

Wildcats at Home in Their New Den

The 60,000-square-foot gym building has athletic training facilities, four locker rooms, offices for athletic staff members and a lounge that could be used by the public or teams. The gym seats 600, which is plenty for Wilmington.

“For non-football schools, at this level, when you look at facilities, we’ve got to be one of the best around,” said Nick Papanicolas, Wilmington’s men’s soccer coach.

At the stadium, seating capacity is 350, with additional standing room. The playing field stretches the NCAA soccer maximum 120 yards long and 75 yards wide.

“It’s great,” said Justus Henry, a senior defender on the men’s soccer team from Vineland, N.J. “It feels like more of a home, like it’s ours, especially having the athletic training facility right here. Before we had to drive back to school and get treatment. We can get treatment before practice, after practice, everything’s convenient.”

The opening of the sports complex allowed Wilmington to recently host its first alumni homecoming, with a volleyball match, soccer doubleheader and social gatherings.

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Wildcats at Home in Their New Den (cont.)

Wilmington University assistant vice president Jack Cunningham said it's nice just to be a "fly on the wall" during events at the new complex and hear parents from other schools rave about the facilities.

In September, Wilmington hosted the 10-team Wildcat Invitational volleyball tournament, which, Cunningham said, "is something we never, ever, in our wildest imaginations, would be able to manage" at Pratt because of limited space inside the building and parking outside.

The first three recruits Papanicolas brought to the new complex committed to Wilmington, he said. That was when the soccer field was in place but the surrounding structures were not.

"It's a tremendous honor to have this here, for our institution to build something like this for us," he said. "It's fantastic for the alumni. It has a 'wow' factor for them. With recruiting, we saw the impact right away."

-Kevin Tresolini, The News Journal

