

Charlie and Marie Lupton Baseball Stadium and Williams-Reilly Field

When Lupton Stadium officially opened five years ago, the new venue predictably sparked excitement for Texas Christian University baseball. Less predictable, perhaps, was what happened next, as the Horned Frogs have won 78 percent of their games at Lupton and have attracted more than a quarter-million fans through its gates—accomplishments that scarcely would have seemed possible previously.

The enthusiasm generated on Feb. 2, 2003, by the inaugural crowd of 3,105 people—more



An aerial view of Lupton Stadium, situated on the west side of the TCU campus between the track and tennis center.

than half of the previous season's *total* home attendance—has grown at a rate that is matched only by the baseball team's level of success during that same brief period of time. Lupton Stadium has thus proven to be a deeply influential catalyst for what has now become one of the NCAA's best overall programs.

“The effect of Lupton Stadium on the TCU baseball program has been enormous to say the least,” Head Baseball Coach Jim Schlossnagle said. “Facilities represent commitment, and the baseball stadium is what first attracted me and my family to TCU, along with our coaching staff and, of course, the student-athletes.”

The widespread attraction to Lupton Stadium is understandable since it continues to embody the finest trends in modern collegiate baseball facilities. The \$7 million, state-of-the-art ballpark seats 3,500 people, boasts a spacious home clubhouse and locker rooms, contains one of

the nation's premier press boxes and features several other amenities for fans and players alike. It all adds up to the kind of environment that can (and does) foster excellence on the field and spirit in the stands.

The initial spike in interest during the 2003 season does not, by itself, fully reflect the stadium's impact. Rather, that impact is still being felt through a sustained rise in prominence, with each baseball season building upon the success of the last. In fact, figures from the recently concluded 2008 season present some of the most impressive achievements to date.



Looking inside the baseball team's clubhouse under the main grandstand and directly connected to the third-base dugout.

Home attendance records were shattered last season. Lupton Stadium welcomed many of its largest single-game crowds in history, including a mid-week showdown with former Southwest Conference rival Texas A&M that drew a whopping 4,294 people and eclipsed the previous high by more than 1,000. In addition, the Horned Frogs hosted their biggest-ever series crowd when perennial power Cal State Fullerton visited TCU for a three-game meeting in February that attracted nearly 7,500 total fans. Altogether, 63,959 people attended games at Lupton Stadium last spring for an average of 1,881 people per game—both of which are new records.

Success in the stands has accompanied success on the field. TCU's last five seasons also happen to represent the top five win totals in school history. The Horned Frogs won 28 home games in 2008, a new record that surpassed the 27 they won the previous season. The team has won five consecutive conference championships—the most recent of which was hosted for the first time at Lupton Stadium.

Of course, the TCU baseball team is able to win so many games, in part, because elite players are drawn to Lupton Stadium and choose to play there. This has helped give TCU the ability to consistently attract some of the nation's top recruiting classes, from which many supremely talented players have arisen. Since Lupton Stadium's inaugural season in 2003, there



A record 4,294 people filled Lupton Stadium on April 29 to see TCU play Texas A&M.

have been 25 Horned Frogs taken in the Major League Baseball draft, including two players picked in the first round, which had not happened in any of the previous 40 years.

When Schlossnagle—himself a vital component to TCU's success, having won three consecutive Mountain West Conference Coach of

the Year Awards—reflects on the team's many milestones and dreams for the future, he leaves little doubt as to how significant Lupton Stadium has been in enabling them all.

“It would be impossible to have accomplished those feats without this ballpark,” Schlossnagle said. “And the donors to the stadium are really the true heroes in this rapid resurgence of the baseball program at TCU.”

In all, more than 220 donors contributed to the construction of Lupton Stadium and Williams-Reilly Field. Inspired onlookers have continued the push to elevate TCU baseball since then, such as Paul Sorrels '41, a three-time baseball letterman who—before his death late last year—chose to leave a bequest benefiting the program that drew him in seven decades ago. Now, as new generations experience TCU baseball through this magnificent ballpark, it seems others will likely form similar affinities for all that takes place within the confines of Lupton Stadium.