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Renovated Martorelli Stadium draws praise

Wednesday, October 03, 2001

By Matt DeReno

Gone are the rubble-strewn patches of brown clod that characterized the old Martorelli Stadium field.

In is the new "FieldTurf," a state-of-the-art playing surface also used at the Steelers' practice facility.

Gone are the sewage problems that plagued the visiting team's locker room.

Gone is a large section of hill and trees that partially blocked the indulgences of a group known as the Rowdy Rooters, essentially a private party with a great view of the field.

Gone is the rubber track that truncated the end zones, making for tricky footwork near the pylons.

North Hills School District unveiled its renovated Martorelli Stadium Sept. 21 to thousands of fans. Cost disputes and lawsuits over the artificial surface were forgotten amid the roar of the crowd and thunder of the marching band. Most in attendance praised the renovations.

State Rep. Dave Mayernik, D-Ross, who attended the game with his family, said, "It's a fantastic, first-class facility. It is well deserved for the community. This stadium is a source of community pride ... The new turf will also prevent injuries, which I should know something about as a former player myself."

Art Bernardi, Butler Area football coach for 24 years and athletic director for four more, agreed.

"Everybody that has this sort of field loves it," he said. "This facility is a tremendous improvement and is an advantage for North Hills. It is the way of the future."

Joe Halder, better known as "West View Joe," a fan famous for his rule-book zeal, was a bit critical of the Indians' new digs: "There is no easy way for a big crowd to get from one side of the field to the other. Plus, people are still standing on the sidewalk [a path that arcs from the



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main gate to the home bleachers] watching the game. I thought that was something they wanted to eliminate."

Wayne Seelhorst, a recently retired math teacher who has kept the Indians' football statistics for 29 years, had a different complaint. "The press box is actually smaller," he said. "I don't know if I like there not being a window in the press box. It might be pretty difficult in here when it gets cold and the wind starts blowing."

Younger fans were more succinct.

"It's awesome," said Chris Ferer, a 2000 district graduate.

"It's just really cool," echoed Eric Norris, who graduated in the spring.

Sophomore Linsey Weir was impressed with the scoreboard, and junior Vicky Kortz appreciated the concession stands.

Chuck Kurbiance, a 2000 graduate, said the seating was the biggest improvement, while sophomore Allan Chapman said the new stadium promoted "a great atmosphere." Sophomore Jess Marson, summed it up: "It's a lot bigger and is really pretty."

The "Rowdy Rooters" also were enthusiastic.

"Absolutely gorgeous. The way it is chiseled out of the hill...", said Ross resident Ken Zalinsky, a local business owner and board member of the North Hills Quarterback Club. "The only problem from a Rowdy Rooters' standpoint is that we can't see the scoreboard."

Praise also came from coaches as well as former and current players.

"I was always more concerned with how the ambulance could get to the field considering how beat up I got playing on the old surface," said Brian Hinterleiter, a running back for the 1990 Indians. "I don't think you will have that problem here. The lay of the land is much improved."

North Hills coach Eric Kasperowicz, who as quarterback led the Indians to the state championship in 1993, said, "The field is just great. The new surface is not as injury-prone as a regular field would be. The surface gives a little more than regular turf. Our players love playing on it."


Defensive coordinator Pat Carey agreed. "When I used to play, the field was great at the beginning of the season, but it was torn up towards the end," said the member of the 1987 championship squad. "We would get [North Allegheny] in here on a muddy and wet field and it was sort of an advantage.

"We might not have that anymore, but our guys just love the new field. You can see that after a game nobody is banged up."

"The footing is fantastic," said running back Daryl Zobb, who scored in the Indians' 28-0 shutout of Butler Area. "The field house is state-

of-the-art. There will be fewer injuries because of the surface. We don't have scratches and bruises like we used to."

Matt DeReno is a free-lance writer.

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