Valley City State opts for turf football field

By: By Dave Selvig / Forum Communications Co., INFORUM

VALLEY CITY, N.D. – Heavy equipment moving around large mounds of sand and dirt have become all too familiar in Valley City in recent years.

But the work being done at Lokken Field has nothing to do with the Sheyenne River. In fact, the near $1 million project to replace the grass football field with artificial turf is on schedule to be completed well in time for the Vikings season opener Sept. 1 against Morningside.

“We’re looking at Aug. 12 or 13 somewhere right around there for it to be completed,” said Valley City State athletic director Jack Denholm.

The project also includes updates to the scoreboard at Lokken Field, but the bulk of the work – and expense – is to the field.

The football field dated back to the 1960s and was deemed to be in poor condition. The cost to repair the grass surface was estimated at $180,000, in part because the field lacked a proper crown, which caused drainage problems.

Instead of sinking a bunch of money into new grass, the school elected for the artificial surface and began a fundraising effort to raise $815,000, which was accomplished.

The original bid for the project was around $815,000, Denholm said, but additional costs pushed the project close to the $1 million mark.

“The cost is a moving number, but it’s paid for. The work is being done,” he said.

The new artificial surface will provide Valley City State with greater flexibility. The field will include soccer lines, and the softball and baseball teams will also be able to use the field, which will come in particularly handy if another spring like the last one were to occur again.

“Coaching-wise, it will help in terms of planning and having a facility to use if some of our other fields are too wet,” Denholm said. “The softball team should be able to play a game on there. So if we have another spring like this last one, we could have Jamestown College, or another team, come over and play a game. We’ll have that type of capability.”

The field will also be used by Valley City High School and other community events, Denholm said.

Electing to add the turf surface, instead of trying to remedy the grass and crown problems, was a pretty easy decision.
“It was decided instead of trying to fix the field, that they would orchestrate a fundraising effort for this turf project,” Denholm said. “In the long run, it was the right thing to do.”

Having the artificial turf will save the school around $12,000 annually in operating expenses to the grass field, including fertilizing, watering, mowing, painting and striping.

“We’re going to be able to put the field to a lot of use,” Denholm said. “We’ll use it for intramurals, and other events that go on here. It’s going to be a really nice addition to Valley City State.”

Selvig writes for the Jamestown Sun, which is owned by Forum Communications Co.