

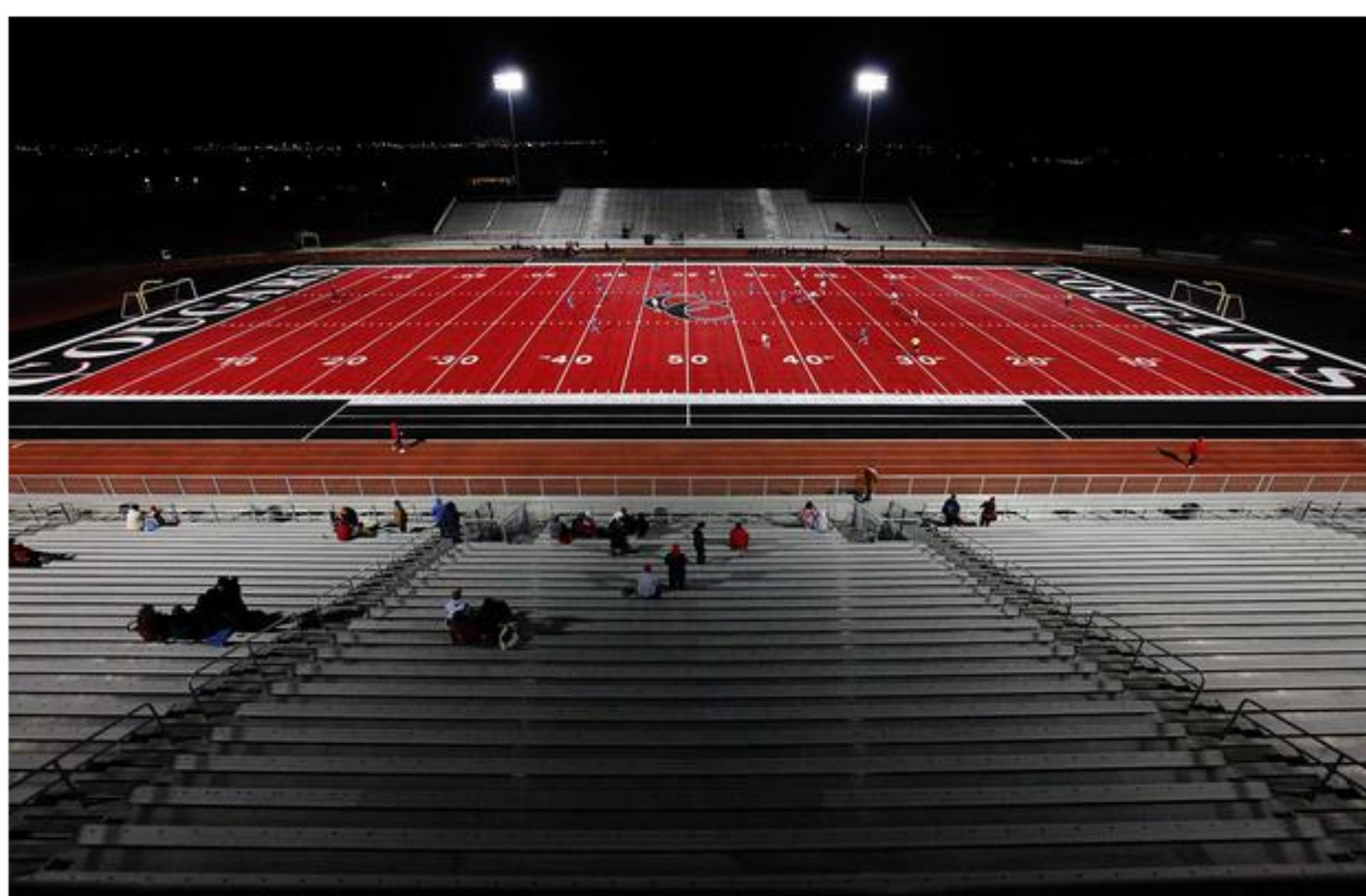
# New Braunfels Canyon swaps its traditional turf for a flashy red football field

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When the New Braunfels Canyon football team reaches the red zone next fall, the Cougars might be inside their opponent's 20-yard line - or they might be at midfield.

That's because the new synthetic turf at Canyon High School is a sea of red. Stretching 120 yards, the red field features white hash marks, black end zones with white lettering, and the school logo in red, black and white at the 50-yard line.

The field matches Canyon's school colors. The other two high schools in the Comal Independent School District - Smithson Valley and Canyon Lake - also are installing new fields, but both will stay with traditional green from goal line to goal line.

Turf installation at all three schools is being handled by Austin-based Hellas Construction Inc. The company also has installed playing surfaces at Westlake, Round Rock and Temple high schools, Sun Bowl Stadium in El Paso and Cowboys Stadium in Arlington.

"It's not as bad as you might think it is," Canyon boys soccer coach Rob Rush said Thursday after his team posted a 2-1 victory over Lockhart. "You get used to it pretty quick. The first time I looked down I lost focus, but you adjust pretty quickly. The players love it."

Installation of the field, completed Monday, comes about six months after Eastern Washington University installed a red artificial surface at its Roos Field. Eastern Washington, perhaps inspired by the publicity surrounding its red field, won the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision championship with a 20-19 victory over Delaware last week in Frisco.

New Braunfels Canyon becomes the first high school in the country to have a red football field, said Annika Lundmark, marketing director for Hellas Construction.

"When we heard they wanted an all-red field, we asked, are you sure?" she said. "We were concerned because (red) is very bright."

Smithson Valley considered an all-blue field before switching to "alternating panels" of green, Lundmark said. The field, nearly completed, will alternate every 10 yards from light to dark green. The end zones will be blue.

Hidalgo High School, a Class 3A school in the Rio Grande Valley, is the only other high school in Texas with a nongreen playing surface. The Pirates play on a blue field.

Marc Walker, superintendent for the Comal school district, broached the idea of a red playing surface at Canyon High, Rush said. Before deciding on it, though, district officials contacted Eastern Washington to see if the field had led to any problems. Canyon's football coaches, concerned about watching film showing a red field, wondered if the video quality would be distorted by a nongreen surface.

In the end, Eastern Washington's coaches said they had no such problems in their initial season with the red field, Rush said.

"There is a certain excitement around here about being the only high school in the country with a red field," Rush said. "The red turf is unique. It looks really sharp, especially from the press box and on video. It doesn't seem to effect the kids. I was worried a little about the black end zone with the writing in it, but goalkeepers tell me it's not a big deal."

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