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IWU Stadium to Be Named on Saturday, Sept. 3

September 1, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — The Illinois Wesleyan football stadium will be named Tucci (pronounced Tu-chee) Stadium in pre-game ceremonies at 12:45 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 3 prior to the Titans' 2011 home opener against Hope.

The stadium will be named in honor of University alumnus and benefactor Byron Tucci, whose gift allowed for the installation of a synthetic playing surface on Wilder Field, the fifth oldest NCAA football field in the country, which will see its first official game action Saturday.

Tucci, a lifelong resident of Bloomington and a 1966 Illinois Wesleyan graduate with a double major in business administration and economics, has been a long-time supporter of Illinois Wesleyan, serving on the Leadership Giving Board for decades.

He is also a trustee of the University, a member of the Illinois Wesleyan Associates and the Preston Wood Society of the University Giving Club.

In 2010, he established a new endowed professorship for Illinois Wesleyan University as part of the school's *Transforming Lives* capital campaign. The Byron S. Tucci Professorship is the 11th such endowed professorship at Illinois Wesleyan.

"Byron's generous gift will enable hundreds of student-athletes to benefit from the use of the field for many years," said IWU President Richard F. Wilson. "His support for this project and his previous commitment to establish an endowed professorship reflect his abiding interest in sustaining the quality of the academic and athletic programs of the university. We are delighted to acknowledge the commitment he has made to athletics by naming the stadium in his honor."

Tucci Stadium, built on the site of Wilder Field, has been used for University athletic contests for over 117 years. The new artificial turf field allows for practice for not only football but soccer, preseason softball and baseball and intramural activities as well. Local groups will also have an opportunity to take advantage of the new field, making it another community resource, much like the Shirk Center.

The average field can last around 10 years. Tucci, along with a number of other IWU alumni and friends have already contributed to a replacement fund, which will cover the costs of a new turf when the current field wears out.



Byron Tucci

Field, Stadium History



Workers installed artificial turf on the football field this summer.

Since the spring of 1893, Wilder Field has been available for use by students (who had contributed \$500 toward its purchase price). The field was named for Rev. William Henry

Wilder, IWU president from 1888-97 and the first alum to serve as University president. According to research in 2000 by sports information director B.B. Branton of the University of the South, the IWU football field is the fifth oldest in the nation, behind Wesleyan (1881), Williams (1883), Sewanee and Amherst (both 1891).

In 1937, ground was broken for a community stadium on Wilder Field under the sponsorship of IWU, the Bloomington Association of Commerce, and several city athletic associations. Funds for the project were obtained through the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal agency, and, given the depressed economic times in America, construction of the stadium was considered unprecedented. It took four years for completion of the \$200,000 project, which seats 3,500 spectators.

Previous renovation in 2000 made improvements to the field and stadium, providing new sod, drainage tiles, and watering system, and moved the field 10 yards east to aid the curve of the new track. A visitors' locker room was built below the stadium bleachers, where IWU uses the original locker room space for its pre-game meetings, and there is a "Titan Wall", signed by former IWU football players.

The 2000 renovation also returned lights to the venue and a night game was played in 2002 for the first time since 1973.

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