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Homecoming rekindles memories of stadium  
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# Homecoming rekindles memories of stadium

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

**BELLEVUE** - Bellevue High School is trying to capture the excitement of the past with a three-day homecoming celebration. Businesses have painted their windows, and banners are hanging across streets to welcome returning alumni.

The focal point will be a rededication of the Bellevue Civic Stadium and Gilligan Field. The stadium and field, nestled between the east side of Interstate 471 and the city, has played host to games since 1936. Many players from that year will be returning.

Dick Heisler, class of '39, played football on the field in 1936.

**ADVERTISEMENT** "It was one of the first new stadiums in Northern Kentucky," Heisler said. "It was a beautiful sight."

A Depression-era project, the complex cost \$35,000. It played host to the state tennis tournament from 1945 to 1952 and in 1963. The state track tournament was held there in 1948.

Heisler's twin brother, Bob, will be traveling from Syracuse, N.Y., to attend Friday's football game.

The festivities kick off tonight with a parade from the Bellevue city building, 616 Poplar St., to the stadium. The evening will end with a bonfire.

"I was a first-generation college graduate in my family. While at Bellevue High School, I was given many opportunities to succeed," said Marilyn Schleyer, class of '65, who went on to earn a doctorate and is on the faculty at Northern Kentucky University. "I now have a responsibility to help this generation and future generations succeed."

Schleyer, who is chairwoman of the event, and the homecoming steering committee have been contacting as many alumni as possible and expect a large turnout.

After tonight's parade, Campbell County Judge-executive Steve Penderly will announce float winners, and Bellevue Mayor Jack Meyer will announce the results of the window-painting competition. The winners will receive gold, silver and bronze painter's palettes to hang in their businesses until next year.

The events continue on Friday with a 6:30 p.m. rededication ceremony and the football game against Ludlow. Alumni will be



ZOOM The Enquirer / Meggan Booker

Bellevue High School students Andrea Bellen (from left), Jane Hammel and Meagan McNeilan chat as students change classes in hallways they decorated for Homecoming.



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The high school is ready for Homecoming. The stadium will be rededicated as part of the three days of festivities.

able to catch up with one another on Saturday. The school will be hosting tours, a golf outing and dinner.

Jim O'Neill, class of '65, of O'Neill's Barbershop in Fort Thomas, hopes that this year's team has a better record than when he played for Bellevue.

"We were possibly the worst two football teams we ever had," said O'Neill. "We were 2-8 my junior and senior year. We were really awful, but we still had school spirit."

O'Neill married fellow Class of '65 member Peggy Hoop, who was named "Football Sweetheart" that year.

O'Neill has fond memories of going to away games - on foot. Newport High School's stadium sits opposite I-471 from Gilligan Stadium. In 1965 the I-471 space was a wooded area.

"We walked to the Newport games," O'Neill said. "We threw plywood over the creek and in full uniform we walked to the game. We all came out of the woods and when our cleats hit the asphalt, the entire stadium would be hushed."

Bellevue won state football championships in 1951, 1977 and 1979. Boys has won five state titles and girls track has won two.

Bellevue has also produced two state tennis singles titles and four state doubles titles.

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