Steinbrenner Stadium Dedication

By Gordon Haff

The dedication of the Henry G. Steinbrenner Stadium last Sunday represented the first part of the MIT Athletic Department's construction program which is planned to eventually replace the present ice rink and the Rockwell Cage with a two-story ice rink, special events center, and field house.

Like many other of MIT's athletic facilities when they were first built, this new track is considered to be of very high quality. It is the only track of its kind in New England and is considered to be one of the best collegiate facilities.

The first step toward the construction of what is now the DuPont complex was the acquisition of the Rockwell Cage which had been used by the US Government for indoor drill. The cage was acquired largely through the efforts of Ivan J. Geiger, Director of Athletics, who also was instrumental in constructing the ice rink eight years later. The same year a wooden basketball court was added to the Cage.

At the time that MIT bought the Cage, the only basketball courts on campus were those in Walker Memorial. The addition of this new facility more than tripled the number of basketball courts. In particular, it increased the court time for 1M basketball while lengthening the varsity basketball and fencing teams in Walker. In a letter from Geiger to the News Office on Oct. 3, 1947, Geiger wrote: "With the addition of this much-needed structure to Technology sport facilities, we should be enabled to realize to a greater degree the general educational aim of 'a Sport for Every Man and Every Man for a Sport.'"

The Cage was a much-needed addition to indoor space for intercollegiate teams as well. In a Feb. 3, 1948 news release, Dr. John J. Rowlands of the MIT news office noted: "The Rockwell Field House will provide much-needed indoor facilities for practicing and competition in the 16 different intercollegiate sports that Technology participates in."

The largest additions to the athletic facilities, however, occurred in the mid to late fifties. 1955 saw the addition of both the ice rink and the movable basketball floor in the Cage. Although the rink has been working on almost a year to year basis for almost a decade, it was considered to be a good facility in the days when artificial ice rinks were few and far between, even in New England.

The hub of the west campus athletic facilities, the $1.25 million DuPont gymnasium, is the first major addition to the MIT athletic complex which would greatly increase the level of MIT's athletic facilities up to their present level. The Director of Athletics, Richard L. Buel, said of the new facility: "During 1958-59 there were 3182 students registered in 30 physical education classes. About 3500 men played on the 421 teams that competed in 14 kinds of intramural contests, and one out of every four students participated in one or more of 19 intercollegiate sports. We anticipate an increase in such activities during the coming year thanks to the facilities provided by DuPont Athletic Center."

The Steinbrenner track with its modern surface manufactured by the German company, Belforger Kunst Materiales, is the first major addition to the west campus sports facilities since DuPont. The addition of the indoor track and field/indoor sports complex in west campus up to date.