

# St. Joe's building sports complex

by BILL SWARTWOUT

A 12-acre sports complex, including a 400-meter track, a combination football-soccer field, major-league 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 Hylan 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.

There is plenty of wooded acreage nearby to create a natural background for the baseball field and the tranquility of Arbutus Lake enhances the complex.

"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 draining. 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, looking north. This way, the sun will travel in a first-to-third base direction overhead. By game time in the afternoon, the sun should not be much of a factor.

A picnic area will be built near home plate, adjacent to Arbutus Lake. The right field line will be about 300 feet and the outfield fence will cut back as you head toward centerfield, 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 Sheriden, athletic director and baseball coach. "If the work outs are held here at school, more will get done."

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

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

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tempting to put it to use. "There's a great deal of room out there," said Sheriden. "If it is utilized right, Sea will have the nicest facilities of any parochial school on Staten Island." The school already has a parking lot for 100 cars.

There are no definite figures on the cost of the entire project as prices go up every day with inflation biting into it. But the Vaccaro Construction Corporation is out there working every day. Frank A. Vaccaro, P.E. and Associates have designed the project. Vaccaro has a daughter at Sea.

Fund raising by the school and the Sea Family Association will go toward paying for the sports complex, which will be all natural. "We are going with a natural field (grass) because it will cut down on injuries," said Father Gaffney.

Sea will shortly realize the idea of having a sports complex. The idea originated when Sea thought of going co-ed. Until 1973, Sea was an all-girls school. But now, there are 970 students — 370 boys and 600 girls. Gradually, Sea

hopes to level those figures off, and this September it is expecting an enrollment of 1,000 students.

Father Gaffney will also be looking for a track coach to go with his new track. If the track coach can also teach freshman English, things would be perfect.

There aren't any definite plans as to naming the fields or track, but a formal dedication could take place in September. By that time, Sea and the Staten Island high school community will have a new place to display their athletic talents.

