

THE HOMECOMING GAME

GOOD FOOD AND GREAT ALUMNI MAKE FOR MEMORABLE EVENT



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It was not your average, run-of-the-mill soccer Saturday at Mangrum Field.

My first clue, as I trudged up the dirt road from the parking lot, was a group of students behind the bus of the visiting Embry-Riddle Eagles. The body paint they were applying was Cougar blue and white. Between two of them they wore enough to finish off the walls of a bedroom.

Before I reached the field I could smell two grills going full speed flipping burgers and hot dogs. I figured it would be the average CSUSM barbecue: Maybe a few sodas here, a napkin there. Wrong! The massive tent brought in case of rain on the cloudy day held a nice surprise. The spread that met my eyes revved up my stomach muscles. It was a layout worthy of a Chargers tailgate. Baked beans! Potato Salad! Chips! Watermelon! The fixings were up for grabs and looking fresh. I had no qualms taking three to-

mato slices for my veggie burger. (That's right, veggie burger. Our school really does promote social justice. Fear not, I downed a hot dog to balance my meal.)

I spoke to a throng of alumni who said they were pleased by the buffet and the turnout, that it made them glad they showed up to help celebrate Homecoming Weekend. Many of them were roped into helping honor the school's twentieth anniversary during halftime of the men's game. They were skeptical, but they smiled while doing it.

As the soccer teams danced on the pitch, the Cougar crowd, more crowded than usual, banged their paw print spirit sticks together and chanted in unison. Vendors on the sideline peddled memorabilia. The barbecue tent became consumed by starving students. The sights, sounds and smells were distinct: college.

This school's come a long way in twenty years, and sports matter. I can't wait for basketball.

PHOTOS BY AARON JAFFE
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