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\$800,000 gift provides artificial turf for Ouachita's Cliff Harris Stadium

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**OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**



NEWS

For Immediate Release

\$800,000 gift provides artificial turf for Ouachita's Cliff Harris Stadium

January 23, 2019

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



ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University announced today that a Little Rock attorney has provided a generous \$800,000 gift that will fully fund the installation of artificial turf at Cliff Harris Stadium.

The turf will be ready for the kickoff of the 2019 Ouachita football season in September.

Tom Thrash of the Thrash Law Firm in Little Rock is a 1977 graduate of Ouachita. He and his wife, Toni, made the contribution because of the university's impact on his life.

"I owe everything I have to Ouachita," said Thrash. "The football program taught me the importance of achieving goals when faced with adversity, a lesson that has served me well over the years. I give because I want to continue the gift of Ouachita – an environment that fosters spiritual growth, provides an extraordinary education, and receives you as part of a family."

Thrash was a four-year starter at defensive back for the Tigers and earned First-Team All-Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference honors twice in his time at Ouachita. He was also inducted into the Ouachita Athletic Hall of Fame as a member of the 1975 football team.

The gift comes on the heels of a historic season for the Tigers, in which they finished 12-1 overall and were undefeated in the regular season. They won the Great American Conference Championship for the fourth time in nine years, earned the top seed in the NCAA Division II Super Region 3, and captured their first playoff victory in school history.

"Tom is a member of Ouachita's Board of Trustees and a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of our university," said Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita's president. "Of the 167 NCAA II football members, we're one of the smaller institutions, but we finished the season ranked sixth in the country. Ouachita is rising in many ways, including in athletics, and investments such as this extend our upward trajectory."

Director of Athletics David Sharp played football with Thrash at Ouachita. He says he's not surprised that his former teammate stepped in with a significant gift.

“Tom has been a leader ever since I have known him during our playing days,” Sharp said. “His passion for Ouachita and Ouachita football is exemplified through this gift he and his wife, Toni, have given. Artificial turf will continue to enhance Cliff Harris Stadium, and this will directly impact the recruitment of student-athletes and the playability of the field they will practice and compete on.”

Following his graduation from Ouachita, Thrash graduated with honors in 1980 from University of Arkansas School of Law. His professional career began at Rose Law Firm in Little Rock, where he served as senior partner. He then founded Thrash Law Firm, P.A. in 1998. Recently, the National Trial Lawyer’s Association voted Thrash one of three members of the 2018 Class Action Trial Team of the Year. He was named Trial Lawyer of the Year in Arkansas by the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association in 2000.

Thrash is also a past president of Pleasant Valley Country Club and an active member of Immanuel Baptist Church.

Construction on Cliff Harris Stadium’s Benson-Williams Field will begin in the coming weeks and will be ready for the Sept. 5 home opener.

Ouachita Baptist University, a private liberal arts university in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, is in its 132nd year as a Christ-centered learning community. It is consistently ranked among the “Best National Liberal Arts Colleges” by *U.S. News & World Report*. The University has an average student/faculty ratio of 13:1. Its seven academic schools include business, Christian studies, education, fine arts, humanities, natural sciences and social sciences. Additionally, Ouachita offers more than 20 study abroad opportunities with partner institutions around the world. www.obu.edu

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PHOTO AND VIDEO AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT <https://obu.edu/news/2019/01/22/turf-cliff-harris-stadium/>.