

Two athletics facilities kicking it up a notch

Expansions and new complex enhance six sports

By CURT DUDLEY

In addition to the expansion of Bridgeforth Stadium, two more major athletics projects will kick it up a notch for student-athletes and coaches in six sports. The JMU baseball and softball Dukes will open a new facility next spring, and work has begun on the Port Republic Road Athletics Facility, which will be the future home of the Dukes' field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, and track and field teams.

It is the nature of a college campus to either be renovating or expanding its physical plant. "If you are a student-athlete, a JMU employee or a fan, you can't help but come here and be excited," says JMU Athletics Director Jeff Bourne. "It is all in constant motion and changing for all the right reasons. It enhances our ability to recruit great student-athletes, which makes it easier to attract and keep top coaches."

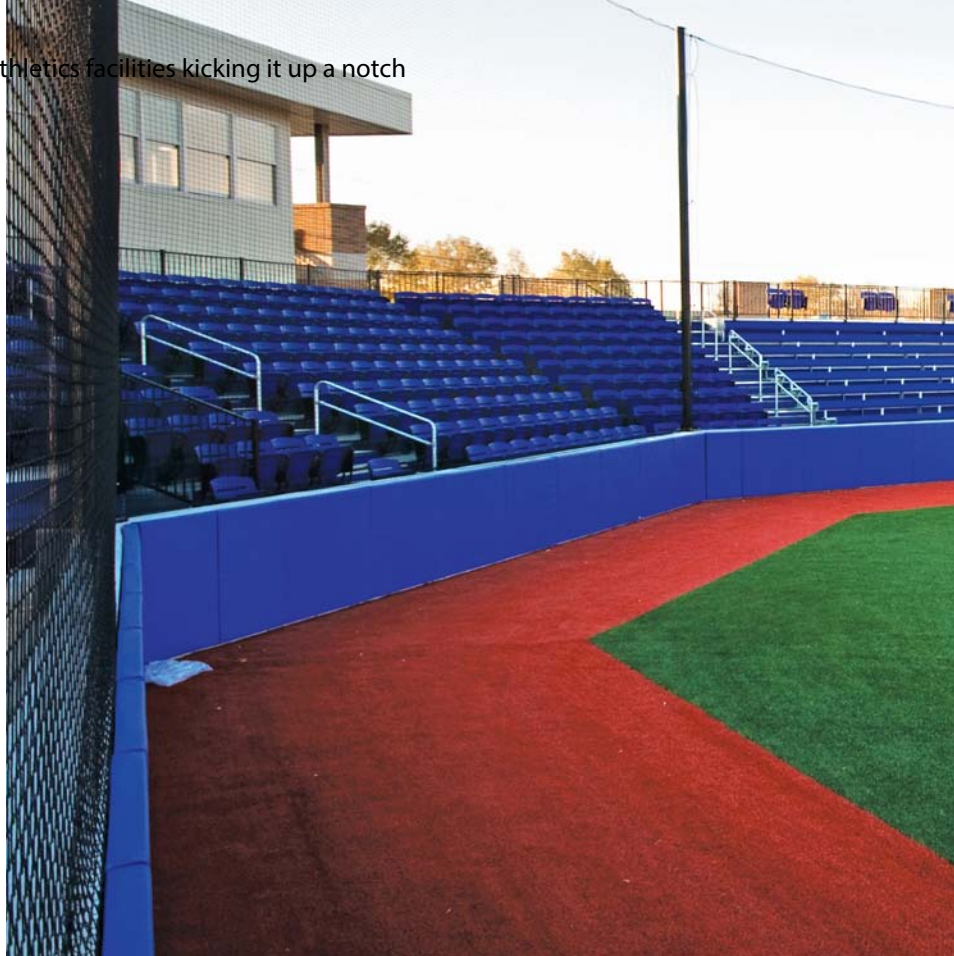
Much of what is being built or expanded today was the topic of meetings held soon after Bourne came to JMU more than a decade ago. The first objective was to raise the well-being of JMU student-athletes with the addition of the Robert and Frances Plecker Athletic Performance Center. In addition to football offices and locker rooms, the facility is the home of Student-Athlete Services and includes tutoring areas and a computer lab. It also holds a 7,000-square-foot

strength and conditioning center and a 5,000-square-foot sports medicine area.

The first of the three major JMU athletics facility projects to come online will be a state-of-the-art facility for both the baseball and softball programs on the site of Memorial

'It is all in constant motion and changing for all the right reasons.'

Jeff Bourne, *JMU athletics director*



Hall and Veterans Memorial Stadium. Coaches and players will take occupancy in their new facility after spring semester.

Both facilities will be lighted, with baseball featuring 1,200 seats including 500 chairbacks, and softball offering 500 seats with 50 chairbacks. Inside Memorial

The new baseball and softball complex (above) will open in spring 2010 on the site of Memorial Hall and Veterans Memorial Stadium. The stadium will retain its name and include a tribute to area veterans.

Beyond the JMU Nation

By JOE SHOWKER ('79)

Affecting lives at the point of change is what former JMU football coach Challace McMillin's life and career mean to me. Sports psychology has been his passion for his adult life. His coaching career turned into a higher educational calling to work with all athletes on the mental and motivational side of sports. Challace demonstrates a love for educating young people and a passion for our university. His positive influence on thousands of young people, as well as his service to JMU, is worthy of this honor.

Challace's promotion of personal excellence, accountability and a goal-driven life affected me during my formative years in college and in my coaching career. My career in sports, education, business ownership and in mentoring Virginia's teachers on digital ethics all refer back to leadership skills that Challace McMillin taught and lives to this day. I'm proud to be a part of the Challace McMillin Center for Sports Psychology and its impact on the JMU Nation and beyond.



Former Madison kicker Joe Showker ('79) and his wife, Debbie ('78), stay in touch with JMU's first football coach Challace McMillin.



The 85-acre Port Republic Road Athletics Facility will feature stadiums for field hockey and soccer/lacrosse. The complex will also include an area for track and field, coaches offices, restrooms, concessions and a press box.

Hall are locker rooms with wooden lockers, spacious coaches' offices and a reception area. There are two tunnel hitting cages, a sports medicine area and team rooms, along with a lounge and a large weight and cardio training space.

"This will be the nicest softball stadium in the Colonial Athletic Association and will rival some of the bigger facilities in the ACC," says JMU Head Softball Coach Katie Flynn. "People don't realize the indoor element in Memorial Hall that completes this as a serious program facility."

The baseball facility will continue to be known as Veterans Memorial Stadium. The site of the baseball portion of the complex is built on the site of the old Veterans Memorial Stadium, which was built in 1948. A public memorial marks the entrance into the parking area of the complex, and Veterans Memorial Park will provide ample green space for fans to enjoy all year.

The monument pays tribute to citizens of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County who lost their lives while serving to protect our nation. The original stadium honored World War II soldiers killed in action. The new monument honors fallen heroes who served from World War I through modern-day conflicts.

Oddly enough, the recent economy has hastened the schedule for construction of the Port Road Athletics Facility as contractors offered bids more favorable to JMU. The 85-acre area, which is being prepared for the University Recreation Center as well as intercollegiate athletics, is located east of campus in an area surrounded by off-campus student housing. The project will feature a natural-grass soccer and lacrosse stadium with seating for 3,000 and a turf field-hockey stadium with seating for 500. The two stadiums will adjoin one another and share a common press box. Concession stands and restrooms will enhance the fan experience. Office and locker room space will also be part of the construction. **m**

Dukes' scorecard (cont.)

Duke, Right: 26–Power

There are so many great memories from that first team and my whole Madison Experience. One of the best from that first season was "Uncle Ron," President Carrier's pep talk at the end of our 0-0-1 first season. "Boys, you've done a good job with little time to get here. I'm proud of you and you've left room for improvement. Maybe we can score next year!" ... 0-0-1 doesn't show how hard we worked that year. We had 28 players, and five did not play; so 23 guys were working hard. I played 13 positions in one game, and we had to carry the trainer off the field one time when he tripped and hurt himself. The name of the first play ever was "Duke, Right: 26–Power," and I got the ball for the first carry. ... I was in Chattanooga in 2004 to see the national championship. I cannot express the emotions I felt when I realized we were going to win a championship just 30 years after we started a program from scratch. How many teams have a player who carried the first ball in a program's history watch his team win a national championship? I was teary-eyed.

— **Chip Parkins ('77)**
former Madison cornerback

Championship memories

The stadium expansion is a very big deal. Playing in front of big crowds

is what athletes dream about. I remember playing in front of a big crowd at the JMU vs. Delaware game in 2004. The atmosphere was incredible! It actually makes you play a little harder when there is a big crowd. Getting more fans into the game to cheer on the Dukes will help the football program. It will also help with recruiting better players and winning more games.

— **Rodney McCarter ('04)**
JMU police officer, former safety/cornerback and 2004 National Champions