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Announcing the H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports

In the message accompanying the holiday card that went out in December to readers of *Iron Game History*, we alluded to something significant that was underway here at The University of Texas—something that had diverted our attention from *IGH*—and we indicated that we would make an announcement about it in the future. However, things on campus moved more quickly than we anticipated and so we decided to wait a few additional weeks before publishing this issue so that we could make our announcement as soon as possible.

Before we could make any announcement, of course, we had to have something to announce, and two hours ago as I write this editorial the UT Board of Regents gave us what we needed when they voted to name a 27,000 square-foot facility—now being built—the Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports. The Center—which will house the Todd-McLean Collection as well as other physical culture and sports collections—will be part of a much larger building that will become part of the UT football stadium. This large building—



Architect's rendering of the new building being constructed at the north end of Royal-Memorial Football Stadium on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin. The Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports will occupy 27,000 square feet of floorspace on the second level of the building. The Center will be accessed by the elevator tower on the center-left in this drawing.

with the Center located prominently within it—will open for business in time for the football season in 2008. And you're all invited for the opening.

As some of you know, to have such a research center at a university has been a dream of mine for over forty years, and Jan has shared the dream for over thirty years. There were times when we doubted that we would ever see the dream come to pass, but through the years, with the help of many friends and supporters—many of whom are among the subscribers to *IGH*—our physical culture collection continued to flourish and to be better appreciated by the University's administration.

At least ten years ago the administration here at UT began to discuss plans to one day renovate Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium by replacing the “horse-shoe” at the stadium's north end with a new building, thereby adding spectator seating and creating considerable interior space. When we became aware of these discussions we decided to work toward convincing The University to make a place inside this new building for a library/museum that would house our growing collection and allow us to expand our research into physical culture as well as help our students and visiting scholars with their own research. We never thought it would take so

long for these plans to materialize, but at large universities new projects usually proceed very, very slowly. Finally, however, a man came along who so galvanized the state and the nation with his brilliance that the team he led to victory put the new building on the fast track. That man was quarterback Vince Young.

Background

Texas' 2006 victory in the Rose Bowl capped a long and distinguished sporting history. Since its founding in 1883, Texas has won a national championship in virtually every sport in which the University competes, and hundreds of UT athletes have gone on to careers in professional sports or to participation in amateur sports events such as the Olympic Games. Of equal importance is UT's consistent support of opportunities for all of its students to maintain their fitness and health through sports and exercise. The University of Texas has been a longtime leader in the area of physical training, and over the past 120 years hundreds of thousands of students—women as well as men—have taken part in organized physical training classes, intramural sports, and recreational exercise. However, the history of sports and physical activity at UT, and the contributions of the many trainers, coaches and notable supporters have not been recorded or displayed in any significant way on campus.

In 1983, Jan and I joined the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education in the College of Education with the hope that we could play a part in changing all that. We brought with us our large collection of publications, photographs, art, artifacts, and other materials related to the history of sports, health, exercise, and other

areas in the field known as “physical culture.” Over the past quarter century, our collection has grown in both size and professional stature, and it was described in 1999 by Georgia historian John Fair as the “single most important archive in the world” in this field. However, because of space limitations within our department, the collection has been housed in a relatively small space in Anna Hiss Gymnasium in crowded and sub-standard conditions. Even so, we have been grateful to our department for providing space over the years, and we have maintained our belief that in time our collection would be seen by the administration as deserving of an appropriate home.

After Vince Young's magical season in 2005-6, plans were made to construct a 200,000+ square-foot building in the north end of the football stadium.

The new addition was to include stadium seats, suites, restaurants, an academic center, and other facilities. Since so much additional space was to be created by the project, we redoubled our efforts to convince the administration to make a place in the project for our collection. Following discussions with Dean Manuel Justiz of the College of Education, Vice President for Development Rick Eason, Director of Athletics DeLoss Dodds, and others, it was agreed that the new building would be an ideal location for a library/museum that would house materials and exhibits in the many areas of physical culture and sports.

But there was only one catch—we had to raise \$3,500,000 for the “bricks and mortar” needed to build out the 27,000 square feet that the University was willing to give us.

As we faced this task, we were sustained by the backing of many of our colleagues on campus and, especially, by the ongoing financial and emotional support of Joe and Betty Weider. Most



Lutch Stark graduated from The University of Texas in 1910. He later served on the UT Board of Regents for a record twenty-four years—a tenure of service which included two terms as Chairman of the Board. In addition to his many philanthropic efforts on behalf of The University, and his hometown of Orange, Texas, Stark was also an avid weight trainer. He learned how to train in 1913 by spending three months with Alan Calvert in Philadelphia.

readers of *IGH* know that just over two years ago we received from the Weider Foundation an endowment of \$1,000,000, and it was this generous gift that prompted UT to give us the chance to raise so much money in such a short time. Even so, we were daunted by the challenge, but we knew that there was a particular, well-established Texas foundation which might be interested in supporting the creation of a library/museum dedicated to the study of physical culture and sports. That foundation was created by a legendary, larger-than-life Texan and UT alumnus by the name of H.J. Lutch Stark.

The Legacy of Lutch Stark

Lutch Stark, born in 1887, was the only child of an East Texas family whose fortune was based on timber and, later, oil. An ardent sports fan, Lutch was interested in all sports, but he particularly loved football. In 1910, his senior year at UT, Lutch was the manager of the football team, a job that included assisting with negotiations to determine which teams the squad—then known simply as the Texas Varsity, or Steers—would play. Following graduation, Lutch remained vitally involved with the Texas team, and in 1913 he donated warm-up blankets for the players with the word “Longhorns” embroidered on them. From that point on, the UT team was known as the Longhorns.

That same year, Stark had a personal epiphany. His weight had increased to more than two hundred pounds (a bit too much for his 5’7” frame), and so he decided to do something about it. Accordingly, he went to Philadelphia and took a course of physical training under the guidance of the top man in the field, Alan Calvert, who preached the benefits of weight training for general fitness as well as for athletes—at a time in which almost all “experts” believed that weight training would make a person “muscle-bound.” Lutch could hardly have made a better choice in a trainer. In any case, young Lutch spent two months with Calvert in Philadelphia and returned home forty pounds lighter, twice as strong, and with a firm belief in the benefits of weight training—a form of exercise that would totally transform sports and physical fitness over the next century.

Stark’s experiences with Alan Calvert continued to shape his life—and the athletic and recreational programs at The University of Texas. Soon after his return

from Philadelphia, Stark met L.Theo Bellmont, who was then the director of the Houston YMCA. Stark had much in common with Bellmont, who was also a weight-trainer, and he convinced the Board of Regents that Bellmont should be appointed as UT’s Athletic Director. In that post, Bellmont oversaw Athletics as well as the Physical Education and Physical Training programs for the regular university students. One of Bellmont’s first hires was a freshman—Roy J. McLean—who was a whiz at short-hand. Beginning in 1914, McLean served Bellmont as a recording secretary, and he often watched the workouts of Stark and Bellmont, who would train with weights whenever Stark visited the campus. Before long the two slightly older men included young McLean in their training sessions. McLean soon became a convert to the barbells, too, and in 1919, after “Mac’s” graduation, Bellmont hired him as an instructor and coach. That same year McLean taught the first organized heavy weight-training classes ever taught in the U.S., and in the 1920s he also began to serve the University as coach of both the cross country and wrestling teams. Because of what he’d learned from Stark and Bellmont, McLean also broke new ground by requiring his athletes to train with weights. For thirteen years straight, his teams won the Southwest Conference in cross country, and he also produced several national champions and Olympians in wrestling. During his fifty years at UT, and with the full support of Stark and Bellmont, McLean also built the largest and most well-equipped weight training facility on any campus in the United States.

Beginning in the late 1950s, Roy McLean encouraged a UT letterman in tennis to become a competitive weightlifter. That young student, then an undergraduate, really took to the weights and—when he began work on a Master’s degree—McLean hired him as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. “Mac” also shared with his protege a large library in the field of sports and physical culture and he instilled in him a deep fascination with everything related to weight training. In time, that fascination inspired the graduate student to win lifting championships in both weightlifting and powerlifting, to write a dissertation about the history of weight training, and to begin collecting books and magazines in the field. That graduate student was me.

When Jan and I brought our collection to UT in 1983, Mac endowed the Roy J. McLean Fellowship in Sports History (now over \$600,000) to help us with our

efforts to make a home for the collection on campus. Thus it was that the lessons learned by Lutch Stark from Alan Calvert in Philadelphia in 1913 influenced the hiring of UT's first Athletic Director; the hiring of Roy McLean, the man who taught the first weight-training classes in the U.S.; the first use of weight training to enhance athletic performance at UT; and our decision to make a final home for our burgeoning collection at The University of Texas.

More than any other person, Stark put UT on the path to athletic greatness. During his many years as a member and chairman of the UT Board of Regents, Stark made countless contributions to UT. He served as a Regent longer than any other person ever has, and for decades he gave both time and treasure to the university he loved. Another bit of serendipity in all this is that the Stark Center will be located in the football stadium he did so much to make possible. With Belmont's help, Lutch Stark conceived of the idea of the stadium as a memorial to those Texans who served in World War One, and he led the fundraising campaign to construct it. Taken together, those contributions to the University's athletic tradition deserve wide recognition, and so Jan and I proposed to the Stark Foundation that because the life of its creator was so deeply connected with fitness and sports at UT it seemed to be a natural fit for the Foundation to provide the funds that would allow us to create a library/museum bearing the name of the man who funded the foundation—H. J. Lutch Stark. After we made our case to the Stark Foundation both in writing and in person, the foundation's board agreed to provide the \$3,500,000 gift that would encourage The University to recognize and honor Stark for his service to UT by constructing the Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports in the new building that will be a next-door neighbor to Belmont Hall, a building named for Stark's good friend and fellow lifter, L. Theo Belmont. Even the name Stark, which in German means "strong," seems perfect.

Organizational Plan

In any case, the Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports will consist of the following internal divisions:

1. *The Physical Culture Gallery* (possibly to be named for Joe and Betty Weider)—permanent and rotating

exhibits related to the history of physical fitness, weight training, and health promotion;

2. *The Sports Gallery*—permanent and rotating exhibits related to the role of sports in society and the role of physical fitness and sports at UT;

3. *The Reading Room*—a large and comfortable room where students, faculty, and visitors can browse through—as well as sit and read—current books and magazines in the areas of physical culture and sports;

4. *The Center Archives*—containing the Todd-McLean Physical Culture Collection as well as books and materials related to general sports. Although our collection has focused on physical culture, it contains more than 2500 books about competitive sports, hundreds of rare photographs about athletics, and thousands of magazines about sports—including full runs of such magazines as *Sports Illustrated*. Our holdings also include an excellent collection of rare books about hunting and fishing published during the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries;

5. *The Gallery and Social Function Room*—will house permanent and rotating exhibits of art, photography, and artifacts in the areas of sports and physical culture. This gallery will also be used for receptions and other events related to the Center.

6. *Other Spaces*—In addition, the Center will include a large conference room, staff offices, a storage area for rare items, a controlled research area where rare books and photographs can be examined, a cataloguing and processing room, and additional storage areas for books, sports artifacts, and physical culture materials.

We hope and believe that the Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports will be a popular destination for visitors to The University of Texas campus as it will be located in the very center of the north end of the stadium and will have several large windows in which we will display full-size copies of some of the most famous statues from antiquity, such as the Farnese Hercules. The Center will also become part of the campus "museum trail," which includes the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, the Texas Memorial Museum, and the new Jack

Blanton Museum of Art. We believe that this project will bring together the academic and athletics aspects of campus life and that it will serve not only as a destination for tourists and sports fans but also as a research center for UT students and for scholars and fans from around the nation and the world. Such a facility is, we feel, a fitting legacy for a man who was a vital part of the evolution of UT Athletics, who was the driving force behind construction of the original stadium, who served on the Board of Regents for twenty-four years, who was a pioneer in the field of physical culture, and who was a proud alumnus who poured most of his life and a good deal of his substantial fortune into improving The University of Texas at Austin.

It is impossible to explain in so little space how complex and all-consuming it has been to go through the many years it has taken us to petition the university for the space we needed, to convince the Stark Foundation that together we could create a facility that would honor Lutch Stark and promote fitness and sports, to draft the dozens of proposals related to the project, to attend and often initiate scores of meetings both on and off campus so that we could present our case for a library/museum devoted to the study of physical culture and sports, to overcome the sorts of opposition one generally encounters at a university when space is being fought over, and to simply endure the often endless waiting for the many parts of the university to act as the process was making its seemingly endless way toward a conclusion. As it all unfolded—in super-slow motion—it often

reminded me of what it must be like to watch a python eat and digest a goat. In any event, we did our best to be patient because we knew it was the only way our dream would ever be realized. In the process we neglected many aspects of our normal academic work, our ranch (which we have now sold in order to be closer to the university and able to get to our offices more quickly), and our beloved *Iron Game History*. We know it must have been frustrating not to receive the issues of *IGH* in a

timely manner, and it has been frustrating for us to not be able to serve your needs. But in

our long, complicated campaign to establish the Stark Center we held to the belief that the end would justify the means, that with a new Center would come freedom from most of our normal academic responsibilities, and that this freedom would mean we'd be able to down through the years to maintain a regular schedule of four issues of *IGH* a year and to keep the Center open during regular business hours. So please accept our apology for the lateness of this issue. Also, please take comfort in and—for many of you—personal credit for helping us to assemble a collection which has grown so much since we came to UT almost twenty-five years ago that it has attracted over \$5,000,000 and inspired the building of a 27,000 square-foot facility designed to honor and preserve the legacy of physical culture, sports, and—last but certainly not least—the Iron Game.

—Terry Todd



Roy J. McLean learned to lift weights from Lutch Stark and Theo Bellmont while an undergrad student at The University of Texas. He later joined the Physical Education faculty and taught the first weight training classes for credit in the United States. He shared his love of the Iron Game with one of his students—Terry Todd—and, years later, helped Todd establish the Todd-McLean Physical Culture Collection at UT