St. Joe’s building sports complex

by BILL SWARTWOUT

A 12-acre sports complex, including a 400-meter track, a combination football-soccer field, baseball diamond and a softball field is being constructed at the St. Joseph-by-the-Sea High School. The work on the sports facility began in September 1979 and is expected to be completed sometime during this summer. The facility is located behind the school, off Fylan Blvd. and Bertram Ave.

"I believe that we’ll have the largest sports complex in any one area for a high school on Staten Island," said Father Thomas Gaffney, the high school’s principal. "One aspect of ours, which nobody else has, is that it borders a scenic area. The Raritan Bay provides one border and Arbutus Lake is on the other side."

Spectators as well as athletes will be able to enjoy the scenic surroundings that Sea has to offer. The sun glistening off the Atlantic Ocean as it stretches toward the horizon, offers a beautiful eastern view.

When it’s all finished, the St. Joseph Sea Sports Complex will look like the artist's rendering.

"It is truly a beautiful setting," noted Father Gaffney. "You can't match this setting. It is unique."

The track, which is nearly done, at a cost of over $100,000, is designed for maximum drainage. It consists of a bottom layer of crushed stone, a layer of sand stone and a layer of rock dust and clay for the water to be absorbed into. Porous pipes will be laid around the track and attached to other pipes which will carry the water away from the facility.

"Work within the track, on the football-soccer field, still needs to be done. The ground has been leveled but seeding is yet to be done. Backstops and grading on the baseball and softball fields are scheduled to take place shortly."

Sea’s new baseball field will be designed with home plate toward the south, facing north. This way, the sun will travel in a first-to-third base direction ward. Batting cage and the outfield fence will be added with a roof over the baseball field. A 40-foot tall fence and a 4-foot wide fence will be added. The softball field will be located near home plate, adjacent to Arbutus Lake. The right field line will be about 300 feet and the center field will cut back as you head toward center field, which will be some 400 feet from home plate. Left field will be close to the track area, where the softball field is located.

The softball field will be closest to the school and situated near the three tennis courts, which have been in place for a few years. All of the new facilities will be put to good use. "Our varsity teams, gym classes, and intramural sports program will all be using the facilities," said Father Gaffney.

In addition to the school’s teams, Father Gaffney believes that the track will be used for high school meets and Staten Island championship meets. "There are tremendous advantages to having your own facility," said the principal. "We’ll be able to expand on our intramurals and the school’s teams will be able to practice on their own field."

Presently, the baseball, softball and track teams all have to travel to practice. "The kids travel every day and there is a lot of time involved with that," said Bill Sheridan, athletic director and baseball coach. "If the work outs are held here at school, many get the benefit."

St. Joseph Sea has a lot of land, 40 acres behind the school, and is at