

# Lamar's stadium getting same turf as Dallas Cowboys

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When Lamar University football players take the field in 2010, they will have at least one thing in common with the Dallas Cowboys.

Their turf.

Hellas Construction, an Austin-based company that is installing the roll-up removable turf system at the new Cowboys stadium, is installing the same artificial turf - in a permanent form - at Provost Umphrey Stadium.

Front loaders began stripping the sod off the W.S. "Bud" Leonard Field Tuesday. As they rolled across the grass, rumbles like those of a jack-hammer filled the stadium.

Lamar's head football coach, Ray Woodard, said the artificial turf will allow the university to be competitive when it comes to recruiting. He said the turf also makes for better play.

"It's a speed game," Woodard said by phone Tuesday. "(Artificial turf) makes a surface that is built for speed. It's much better in bad weather. You never have to worry about playing on a bad field."

Lamar will be among a handful of schools in the Southland Conference that has an artificial turf field, said Brian Henry, the university's assistant athletic director for sports information.

There are 12 schools in the conference, including Lamar. Henry said at least four of those universities will compete on turf.

The field will cost just under \$1 million and an anonymous donor contributed the money to pay for it, according to previous Enterprise coverage.

What makes this turf so special is its color and size. The man-made grass is created with two fibers in different sizes and colors, according to Hellas Web site. This variation creates better traction, a stable turf system and excellent light deflection, according to information on the Web site.

Annika Lundmark, marketing director for Hellas Construction, said the company researches the durability and playability of the surfaces made by manufacturers.

She said that most high schools and colleges are making the move to synthetic turf because there is no downtime and it requires minimal maintenance.

"You can use it all year round," she said by phone.

Henry said the turf is a smart choice financially because the university does not have to water the field, repaint the lines or keep up the lawn equipment necessary to maintain a natural field.

Beyond the advantages the field presents to players and coaches, it also will serve as a multi-use facility, said Brian Sattler, Lamar University's director of public relations.

Because there is going to be a marching band, the turf will be better able to accommodate band and football practices, he said.

Sattler could not say if Lamar would be opening the field up for other schools or sports teams' use.

In the past, Beaumont ISD had played some football games at the Lamar stadium. But, during the past two years, the stadium's primary use was for the Lamar University's women's soccer team, Henry said.

The university will have a \$3 million soccer/softball complex built off Rolfe Christopher Boulevard near Vincent-Beck Stadium.

BISD will get its own stadium in 2010 as a part of the \$389 million bond package passed by Beaumont voters in 2007.

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