

Prep football gets a new home

Boise, Borah break in 5,200-seat stadium at Dona Larsen Park

By Danny Ciaccio
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With just a few minutes remaining before kickoff, everyone seemed antsy for a new season to begin. Cheerleaders were practicing chants.

Both marching bands were settling into their positions.

Thousands of fans covered the bleachers on both sides — one colored in red, the other in green.

Then there was Debra Huber, who seated herself in the front row and looked out toward the artificial field. Amidst the craziness of pre-game excitement, Huber recalled an old, dusty track. Long ago, she competed on the site as a track and field athlete at East Junior High.

“(The old track) didn’t look anything like this,” Huber said. “Much different, not as deluxe.”

Soon after Huber’s trip down memory lane, the opening kickoff signaled a new chapter in Treasure Valley high school football. The Borah Lions and Boise Braves competed in the inaugural game at Dona Larsen Park, named after Huber’s mother, who was an educator and coach at East for three



Brett Walton, Zachary Noeker, Larry Evans, Will Winkle and Tanner Gustavsen walk to the center of the field for the coin toss in the first game at Dona Larsen Park.

decades.

Since the 1960s, high school football games in the Boise School District have taken place at Bronco Stadium on the Boise State campus. With only a portion of the massive stadium ever filled, it drained the high-energy atmosphere that high school football games are supposed to generate.

Now four public schools — Boise, Borah, Timberline and Capital — will play at a new location that should produce a more exciting atmosphere.

“This is much better than Boise State because it looked

like we never had a crowd,” said Pat Corpus, the mother of Borah coach Darren Corpus.

Students of the cheering sections agree that bigger is not always better for high school football stadiums.

“It is a nice facility,” Borah senior Parker Dial said. “It is a lot more convenient to do chants against the other school.”

The stadium is nestled near a large stand of trees, near the corner of Warm Springs and Broadway, only a few blocks southeast of St. Luke’s Boise

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- Peter Gustavsen



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Medical Center.

With the Foothills in the background, the location of the park and atmosphere, in addition to the perfect, cloudless weather, it was a magical Friday night.

The main concern heading into the opening weekend was parking, since there isn't a designated public lot on the stadium grounds.

Boise School District Athletic Director Matt Kobe said there were no complaints about parking, and the stadium was nearing its capacity of 5,200 by the start of the game.

Many fans arrived more than an hour early, including Peter Gustavsen, the grandfather of Boise senior quarterback Tanner Gustavsen.

He has attended Boise games at Boise State for two generations but is happy with the move to Dona Larsen Park.

"This will work out just fine," Peter Gustavsen said. "It was too huge over there. This is perfect."

As for Larsen, she will continue to walk Goliath, her 8-year-old miniature pinscher, to the same field just as she has always done, even before the place was named in her honor.

After going out to midfield for the ceremonial coin toss, Larsen, 84, had one hope for the new park:

"I want it to carry on," she said.

If the atmosphere continues to be as electric as it was Friday night, she shouldn't have to worry about that.



TOP LEFT: Boise fans show their support with a homemade sign and show it off just before the start of the game.

TOP RIGHT: A Boise cheerleader escorts Dona Larsen on to the field.

MIDDLE: More Braves' fans decked out in their Boise High gear get a chant going at the start of the game.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Local artist Ward Hooper designed a poster and offered it for sale to commemorate the Boise-Borah rivalry and the opening of the field.