

Jesuit planning new \$2 million ballpark

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If all goes as projected, Jesuit High soon will have a baseball stadium nearly as palatial -- if not quite as large -- as nearby Steinbrenner Field.

A \$2 million capital campaign is underway to construct a new on-campus ballpark next to the current one along Himes Avenue. The home plate of the new facility would rest in the left field corner of the current one.

It also will feature locker rooms, covered batting cages, coaches' offices and a trophy hall. According to Jesuit alumni and development director Nick Suszynski, three months of fundraising efforts already have generated nearly a million dollars.

"Our goal is to break ground on this new facility at the end of our current season...and get this done by December," said Suszynski, who provided the accompanying artist's rendering of the new park.

Suszynski said new Tigers athletic director Terry Rupp (a former baseball coach at Maryland and the University of Tampa) and baseball coach Richie Warren (who played at Florida) were highly instrumental in the design phase of the new park.

"When they were doing comparisons of what Jesuit wants, they went to Steinbrenner Field," Suszynski said. "They went to USF, UT. They weren't going out to get the normal high school facility, they were out to get the best they could get."

While the field (like the current one) still will be named in honor of legendary former Tigers coach Paul Straub, the capital campaign is offering naming opportunities for several parts of the facility, including the stadium itself.

Speaking of Straub, he'll toss out the first pitch at the Tigers' 7 p.m. home game against rival Tampa Catholic on Feb. 20. A reception for all Tigers baseball alumni will precede the game.

For information about the reception or capital campaign, call Suszynski at (813) 877-5344, ext. 704.