FIELD OF DREAMS

Emmanuel and City of Boston
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Emmanuel’s location in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston is integral to the College’s character and its 90-year history. With the Back Bay Fens just across the street from campus, Emmanuel students have enjoyed, along with other members of the Fenway community, the green space and walking paths that this section of the Emerald Necklace has provided.
Roberto Clemente Field, a city-owned field in the Fens, has long provided recreational space for members of the Fenway community, but over time it has been worn down by incessant use and abused by the harsh New England weather, rendering it often unusable. The stonedust track used for running and walking by the neighbors is uneven and damaged. In all, ragged conditions that are hardly worthy of its owners, the people of Boston.

So, when Emmanuel saw an opportunity to initiate a partnership with the city of Boston to restore the athletic field, which has been part of this park since the 1970s, to its original glory, the College pursued it tenaciously, working tirelessly to build support in the community knowing the significant impact that an upgraded facility could have.

“Nearly a year and a half ago, Emmanuel College began the complex process of working with many constituents — the city of Boston, neighbors, community groups, elected officials, environmental engineers and others — to make this partnership happen,” said Emmanuel College Vice President of Government and Community Relations Sarah Welsh. “Countless hours have gone into the meetings, negotiations and planning to make this project a reality. It is our hope that through this partnership Clemente Field can once again be a jewel in the Emerald Necklace.”

Renovation to Provide Much Needed Green Space for The Fenway Neighborhood

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A field restored
This comprehensive restoration of Roberto Clemente Field, to be completed this summer, will result in a brand new facility that will not only benefit the Fenway neighborhood, but will serve as the new home field location for Emmanuel College and Boston Latin School athletic teams.

Designed by Camp, Dresser & McKee (CDM), one of the leading global consulting, engineering, construction and operations firms, the renovation will include an upgraded 120,000 sq. ft. NCAA-regulation synthetic turf field, a three-lane rubberized track, practice facilities for expanded track and field events, new MUSCO lighting, scoreboard, spectator stands and benches for handicapped seating. With the planned removal of the southern spectator stands and planting of new trees, community members will be able to enjoy additional green space for picnicking, in addition to an enhanced view of the Muddy River.

As a mission-driven college with deep roots within the Fenway, Emmanuel is proud to play a part in this collaborative enterprise. Upon completion, Clemente Field will be used for Fenway High School gym classes, Colleges of the Fenway intramurals and adult and youth summer softball leagues. The all-weather track, meanwhile, will remain open to the public for recreational walking and jogging year-round.

“Emmanuel has a long tradition of giving service to the wider community,” said Emmanuel College President Sister Janet Eisner, SND. “We hope that this renovation will enable more members of the Boston community, including our students and our neighbors, to appreciate and use this historic treasure.”

Supported in part by a grant from the Yawkey Foundation II, the project marks the next chapter in the continued partnership between Emmanuel and the Yawkey Foundations. In 2004, aided by the foundations’ generous donation, the College opened the Jean Yawkey Center, a facility that has since become an integral part of the Emmanuel community and transformed the campus. This ensuing Clemente Field restoration will further advance complementary characteristics of the Emmanuel experience, creating a facility for both varsity athletic teams and recreational use. For the city of Boston, the collaboration will help preserve the park for generations of residents to come.

“Renovating Clemente Field is consistent with the Yawkey legacy of supporting and celebrating quality youth and amateur baseball and softball programs throughout the region,” said James P. Healey, President and Trustee of the Yawkey Foundations. “The Trustees of the Yawkey Foundations are pleased to be involved with this worthwhile project.”

Despite upgrades to the area as part of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department’s “Getting the Job Done” capital improvement program, which renovated city playgrounds between 1993–2000, the need for further improvements has persisted in the popular park. Emmanuel’s commitment to improving the facility is consistent with objectives set forth in the Parks and Recreation Department’s “Community Open Space & Recreation Mission” for the Fenway/Kenmore neighborhood, which emphasizes the need for both public and private “broad-based capital investments” to aid future improvements in the Fens.
“The partnership is particularly important in these difficult economic times and we appreciate Emmanuel’s willingness to assist,” said Boston Parks Commissioner Antonia Pollak. “This will provide a terrific state-of-the-art field for Boston Public School children, the neighborhood and Emmanuel.”

For Emmanuel College Chair of the Board Thomas J. Hynes, Jr., who was instrumental in bringing Julie Hall back to the Emmanuel College campus, this partnership with the city is just one of many decisions the College has made over the years to capitalize on its location to the benefit of its students and the community.

“Emmanuel has deftly and creatively capitalized on opportunities to enhance the experience of its students, improve the community and sustain itself financially through changing times. The renovation of Clemente Field is a striking example of a collaboration with the city of Boston and Emmanuel College — a classic public/private partnership which will enhance the quality of life for the College, Boston Latin School and the Fenway area community at-large,” said Hynes, who is also Chairman and CEO of the commercial real estate firm Colliers Meredith & Grew.

A vision realigned, a legacy honored

Located within one of the city’s premier parks, the Back Bay Fens, Clemente Field is part of the city’s 1,100-acre chain of parks and waterways known as the Emerald Necklace. Designed in the late 19th century by Frederick Law Olmsted, the Emerald Necklace was meant to serve the city as a place for both relaxation and recreation. At the foundation of Olmsted’s plan to develop the Back Bay Fens was a desire to eradicate the pollution plaguing the area, all the while remaining true to “both the character of the land and the needs of the growing population.”

Although over time the area has undergone change, most notably in the early 20th century through the damming of the Charles River and the addition of new features, including the ball fields designed by landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff, Olmsted’s vision of creating a park that meets the needs of the city’s residents has remained strong.

The current restoration project will respond to the increasing needs and demands occurring at the site today, both in terms of maintaining the cultural integrity and improving recreational use. Described by CDM Vice President John Kissida as an “anomaly of an Olmsted design” in that the area has evolved into a place of athletic activity despite its creator’s original intent, Clemente Field will continue to serve as a blend of active and passive interests.

In an effort to maximize the open and unrestricted use of the facility’s surrounding green space, the track will be shifted down to allot more room for passive community use. This space will also serve as a practice area for expanded track and field events, including discus, shot put, long jump, triple jump and high jump. While the field is designed to meet the regulation standards for sports activity (National Collegiate Athletic Association, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, etc.), at the same time, it maintains safety zones around the field to protect joggers and walkers when games are in progress.

“We needed to strike a balance as the field serves a variety of users, both in terms of active and passive recreation,” said Kissida. “We wanted to make sure it served all purposes.”

The ball field at Joseph Lee Playground was named “Roberto Clemente Field” in honor of the legendary Hall of Fame baseball player and humanitarian. Proclaimed by his contemporaries as “the greatest right fielder of all time” and lauded for his abilities on the field, the Puerto Rican native is equally remembered for his tireless charitable work around the world. Tragically killed in a plane crash in 1972 while attempting to deliver relief supplies to Nicaraguan earthquake victims, Clemente’s memory has certainly not been forgotten.

Since 1973, Major League Baseball has annually presented the Roberto Clemente Man of the Year Award as a means of honoring his “spirit and goodwill.” The award is given to the player who “best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship,
community involvement and the individual’s contribution to his team.

It’s Clemente’s spirit that lives on in the hearts of many, such as **Raimar Martinez ’11**, today as well. Immigrating to Jamaica Plain from Puerto Rico when he was 10 years old, Martinez considers Clemente his boyhood hero. Growing up, he played in area baseball leagues named in memory of the Puerto Rican star, which is how he came to be introduced to the Fenway area, Emmanuel College and the field that also bears his hero’s name. He’s proud to be a part of a college paying homage to a man that has been his inspiration.

“I hope that with the restoration of this field, people will be encouraged to learn more about him,” said Martinez. “To me, it’s the greatest way to honor his name.”

**A place to call home**

For inner-city schools, gaining access to usable open green space is a constant challenge. Student athletes at Emmanuel and Boston Latin School know that all too well.

The Emmanuel women’s soccer team shares limited field time at The Winsor School’s facility down the street from the College because it also serves as the home field for a number of schools in the area. Their male counterparts, meanwhile, have bounced around to multiple practice facilities since the program’s inception in 2002, in some cases training without the aid of soccer nets. Only last year did they finally host their first “home” games at Dilboy Stadium in Somerville — a 25-minute ride from campus.

Although Clemente Field has served as home field to the Saints’ softball team for two decades and as the practice venue for Boston Latin’s football program since 2001, in some instances the conditions have been so poor that it has been rendered unplayable. The Saints were only able to host two dates on the field last spring, moving the remainder of their home schedule to Emerson College’s Rotch Field or away sites. For the Wolfpack football team, meanwhile, each practice seems to be met with a challenge no matter what Mother Nature happens to throw its way.

In the warmer weeks of the season, every move players make on the dry, loose soil is kicked up and sent airborne, creating a storm of dust that quickly blankets the area and becomes a nuisance to all. When the colder weather arrives, the frozen and unforgiving playing surface makes any and every tackle a chance for injury and an unpleasant experience for players. Rainy days are marked with muddy jerseys, but at least such days allow for the team to better focus on the task at hand.

“The best days we have down there are when it rains,” said Boston Latin School Athletic Director and Varsity Football Coach John McDonough. “The kids don’t have to worry about the dust or the hard surface, they can just have fun with it. The kids have put up with a lot, but they don’t complain.”

Now, with the upgrades to the field, McDonough expects the area to leave a lasting impression on all Boston Latin students. Besides his boys having a practice facility constructed of the same turf that the New England Patriots play on at Gillette Stadium, called FieldTurf, freshmen teams will have a home field in which to play. The track team will be able to practice field events prior to meets. Even the 7th and 8th grade “Field Day” can now be held on a beautiful field that the students can enjoy.

“What you do today, these kids will remember tomorrow,” said McDonough. “They will remember how important it was to them to have an open space they could do something with.”

**Kayla Zaremski ’11**, a Boston Latin alumna whose two younger sisters, Krista and Kelly, are current student athletes there, agreed.

“I know how much the students there will appreciate this,” she said. “It will have such a positive impact on the school.”

For Emmanuel’s athletic programs, the addition of a high-quality Division III athletic venue will be a boon for the teams that for years have remained resilient despite the obstacles and challenges. From recruitment and player development to access and pride, Director of Athletics and Recreation Pamela Roecker is thrilled by the potential the Clemente Field renovation has to offer the Saints.

“The goal of our department is to provide equitable treatment and put our student athletes in a position to succeed,” she said. “We’re excited to provide this opportunity to them. On a daily basis, these student athletes will get to play on the type of facility they deserve. Even though this is a partnership, we have a chance to establish a sense of identity for our programs there. These athletes have a place they can be proud of.”

Tony DaRocha, the Head Coach of Emmanuel’s Cross Country, Indoor and Outdoor Track & Field programs, has had a connection with the field for longer than most, dating back to 1988 when he organized a Mayor’s Cup track meet onsite for the Parks and Recreation Department. With 16 seasons of coaching in the Fenway area between time with Boston Latin and Emmanuel, he has simply made do with the challenges he has faced while training his athletes. Now, he looks forward to seeing how a rejuvenated and modernized Clemente Field will impact his program and the community.

“Knowing how important having a track here is for the community, it’s great to see this renovation happen,” said DaRocha. “This is a positive change for the community, Boston Latin and Emmanuel College.”

—BRYAN MAHONEY