

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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September 29, 2015

“Five Big Years for Veterans Memorial Park”

As the Norfolk High Panthers football team readies for one of the biggest games in the state this Friday against top rated Millard West, hometown fans can be proud to host the visiting team at one of the finest high school football facilities in Nebraska.



Veterans Memorial Park has been a popular site since its renovation. Since its opening in 2012, AquaVenture has had a total of 188,000 visitors. There have been 311 baseball games held at the newly renovated Memorial Baseball Field and a total of 139 soccer games and 196 football games held on the renovated Memorial Football Field.

approved by Norfolk voters in 2010 to pay for a \$16.4 million recreational bond that included renovating Memorial Football Field and Memorial Baseball Field, construction of Memorial AquaVenture, adding paved parking lots at Memorial and installing new baseball fields to the baseball park complex at Ta-Ha-Zouka Park south of Norfolk. Income from the taxes has actually been more than estimated so that the bond is expected to be paid off eight years earlier than previously thought.

Since the “Sprinturf” brand artificial turf was installed in 2011 there have been 139 soccer and 196 football games held on the field.

As a result of the bond issue, Memorial Field has renovated stands with a total capacity of 3958 people plus handicapped accessible seating areas. The fans filling those stands can park in 511 concrete parking stalls and 30 handicapped parking stalls rather than the previous dirt lots. Players change in roomy locker rooms in the multi-purpose building with carpet on the floors temporarily to prevent football cleats from marring the surface. The previous locker rooms were located underneath the baseball field and were rarely used.

Attending sporting events is a social affair and park staff has made picnic tables available in a large mezzanine area for people who want to visit during halftime while they eat their snacks purchased from the new concessions area.

It hasn't always been so. Before the Memorial Field artificial turf was installed, players many times had to run through puddles in the middle of the field. With three high schools sharing the facility, the grass didn't have time to recover from one game to the next so mud was everywhere. Hosting a Class A school for a top flight game would have been unthinkable back then.

That was five years ago and already fans take it for granted that Memorial Field will be pristine in whatever the weather conditions may be. The entire renovated Veterans Memorial Park at the intersection of South First Street and Pasewalk Avenue has become the crown jewel of Norfolk.

A 2% occupation tax on prepared food and beverages and 4% occupation tax on lodging was

The new women's restrooms have 26 stalls. The men's has 15 fixtures and there are three separate family restrooms. The press and coaching staff now share two press boxes above the home grandstand. Those who are walking to and from their seats can do so without blocking anyone's view as the walkway is ground level rather than in front of the first row of seats. It's all improved from what it was like going to a football game before 2011.

Even with the rain predicted for this week, the turf should be fine for Friday's game. There are eight drain tile lines installed under the field surrounded by road gravel. On top of that is six inches of crushed rock aggregate with another two inches of ¼ inch aggregate on top of that. Crumb rubber is incorporated into turf fibers for safety cushioning and to hold up the turf fibers giving it a more "grass like" look.

It will help cushion the tackles of the two football teams playing for the Class A top ten state rankings this Friday evening.