

Never forgotten: Lutzie Field to be dedicated

By Emily Esleck | Editor-in-Chief (<http://www.theplainsman.com/staff/emily-esleck-editor-in-chief>) | 07/22/15 2:45pm



Philip Lutzenkirchen's jersey on display at his memorial July 2, 2014. (Raye May | Managing Editor)

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Lassiter High School and the community have been planning the installation and dedication of Lutzie Field, a new turf football field, for about one year.

Work began June 29, one year after former Auburn football player Philip Lutzenkirchen passed away.

The Lutzie 43 Foundation was formed shortly after Lutzenkirchen's death because of a desire to create a legacy to Philip and honoring that legacy in the Lassiter community, according to Bob Penter, Lutzie 43 Foundation board member.

Penter said his oldest son, Brian Penter, was best friends with Lutzenkirchen since he was 6 and was his roommate in Montgomery when he died. "Philip was like a fifth son to me," Bob said. "I have four boys ... Auburn is very close to our community and my family itself. It's been a very unique relationship between

the local community here and Auburn, certainly going back to the memorial last year and the role that Auburn played in that. Hopefully it will continue to be a integrated role on a more positive note as we move forward with the broader mission of the foundation.”

He said the board started thinking about resurfacing the field and dedicating the field to Lutzenkirchen in August 2014.

However, he said the foundation took on its own mission of character development and helping kids make good decisions by rewarding them with scholarships.

Penter said the field project is separate from the foundation’s donations, and funds for the field were gathered by individual donors and seven or eight booster groups.

He said Lutzie Field is a \$350,000 project.

Sports Turf, a turf manufacturer and installer, provided a discount for the work they are doing to replace the field, according to Penter.

He said the unanimous vote from the Cobb County school board approved the project Thursday, June 25, after working through challenges.

Penter said the approval was delayed two to four weeks, but they hope to have most of the project completed by the end of next week.

“It’s gone pretty smoothly,” Penter said. “Thankfully we’ve had good weather, which is one of the biggest worries, given the restricted time frame to do it. They’ve been right on time with the progress.”

The field will be dedicated Friday, Aug. 14, at 7 p.m.

Chris Richie, principal of Lassiter High School, said Friday night football games are always exciting, but the addition of the Lutzie Field will provide a tighter bond in the community.

“It’s more than just a field, it’s really about bringing the community together and the character education and development of all the student athletes in the East Cobb area,” Richie said.

He said he doesn’t expect the installation work or dedication to hinder school activities.

The hash marks on the 13th yard line, Lutzenkirchen’s high school number, and the 43rd yard line, his college number, will be outlined on the new field.

“That’d obviously be for purposes of reminding people about what’s behind it,” Penter said. “Really, the purpose of it is to do something in the community that was necessary. The high school needed a new field. And (Lutzie Field) provided a tangible reminder of the whole foundation and its mission. I think the community’s response to that has been tremendous.”

The rendering shows a Lutzie Field logo between the 20 and 30 yard lines on each side of the field.

Jep Irwin, Lassiter High School football coach, said he was not Lutzenkirchen’s football coach while he was at Lassiter, but said he left a tremendous legacy in how he lived.

“I think the Lutzie Foundation’s mission to help youth is right on point with the kind of life that Philip tried to live and lead,” Irwin said. “We’re really excited about it.”

The Lutzie 43 Foundation is partnering with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes for the first annual Lutzie 43 Road Race.

The race will begin at 8 a.m. at Lutzie Field on Aug. 15.

Race fees of \$35 will go to the Lutzie 43 Foundation and FCA East Cobb.

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