

Press release

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**Demolition begins at Wembley Stadium**

On 30 September demolition began of the historic 80-year old Wembley Stadium in order to make way for the new state-of-the-art stadium designed by the World Stadium Team, a joint venture between Foster and Partners and HOK Sport. The new stadium is being constructed by Multiplex, Australia's largest commercial, retail and residential construction company, which built the 110,000-seat Stadium Australia for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

Following the financial agreement a week earlier, the bulldozers moved in to tear down an awning between the stadium's twin towers as a symbolic gesture. Full demolition begins on 3 October and is expected to take six months. The new 90,000-seat stadium is due to open in 2006.

The new Wembley Stadium will be the first of a new generation of sports stadia, with facilities unparalleled anywhere in the world including, offices, a banqueting hall, pre-function gathering spaces and facilities for media coverage. The design builds upon the heritage of the old stadium to provide future generations of sports and music fans with a venue equipped for the twenty-first century.

The key feature of the new stadium is its partly retractable roof. When fully open it will allow sunlight to reach the whole pitch - an essential element in maintaining the world-standard quality of the turf. In poor weather, the roof can be closed within 15 minutes, providing cover for all 90,000 seats. The roof will be supported structurally by a spectacular 133-metre-high arch that will tower over the stadium, providing an iconic replacement for the old building's landmark twin towers. Dramatically illuminated at night, the arch will be visible from vantage points across London.

Facilities are designed to maximise spectator comfort and enjoyment of events: the stadium's geometry and its steeply raked seating tiers will ensure that everyone has an unobstructed view; seats will be larger than at present with more leg-room; the highest tiers will be easily accessed via escalators; and a new concourse wrapping around the building will allow easy circulation and provide catering for up to 40,000 spectators at any one time. The development includes the renovation of Wembley Park Underground station to allow it to handle 40,000 people per hour.

Lord Foster said:

We are absolutely thrilled that we can start work on what will be the best stadium in the world. The emergence of the new stadium will herald a new optimism for the nations sporting fraternity the Wembley Arch will become a symbol for sporting excellence, a dream for future generations of footballers and athletes alike from around the World.

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