The new Doghouse

Legendary coach and former Hancock College athletic director John Osborne throws out the ceremonial first pitch at the rededication of the baseball field named after him at Allan Hancock College Saturday.

Continues ...
Hancock College athletic director Kim Ensing saw years of work come to fruition Saturday.

"It's like a dream come true," she said as she stood on lush grass in foul territory at the dedication of Hancock's John Osborne Field.

Ensing stood a long way from the first-base dugout as she spoke. The space in foul territory at the old John Osborne Field, which was so designated in 2006, was much more cramped. At the new facility, there is ample room between home plate and the backstop in foul ground and in foul territory besides both foul lines.

The outfield dimensions to the left-field and right-field corners are the same as they were at the old park, 320 feet. However, the left-centerfield and right-centerfield gaps are more spacious. The batting cages and bullpens are much larger at the new Hancock park than they were at the old one.

The dugouts are twice as large at the new one.

The new John Osborne Field is across the street from the old one and next to Hancock's softball field.

Ensing said, "The facility is 98-percent complete. We're looking at moving in bleachers, moving in bathrooms."

Hancock baseball coach Chris Stevens told a large, enthusiastic crowd that it took a lot of late work to get the field the way it was looking Saturday.

"Have you ever seen the television show "Restaurant Impossible?," Stevens said to the crowd. "This was a baseball field's version of that."

"Yesterday, the pitcher's mound hadn't been built yet."

Ensing credited Hancock's grounds crew, and grounds crew supervisor Gerald Dominguez in particular, with constructing the pitcher's mound. Bulldogs assistant coach Clarence Griego worked on the bullpens.

Ensing said to the crowd, "This baseball field is the first piece of the puzzle. Six months from now we're looking at a new track, a new football field and new soccer fields."

Stevens thanked the large contingent of Hancock baseball alumni who turned out. "We have 50-plus alumni here," he said shortly before an alumni baseball game at the new field took place just after the dedication ceremony.

Continues ...
Former longtime Hancock baseball coach and athletic director John Osborne was at the rededication ceremony. So were his wife, Mardi, and grown children, Jon and Elizabeth.

Jon and Elizabeth Osborne are veteran teachers. Jon Osborne is Cabrillo High School's veteran baseball coach.

Ensing said to the crowd, "I'm always hearing, 'When OZZIE was the athletic director ... When OZZIE was the athletic director ... He set the bar very high.

"Now, Mr. Osborne," Ensing said to John Osborne. "Go to the pitcher's mound and throw the first pitch."

"I'm going to have to move up," John Osborne quipped. He stood on the mound and did just fine throwing out the ceremonial first pitch.

Interim Hancock College Superintendent and President Dr. Betty Miller spoke to the crowd. Afterward, she said that community support and Measure I were the linchpins for the school's movement toward upgrading its athletic facilities. In particular, Ensing had wanted for awhile to spruce up the school's track that has been in disrepair for years.

Voters approved Measure I in June of 2006. The measure allocated a $180 million fund for general facilities improvements, technology upgrades and infrastructure replacements.

Miller became Hancock's interim superintendent and president in June of 2012. She said, "The community support (for this) has been just tremendous.

"Without the support, and Measure I, there is no way this could have happened."

John Osborne said to the crowd, "When I first came to the school, in 1965, we had a sand infield. We had no fences. Actually, we played at Elks Field.

"This is a beautiful facility."

Ensing said to the crowd that Stevens had remarked that moving to the new Hancock ballpark from the old one "was like moving from an apartment to a mansion."

Hancock plays its first home game at the new field on Thursday, Feb. 7, against Porterville at 2 p.m.