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Tough Out The Gate

HHS, TA Face Imposing Football Slates To Open 2011

By MATTHEW STOSS
The VBL's opening slate of football games will be a tough one for the teams involved. The slate includes the Virginia Tech and Wake Forest matchups, which are expected to be the most competitive. The slate also includes the Virginia Tech and Wake Forest matchups, which are expected to be the most competitive.

By FOOTBALL

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Commentary



By MATTHEW STOSS
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Nat Owed More

Zimmerman Deserves Success

L... Zimmerman deserves success. He has shown a lot of promise and is a player who can make a difference on the field.

By... Zimmerman deserves success. He has shown a lot of promise and is a player who can make a difference on the field.

Home Cooking In The Valley



Armstrong shines in VBL

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High School All-Star Games

One More For Holmes, Phillips

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Phillips shines in VBL

College Football: Bridgewater

BC Considers Turf

Jopson, Nininger Could Be Renovated

By... BC considers turf. Jopson and Nininger could be renovated. The school is considering switching to artificial turf to accommodate more sports.

College Football: Bridgewater

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Jopson, Nininger Could Be Renovated

By MATTHEW STOSS

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HARRISONBURG — It's not definite, but Bridgewater College's Jopson Field could have a new synthetic turf and lights within the next few years.

BC president George Cornelius said converting Jopson Field from grass to an artificial surface — like the FieldTurf used at James Madison University's Bridgforth Stadium — is part of a larger study the college is doing to improve, among other things, campus facilities. Renovations to Nininger Hall — home to the Eagles' basketball teams — also are being considered.

There is a possibility these projects could be approved at Bridgewater's board meeting in April 2012. Cornelius, though, stressed that nothing is definite at this point.

"That doesn't mean all these decisions will be handled in that time," he said. "It may be that no decision is rendered then and it's

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Bridgewater Considers New Turf

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put off for a year. I can't guarantee you that there will be a decision on that."

BC is considering the surface switch to help accommodate more teams — a need exacerbated by the addition of men's lacrosse, which begins play in spring 2013.

If Jopson Field gets turf, the Eagles' football, field hockey, and men's and women's lacrosse teams would use it for games and practice. The addition of lights would extend the practice day as well as make it possible to play night games.

"It becomes a multipurpose facility ...because now you've got an area that can be used by a number of teams," Bridgewater athletic director Curt Kendall said. "Weather doesn't hinder your ability to play, and then you have a bad weather location as far as practices. And with lights, you can practice through the evening."

Still, there isn't anything wrong with Jopson Field as it is. Its Patriot Bermuda grass is one of the best surfaces in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference and comparable to a golf course fairway. The problem is that the grass may not be able to survive the wear-and-tear of four teams. (Kendall also said there is a possibility BC's soccer teams may switch to Jopson if turf is installed.) With football and field hockey in the fall and lacrosse and more football in the spring, the grass wouldn't see an offseason. An artificial surface makes that problem irrelevant.

"I can ruin two months worth of work in one afternoon," BC football coach Michael Clark said.

Currently, three ODAC football teams — Guilford, Emory & Henry and Washington & Lee — play on an artificial surface. Shenandoah, which enters the league in fall 2012, also plays on turf. Most of the ODAC's field hockey and lacrosse teams also play on turf.

Kendall said a small part of proposing a FieldTurf switch had to do with keeping up with the ODAC.

"You try to stay out of the arms race but, indirectly, you're going to get involved somewhat just because you have to keep up with the trends and the way things are going," he said.

Recruiting was another part of it.

"The facilities are what a studentathletes looks at because they want to see where they're playing — what's that facility compared to the other school they're looking at?" Kendall said. "And we're in the mix with everybody like that. But obviously, a lot of kids nowadays come from [high] schools with turf fields."

In terms of football, Clark said, he had no playing-surface preference and praised the quality of Jopson's current grass surface. But he said he would be in favor of BC switching to FieldTurf because of the space it would create.

"From a logistic point of view — which is from a field-space point of view — we're going to need it," Clark said. "...Basically, a FieldTurf field increases your space without changing geography."

Cornelius said the school is in the process of getting estimates on what it would cost to switch Jopson Field from grass to turf. He also said architects are currently looking at options for a Ninger renovation. Ninger houses the basketball arena, a weight room, pool and numerous athletic offices.

When JMU put down FieldTurf in 2006, it cost the school \$911,859. That also included tearing up the old AstroTurf. It is unclear what a grass-to-turf conversion would cost Bridgewater.

