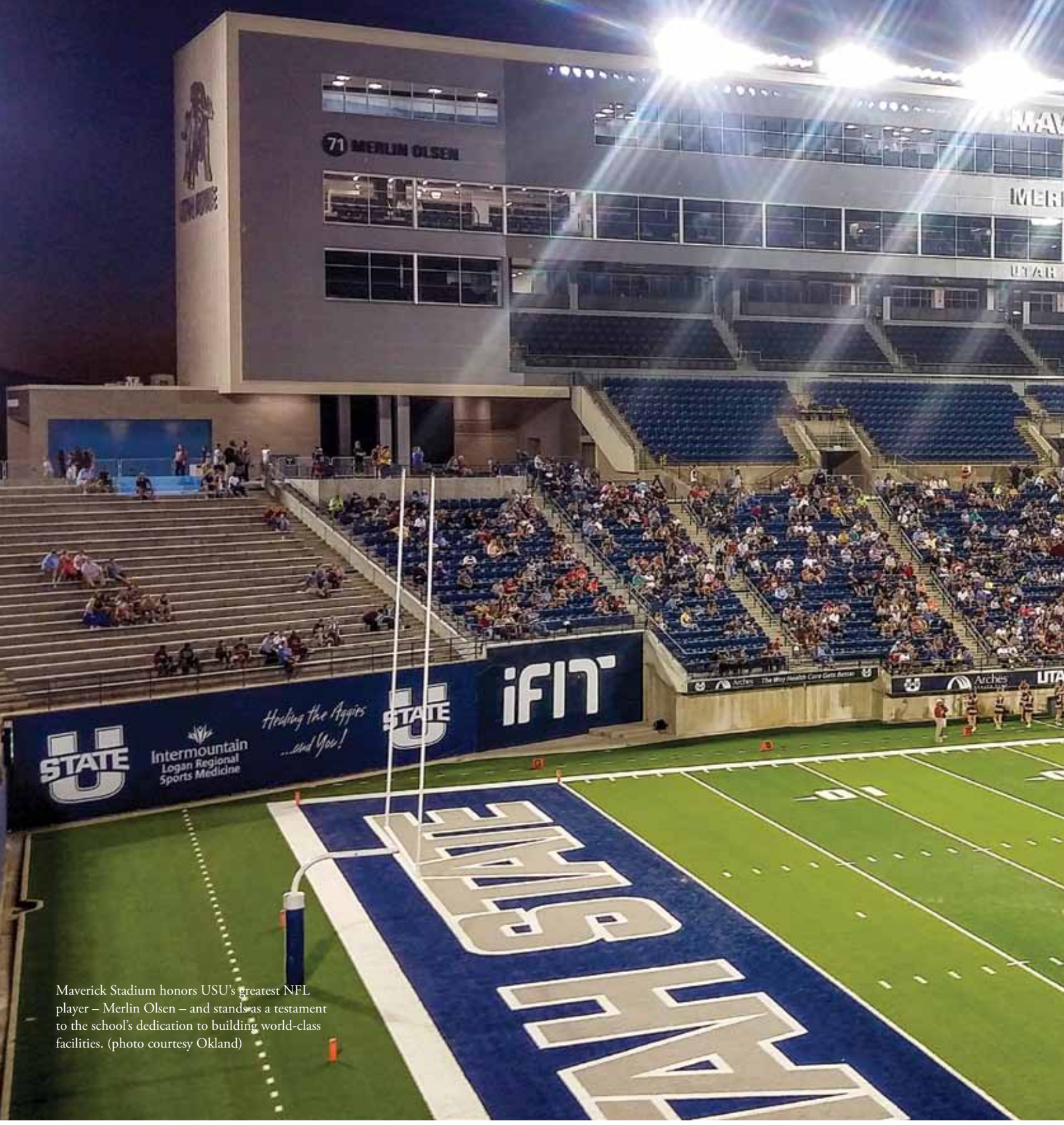
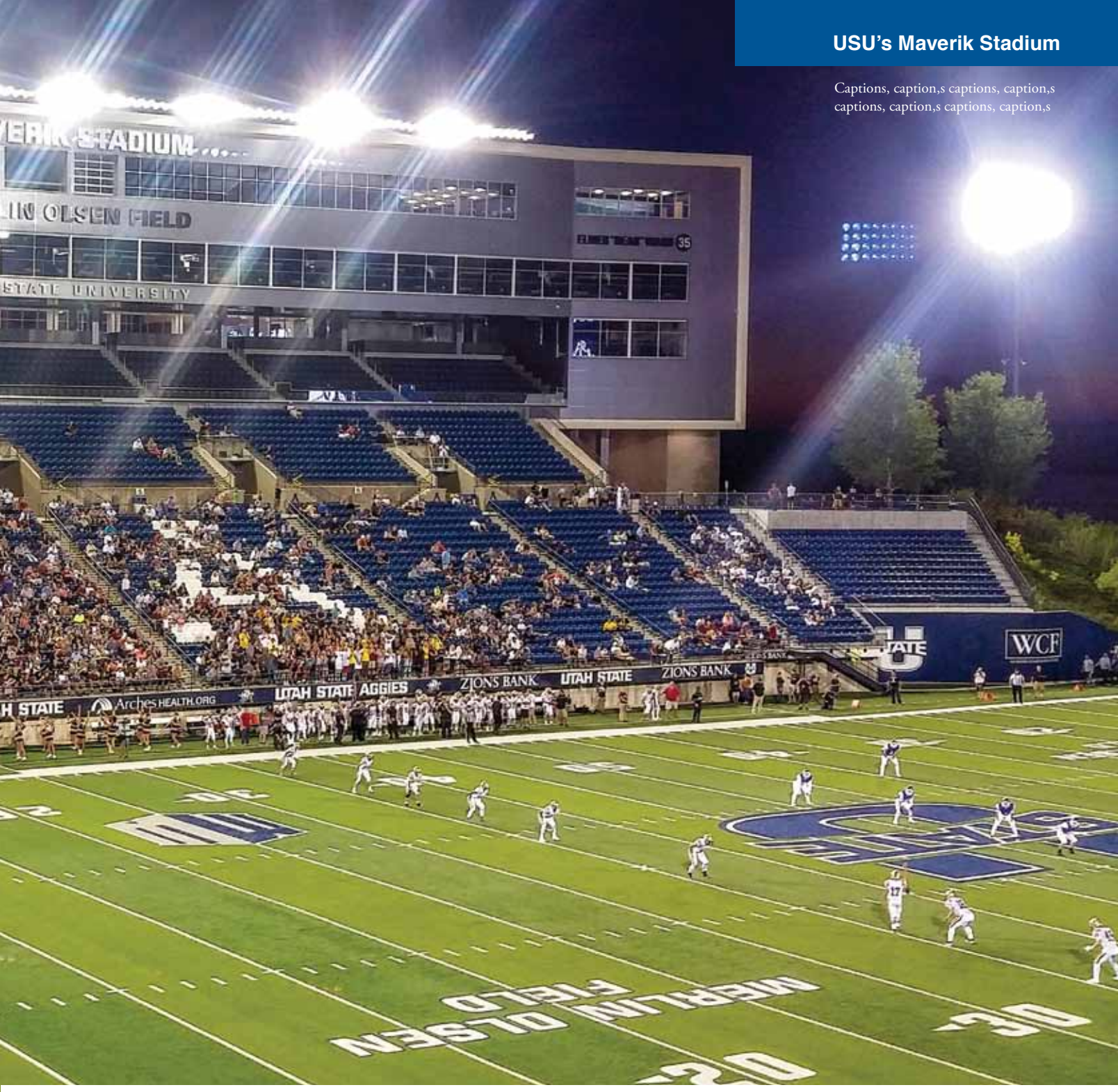


Maverick Stadium honors USU's greatest NFL player – Merlin Olsen – and stands as a testament to the school's dedication to building world-class facilities. (photo courtesy Okland)

Field of Vision



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Project team overcomes unique challenges on Utah State's newly renovated $36 million Maverik Stadium.

By Doug Fox

Despite some shifting obstacles, Utah State University's new $36 million renovation of Maverik Stadium indeed reached a suite conclusion. The 16-month project helmed by Salt Lake-based firms Okland Construction and designer Method Studio not only faced some timeframe challenges to get the stadium ready for this season's home opener on Sept. 1 – a 45-6 trouncing of Weber State – but the Salt Lake City firms also managed to take the biggest hurdle and turn it into a signature achievement.

Among the main additions, the renovated stadium includes 24 twenty-person private luxury suites, more than 700 club level premium seats (which are outdoor, covered and heated), a 300-person club lounge, an expanded press box, and three times the number of restrooms on the concourse level. Two video scoreboards also enhance the fan experience. Seating capacity is now 25,100. ››

Cantilevers help create a dramatic form factor and proved crucial in renovating the stadium on a challenging site. (subsequent photos courtesy Method Studio, by Rob Beishline)

> “In order to execute this solution, the new premium seating and press box facility footprint had to fit and function on an extremely narrow strip of land centered atop the existing berm – the only structurally adequate soils on the project site...”

The biggest impediment to the project’s process, as it turned out, was sediment. According to representatives from both Method and Okland, unfavorable soil conditions on the west side of the stadium – where the luxury suites, press box and premium seating were planned -- created several dilemmas.

Initially, said Joshua W. Greene, Principal for Method Studios, the plan was to install deep foundation systems on the west side to address the soil concerns. However, that prospect proved cost prohibitive – as it would have added between $3 million and $7 million to the total price tag. Greene said secondary options included studying the feasibility of locating premium seating and the press box on the south and east sides of the stadium instead. The downside to that alternative, Greene said, was that conditions were not optimal for TV broadcast requirements or for the fan experience.

Ultimately, Greene said his firm, in partnership with stadium specialist AECOM of Kansas City, Mo., and Okland, conceived of a solution that moved premium seating and the press box back to the west side while avoiding the need for a deep foundation system.

“In order to execute this solution, the new premium seating and press box facility footprint had to fit and function on an extremely narrow strip of land centered atop the existing berm – the only ››

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USU's Maverik Stadium

structurally adequate soils on the project site," Greene said. "The existing grandstand needed to be partially demolished and a plan put in place to replace the loss of existing premium seating – a previously unaccounted-for cost to the project."

Furthermore, Greene noted, space was an issue as everything involved with the west side renovation – including the new concourse, restrooms, concessions and stadium support functions…as well as entry lobbies, stairs and elevators to the private suites, lounge and club seats, and press functions on the level above – all had to fit within a strip of land just over 40 feet across.

"Nationwide," Greene said, "premium suites alone are nearly 30 feet deep." The solution came in the form of two cantilevered sections. The club lounge cantilevers over the space above the western edge of the hillside, concourse and unfavorable soils below. "This cantilever gives the building its most dramatic form factor," Greene said. Additionally, this also resulted in the press box and luxury suite being cantilevered above the club seating section – allowing all of those sections to move closer to the actual field of play.

"What this provides is a better box/suite experience than any we are aware of in the United States," said Jared Francom, Project Director for Okland. "According to the sports consultant AECOM, this proximity is unrivaled in a suite experience."

"The overall design is field-focused, providing private suites and a press box closer to the football action than any other stadium in Division I football," Greene said. "Each of the private suites features branded lounge and stadium seating, customized art work, large kitchen areas for food and beverages, multiple TV displays and floor-to-ceiling motorized operable windows bringing the sounds and excitement of the game right into the suites."

According to Ben Berrett, Director for Facilities, Planning, Design and Construction at Utah State, another challenge was keeping everything on a timetable – which included working throughout last year's football season as well as the ensuing winter. "There were a lot of temporary facilities that had to be provided for the football season during construction," he said. "Timeframe was a major concern for USU athletics," said Francom, "and our contract carried fines if specific dates were missed. To avoid that scenario and ensure that we hit those critical game dates, we developed a plan with Method Studios and USU Athletics on when drawings would be available, and when we could start specific areas. This allowed for a successful delivery of the project for (opening) game day."

Utah State has actually had the renovation itch for at least 12 years. Berrett said the whole stadium area was master planned back in 2004. The new renovation notwithstanding, the university continues to have its eye on future expansion. "We master planned ››

a future stadium >> seating expansion, to achieve a capacity of over 30,000 seats and fan amenity upgrades on the east side of the stadium," Greene said.

Having earned his undergraduate and graduate civil engineering degrees from Utah State, Francom said he found this project personally satisfying. "After spending 16 years traveling the West completing large, complex commercial projects – to come back and build on my campus was very rewarding," Francom said. "This project brings USU athletics into the limelight, something their football team has worked diligently for. This is their time to shine, and I'm glad I was a part of it. I wish them the best in their future games, and rest assured this Aggie fan will be following along closely." ■

USU Maverik Stadium Renovation

Cost: $36 million
Start/completion date: April 2015 to August 2016
Owner: State of Utah DFCM
Architect: Method Studio; AECOM
General Contractor: Okland Construction
Construction Project Manager: Blake Westbroek
Construction Superintendent: Cory Hardman
Engineering Team: Spectrum Engineering (electrical), VBFA Engineering (mechanical), Reavely Engineering (structural), Civil Solutions (civil)

Key Subcontractors: Cache Valley Electric (electrical), VO Brothers (mechanical), Flatwork Okland Construction (concrete), Geneva, Structural/JBP (concrete), Skyview Glass (glazing/curtain wall), Shane Demler (masonry), IFS (drywall), Nicholls Brothers Painting (painting), Design Team (flooring), Superior Roofing (roofing), Western Steel Erectors (steel erection), Sun Steel (steel fabrication), Ace Tile (tile), All Metals (metal panels), RBI (landscape), Clients Design (millwork) and Baer Welding, Ducworks Inc. (specialty metals)
Landscape Architect: Civil Solutions