
Bucknell

Department of Athletics & Recreation

The Case for Funding

An Outdoor Artificial
Surface Practice and
Competition Facility

Bucknell University provides the foundation for developing successful scholars who are also successful athletes. The University's programs recognize the value of experience gained through competition and teamwork from winning and losing. Hand-in-hand with the educational staff and programs, the Department of Athletics and Recreation provides each and every Bucknell student with the opportunity to use the best possible

athletic facilities available; to choose from a variety of academic and athletic offerings that will benefit them in both short and long term development; and provides experiences in all aspects of the program that will provide for personal growth, physical fitness, the efficient and effective use of the mind and the body, and an increased sense of social awareness, teaching unequivocal respect for others.

As significant as the new Recreation and Athletics Center will be in addressing the University's indoor athletics facilities needs, there still remain several critical facility improvements/upgrades that can advance the athletic and recreational opportunities for students and the campus community beyond those at other Patriot League institutions. These will prepare Bucknell to meet anticipated future needs.

As part of the University's commitment to excellence in all offerings, the need to provide Bucknell's athletic teams with an outdoor artificial surface on the West Athletic Fields has continued to be a priority. The synthetic grass-like surface in Christy Mathewson Memorial Stadium, which was installed during the Summer of 2001, will improve the space available for practice, but it cannot handle the practice and competition demands of all the men's and women's teams involved in Bucknell's intercollegiate and recreational programs.

An outdoor artificial surface will overcome or alleviate problems such as early/late practice times, poor grass quality, inadequate field drainage, inadequate square footage and chronic late-fall and early-spring weather problems for the benefit of both female and male students. The facility will serve as the primary competition venue for field hockey and as a back-up competition and practice field for women's lacrosse, soccer (men's and women's) and softball.

Need for the Facility.

Several factors have created the need for an outdoor artificial carpet surface practice and competition facility at Bucknell. They include: physical limitations of existing facilities, the climate, and competitive issues such as recruitment of elite student-athletes and student welfare.

Limitations of Existing Facilities.

The current athletic physical plant is inadequate not only for field hockey competition, but also for practice. The small size and limited available time in Gerhard Fieldhouse makes it difficult for spring and fall teams to conduct productive practices. On most inclement weather days, intercollegiate teams command use of the Fieldhouse from 5-8 a.m. and then from 3 p.m. until midnight. The scheduling of indoor practice times often conflicts with students' ability to meet their academic responsibilities. Practices as late as midnight (men's lacrosse) or as early as 5:30 a.m. (women's lacrosse) are particularly difficult for students who must balance academics with athletics, not to mention creating liability concerns in regard to necessary medical coverage and athlete performance.

Climate Factors.

Everyone familiar with the climate of Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, knows that early winters and late springs produce poor weather and wet fields. Fall sports must go to extremes to protect their fields until the end of their season by going into Gerhard Fieldhouse or changing drills. Bucknell's spring teams are often not able to play home games until mid-April. Since classes end the last week in April, Bucknell faces three options, none desirable, for dealing with the situation. First, they may be forced to travel to compete on the home field of the team they are scheduled to host. As an alternative, they may need to rent artificial surfaces at nearby institutions such as Penn State, Lock Haven or Scranton. Finally, some games may have to be postponed, canceled or rescheduled until the end of the semester.

Due to the number of contests that have to be rescheduled, students miss most of their classes the last two weeks of the semester – a time when they can least afford to be absent.

Competitive Issues.

Although the installation of the synthetic grass-like surface in Christy Mathewson-Memorial Stadium will help provide needed practice space, the surface is inadequate for the sport of field hockey. By continuing to play on natural grass, the Bison field hockey program will not be practicing or having home games played on the preferred artificial surface used by the majority of NCAA Division I programs. Beginning with the 2001 season, Bucknell will be the only Patriot League school that does not have the preferred artificial carpet for field hockey. The effect on recruiting elite students who play field hockey is huge and places the Bucknell field hockey program at a competitive disadvantage.

In addition, the women's field hockey program does not have a spring practice facility as their outdoor field is unplayable due to the condition of the grass. They must coordinate practice time in Gerhard Field House around tennis schedules, intramurals, and poor weather practice times. As one can imagine, this is not ideal in the development of individuals and team performance.

Description of the Facility.

Numerous factors have been considered in planning an outdoor artificial surface practice and competition facility on the West Athletic Fields. University officials have consulted a number of companies and have decided to rely upon the expertise of Clark Companies, one of the nation's leading sports construction firms, and Southwest Recreational Industries, Inc., installers of AstroTurf. As a result of the time and planning that have gone into the project, the resulting facility will be maximally useful while also ensuring safety in an aesthetically pleasing setting.

The proposed facility will be located on the West Athletic Fields, adjacent to the baseball and women's lacrosse natural grass fields, with the precise location contingent on the wishes of donors. The consultants have identified at least three different possible locations, including (1) the current field hockey field; (2) the new terraced field to the west of the women's lacrosse field; or (3) an adjacent intramural field.

The AstroTurf surface will be approximately 380 feet long by 235 feet wide and will be equipped with its own drainage system. The AstroTurf surface is a premium knitted nylon system designed for multi-purpose athletic use and is known for its durability. The sub-base will be Southwest's new elastic layer, which is made of crushed tires and provides maximum shock absorbency. Because this e-layer eliminates the need for an asphalt sub base, it is kinder to athletes. It is firm enough, however, to hold the weight of large vehicles so that snow can be plowed off the surface. This will allow Bucknell's teams to practice and play outdoors throughout the year.

Funding the Project.

Location Option No. 1: Current Field Hockey Field.

Construction of the outdoor artificial surface practice and competition field on the West Athletic Fields on the current field hockey field will be the least expensive option, with a price of \$1,000,000 for the field surface. Existing lights, field watering mechanism, and press box will be utilized until additional funds become available.

Estimated Facility Cost Breakdown:

AstroTurf Carpet & Sub-base Drainage	\$950,000
Maintenance Equipment	\$ 50,000

Location Option No. 2: New West Field, Constructed in Summer of 2000

Construction of the outdoor artificial surface practice and competition field on the newly landscaped 'Summer of 2000 field' will provide a secure location for the new facility. Added cost as compared to the previous option includes new lighting, new watering system, expanded fan seating area, a new scoreboard and a new press box.

Estimated Facility Cost Breakdown:

AstroTurf Carpet & Sub-base Drainage	\$950,000
Fan Seating and Other Support Amenities	\$200,000
Lighting & Scoreboard	\$100,000
Maintenance Equipment	\$ 50,000

Future Fundraising Initiatives – Post Field Construction.

Once the primary need of the students is addressed by the construction of the playing surface, the department proposes an initiative to raise additional dollars for the construction of a seating and support structure that will provide amenities such as concession stands, restrooms, locker rooms, training room and ticket booths for the facility. An estimated cost of such a facility is an additional \$1,750,000.

Summary.

Bucknell prides itself on providing students with the best possible academic experience where excellence in all offerings is expected. Intertwined within this collegiate experience are the valuable lessons learned from athletic competition.

Bucknell's intercollegiate athletics program has compiled a record that is enviable both for its successes on the playing fields and courts and for the accomplishments of the student-athletes in the classroom and laboratory. The addition of an outdoor artificial surface practice and competition facility on the West Athletic Fields will address a glaring need that our students and coaches currently face each and every day while trying make the most of their successful collegiate experience.

For more information:

John P. Hardt, Director of Athletics
(jhardt@bucknell.edu or 570/577-1232)

Heather Lewis, Head Field Hockey Coach
(hlewis@bucknell.edu or 570/577-1927)

Mark Elliott, Director of Planned Giving
(elliott@bucknell.edu or 570/577-3608)

Bucknell University
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania 17837