Cajundome slated for $22M renovation

BY RICHARD BURGESS
rburgess@theadvocate.com

The Cajundome is undergoing a $22 million makeover that will bring new and expanded seating, new lights, upgrades for concession areas and restrooms, and a clean roof.

The facelift, which was formally launched at a ceremony Monday, will be the most extensive work at the facility since it opened in 1985.

"It has never had a major renovation," said Cajundome Director Greg Davis.

The arena is set to reopen by Dec. 1.

The original 11,500 orange and white seats will be ripped out to make way for 12,500 new black seats designed to reduce reflections and create an arena environment that disappears into the background when the lights shine on sporting events and performances, said Cajundome Operations Director Phil Ashurst.

Cajundome Director Greg Davis talks Monday about the first major renovation to the arena in the facility's 31-year history at the Cajundome in Lafayette. The $22 million renovation is planned for completion by Dec. 1.
The Advocate staff photos by LESLIE WESTBROOK

David Fontenot, chairman of the board of directors for Ragin' Cajun Facilities, from left; Gerald Boudreaux, state senator for District 24; Joseph Savoie, University of Louisiana at Lafayette president; Jay Castille, Lafayette City-Parish Council chairman; Liz Webb Hebert, Lafayette City-Parish councilwoman for District 8; Bruce Conque, Lafayette City-Parish councilman for District 6; Kam Mavassaghi, Cajundome Commission member; and Dwayne Bowe, chairman of the Cajundome Commission, pose Monday for a photo during a groundbreaking ceremony for a Cajundome renovation.

CAJUNDOME

Continued from page 1A

The walls of the arena will be painted black and gray, and a new LED lighting system will allow for tightly focused beams that don’t bleed into the seating areas.

"It’s going to give patrons a much better live entertainment experience," Davis said. "It’s going to have a theatrical live performance feel to it."

He said lower-level seating will be reconfigured and expanded to allow spectators at University of Louisiana at Lafayette basketball games to push right up to the court, rather than sit on the other side of the 14-foot gap in the old seating arrangement.

The arena’s main entrance will be spruced up, and the restrooms will be renovated.

Concession area upgrades will allow for expanded food service, more points of sale and a "state-of-the-art beer distribution system" for faster service and colder brews.

"We will enhance the menu and offer higher-quality food at the concession stand," Davis said.

Most of the $22 million in upgrades will be inside the arena, but the project also includes the resealing of the arena’s massive roof, work that will remove the unsightly mildew that now mars the top of the Cajundome.

Davis said the improvements will give the 31-year-old arena a new lease on life and position it to aggressively compete for premium events and more customers.

"We are competitors in this business," said Cajundome Commission Chairman DeWayne Bowie.

The renovation work will be paid for with proceeds from the local hotel-motel tax.

Davis said UL-Lafayette basketball, which begins in November, will hold early season games at the nearby Blackham Coliseum.

The games are expected to return to the Cajundome by Dec. 1 or possibly earlier if the renovations are finished before then, he said.

Guests wear red and white hard hats as they chat during the ceremony. The $22 million renovation is planned for completion by Dec. 1.