

NEGOTIATIONS PROGRESS FOR REDSKINS STADIUM

Despite the success of the Washington Redskins on the field, the team's success at the bank has been disappointing to owner Jack Kent Cooke. Restricted by the 55,000 seats and lack of luxury suites at RFK Memorial Stadium in Washington, DC, Cooke has made no secret of his wish to build a second stadium in the city.

Bolstered by the hope of obtaining a National League Baseball expansion franchise to occupy RFK if the Redskins leave, Washington Mayor Marion Barry is cooperating with Cooke to reach an agreement on building a new 80,000-seat stadium next to RFK. As Joe Robie proved in Miami, the 300 proposed luxury boxes could make the payments on a new stadium, whether financed by the city or Cooke himself.

Regardless of who picks up the tab, one thing is clear. Cooke would like "an open-air stadium with natural grass." Tony Burnett, head groundskeeper at RFK, expects to make a few changes if the Redskins move to their own stadium: "We resod the field every summer with Tifway II bermudagrass to give it a good base for football. That wouldn't be necessary for baseball, soccer or other events that use the stadium." Burnett converted the field to bermudagrass overseeded with perennial ryegrass in 1977, two years after it was reconstructed to the PAT System.

To keep the bermuda active in the fall, Burnett covers the field with a vented geotextile to keep soil temperatures up. This also pushes the overseeded ryegrass.

For the new stadium to be located next to RFK, nine holes of a neighboring golf course would have to be relocated to make room for additional parking. When asked what the new stadium will look like, Burnett answered, "All I know is Mr. Cooke loves Giant Stadium in the Meadowlands (New Jersey). He also likes natural turf. If they do build it here, I hope I can be involved with the field."

"NUMEX SAHARA" CLOSE TO COMMERCIAL USE

Seed yield on a variety of bermudagrass developed at New Mexico State University has brought the grass a step closer to commercial use.

Arden Baltensperger, professor of agronomy and horticulture in NMSU's College of Agriculture and Home Economics, who developed "NuMex Sahara," said the grass produced a good seed yield on a breeder field of about two and a half acres. Development of the variety has taken about ten years and the assistance of several graduate students.

Since June, approximately 100 acres of foundation field were planted in Arizona

and Southern California. The foundation fields are the second phase toward certification of the seed, a "seed increase phase," Baltensperger said.

"I hope this new variety will be of good use on golf course fairways, city parks and other large areas where seeding is the preferred method of establishment," he added.

The variety has several advantages over "Common," the current primary seed-producing variety of bermudagrass available commercially. Baltensperger said it has better turf quality, is denser, experienced less stunt mite damage, and is credited with better summer color.

NuMex Sahara was granted plant variety protection in March by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture through the New Mexico Crop Improvement Association (CIA).

Farmers Marketing Corp. (FMC) of Phoenix, AZ has the exclusive right of increasing NuMex Sahara seed and marketing it. The firm pays royalties for the privilege to the CIA that find their way back to NMSU and the U.S. Golf Association.

Royce R. Richardson, president of FMC, noted that in 1987 some 70,000 NuMex Sahara plants were hand-planted on the two-and-a-half acre breeder field, "to ensure the genetic purity of that field."

"It's all up and it looks very good," Richardson said of the grass. "We will have certified seed available to the public in July 1989."

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