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## Team hopes to play home opener there

BY SCOTT WUERZ  
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**O'FALLON** --- The construction crew rebuilding *the O'Fallon* Township High School stadium has no time outs left as it makes its final drive to complete the project just in time for the school's Friday night home opening varsity football game.

"They're scrubbing the rubber into the turf today and getting ready to lay the asphalt for the track," Principal Steve Dirnbeck said. "It's going to be close. But right now we're still planning to play football there on Friday."

Dirnbeck said school officials will decide sometime Wednesday whether the game will go on as planned or whether it will have to be moved to another location, likely McKendree University in Lebanon.

While workers were putting the final touches on the playing field, there was enough left to do to make onlookers nervous.

On Monday afternoon, carpenters were just beginning to put on the decking of the roof of a new concession stand and the asphalt base for the rubberized track around the field hadn't even begun to be laid.

But, like Joe Montana casually calling the plays during the Super Bowl, Don Bolinger, president of construction services for contractor ATG Sports, said not only will the stadium be done in time for the Friday night game --- it will be done in time for a late Thursday practice session.

"There's no if about it," Bolinger said. "It's going to be done on time. I have no doubts."

Bolinger said the field is nearly ready, the bleachers are done, the lights are in working order and the track would have already been done except that he didn't want to risk damaging it by driving vehicles back and forth to complete the football and soccer field.

The total cost of the renovation project was about \$2.3 million, *according* to O'Fallon Township High School District Superintendent Darcy Benway. About \$2 million of the funding used to pay for the project came from money left over from other construction jobs. The school's athletic department is conducting a fundraiser to get the rest.

Dirnbeck said the work was needed because the stands and walkways at the old stadium were becoming unsafe, and the natural grass field limited the number and variety of events that could be held in the stadium.

The synthetic turf that has been laid is softer than natural grass, according to Bolinger, and could host multiple events every day for 15 years without showing any signs of wear and tear. It will also save money because it requires less maintenance and it doesn't have to be watered.

Edwardsville and East St. Louis high schools have also switched recently from natural grass fields to artificial turf. Those fields are already complete, Bolinger said.

Contact *reporter* Scott Wuerz at [swuerz@bnd.com](mailto:swuerz@bnd.com) or 239-2626.

