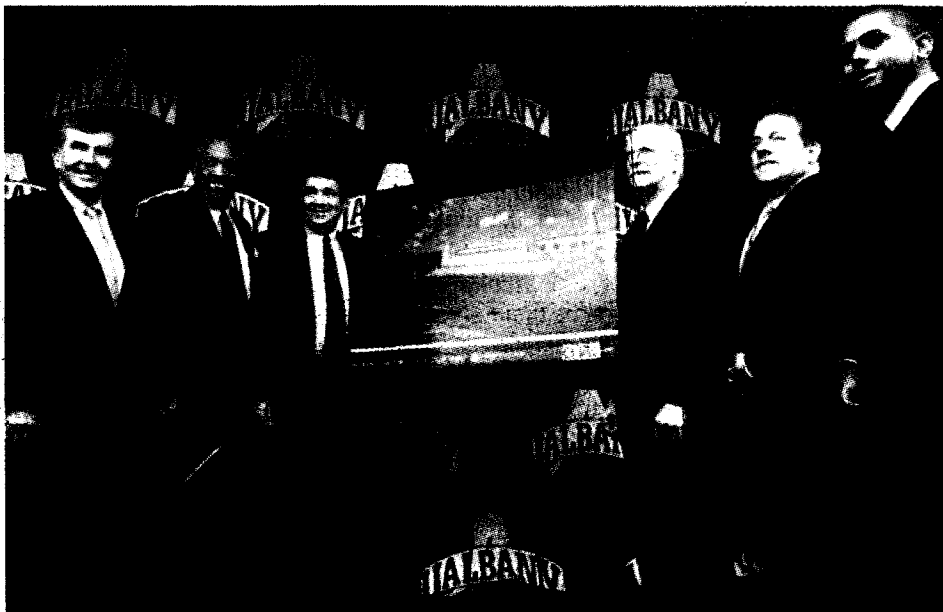
By MARCY VELTE  
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In April, the University at Albany will break ground on a \$24 million project to update the school's outdoor athletic facilities — something officials said has been years in the making.

"Believe it or not, the university first started talking about making upgrades to our football field in 1973," said UAlbany President George Philip at a press conference held to announce the project at the university's SEFCU Arena.

University Field and the existing track were first built in 1963 and school officials said few renovations have been made since that time. The facilities, especially the track, do not meet the current National Collegiate Athletic Association guidelines or access codes, and seating is described as inadequate.

Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings, an alumnus of the university, said the school has been talking about the upgrades since he was a graduate



**UAlbany officials announced a \$24 million project to update the school's outdoor athletic facilities at a press conference at SEFCU Arena.**

*Marcy Velte/Spotlight*

student. He now believes UAlbany's athletes will be competitive on the national level.

Head football Coach Bob Ford said the current facility hasn't helped with recruiting players.

"We've never said 'let's go out and show you our stadium,'" Ford said.

Ford started the school's football team as a club sport in 1970. Players are now essentially playing on the exact field used 42 years ago.

The new complex will be constructed in three

phases and will include a multi-use synthetic field for student and intramurals use, an enhanced football and soccer facility able to accommodate NCAA Division I competitions and repairs and upgrades meeting NCAA Division I standards to the university's track and field.

The football and soccer facility is slated for completion in the fall of 2013 and will be built on an area around an existing football field to the southeast of the SEFCU Arena. It will include 4,000

permanent seats, 2,000 berm (hillside) seats and nearly 2,000 temporary bleacher-style seats.

Philips said some construction will occur during the New York Giants' training camp in the summer, but the school will do everything in its power to make sure the team has "adequate facilities" to practice.

According to Ford, most of the school's athletic training equipment is Division I quality because of the Giants' usage, but the field is Division III.

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**Head football Coach Bob Ford**

"I think it came down to some political leadership that the money went here and not someplace like Long Island," he said. "Things are falling into place... the money would just be spent in someplace like Long Island or Buffalo, so why not here?"

The university president went on to add the project could not have happened without the support of the Capital Districts three state senators, Neil Breslin, Hugh Farley and Roy McDonald.

The entire project will cost \$24 million, with \$18 million coming from "allocated state appropriations targeted for capital improvements and scheduled maintenance projects."

Philips said the money would not be available to the school if it weren't used for the athletic complex project.

Another \$6 million is to be raised through private funding, and the recent press event also included the announcement of the university's efforts to raise

the needed funds.

University at Albany Foundation President George Hearst said an anonymous donor has gifted the university with \$1 million to match dollar-for-dollar that of additional donations.

"The anonymous gift... places the University at Albany well on its way to achieving the state-of-the-art multi-sports complex for students, alumni, and the community at large," he said.

The entire project is scheduled for completion by the winter of 2013.

UAlbany Vice President and Director of Athletics Lee McElroy touted the project as an acknowledgement of the hard work put forward by coaching staffs and their players. He added the community would have use of the field in the off-season.

"All our students, coaches, alumni and community supporters will now receive the Division I-level playing facilities their dedication merits," he said.