



Q&A

WITH BILL BATTLE

Q. WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT?

A: Making the student-athlete experience as fulfilling, enjoyable and useful as possible should always be our top priority and, to the best of my knowledge, it has always been so at Alabama. There is much that we do to enhance the student-athlete experience beyond providing great coaches, championship-level facilities, strength and conditioning and dietary programs, and a platform to showcase their skills in sports at the highest levels. Equally important is to prepare them to be successful in life through a comprehensive academic services program, career and leadership development, and counseling from the time they enroll until graduation. We have also begun a program designed to encourage them through the A Club to stay engaged with the university so that the outreach occurs long after graduation. Our Mission is three-fold: to recruit and develop students to compete at the highest levels in all sports; to educate and prepare those students to compete at the highest levels in life after graduation; and to do both with honor and integrity.

Q. WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE THINKING OF MAKING A GIFT TO THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT?

A: Donor support makes a decisive difference, and that support comes in many facets. We need our fans to be present at our events, to be mindful of the significant effect their support has on our people and programs, and that the financial support we receive insures our future successes. We take our Mission seriously and challenge our staff regularly to think about it in every decision we make as a department. We are riding the momentum of unprecedented success in all sports over the last few years, but also seeking to build on that by providing even greater support for our students, staff and coaches. It's a challenge that we all embrace, and I know that you will, too.

I cannot stress enough the difference that support makes for our program. Attendance at our athletic events; following our team on radio, television and social media; the generosity of time, money and passion is what makes Alabama Athletics nationally preeminent. We are all teammates in this effort. All of our students, coaches and staff are deeply grateful for that support.

We encourage participation at every level, no gift is too big or too small. Our development staff is armed with a great deal of information, opportunities for involvement, and creative ways to go about making contributions. If interested in making a difference, but uncertain about how to best go about it, please contact our staff.

Q. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO MAKE THE LEADERSHIP GIFT YOU MADE AND HOW YOU CHOSE TO DIRECT IT?

A: My experience as a student-athlete and the transformative impact it had on my life was my inspiration. It was, for me, the total package of athletics competition at the highest level along with academic opportunities that are second to none. I received a great academic education at the University of Alabama in the classroom from outstanding faculty and staff. But some of the most valuable lessons I learned about life, competition, time management, preparation, team dynamics, and rising above adverse circumstances were taught on athletic fields by my coaches. I don't think we talk enough about the educational values of sport, but I can tell you our coaches understand and teach those lessons every day. I want to make sure that as many of our student-athletes as possible are able to enjoy that same experience in order that the time they spend here helps make a positive difference in their lives.

Q. WHAT ARE THE FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR ALABAMA ATHLETICS AND HOW CAN DONORS GET INVOLVED?

A: We have a major initiative in progress to endow athletics scholarships. Now, this is a huge undertaking, but it is a crucial part of the future well-being of our athletics program as tuition is one of the largest line items in our budget. To date, we only have \$35 million in endowed scholarships, but I hope to see that number rise to \$100 million in the next few years. While interest from that amount won't cover our full tuition costs, it will move the needle significantly as a vital part of the future of our athletics program and free up dollars for other needs.

Equally important is the need to get - and keep - our athletics and academic support facilities in championship form. With almost a billion dollars in athletics facilities, it takes a lot to keep them in championship condition. Buildings wear out and need to be repaired or replaced from time to time. Our baseball stadium will be a great asset to our program as it is finished late this year. Our swimming and diving facility is in urgent need of a major upgrade. Other projects are on our five-year plan, and the business of our department does not provide adequately to meet those expenditures.

Q. HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THOSE WHO SAY ATHLETICS HAS ALL THE MONEY IT NEEDS?

A: There's the widespread myth that Alabama is rolling in dough. We have done very well, especially the last few years, but there is a lot of misinformation out there. Now, it's not intentionally reported to mislead, but the metrics used by the media are often incomplete and inaccurate. We are proud to be self-sufficient and we take pride in managing all the resources at our disposal as efficiently and effectively as we can, but the business of our enterprise generates about 80 percent of what we need to operate in a manner that gives us a chance to carry out our Mission as I described earlier.

Over the last few years, Tide Pride has pretty much made up that 20 percent shortfall. Facilities don't win championships, but they do help attract good coaches and good players. There have been major construction projects completed over the last few years at Bryant-Denny Stadium, the Mal Moore Athletic Facility, Coleman Coliseum, Foster Auditorium, the Roberta Alison Baumgardner Indoor Tennis Facility, the new Rowing Facility and others that have helped keep Alabama competitive in the collegiate athletics marketplace. We have a solid base of reserves, but we also have a large debt service obligation that is another major line item in our budget.

Our donor base has been very generous throughout our history, as athletics is part of the DNA of our great university. We also take pride in the monies athletics provides to the university annually and in time of need. It is our desire to be a positive force in carrying out the overall mission of the University, and to make our students, faculty, staff, alumni and fans all proud of how we represent them.

While we are proud of everything we have accomplished, we are always mindful that our competition is fighting hard to duplicate our success. Getting athletic and academic facilities to championship levels is one thing, keeping them there is another. If we're not moving forward, we're falling behind. Our goal is to provide our coaches and student-athletes with the resources they need to compete for championships and build champions on and off the field for life.