

Patriots are coming to play



Davies Tech adding football starting next season

Woonsocket Call 6 Dec 2018 By JON BAKER jbakera@pawtuckettimes.com

Davies Tech announces plans for varsity football team

LINCOLN – It's been a hot topic of conversation at Davies Tech for over 40 years, since just after its opening in 1972.

"My son Cooper graduated from school here two years ago, and he always used to ask me, "If we had football, I'd play in a heartbeat. Why don't we?" explained Davies Tech athletic director Bob Morris. "At that point, I didn't know, so I told him that.

"The main reason, from what I was told, was the money factor," he added. "Still, whenever I subbed in

classrooms, I'd talk to the kids, ask them, "What are you looking for when it comes to new sports at Davies? What would you want to play?"

"The No. 1 answer: Football."

That dream for so many finally became reality Monday, when new School Director Adam Flynn-Tabloff gave Morris the official "go ahead" to begin the fledgling program, which will begin with pre-season workouts next August.

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can't wait.'"

— Davies AD Bob Morris

Davies will face its first-ever grid opponent in mid-September, and hopes to do so at Bryant University, which has already given Morris permission to play home games at its sparkling stadium. Morris confirmed it all while relaxing in his office early Wednesday afternoon.

"Adam gave me the OK late Monday morning," Morris grinned while discussing details of the project, which began only seven or eight weeks ago. "I was actually passing him in the hallway, and he just said, 'We've got everything set. Everything's in play for football.' I imme-



Davies Tech High School director Adam Flynn-Tabloff, left, and athletic director Bob Morris added four new athletic programs to the school, including football. The Patriots will also add teams in girls volleyball, cheerleading and esports.

diately said, "Fantastic! Can I announce it?"

"Turns out, I didn't have to. He said he was about to put out an e-mail to the faculty and staff," he continued.

"We hadn't told the students yet; we're going to make that official soon, but everyone knows about it.

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"This is a 'go,' a great go, and everyone is thrilled, but now comes all the hard work."

Morris indicated he contacted the Rhode Island Interscholastic League, and officials told him to send a letter dictating Davies' desire to begin building a grid program.

"They also told me that when we receive the registration form in May (for which fall sports we will compete in next school year), all I have to do is check off football," he stated. When asked if the new program will have to serve a one- or two-year probationary period – that is, playing only at the junior-varsity level so athletes can grow into their roles – Morris claimed it wouldn't.

"We'll go varsity and, hopefully, JV, right away," he said.

People apparently have talked it about for decades now, but no one



Davies Tech High School director Adam Flynn-Tabloff, left, and athletic director Bob Morris discuss the expanded athletic programs at the school, including a football team, at the school Wednesday. The football team will play in Division IV starting in 2019.

really picked up the ball and ran with it. At least not until Morris.

He admitted he's always loved the game, played at Shea back in the mid-1980s under then-head coach Fred Pastore. He would have loved for his son Cooper to play at Davies, but he had to settle for baseball.

"When I became the AD for Bill Meekins in July, I thought about it,

but it was, like, the elephant in the room; people had tried to get it done, but – for whatever reason – didn't," he noted. "There were too many stumbling blocks."

He nevertheless started looking at what the school could add for new athletic endeavors at the school, those that fell within the department's budget, and it didn't take long for Davies to OK varsity cheerleading and Esports, and it actually will start its new girls' volleyball program late next summer as well.

"Still, everyone kept bringing up football, so that's when I contacted (teachers) Henry Cabral, who I knew coached football at Mount Hope, Bill Meekins and Dave Champagne; all of them are current or former coaches here," he said. "I asked them if forming a football team was viable, and they gave me a host of ideas about possible obstacles. Naturally, funding was the big one.

"We talked about doing a co-op, but we figured it would be more beneficial, and simpler, if we did it ourselves. I started making out a budget for only a base program, just what it would take to get it off the ground,

and the number I came up with was about \$45,000; that for uniforms, equipment, etc.

"This was all through October, and then I took it to Adam, who said the numbers weren't outrageous. He and a lot of people had thought previously they would be. He said he'd look into it, then get back to me."

Flynn-Tabloff then scheduled a meeting with Morris and other appropriate school officials. The AD got the OK on Monday.

"I've been working here for 13 years as a teacher, supervisor of academics and assistant director before becoming director, and students and faculty have always talked about it," he said, grinning ear to ear. "I know when we have open houses, future students have brought it up, too.

"I know athletics can be a huge part of a child's education. It can keep them engaged in academics, want to come to school every day so they can play; it also exposes them to positive role models and teaches them things you can't always learn in a classroom. This is a very impor-

tant thing for our school; we have a lot of great things happening within our sports arena, so it's an exciting time for us."

He then pointed toward the corner of Morris' office and smiled, "We even have a new mascot." There was the hefty, cartoon-like head of a Patriot (though nothing like Pat Patriot).

"We're not worried at all about attracting kids," said Morris, who indicated he's still in the process of forming a coaching staff. "We knew we'd have plenty. I think we have about 25 who are playing or have played on the youth level, so we should be OK from the get-go.

"We haven't ordered uniforms or equipment or footballs yet, but Henry and I have been texting back and forth when we watch college football games, and we'll say, 'What you think of that design?' How 'bout that?' We're trying to think of everything.

"The mood here is just unbelievable," he added. "This is the first time Davies has ever fielded a football team. I've heard from some of

the (current) seniors, who said, 'You're going to start one up now? Are you kidding me?'

"I still think they're excited, because I tell them, 'Hey, next year, you can come to our Homecoming game.'"

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