

ODU stadium to bear name of contractor, \$2.5M benefactor



Workers install turf on Foreman Field at Old Dominion University in Norfolk on Monday, June 8, 2009. (Bill Tiernan | The Virginian-Pilot)

By [Rich Radford](#)
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NORFOLK

Foreman Field is so much more today than it was two years ago that even the name has expanded.

When Old Dominion brings football back to campus in a little more than six weeks near the corner of 49th Street and Hampton Boulevard, the Monarchs will play at Foreman Field at S.B. Ballard Stadium.

ODU's Board of Visitors approved the name Monday, ending months of speculation - and years of secrecy - concerning the stadium's name.

Ultimately, it was named after the first man willing to pony up.

Ballard, who heads a large regional construction operation, made what was then an anonymous \$2.5 million donation nearly four years ago. At the time, university president Roseann Runte had stipulated the school raise \$8 million in six months if visions of football at ODU were to move forward.

Alonzo Brandon's first couple of calls to potential donors came up empty. Brandon, vice president for development and alumni relations, was beginning to wonder if football stood a chance.

Then someone pointed him toward Ballard, a self-proclaimed football nut who had played at Maury High in the early 1970s and was once a ball boy for the semi-pro Norfolk Neptunes.

"Look, I'd cut ODU a \$25,000 check back in the 1980s the first time there was talk about football coming to the school," he said. "I was one of the first to do it. I've always wanted football."

Ballard is best known for having built the Ted Constant Convocation Center, and S.B. Ballard Construction has worked on a variety of projects throughout the campus.

But at the point when Brandon approached him, Ballard was "off the books" at ODU, having completed work on a parking deck a few months earlier.

With no ongoing project at ODU, Ballard agreed to a gift of \$2.5 million. His construction company subsequently won the bid for the \$24.8 million refurbishing of Foreman Field, the addition of an adjacent parking deck and the construction of Foreman Field's gameday building.

Ballard made the contribution nearly 18 months before requests for proposals on the Foreman Field job went out.

"Nobody on the contracting committee knew that Steve had made the contribution," Brandon said.

"His donation had nothing to do with his company getting the bid."

In addition to the Constant Center, Ballard, who grew up in Norfolk's Colonial Place, has had a hand in the construction of the Powhatan Sports Complex - it houses lacrosse, field hockey and the football team's practice facility - the University Village Apartments and the Student Rec Center.

Rather than name it Steve Ballard Stadium, he went with S.B. to appease his daughter, Stephanie Brook, and son, Stephen Boyd.

"I almost got it all covered with that," Ballard said, adding he had no idea how to work his wife, B.J., into the naming equation. "If I'd had it my way, we would have held off naming the stadium until the opening kick."

The name of the stadium will appear on the press box facades and the coaches box at the top of the east and west sets of stands.

ODU's Board of Visitors also approved two other measures involving names: The gameday building will be called Ainslie Football Complex, after contributor Jeff Ainslie, and the plaza next to the gameday building will be the Alcaraz-Weinstein Family Plaza, following contributions by local businessman Gary Alcaraz and Dr. Lee Weinstein.

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