

Mustangs ride into new era with turf



Football team to play tonight on artificial field

MURPHY — Later tonight the Hidden Valley High football team will break in their new football field with a Skyline Conference game against Mazama at 7 p.m.

The team isn't the first to get to play on it — that honor went to Boys' & Girls' Club football teams this past weekend — but it's the culmination of the first part of a plan to upgrade athletic facilities at the school.

The Mustangs had hoped to play their home opener on it on Sept. 12, but delays forced them to play at Mel Ingram Field.



The girls' soccer team had hoped to play its cross-valley rival North Valley on the field last Monday, but the new goals were shipped with wrong parts, moving the game to the Erik Pipher Memorial Soccer Complex.

The field, which features a blue running mustang outlined in white stretching from one 46-yard line to the other 46-yard line.

The end zones are blue with "MUSTANGS" in white block letters. Both 20-yard lines are outlined in orange.

The school plans to move on with turf on both the baseball and softball fields as well.

This project was spearheaded by former football coach Jacob Schaufler and former athletic director Jamie Ongman. Schaufler wrote a grant proposal to Salem-based Community Sports Development to help get artificial turf installed at the school.

He also spearheaded a similar project at Eagle Point to help the Eagles get a turf football field.

Schaufler is now a teacher and an assistant football coach at North Valley High, while Ongman is the principal at Illinois Valley High.

CSD, which specializes in grants for turf, agreed to pay a significant portion of the cost.

Hidden Valley Principal Daye Stone said the grant ultimately amounted to \$1.2 million to install turf on the football, baseball and softball fields.

That left \$685,000 left for the school to raise on its own. Stone said the school remains about \$45,000 shy of that goal.

Evergreen Bank stepped in to help fund a significant portion of the cost. Jeff Hyde, president of Evergreen Bank, said his company paid Hidden Valley \$200,000 for naming rights of the entire sports complex for the next 20 years.

"The naming rights on the scoreboards of those three fields, we're able to use it as a marketing expense," Hyde said. "Then, we've helped out with some cash donations along the way. We certainly are glad to part of this."

Both Stone and Hyde said the official name of the facility has yet to be determined.

"It's important that it's the Hidden Valley project," Hyde said. "Their workers are supporting Hidden Valley. We're coming alongside and helping them, but these are all backers and donors to help them.

"We've been involved in other projects over the years when the fields went in at Grants Pass and also helped

out North Valley and Illinois Valley with their tracks. We were part of the Ingram Field project, the Russ Werner track and of course the (Grants Pass) softball field as well.”

In addition, the bank gave Hidden Valley a \$150,000 loan at 3 percent interest.

“We’ve always wanted to give back to the community,” Hyde said. “It’s what we do. We’re successful because of the community support, so it’s only natural to give when you can and as much as you can.”

When Grants Pass High first got its turf in 2005, officials said they thought the turf would last 15 to 20 years.

Now, in its 10th year, the surface at Mel Ingram Field has shown signs of wear-and-tear. Portions have had to be replaced, and part of the base has shifted, creating an uneven surface.

Grants Pass High Athletic Director Clay Rounsaville said he would like to look into getting the turf replaced, though there are a number of items higher on the list of priorities for the school district.

The surface has seen far more use than originally expected with physical education classes, boys’ and girls’ soccer, football, baseball and softball teams using it as well as community events.

“I don’t think we could have imagined how many people that have taken advantage of the facility,” Rounsaville said. “I don’t think anybody could have. It would be full 24 hours a day if we wanted to.”

To that end, regardless when the surface ultimately has to be replaced, Rounsaville said the investment was worth it.

“Absolutely,” he said. “What the booster club did for District 7 is unbelievable.”

Stone said Hidden Valley’s turf should last 20 years, even if it gets similar traffic that Mel Ingram Field does.

“When Grants Pass put their field in, it was a different era of field turf,” Stone said. “This is a collegiate/professional surface. They’re saying if we take care of it, we should be able to get to the 20-year threshold.”

Ongman said in February the turf being installed would be 45-ounce density, which has about 25 percent greater density than the standard in 2005 when Mel Ingram received the turf.

The Grants Pass High booster club is still paying off the interest-free loans for both the football and softball fields.

The loans had been set to come due at the end of 2014, but booster club president Tom Blanchard said an extension was negotiated recently and he expects the final \$75,000 — of the total \$1.1 million investment in athletic updates in the last decade — will be paid off in the next couple years.

Hidden Valley’s investment in athletics is expected to grow even further than it already has.

Stone said there is another project in the works to replace the old football practice field, just south of the game field, with six tennis courts and elevated stands.

He said the cost is projected at \$40,000 to \$80,000.

“In Grants Pass or Medford, outside of a club, it’s hard to find decent tennis courts,” Stone said. “We want to create a place where we don’t have to keep scraping the bottom of the barrel. We want to be able to take the money we make from tournaments and put them back into the sports.”

That means making these facilities as attractive as possible.

“We want to create a destination,” Stone said. “People can come in the spring time and practice, and we’ll be able to have tournaments at our baseball and softball facility. We can have jamboree-type things.

“These are for multiple sports, so we can use it for soccer, and the community can use it as well.”

Stone said Baez Sports Group, based in Salem, installed the turf.

PHOTOS: Top - The new artificial turf at Hidden Valley High School’s football stadium is ready for tonight’s game between the Mustangs and the Mazama Vikings. Bottom - The base of the home stands has been painted as part of the renovations at the stadium.