

# EVENTS

## CALENDAR

### JANUARY

**8-10** North Carolina Annual Turf-grass Conference, Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, N.C. Contact Leon Lucas, North Carolina State University, (919) 737-2712.

**8-9** Indiana Golf Course Superintendents Association, annual two day seminar, Holiday Inn North, Indianapolis, IN. Contact J. L. Harris, IGCSA, (317) 736-7226.

**14** Turf Basics Short Course, University of Florida Extension Service Auditorium, Orlando, FL. Contact Uday Yadav, (305) 420-3265.

**14** University of California Horticulture Short Course, evenings through February 13, held at three different locations in the Los Angeles area. Contact Ed McNeil, 2492 E. Mountain St., Pasadena, CA 91104, (818) 798-1715.

**14-17** Golf Course Association Annual Meeting, Palm Springs, CA, (312) 644-6610.

**26** Super Bowl XX, Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, LA

**27-3** Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and Sports Turf Managers Association combined conference and show, Moscone Convention Center, San Francisco, CA. Sports Turf Program Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 1-2. (913) 841-2240.

### MARCH

**20** Sports Turf Clinic and Equipment Rodeo, Ranger Stadium, Arlington, TX. There will be three hours of instruction and demonstration of equipment. Contact Bill Knoop, Texas A&M, 17360 Coit Rd., Dallas, TX 75252. (214) 231-5362.

**27** Third Annual Sports Turf Institute and Trade Show, California Polytechnic University, Pomona; in cooperation with the Sports Turf Managers Association. Contact Kent Kurtz or Mary Giles, (714) 598-4167, or 598-4168.

# THE FRONT OFFICE

## OPINION PAGE



### MAKING SPORTS TURF HISTORY

I find it hard to understand after 12 years of covering the turf industry, why the sports turf market has been so neglected. After speaking with many extension agents and sports field managers, it was clear they felt the same way. After all, isn't quality, safe sports turf important to society?

Not all sports turf is forgotten. The gridirons of major college and professional football games and major league baseball have become monuments to the importance of sports to Americans.

Perhaps the apparent health and success of these athletic facilities makes the public assume all is well with all sports turf. It is too easy to forget the condition of the fields not shown on television.

But as I dig deeper into this double standard for fields, there are signs that the public is beginning to wake up. More and more sports facilities are reevaluating the condition of their fields. Transition is definitely underway.

Still, what took the market so long to wake up? An interesting idea comes to mind. Try imagining that you are a student sitting in an agronomy class in 2,000 A.D. listening to the instructor describe the sports turf market of the 1980s. Might he say something like this?

"In the 20th Century, the world of sports turf was in chaos. Sports field managers were broken into rebel groups, some blindly worshipping artificial turf. A few managers tried any new field concept without question. Confusion, and a lack of standard construction and maintenance specifications, caused many to ignore all recommendations for field care, leaving fields in primitive condition.

"Many athletes had their careers shortened by poor sports surfaces. Far too many fields were in pitiful condition causing injuries to kids anxious to develop their sports skills. Sports turf managers needed leadership.

Will that professor say that chaos ended in the '80s, that the market got organized, and all available technology was put to use? If letters from our readers are any indication, the answer is a resounding yes!

We are all getting it together. Let's not blame artificial turf for every injury. You have to admit, the owners of artificial turf fields at least recognize the need to invest in the field surface. In many cases, they chose artificial turf because of a lack of agreement on how to make natural fields meet professional appearance and playability standards.

We can't say that about those who build fields with no consideration to modern technology, those who deny the field manager the necessary money to maintain them, and those who think they can cut corners on field construction and care and get away with it.

To me, these people are the main problem with the industry. Their rehearsed excuse is always "We don't have the budget for proper field construction and care." My question to them is, "Do you have the budget for higher insurance premiums, lawyers in the event of an injury on fields inadequately cared for, or regular reconstruction because fields fall apart for lack of maintenance?"

I believe strongly that, with needed information, sports turf managers can build a strong case to their superiors for more investment in field construction and maintenance. They can overcome artificial turf worship. They can be the leading edge in a fight for better and safer fields.

In the year 2,000, an agronomy professor will tell his students that sports turf came alive in the 1980s and in the '90s achieved a status equal to golf course maintenance. And those students will go on to become sports turf managers working with advanced technology.

Bruce F. Shank