

Home Field Advantage

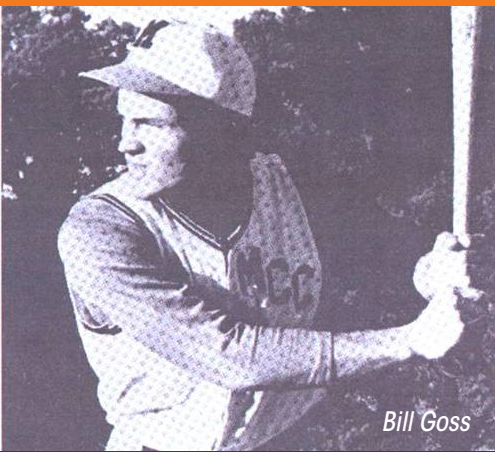
Baseball & Softball Field Upgrades
at McLennan Community College
2021



McLennan Community College is seeking partners on an exciting new project that will take the celebrated McLennan Baseball and Softball programs to a new level of excellence. The "Home Field Advantage" campaign seeks to raise funds to improve persistent drainage issues, equip the fields with artificial turf, and add lights to enable night games.

MCC Foundation & McLennan Athletics





Bill Goss

Why Artificial Turf & Lights?

■ Cost Savings

Keeping natural grass fields in top shape is expensive and time consuming. Lacking a grounds crew, MCC coaches spend valuable time mowing and striping fields instead of developing their teams.

■ Recruiting

McLennan builds champions. Artificial turf and lights on the McLennan ball fields will lift the facilities to the same elite standing earned by MCC coaches and players.

■ Time

Each spring, MCC teams lose an average of 14 days of practice due to muddy fields. Rescheduled and cancelled games would be reduced, allowing athletes to focus on a consistent schedule for academics and athletics.

■ Economic & Quality of Life Impact

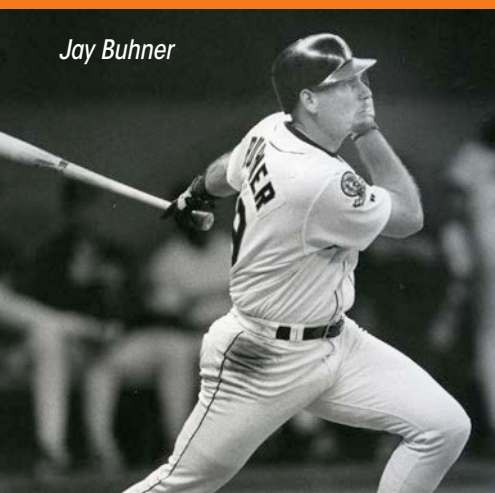
The ability to play at night would bring an affordable ballpark experience to families from all corners of the community. The combination of artificial turf and lights would attract numerous high school, select, and college tournaments to the complex, resulting in an estimated \$2.9 million new dollars to the Waco economy each year*.

*Source:

The Perryman Group Report, 2021



1970-71 Highlanders



Jay Buhner

Excellence from the Start

When Rick Butler hired on as McLennan Community College's baseball coach in 1970, he had dreams, but no field. According to Rick, he had to steal more than a few opportunities to practice anywhere that would let his 14 hungry players grind out drills and build the budding program. Soon after, work was underway on an MCC baseball field by the Bosque River at the edge of campus.

Unbelievably, those early nomadic "grinders" were posting wins — so many, in fact, that they snagged a berth at the conference tournament their very first year. A few years later Butler's program won that conference championship and, in 1983, they brought the NJCAA National Championship trophy home to Waco.

In the years since, the McLennan Baseball program has racked up an impressive 23 conference championships, 12 Region V Championships, and six more World Series appearances. The program is known not just in Texas, but throughout the nation for its scrappy brand of

winning baseball. Just as they did in 1970, hungry and talented players from Waco and beyond seek out the program to hone their skills and make it to the next level of college or professional play under the leadership of eighth-year head coach Mitch Thompson.

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Players quickly learn that 'good' is never good enough at McLennan

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The presence of that national championship trophy is never far from anyone's mind. McLennan Softball joined the program in 1999, and those players quickly learn that 'good' is never good enough at McLennan — only excellence will do. As proof of this, third-year softball coach Chris Berry points to the program's four national tournament appearances in its relatively short history.



Josh Breaux

The Challenge

Today, that 50-year-old baseball field by the Bosque River has witnessed thousands of home runs, strikeouts, triumphs, and heartaches. Like most reaching midlife, the field is showing its age, with dead spots that cannot be coaxed back to health, stubborn drainage problems, and an uneven surface that puts new meaning into the phrase “that’s how the ball bounces.” No one ever knows how the field will treat a grounder.

“

The MCC fields are also beset by this immutable truth: Mother Nature always wins. A wet field means no practice or competition, and a setting sun calls the game.

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Thompson and Berry know this all too well: lacking the benefit of a large budget or turf professionals, when players are gone to class, the coaches are mowing the grass.

The MCC fields are also beset by this immutable truth: Mother Nature always wins. A wet field means no practice or competition, and a setting sun calls the game. Neither of the MCC fields has lights.

“People from all over know that if they want to watch great ball, they should watch MCC play,” says Thompson. “Unfortunately, we play at 2 in the afternoon during the week, and who can come watch then? Offering night games would give our community another point of pride, like having a minor league ballpark experience that is accessible to people from all corners of the community.” The classic American pastime of watching an evening baseball game would provide area families an affordable and healthy outdoor activity in this age of social distancing.



Jenny (Isham) Fuller, former MCC and Baylor pitcher who is now head coach at Northern State University.



The Advantage of Waco

With MCC’s central location in the state, having fields that offer a consistent playing surface and lighted games would make the school a mecca for high school and college tournaments and their accompanying parents and fans. Field enhancements not only improve functionality, but also position MCC to host additional games, tournaments, and camps that bring visitors to the Waco area. Upgraded full-size fields at McLennan would complement the youth and slow pitch fields at nearby Riverbend Park.

The potential economic impact is so great that the college is seeking public funds from the Tax Increment Financing District, which invests in projects to elevate quality of life in the river corridor. Such funds could cover a portion of the field

upgrades, with private dollars completing the project.

“This is about setting up McLennan baseball and softball for excellence for the next 50 years,” Thompson says. Having up-to-date facilities will solidify the college’s position as one of the top two-year college programs in the country. Recruiting would benefit, too, and not just for aspiring baseball and softball stars.

“When high school parents come to Waco and see MCC’s campus and the affordable excellence we offer, that puts another college option in their sights,” Thompson says. Waco is on the rise, and MCC is a big part of the quality of life that the community can offer visitors and potential students.

By the Numbers*:

Economic benefits of construction of ballpark improvement:

\$3.5 million in gross product;
39 job-years of additional employment

Ongoing benefits to area from current & incremental visitors to Bosque River Ballpark:

\$2.9 million annually in gross product and 38 new jobs

**Source:*

The Perryman Group Report, 2021

After the Game is Over

By the Numbers:

Lighting

Baseball & Softball fields
\$700,000

Baseball

Synthetic Turf & Repairs

\$1,440,000
(replaces native soil, adds free-draining base layer & underground collection system)

Softball

Synthetic Turf & Repairs

\$800,000

Professional Services

\$400,000

Total Need: \$3.34 million

Everyone knows that an athlete's playing window can be short, which is why classroom performance is as much a part of the McLennan DNA as are hits and runs. McLennan Athletics prepares students to compete on the field, and in life.

In program history, McLennan baseball has had 61 NJCAA All-Academic Student Athletes, three CoSIDA Google Cloud Academic All-District awardees, and seven team academic awards that signify the team earned an overall 3.0 gpa or higher. Eleven players have gone on to play in the major leagues. Softball has had 26 NJCAA All-Academic Student-Athlete awardees and seven team academic awards.

Giving young people a shot at fulfilling their potential is what gets Thompson and Berry out of bed every day. For many who come to MCC, sports is their only ticket to earn a college education and have a successful life. Even if big-league dreams do not play out, making it to the pros is not the point.

"McLennan is about excellence, and MCC gives student-athletes their best shot at success," Berry says. "It is our job to set the example, carry on the tradition, and give them the best experience possible. They should leave our college proud of the time they spent in Waco and at McLennan."



Home Field Advantage Support Committee:

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Dr. Johnette McKown	254-299-8601
Kim Patterson	254-717-8919
Coach Mitch Thompson	254-709-9688
Shawn Trochim	254-717-8776

Thank you for reviewing this information and for considering helping with this need at your community college.

We are hopeful that public TIF funds will assist, but we estimate MCC will still need up to \$1 million in private gifts to complete this ambitious project. The MCC Foundation is a 501(c)3 and 509(a)1 not-for-profit organization that can accept gifts of all types; multi-year pledge and naming rights opportunities exist for major donors to this effort.



The McLennan Community College Foundation

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Nonprofit Tax ID: 74-2550278