

## WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC COMPLEX

### **Site of First World Olympics in Western Hemisphere and the First Three-Candidate Presidential Debate**

In 1904, Washington University in St. Louis hosted the Third World Olympiad—the first Olympics ever held in the Western Hemisphere. On Oct. 11, 1992, the much-expanded Athletic Complex hosted another first—the first nationally televised three-candidate debate among Bill Clinton, George Bush and Ross Perot. In 1992, Washington University had only seven days to transform the hardwood-floor gymnasium into a red-carpeted debate hall because St. Louis was a last-minute choice acceptable to all three candidates.

The complex has several key buildings and facilities.

### **Field House: Site of Athletic Competitions, Presidential Debates and Speeches**

The Washington University Field House was the site of the first 1992 presidential debate. After a major renovation of athletic facilities, the Field House is considered one of the nation's finest and largest athletic facilities at an NCAA Division III institution. Constructed more than six decades ago, the Field House was completely renovated in the mid-1980s when a new athletic complex was built around it. The Field House, which has a floor size of 17,250 square feet, can accommodate seating for 3,000 fans. During the 1992 debate, the Field House could seat only 600 people due to the requirements of four television network platforms, additional camera sites and a three-level stage for the candidates.

At its renovation, the Field House provided a new home for men and women's sports. It currently is home of the reigning NCAA Division III women's basketball national champions, as well as the nationally ranked men's basketball squad and seven-time NCAA champion volleyball team. The teams' mascot is the Bears.

The Field House has a rich and storied past. It was the site of several NBA games and outstanding Missouri High School state championships, not to mention numerous Bears games with Illinois, Missouri, Princeton, Harvard, Purdue, Arkansas and others.

Since its renovation, the Field House also has been host to speeches by then President George Bush in February 1989, former President Jimmy Carter in February 1991, Jesse Jackson in September 1991, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet in September 1993, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in March 1994, and Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates in October 1998.

## **Facts on the Athletic Complex—continued**

### **Francis Field & Gymnasium: Home to Another Contest of International Interest**

Washington University's Francis Field and Gymnasium, registered historical landmarks, were the site of the 1904 Olympic Games—the first Olympics ever held in the Western Hemisphere. The event was brought to St. Louis by David Rowland Francis, a former Ambassador to Russia, a one-time Secretary of the Interior, and an 1870 graduate of Washington University. Francis also forged the plans for the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis and argued that the games should take place in the same city. The Olympic Committee agreed, and Washington University was named the site.

The 1904 games made use of the university's castle-like Francis gymnasium, constructed of Indiana limestone and Missouri red granite. Built in 1902, Francis Field's permanent stands represented one of the first applications of reinforced concrete technology. Francis Field also featured a third-of-a-mile track (660-yard)—a track that was used through the early 1980s.

During the university's halcyon days of pigskin—the 1920s, '30s and '40s—the Bears played major college football. There were even flood lights back then, an innovation quite revolutionary at the time. At the height of its day, Francis Field seated close to 19,000 fans with a large section of wooded stands erected on the north side of the field.

In 1984, Francis Field underwent a major facelift. The seating capacity was reduced to 4,000, and a new press box, concession stand and ticket window were added, along with a synthetic eight-lane 400-meter track. A new track surface was laid in 1994.

Francis Field also has been the home for the 1986 AAU/USA National Junior Olympic Games, the first and second National Senior Olympic Games, and the 1985 NCAA Division III National Men's Soccer Championship.

In July 1994, Francis Field served as a centerpiece for the U.S. Olympic Festival as 3,000 athletes were housed on Washington University's Hilltop Campus for the country's top amateur sporting event. After a 4,000-mile torch relay, the Olympic Festival torch was stationed and remained lit just inside the Francis Field gates throughout the 10-day event.

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