

## SPORTS

## WCU baseball stadium undergoes renovations for 2011 season

Samantha Crotty | Staff Writer

For many years now, Western Carolina University's baseball team has advanced themselves, and accomplished some incredible goals. Team members have gone to the professional league; they have won championship titles, beat other top notch teams, and have made a name for themselves. So when a simple paint project turned into a mega renovation, it only seemed like the right move to make.

It all started on July 10, when Bobby Moranda, head baseball coach, and his wife Pamela, woke up and decided they needed to do something about the dugouts. They both agreed that they needed to be painted because they were disgusting. So a few days later they loaded up their two kids and headed to the stadium for the big project. Little did they know what awaited them.

Before the painting began, Moranda wanted to take on another project, the floors of the dugout. So he got down and began pulling out all of it.

"There was fungus and plants all underneath the carpet. We had to scrap rubber, and plants just to get it all out," Coach Moranda said. "It took 7 hours to get it all out. Meanwhile we set the kids up in the car with movies and A/C so they would be out of the 95 degree heat."

On a later trip to Lowe's, Moranda explained the paint they needed for the project, and one of the managers mentioned that Dave Steed, Senior Vice President at Lowe's Home Improvement, was an alumni from Western, and that he should contact Steed to see if he would help out with any of the paint. Moranda got Steed's information and gave him a call. After a bit of phone-tag, Steed immediately said he loved what Coach Moranda was doing, loved his

direction, and ask what was needed. "Ask for anything," Steed replied.

After a few requests to upgrade the stadium in the past, Moranda finally got his wishes. WCU's baseball team was finally going to get a stadium they have worked so hard for, thanks to so many contributors, both locally and nationally.

"If I had to give a rough estimate, I'd say the renovations have cost about \$300,000, maybe more. And all of it has been donated," Moranda replied. "The university spent about \$24,000 on the whole project."

Grant Lambert of Valspar donated 100 gallons of paint for the whole facility. Ivy Green, Quincy Tan, and Boston Brick were chosen.

"These are baseball colors," Moranda explained. "The stadium is set to look similar in color with that of Wrigley Field. These colors are all throughout the complex, in the seats, the dugouts, the roofs, and the ticket office."

Painting the exterior blocks of the stadium posed a problem. It was textured, and you just can't run a roller over it. You need sprayers. From a connection at McNeely's, sprayers were donated for the job. It took 40 days to complete all of the paint around the stadium.

"We worked seven days straight for 30 days. The assistant coaches and my wife all pitched in," Moranda said.

Keeping up with the color scheme, Union Metals set up all of the roof work, which matches the rest of campus.

Travis Chapel of Triangle Brick Company donated 24,000 bricks in the color Windsor, similar to that of Balsam and Blue Ridge Residence Hall. Around the whole stadium there will be brick columns that are connected by brand new black metal fencing, which cost around \$10,000.

Throughout the stadium,



A new section of seating has been created at the baseball stadium.

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um, there have been many changes, starting with the lower-level seating. Concrete has been poured for 154 elite seats, similar to those at Yankee Stadium. There are 100 of those same seats that will be placed in the theater level section, all of which will be Ivy Green. The lower-level concrete slab has a walking path that is located behind the seats, so there will be no interruptions of people walking around during the game. In front of those seats there will be a 3ft. brick wall with a concrete cap that runs along the whole level. To prevent any stray balls from hitting the fans, Eli Rowe, of Burbank Sports, donated a 156 ft. by 50 ft. UDR Net that will be placed along that brick wall.

"This netting is big league style," Moranda said. "Fans who sit in the lower-level will be exactly 45 ft. 6 in.

from home plate; this allows the fans to feel like they are right in on the action."

On the exterior of the field, there will be an electric gate located right next to the new pitchers compound. Inside of this gate there will be a 16 in. paver brick wall that can be used for sitting prior to the games. Along this same wall, there will be a custom built grill that can be used for tailgating. At the main entrance of the pavilion, there will be a double swinging gate that will be in matching black fencing.

On the exterior walls of the stands, there are three insets that will house a mural of championship collages. Each inset will display a different theme. According to Moranda, the insets might have coaches of the past to present, or of current players. Regardless of what theme is selected, all of the collages

will display players and coaches enjoying the game of baseball.

This whole project has been taken on by architect Galen May, who constructed most of the dorms on campus.

"He has been outstanding, and the driving force for the whole project," Moranda said. "Galen has had the 'how can we make this happen?' attitude throughout this whole project."

But May is not the only person who has been on the job, the local managers Matt, Steve, Travis, Van and Brian at the Lowe's in Sylva and Franklin have put forth their help as well.

Mackie and Brian McKay have both been largely in charge of the project as the general contractors. Team General Manager, Larry Stanberry, an alumnus of WCU has done wonders for

this renovation as well.

"In my opinion, the biggest driving force of this project has been my wife Pamela. She gave up her entire summer to help out as much as she could. She put in physical labor, helped with planning, she was amazing," Moranda said.

Fred Cantler, WCU athletic director Chip Smith, Brian Frerking and Gorham Bradley have also been a large support crew on the project. Estimated completion of the project should come to a close by the end of October. However, the new seating will not be placed in until December.

With baseball season just around the corner, the new stadium is sure to please.

"We wanted our players, our fans, the students, and the alumni to have a place to enjoy the game." Moranda said about the renovations.



Pictured above is the home dugout before renovations and below is the dugout after new paint was applied.

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