

No plan in place for aging locker rooms

hailey NEUNER

Da'shaun Anderson, varsity football captain, leads a sea of green and navy off the field at halftime. Unlike most teams who regroup in the locker room, this team's only option is to spend their halftime in the weight room.

MHS, home to 23 varsity sports, is the third largest high school in Missouri according to student population and features the original four locker rooms built in 1993.

That's three decades of wear and tear.

The football program utilizes two locker rooms six months out of the year, beginning during summer workouts and concluding in early November.

Anderson attributes the relocation of this year's halftime meetings and speeches to the locker rooms' lack of space.

"I wouldn't say it's outdated. More like too small. We're pretty crowded in there," Anderson said.

Ninety-five lockers for 90 varsity players line the walls and create narrow corridors in between. Benches sit in these corridors, some broken and some removed from the floor altogether. The lockers are filled with gear, all under minimal ventilation.

Anderson, having spent four years in the football program, said the locker room is a major contributor to team culture.

"We play a lot of music. We dance a lot. We



Kaitlyn Johnson, sophomore, bench presses in fifth hour Advanced Strength Training. The weight room is one of the more recent renovations in the academic building and features space, natural lighting and new equipment. *Photograph by Ila Hudson*



After 30 years, the original locker rooms are showing their age with rust and broken locks, shelves and benches. *Photographs by Elliott Jorgensen and Hailey Neuner*

chill. It's where we always are," Anderson said.

Michael Stewart, head football coach, sees a need to renovate the athletic locker rooms.

"When we have envious facilities, like our weight room, the players do a really good job of keeping it in good shape. It's a point of pride," Stewart said.

The weight room houses top-notch equipment, Stewart said. The racks and dumbbells have MHS emblems, and matching green and navy bumper plates sit at each rack. Mirrors line one wall, while windows line the others, all looking out at the stadium.

"We want to create a safe environment where the kids feel secure about where they are," Stewart said. "And, in an updated facility, they're confident they have that. So, I do think we're behind when it comes to locker rooms."

Stewart said the locker room lacks square footage most of all. Each player wears about \$1,000 worth of gear, and often there isn't a place to put their equipment in the locker room.

"We have to hang equipment in the office. There's just no other space for it," Stewart said.

The coaches have put graphics along the walls and continue to maximize the space to create a sense of home for their players.

"Our school does as good of a job as possible with the facilities," Stewart

said. "We do the best that we can with what we have, but there's definitely plenty of room for improvement."

One solution, Stewart said, is re-hauling the basement structure to accommodate more room for lockers by building a wrestling room on top of the weight room, which would require a district-level financial commitment.

Felicia Durst, PE department chair, said only a few students change their clothes before and after gym class; however, the 1993 fixtures such as the tile floors, showers and broken lockers could be updated.

"For our PE students, the locker rooms are sufficient," Durst said. "There is plenty of room each hour, and there are enough lockers for the students that want one."

While the stadium press box and most of the bleachers below are original to the school, new scoreboards, new gym floors, new gym pads and new football turf mark some of the newest athletic facility updates.

Activities Director Adam Starling said the district has recently prioritized academic wings over other campus updates.

"World-class STEM labs have gone up in all four high schools," Starling said.

While there are currently no plans to renovate the locker rooms, Starling said, "We are always looking for ways to improve facilities."

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