

University Arena “The Pit” at The University of New Mexico

The Product:	Sitmatic Tuxedo, 765 Positions	www.sitmatic.com
The Architectural Firm:	Molzen-Corbin and Associates	www.molzencorbin.com
The Dealer:	Goodman’s Interior Structures	www.goodmansinc.com
The General Contractor:	Flintco Constructive Solutions	www.flintco.com



Overview: More commonly known as The Pit, the University Arena is a basketball-only arena in Albuquerque with a capacity of 17,126. It serves primarily as the home of the University of New Mexico Lobo teams. The design of The Pit won international recognition for chief architect Joe Boehning. The arena was built with its floor lying 37 feet below grade, giving rise to its now-famous nickname. The roof was built first, before the pit was excavated and concrete was poured for the foundations. With the unique method of construction, there are no supporting pillars in the seating area of the arena, so there are no obstructed views. The compact area, steep grade and proximity of the seats to the floor all contribute to the legendary noise level.



Past to Present: Originally seating 14,831, the arena opened on Dec. 1, 1966, with \$1.4 million spent. The Pit is known as a visiting team’s nightmare, due to the high volume of sound created by the fans and the sunken design. Some sources have reported the arena reached sound levels of 125 decibels at peak times. In 1999, Sports Illustrated listed The Pit as one of Top Twenty Sporting Venues of the Century. The Pit came in 13th, ahead of such locations as Daytona Speedway, Notre Dame Stadium, St. Andrews Golf Course and the Rose Bowl.

The Pit has undergone two major renovations. In 1975, construction of a cantilevered deck above the original seating, along with dedicated standing room only space, brought capacity up to 18,018, and cost \$2.2 million. The second renovation began in 2009 and was completed in November 2010, just in time for the 2010-11 basketball season. The cost was \$60 million, and brings the facility up to modern luxury standards. Among a bevy of renovations, included was the addition of 40 luxury suites and 300 club level seats among others. Post renovation, the arena now holds 17,126.

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The Challenge: Goodman’s Interior Structures brought Sitmatic to Molzen-Corbin & Associates, as a possible solution. They were looking for a fixed seating manufacturer that offered quality and durability, value, and most importantly the flexibility to work within the parameters of an existing facility while meeting the customization needs of their client. Working with tight spaces, and steep angles while maintaining the required seat count factored heavily into the desired floor plan. Comfort and durability were also key factors as these seats were being placed in high dollar skyboxes, or being sold individually at premium rates. The use of the Lobo’s logo somewhere on the seats, along with a request for leather seating surfaces were important from the end user’s perspective. Lastly, coordination with a complicated General Contractors construction schedule and the multitude of trades on sight were also requirements.



The Solution: After extensive evaluation of the space and the clients needs, Sitmatic’s Design Department began the task of creating a product solution and floor plan that would be a solid fit for the budget and key criteria of Molzen-Corbin and UNM. The eight available on center seat widths allowed us to provide the required number of positions. At the same time, custom back angles aided in maximizing the seat count, without compromising comfort. The Sitmatic Project Management team was able to source durable, supple leather that was upscale, yet reasonably priced to stay within the clients’ budget. We also suggested laser etching a highly detailed Lobos logo into the seat backs, instead of embroidery, furthering the brand image for seat holders. Wood arm cap accents richened the look of the product, along with matching durable laminates. The collaboration of Sitmatic’s Design Department, Project Management Team, and Production/Installation Staff allowed for a successfully staged complex installation along side many other trades. The end result is a rich, durable, comfortable product solution that integrates well with the space and was delivered on time, on budget.