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USC BASEBALL

Site is back in a hard place

Discovery of
granite deposit
jeopardizes
stadium's timeline

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It was enough to make someone slap their head with their fist — precisely what USC athletics director Eric Hyman did when the subject came up Tuesday.

Yet another problem in the building of the long-delayed baseball stadium. And yet another reason it may not open as planned next spring.

Workers on the site last week struck what Hyman called a "pretty substantial" amount of granite. It shouldn't affect the design of the stadium itself, but could add time to a project that

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Excavation work continues at the site for the new USC baseball stadium. Granite deposits are slowing the process.

STADIUM

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already had little room for error.

"It's going to be an impact," Hyman said. "What kind of impact it is, (we don't know). Within a couple, two or three weeks, we'll have a much better handle on it."

The building process has three phases: Demolition is completed. Excavation is ongoing at the site, which is near the Congaree River at the corner of Williams and Blossom streets.

The bids for construction — the final phase — were due to go out next month. That might change depending on what is reported by the primary architects, Curt Davis and Associates, a Columbia company.

USC associate athletics director for facilities Jeff Davis said the architects and the school will then make a decision on whether to move back the timeline for opening the stadium.

"They're the experts. They know where we can be based on the timelines, construction documents and where we are with the excavation and all that," Davis said. "So they'll be able to give us a better idea."

The fact that granite was hit at the site was not surprising, considering a rock quarry is nearby. But the amount of granite was more than anticipated.

"It's just the time element that's required to get in and move it," Davis said. "If you didn't have it, you just dig the bowl and you're

out. With hitting granite, you have to do a lot more."

Hyman also expressed concern at the project's cost. It was approved at \$28 million, and Davis said it was still within budget, but the construction bid process could change that too.

"If you look around the country and you look at facilities and what the original estimates were on costs, then you see how they've changed, how the costs have increased, it gives me great pause because we haven't put it out to bid," Hyman said. "But when the bids come back, then the rubber hits the pavement."

But so far nothing has been cut out of the project, according to baseball coach Ray Tanner. He emphasized that the plan never included a visitor's clubhouse, since college baseball teams usually dress elsewhere.

"I'm the one who said, 'Whoa, what are we doing that for?' That is not a common practice in college facilities," Tanner said. "To me, that's a waste of money."

Tanner drives by the site every day he is in town. He likes the progress he has seen, but knows it remains an uphill task to get it done in time for his team to play there on opening day of next season.

"Time is of the essence. That would be the appropriate way to put it," he said.

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