

"FIELD OF DREAMS" WAS FLEETING PROJECT

The Proturf Division of Pacific Sod in Camarillo, CA is accustomed to unusual requests from movie producers. But last summer, when Gordon Productions asked the company's Neil Beeson if he could build an authentic-looking professional baseball diamond in the middle of an Iowa cornfield for "Field of Dreams," he thought he had heard it all.

The production company selected Dyersville, IA, a small dairy farming community 60 miles west of Dubuque, for filming. Farmers there grow their own feed corn to keep milk cows well-fed and productive. As you drive along the two-lane rural routes outside of Dyersville, all you can see is miles and miles of cornfields surrounding dairy barns and rustic farmhouses. The company found two farmers willing to give up a couple of acres for one season, as long as the producer replaced the corn lost.

"When we arrived in Dyersville last June, the corn was five-feet-high," recalls Beeson. "It's the first time I've had to cut down corn in order to build a field. The schedule was tight. We had to complete the project over the Fourth of July to meet the producer's schedule. That gave us only seven days to build a baseball diamond out of a cornfield." Beeson increased his manpower with the help of Dubuque Country Club and the Dyersville High School baseball team.



As soon as the field was cleared, graded and surveyed, Musco Lighting of Muscatine, IA, installed the light standards. "You couldn't tell in the film," explains Beeson, "but the foul lines were only 175 feet. The whole field is roughly an acre shy of a real one."

Next the warning track and infield skinned areas were excavated and filled with lime chips. The producer wanted bright red dirt to provide contrast, so these areas were capped off with screened brick. Coarse screenings were used for the warning track and finer ones for the basepaths.

After finish grading, starter fertilizer was applied to the turf areas. Seven Cities Sod trucked in more than an acre of Kentucky bluegrass sod from Davenport. "I was concerned about some of the high wear areas," said Beeson, "so we used large staples to anchor the sod in these areas. We borrowed a mower from the local golf course

and started cutting a pattern into the field."

Musco returned to install and aim the lights. In seven days, the "Field of Dreams" was ready. The film crew and actors moved on site for ten days and nights, and then they were gone.

"It would have made a great Little League field," says Beeson, "but the property line runs right down the middle of the field and the farmers were anxious to plant corn there again the following spring. They used the field only one more time during the winter to get footage of the field covered with snow."

The bluegrass has been turned under, the lights have been removed, and the farmers of Dyersville must watch the movie to see their short-lived baseball field. No doubt they'll be telling the story about night baseball in the middle of their corn fields for years to come.



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