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TOWERING ACHIEVEMENT

SEVEN-STORY ADDITION COMPLETES OVERHAUL OF LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL COLISEUM

BY TIM NEWCOMB



A \$315 million renovation modernized the historic home of University of Southern California football.

THE HISTORIC NATURE of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, built in 1923, gave the venue a legendary status. It still lacked many of the amenities expected in a modern facility, however, until it underwent a \$315 million renovation that touched nearly every aspect of the stadium and reopened in August.

The work extended throughout the stadium, from installing new seats to adding Wi-Fi to building the 3,000-capacity, seven-story Scholarship Club Tower tucked into the historic bowl.

The new 235,000-square-foot addition, which includes 42 luxury suites, a multilevel club space and a 500-capacity rooftop deck

and replaces an outdated two-story press box, brought with it tricky engineering challenges created by working within a nearly 100-year-old concrete structure. But the effort was worth the value it added for the home of University of Southern California football and the temporary home to the NFL's Los Angeles Rams, the architect of the renovations said.

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“There are now different levels of quality experiences, and prior to that there was zero premium opportunity,” said Don Barnum, DLR Group principal and leader of the firm’s Sports Studio.

Changes weren’t just about the premium, although that was a major component for the building, now officially named United Airlines

Field at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. The renovation reduced capacity from 93,000 to 77,500, making way for premium spaces while increasing legroom and chair width throughout. Every inch of additional seat width requires a 5% reduction in stadium capacity. DLR Group also designed in additional aisles to eliminate 40-plus chair rows.

“A lot of the focus on the renovation wasn’t just the Scholarship Club Tower,” said Kevin Daly, coliseum director of events and customer service. “It was what can we do about the venue in its entirety? They are standard now, but to bring a facility built in 1923 and to make

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

HISTORY DEFINED, NOW REDESIGNED.



LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL

COLISEUM

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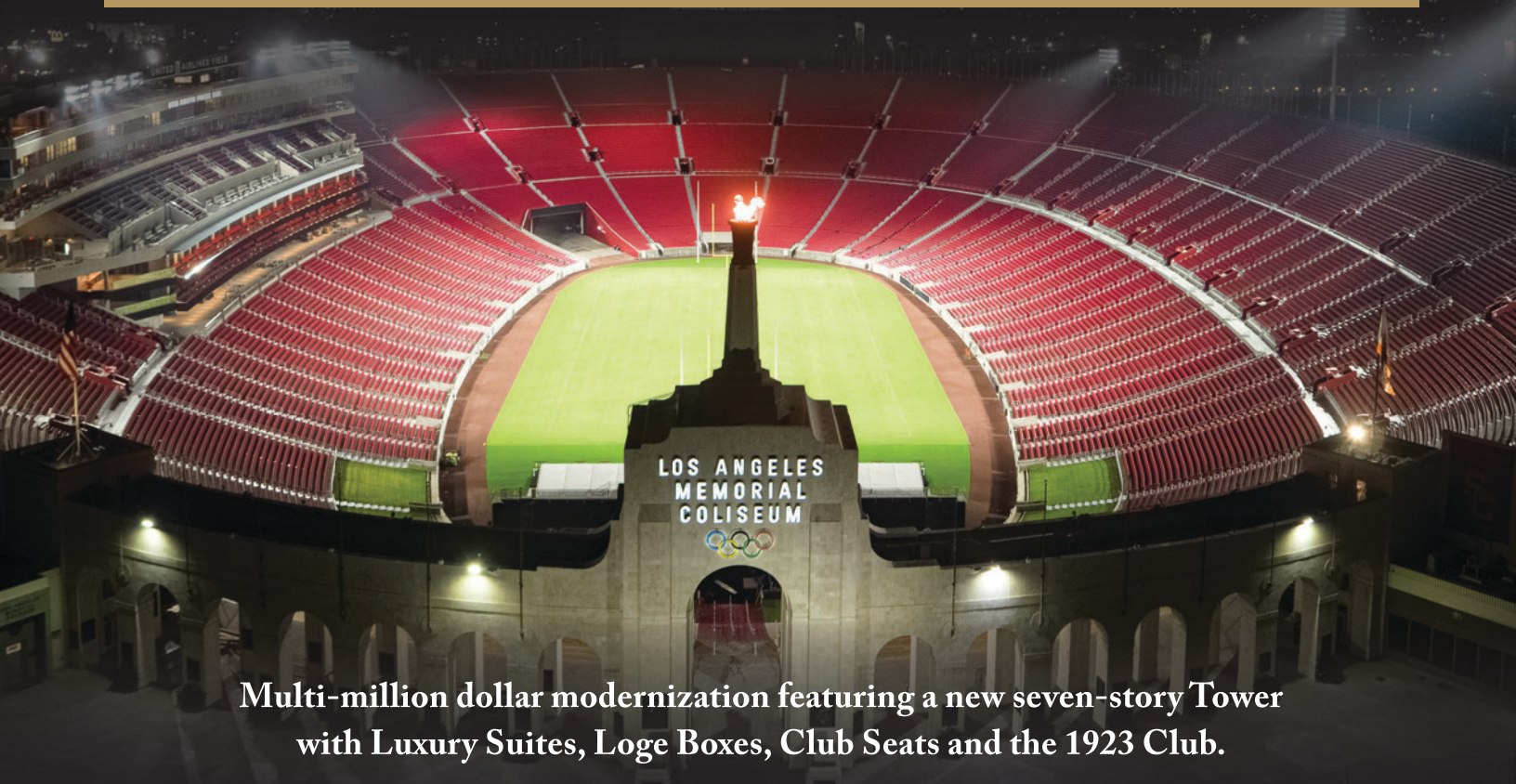
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Located atop the Coliseum, the 1923 Club features views of the downtown skyline, San Gabriel Mountains, Hollywood Sign and the Pacific Ocean.

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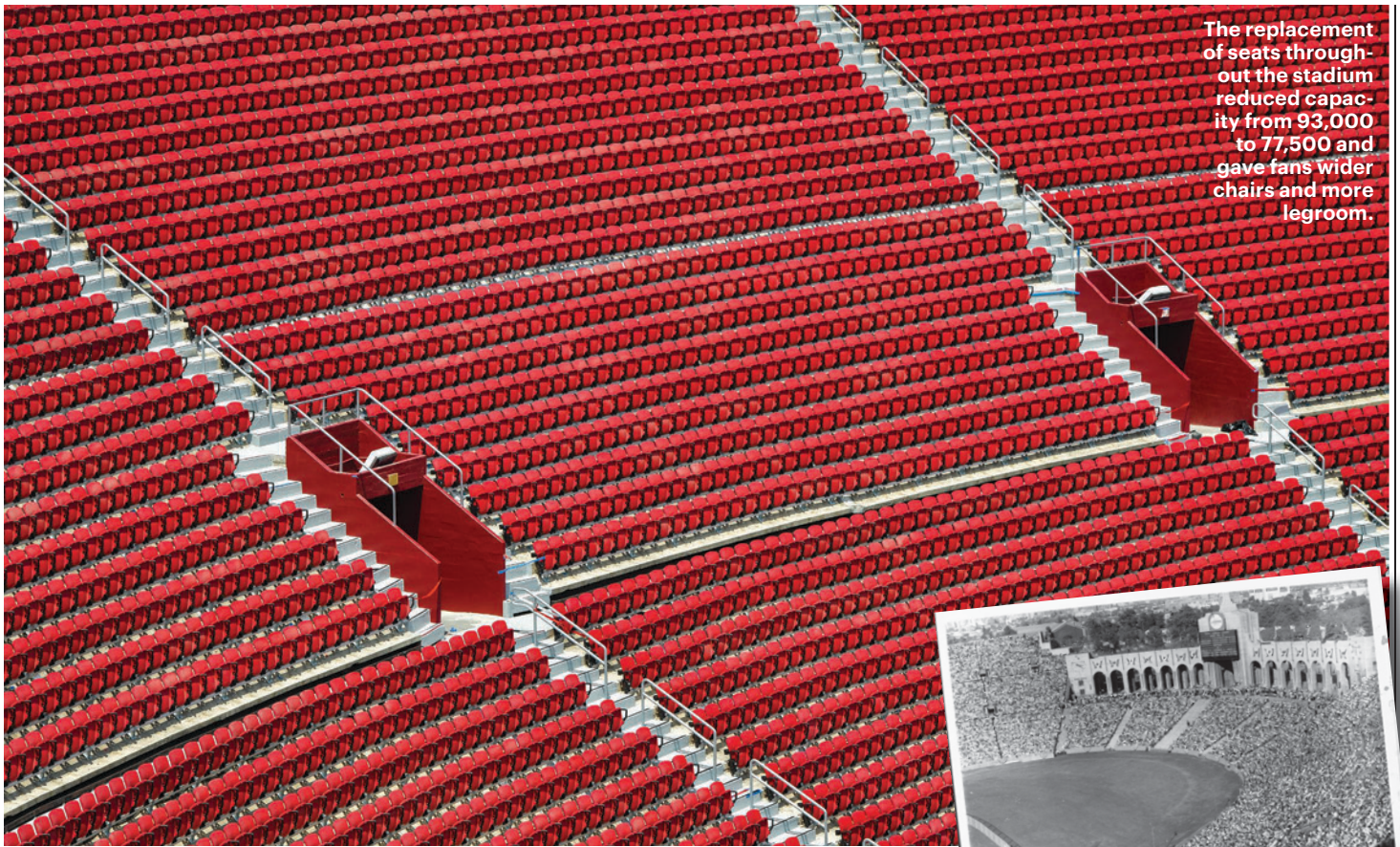


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The replacement of seats throughout the stadium reduced capacity from 93,000 to 77,500 and gave fans wider chairs and more legroom.



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

it modern was a feat. We still have room to go, but that is one of the most amazing changes. Just the look of it is pretty amazing.”

All these changes came without losing an ounce of the venue’s historic facade next to the campus of USC. For the past host of two Olympics — with the 2028 Olympics on the books — the World Series, multiple Super Bowls and Pope John Paul II in 1987, regulations required that it remain unchanged.

While the historic nature of the building did get a polishing, from bringing in new Italian travertine from the same quarry as the original to refurbishing the coliseum’s peristyle, the trickiest part of the renovation was maneuvering the Scholarship Club Tower, with its Founders Suites, dining services, a club lounge, traditional suites, press level and rooftop deck, into the space allowed by the building’s historic designation.

The existing facade needed not only to remain intact but also be the star, with no additions taller than the 101 feet that the press box previously stood. “On a historic preservation, a lot of things come into what makes it a historic landmark and it is not just a view,”

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A rendering shows the 1923 Club, the rooftop deck atop the new Scholarship Club Tower.



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Barnum said. “We have to maintain that integrity.”

To preserve that history, the old two-story tower floats like an island in the middle of the new tower, structurally independent from it. Using computer modeling and a new bracing system, engineers worked to meld new with old while better enabling the entire structure to handle seismic loads.

As major universities around the country continued to invest in premium stadium spaces, whether the Pac-12’s University of California at Berkeley spending over \$300 million earlier in the decade or key USC rival Notre Dame pouring over \$400 million into its stadium, USC had invested nothing in premium opportunities. USC flipped that discrepancy on its head.

“There are various levels of premium opportunities,” Barnum said. “The Founders have committed a great deal of gifting to get the opportunity to come into the suites. They get that high-level Los Angeles five-star hotel accommodations.”

The 20 Founders Suites stretching across two of the seven levels each have a capacity of 30. Operable wall windows and two rows of seating outside allow for a mix of environments in each suite.

Along with 22 additional, more traditional suites, the tower includes 99 loge box seats and the 1,100-capacity Lou Galen Club Lounge with finishes and lighting designed to bleed cardinal red on USC game days but easily shift to match any other event held within the building, from meetings in the club space to other major sporting events or concerts. “We can promptly shift from one environment to another,” Barnum said.

Barnum said the 11,000-square-foot rooftop deck, now called the 1923 Club, aims to mimic a downtown Los Angeles hotel rooftop with soft seating, twinkly lights, plants and a comfortable environment for fans to sit out front or lounge in the back. The rooftop deck has already proved a popular space for non-event rentals.

DLR Group gave the building a more classic look by removing advertising from around the peristyle and then installing new video boards elsewhere in the venue. “The scoreboards are twice as big but in a better location,” Barnum said.

The Wi-Fi covers the entire property and a new sound system joins the new concession stands, new handrails, new LED lighting and new seats as upgrades within the bowl.

Elsewhere in the building, engineers needed to make repairs to cosmetically crumbling concrete while installing the new seating and Wi-Fi system. “The condition of the stadium had some issues,” Barnum said. “We made repairs where necessary, with most of that in the seating bowl.

“We want to make sure the building is viable for the next 100 years. We don’t want it to end up like the Colosseum in Rome.”

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