Investing in Innovation

Milestone gift boosts plans for Centre for High Performance Sport

As it celebrates the first season at the new Varsity Centre, the Faculty of Physical Education and Health is already dreaming about what comes next. That dream came closer to reality in June, with an $11 million gift from the Goldring Family.

The largest individual gift ever made to university athletics at a Canadian university, the Goldring commitment bolsters the plans for phase two of the Varsity Centre project – the Centre for High Performance Sport.

Approved by U of T's Governing Council on June 25th, the centre will boast a 2,000-seat basketball and volleyball field house, a strength and conditioning centre, a state-of-the-art sport medicine clinic, and teaching and research labs that will explore a range of issues relating to health and athletic performance.

"U of T is setting a new standard of excellence for sport in Canada, from research and teaching to training and competition to medical innovation and sport science," says Dean Bruce Kidd. "The synergies created by the Goldring Centre for High Performance Sport will be felt far beyond the U of T community, boosting the standard of high performance sport across the province and the country."

The Goldring Centre will fill a critical facility gap in Ontario. "This will contribute significantly to the creation of the sports institute environment that we very much need in Ontario," says Chris Rudge, CEO of the Canadian Olympic Committee, citing the tremendous decline in the percentage of Ontario Olympians in recent years.

The Goldring gift represents a significant boost to the fund-raising campaign for the $53 million facility. The university aims to raise the remaining funds and begin construction in the fall of 2008.

"Our goal is to help create a world-class facility that will attract top rate researchers and athletes, and ideally foster new Olympians," says Blake Goldring, on behalf of the Goldring Family. "These are the things that really motivate and excite us."

The Goldring Centre will also be a place for U of T students to learn, conduct research, work out and enjoy a Varsity Blues basketball or volleyball game.

"The University of Toronto is a world-class institution," says Goldring. We are delighted to contribute to a project that will enhance the experience of students attending this university in the years ahead." - *Althea Blackburn-Evans*

ARTIST'S RENDERING: PASCALE DIONNE, URBAN STRATEGIES INC.

The science of sport

The Goldring Centre for High Performance Sport will be a hive of research activity. Professors and graduate students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Health will collaborate to study:

Athlete nutrition

Scientists across several disciplines will explore the biology and genetics of behavioural, socio-cultural and environmental influences on nutrition, physical activity, weight and energy balance to find new ways optimizing athletic performance.

Benefits of training

Researchers will help quantify the relationship between training and benefits to individual performance, giving athletes better knowledge about how and how much to train. The work will help athletes create a personalized training program, understand how to taper their training before critical performances and avoid overtraining.

Biomechanics and motor learning

Sport scientists will conduct lab studies and film sports at Varsity Centre to determine how people learn movement within a sport context. This work will help athletes analyze their technique and researchers understand how athletes learn parts of their technique, and whether what is observed in the lab gets translated onto the field.

Environments for physical activity and sport

Researchers will study a range of socio-cultural issues relating to the quality of, access to, and meaning around activity spaces available to Canadian youth. The work will further knowledge about the relevance of environment to the health and well-being of young urban populations, and understanding of the importance of inclusive sports environments for high performance enhancement.

Heart health

Researchers will explore a range of issues related to sport and heart function, including cardiac fatigue, irregular cardiac function in athletes, and sudden death during exercise. A registry of cardiac incidents among athletes – the first of its kind in Canada – will enable researchers to track recreational and high performance athletes with cardiac conditions.

Injury

Researchers and sports medicine experts will study the consequences of both concussion and musculoskeletal injuries on long-term athletic performance; track athlete training and competition activities to assess risk correlations; and explore issues such as return-to-play guidelines and the effectiveness of specific exercise routines during recovery.

Psychology

A sport psychology support service will range from personal and team counseling to educational workshops. Research will also explore factors that prevent physical activity, whether participation in physical activity and sport influences psychological well-being, and whether physical activity and sport promotion initiatives (e.g., ParticipACTION) are effectively designed and delivered to the public.