

## **Linn-Mar celebrates its new \$10 million stadium**

Written by Jim Ecker

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Linn-Mar High School has been holding events at its new \$10 million stadium since April 7, so Saturday's ceremony was more of a giant party than a grand opening.

They invited the Linn-Mar marching band, cheerleaders, poms, members of the spirit squad, and a choral group. There were booths and lots of young kids romping around on the new turf, tossing footballs and kicking soccer balls and having a grand time.

They used a giant scissors to cut a giant red ribbon, with Linn-Mar Superintendent Katie Mulholland, Board of Education President Ann Stark, Marion Mayor Paul Rehn and many others all celebrating the impressive new facility.

Bob Forsyth, the head coach of the Linn-Mar football team, was one of the happiest guys in the stadium. The Lions have moved from flood-prone Armstrong Field to one of the swankiest homes for a high school team in the state.

"This is really a neat thing for the Linn-Mar community and for Linn-Mar families to have a facility like this," he said as young kids frolicked on the field. "Kids will be familiar with this place and will want to grow up and will want to play here. I think it's nothing but a bonus for us."

Linn-Mar Stadium has a big, colorful state-of-the-art scoreboard with bright animation and a message screen. The scoreboard was damaged by strong winds earlier this summer, but it's fully operational now, with a giant lion paw at the top.

There are huge locker rooms for the home team and visitors, two rooms for game officials, spacious restrooms for fans, several concession areas, storage areas, a sports medicine room, office space and a long press box with elevator. The old victory bell is at the new field, too.

Forsyth, a former graduate assistant for Hayden Fry at the University of Iowa, joked about the "pastel" colors in the visitors locker room, reminiscent of Fry's old pink visitors locker room at Kinnick Stadium that supposedly took the sting out of opponents.

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The new stadium seats 6,000 for football, with 5,000 bleacher seats on the home side and 1,000 on the visitors, roughly twice the capacity of Armstrong Field. They could expand to 8,000 seats some day if they want, although there won't be any spectators allowed on the grassy hills that border the facility.

The artificial turf cost approximately \$1 million, and lots of Linn-Mar fans bent over and touched the new playing surface Saturday. Many others posed for pictures.

They broke ground on the new stadium in October of 2009, using revenues from a 1-cent sales tax to help pay for it. The field will be used for football, soccer, track, band and physical education classes for the 7,000 students in the Linn-Mar school system.

"A facility that our students will enjoy forever," said Mulholland.