

# HILLTOPPERS



## History of Chardon Memorial Field

There are actually two Chardon Memorial Fields at Chardon High School. The first Field is located to the east of the current football/soccer stadium. It remains the home of Chardon Track & Field. The original Field was to be part of a larger Memorial Recreation Park that was to include picnic grounds, swimming pool and playgrounds. The Boosters then (1947-48) were a community group and not simply an athletics support organization.

The original Field was constructed during the summer of 1948 by individuals and businesses in the Chardon area. The original "old" Field, like the present "new" Field was not originally funded by tax dollars. The Field was dedicated to all World War II Veterans. Prior to the 1948 season, the Hilltoppers had played all their games "away" due to the loss of the old field where now sits Chardon Plaza on Water Street.

The Chardon Boosters were fortunate enough to make connection with Bob Hope and he agreed to come to Chardon on October 8, 1948 to dedicate Chardon Memorial Field. Bob Hope was a minority owner in the Cleveland Indians at that time and the Tribe was in the World Series that year and he was in Cleveland to attend those games. Throughout World War II, Hope had supported American troops around the world. He continued to do so for many years to come. His visit to Chardon was a natural extension of that support.

The night of October 8th saw more rain than had fallen in Chardon for decades. It rained so much that the game was stopped at half-time with the score Jefferson 0, Chardon 0. None the less the dedication went forward with Hope and then Columbus Mayor James Rhodes in attendance. Attired in a Chardon Fire Department raincoat & helmet, Hope said "Do you call this rain? Why in California, we call this a lovely day. Bing Crosby wanted to come along but he hurt himself falling off his wallet. - Anybody got a pancake?"

As part of the 1998 re-dedication of the old Field, Hope was asked if he recalled coming to Chardon. His reply was - "Do I wish I could be back for the rededication of the Chardon Memorial Park...especially when we've just used up the last gallon of Geauga's best syrup that they gave me. Do I remember the ceremony? You bet I do - it's the first and only time I had to swim to make an entrance on stage."

The old Field served the Hilltoppers until the fall of 2000 when the new Chardon Memorial Field was created. The new Field was placed where it is today in order to provide space for the 8 lane track at the old Field and to also provide better viewing due to shorter distances from field to seats.

The present home seats were originally intended to be the visitor seats if the necessary finances for home seats on the west side could have been obtained when the new Field was constructed. Unfortunately that funding never materialized and the School District finally purchased seats from the Nautica Complex and constructed them on the west side for visitor seating. The small press box on what remains the home side was intended only for the visitor coaches. It now houses all game day operations and both home and visitor coaching staffs. Area media do not routinely visit Chardon Memorial Field due to the lack of a standard press box.

The new Field now features its second artificial surface. The new surface is "Tiger Turf" and was installed by the Chardon Local Schools through its permanent improvement levy in 2009. The surface can drain seven inches of rain per hour and provides a safe playing surface because of the drainage system and padding underneath.

This season marks the 19th season at the "new" Field. The new Chardon Memorial Field hosts football (all ages), soccer, and lacrosse and provides practice space for baseball and softball. The scoreboard at the new Field is unique to the area. It provides sports information, advertising, and game time fun every night.

Both the old and new Chardon Memorial Fields reflect the Chardon community. Support for both facilities came from the people of Chardon and both Fields remain dedicated to the Veterans who so bravely served our Country in World War II.



Wayne Johnson, Mayor J.W. Moats, Bob Hope