

## LEADOFF: Cranes gone and turf coming at Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Tim Tucker | July 18, 2017

Good morning. This is LEADOFF, the early buzz in Atlanta sports.

In another milepost toward next month's opening of Mercedes-Benz Stadium, the cranes have been removed from the field and preparations have begun for installation of the artificial-turf playing surface.

Work progressed Monday on the subsurface for the turf.

Until recently, the future field was covered with cranes and other construction equipment and materials.

The \$1.5 billion-plus stadium will have a FieldTurf "Revolution 360" playing surface, which also is used in Seattle's CenturyLink Field and New England's Gillette Stadium.

Falcons officials initially hoped to have natural grass in their retractable-roof stadium, but they decided on artificial turf in 2013 because parts of the field won't get enough sun light for grass. After announcing a different turf provider early last year, they confirmed the switch to FieldTurf in April.

High above the field, the stadium's halo-shaped video board – 58 feet tall by 1,100 feet around — is installed and operational. Work continues on programming and testing it.

The stadium is scheduled to open Aug. 26 with a Falcons-Arizona Cardinals exhibition game.

Eleven sports events are slated to be played in the stadium in its first month of operation, including two Falcons exhibition games, one Falcons regular-season game (Sept. 17 vs. Green Bay), six Atlanta United matches (the first on Sept. 10) and two nationally televised college football games (Alabama vs. Florida State on Sept. 2 and Georgia Tech vs. Tennessee on Sept. 4).

