

LED lights illuminate Norway field

Written by Mike Condon

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NORWAY - The history of baseball in this small Eastern Iowa town is legendary.

Much of that history has taken place on the Norway Baseball Field that served as home to the 20-time state high school champion Norway Tigers until the school closed in 1991.

Now, thanks to the Norway Baseball Association, a group of Norway baseball boosters, headed up by former Norway baseball coach Jim Van Scoyoc, the field with so much history associated with it has undergone a number of upgrades, ensuring more baseball memories will be made in future years.

The latest upgrade was the installation of LED lighting. The state-of-the-art lighting system, created by Musco Lighting, was first used on June 7.

"The lights have worked as advertised," Van Scoyoc said. "Musco leads the field in this and it really shows.

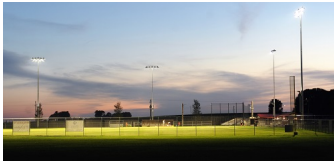
"I was out working on the field one day and they were testing them," he said. "I looked right into them and it about blinded me. They are powerful."

The field, the home of the Iowa Valley League's Norway Bandits, became part of the Benton Community School District when Norway closed. Since then the field had been used for a variety of baseball events. As time passed, the field began to need upgrades.

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In July of 2015, the Benton school district decided to sell the field.

"The Benton school board approached the City of Norway and asked if they wanted to buy it back from them," Van Scoyoc said. "The city approached a bunch of us people who were forming the Norway Baseball Association and asked if we would lease it from them because Benton wouldn't sell it to a private firm.

"It's a city park now," he explained. "We leased it from them. The first lease is a three-year lease and the next one will be longer."

The field, called one of Norway's "prized possessions" on the Norway Baseball Association's website, will be getting more upgrades as funds become available. Van Scoyoc said the association, through fund-raising efforts, has raised and spent approximately \$200,000 on improvements.

The dugouts have been renovated, a protective screen has been added behind home plate and an eight-foot high outfield fence has been installed. Exterior improvements include the construction of a concession stand and maintenance building and the planting of trees around the field.

Future improvements will see a renovation of the bullpens, a building up of the home plate area and the installation of crushed brick in front of both dugouts.

As one of baseball's biggest ambassadors, Van Scoyoc is working to bring additional events to the field. There will be a three-day Perfect Game event at the field this weekend.

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"Next summer, I am working on hosting a four-team high school tournament with some (Class) 1A or 2A schools," he said. "I think there are some teams who would like to play on this field."

So the field that helped launched four major league careers (Hal Trosky, Hal Trosky, Jr., Bruce Kimm and Mike Boddicker) is alive and well. That said, more funds are needed.

Anybody interested in donating to the ongoing work on the Norway field can click on the Go Fund Me tab on the Norway Baseball Association's website norwaybaseballassociation.com.