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## Lovelace Athletic Museum

When the original Jonathan B. Lovelace Museum & Hall of Honor first opened at the Auburn Athletics Complex, it had a bigger purpose than housing memorabilia and banners.

"The purpose of the Lovelace Museum was to honor the past, define the present and inspire the future," said David Housel, former Auburn Athletics Director and the unofficial historian of Auburn Athletics. "If we don't know where we come from, we really don't know who we are. If we don't know who we are, we really don't know where we have a chance to go."

While the newly opened Lovelace Hall of Honor at Auburn Arena holds true to the museum's original intent, it presents Auburn's history and defines the Auburn Family in a more colorful, interactive and perhaps even more inspiring way.

Fans who visit the Lovelace Hall of Honor at Auburn Arena will take an interactive walk through Auburn Athletics history. They will hear and feel what it must be like to experience Tiger Walk. They are sure to learn facts about Auburn Athletics history they didn't know.

Whether those visiting the Hall of Honor are life-long Auburn fans, the young children of Auburn alumni or even visiting fans from other schools, Randy Byars hopes they will come away knowing what makes the Auburn experience unique.

"The most important thing that we are trying to communicate is what it is like to be a part of the Auburn Family," said Byars, who oversaw the development of the Hall of Honor with help from a consulting firm.

The project has been a labor of love for Byars, who spent months sifting through artifacts from the old museum while also working to obtain new mementos and items never seen before.

The museum features 17 interactive sports cases highlighting each sport at Auburn. LCD screens display pictures of past champions and historical moments, and artifacts in each case complement the stories told on the screens,

such as the women's track and field case. It features the National Championship trophy the team won in 2006. Look above the trophy, and a bar is mounted at a height of 6-2.25, the distance school record-holder Raevan Harris cleared in 2009.

"When we set a new record, I'll have to move the bar up," Byars quipped.

Visitors browsing the sports cases can also view Bo Jackson's Heisman Trophy, Jeff Beard's track shoes from the 1932 season and a football signed by the 1937 football team, which won the Bacardi Bowl, Auburn's first bowl game that was played in Havana, Cuba. Auburn and Villanova fought to a 7-7 tie in a game that was almost canceled because Cuban Dictator Fulgencio Batista's picture was not in the game program. The names scribbled on the ball are those of Auburn legends like Walter Gilbert and Billy Hitchcock.

No Auburn Hall of Honor would be complete without Auburn's 17-16 win over Alabama in the 1972 Iron Bowl. And while many Auburn



fans know that David Langner scooped up two blocked punts on nearly identical plays to score the winning touchdowns, few may remember the name Gardner Jett. Jett was the placekicker who kicked the go-ahead extra point to seal the victory. His black kicking cleats from the game are featured in one of the cases.

Other walls at the Hall of Honor feature great Auburn players, teams and coaches. The "Great Auburn Moments" wall presents a chronological history of watershed moments, beginning with Auburn's first football game against Georgia in 1892. Dr. George Petrie was the coach, and the price of admission was 50 cents.

The Auburn Spirit Theater, as Byars calls it, is sure to be a fan favorite. A 16-foot wide screen features 25 brief videos that tell the Auburn story in a compelling, even moving, way. One clip features legendary Coach Pat Dye and the men who played for him. They reminisce about the brutal practices early in the Dye era and how playing for Coach Dye taught

them more about life than about football. The "Punt Bama Punt" piece features video and audio highlights of that day that will forever live in Auburn lore.

"These video clips," Byars said, "are not meant to just be the greatest Auburn sports highlights. They tell the story about what makes Auburn special--the Auburn Family and the Auburn spirit."

Another display that Byars calls the "Celebration Area" symbolizes Toomers Corner after an Auburn victory. A ring of white streamers hangs down from the ceiling along with orange and blue banners honoring Auburn's championship teams. Look up, and Nova is circling overhead on a blue-sky canvas.

Another unique feature at the Hall of Honor features pictures of every Auburn student-athlete who has competed for Auburn over the past six years. From a distance, the mosaic shows the eagle soaring above the turf of Pat Dye Field above the inter-locking Auburn

symbol. Up close, fans will see some familiar faces and some they may not know that create the mosaic.

When Auburn men and women, their children and grandchildren stroll through the Hall of Honor on Saturdays this fall or throughout basketball season, Housel hopes--knows, really-that something important will be happening.

"Knowing who we are, knowing where we've come from puts flesh and blood and spirit on the words 'hopes, dreams and aspirations.' It gives those words a humanity that is often lacking when people talk about them. The thing that separates Auburn from other schools is the fact that most people who are Auburn fans became aware of Auburn or were brought to Auburn by someone who loved them and cared about them. That's what makes the Auburn experience special."

And that's what makes a visit to the Lovelace Hall of Honor at Auburn Arena worth every minute of it.















