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NEWS

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Ouachita honors Gene and Kathy Whisenhunt with March 12 dedication of soccer fieldhouse

By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

March 17, 2015

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Dedicating Ouachita Baptist University's new Gene and Kathy Whisenhunt Soccer Fieldhouse on March 12 capped a busy and successful season for Ouachita soccer.

The Tiger soccer teams previously celebrated the dedication of Wesley and Debbie Kluck Field last fall, the women's soccer team earned its first Great American Conference championship and the men's team welcomed new head coach Wilson Jones. Kevin Wright, who previously served as head coach of both the men's and women's teams, continues in his role as head coach of women's soccer.

With the dedication of Whisenhunt Fieldhouse, the new home of Ouachita soccer features state-of-the-art locker rooms as well as a team room, players' lounge and coaches' offices.

The dedication service honored the contributions of Gene Whisenhunt, a 1983 Ouachita graduate and immediate past chairman of Ouachita's Board of Trustees, and his wife, Kathy. Also recognized during the ceremony was Greg Hatcher, a major supporter of both Ouachita soccer and wrestling.

Jay Heflin, a 1993 OBU graduate and current trustee chairman, welcomed special guests, student-athletes, faculty, staff and fellow trustees to the standing-room-only dedication service held in the new facility's team room.

"Today is a special day in the history of an athletic program," Heflin noted. "This kind of facility shows students the value that Ouachita places on athletics."

As future student-athletes are recruited to play soccer at Ouachita, Coach Wright and Coach Jones "will be able to mentor and nurture those students," Heflin added. "Those students will also be molded by the Ouachita community as they develop mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually into the kind of difference makers that only Ouachita can produce."

Expressing appreciation to each of the major donors who contributed to the soccer facilities, Coach Wright told the dedication crowd, "We're obviously very grateful for the generous gifts that make all of this happen" and for the individuals "who facilitated the process and got us the wonderful building that you're sitting in."

Logan Hampton, a soccer midfielder and sophomore accounting major from Conway, Ark., spoke on behalf of the soccer teams, citing "our deepest gratitude to everyone who was a part of making this building possible."

"As dedicated soccer players, we're grateful for the opportunity to play college soccer," he added. "It's an honor to play for Ouachita Baptist. This is a game we love."

The dedication celebration also featured a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, the presentation of an encased soccer ball to the Whisenhunts and a prayer of dedication by Audrey Rodriguez, a soccer midfielder and junior elementary education major from Rogers, Ark.

Affirming the soccer fieldhouse donors and honorees, Ouachita President Rex Horne said, "There are no finer people than the Whisenhunt family. Gene is a great board member, churchman and a great businessman. Kathy is so supportive and so kind and does so much. We are indebted to these two."

Noting that Whisenhunt Fieldhouse "will be a lasting legacy to Gene and Kathy and also to their children," Dr. Horne said, "You honor us by caring about Ouachita and by being devoted. Thank you for what you do and thank you for your leadership."

President Horne also emphasized that "there's nobody who has more vision and ideas than Greg Hatcher," noting that "in some respects, he has changed the face of Ouachita athletics" through his generous support of Ouachita wrestling and soccer.

"Greg is a guy who just has a vision and is willing to put his own life and resources on the line to make good things happen," Dr. Horne added.

"Everybody gets to this point because they had good mentors," Hatcher responded. As a longtime youth soccer coach, he added, "There's nothing more important than the bonds you have with your kids, coaching and fighting those battles."

Encouraging the Ouachita soccer players to pursue lives of generosity and community service, he said his personal motivation has been based on the perspective, "If I ever do good, I'm going to give it right back to the things that meant a lot to me."

Voicing appreciation for the dedication service, Gene Whisenhunt said, "The reality is we're overwhelmed by this because so many participated and did so much that I don't feel worthy that our name is out there on this building.

"We love Ouachita. This is a special place," he declared. "We feel extremely blessed."

Reflecting on his years as a Ouachita student, Whisenhunt concluded, "God provided the path for me to be a part of this institution. God opened the door and changed my life through this place. It's a great joy for us to give to Ouachita, be a part of this institution, and we plan to do that our entire lives."

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