

OHIO STATE PLANS GRASS FOR FALL OF '90

When John Cooper left Arizona State University to become head coach at Ohio State University, he started to miss the natural turf at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe. The eight-year-old artificial surface at Ohio Stadium in Columbus was aging. Cooper immediately began to lobby athletic director Jim Jones to convert the stadium back to grass.

The odds were against him because the stadium is used almost constantly throughout the year for intramurals, soccer, softball and other sports in addition to football games and practices. He knew that natural turf could not withstand that kind of abuse.

But he persisted, and last month the school announced it will become the third Big Ten Conference team to convert to grass after the end of this year's football season. For most of this decade Indiana's Purdue has been the only conference school to have natural turf, the original P.A.T. field at Ross-Ade Stadium. The University of Iowa just converted Kinnick Stadium to P.A.T. this spring.

"Given my choice," states Cooper, "I'd prefer grass. I think you're better off playing football on grass." It appears that his choice has been approved, not just for the stadium, but for a new grass practice field on campus as well. The new, lighted practice

field is designed to take some of the load off Ohio Stadium.

The university has enlisted the support and advice of Dr. John Street and Dr. Karl Danneberger in its agronomy department as well as O.M. Scotts' agronomist Eugene Mayer for the project. Mike McBride, superintendent of Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, OH, was a major proponent of the conversion to grass.

"The plan is either to seed or sod the field next spring with a mixture of Kentucky bluegrasses," says Danneberger. "The type of construction should be decided within the next two months. We think that Michigan (University of) will also make the switch in the next few years."

HORSES AT SANTA ANITA WILL RUN ON TURF FIT FOR GOLFERS

Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, CA, recently borrowed the specifications for building a green from the United States Golf Association in reconstructing its turf track. The only difference between the USGA greens specs and the 9/10-mile-long track is the incorporation of interlocking geotextile grids into the top six inches of rootzone.

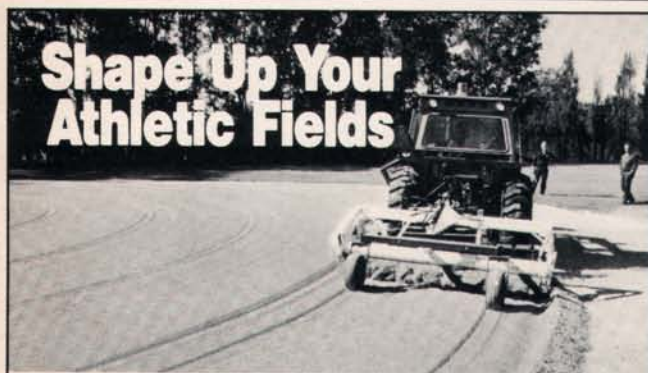
"The new track is the culmination of months of research and millions of dollars

in renovation," states Clint Granath, director of facility management for the famous race track. "The old turf course was totally excavated and widened to 80 feet from 65 feet. This required a whole series of associated changes, including increasing the size of the tunnels leading to the track. Altogether, more than \$3.2 million was spent on the project."

Santa Anita is the first track in the U.S. to incorporate the mesh elements (Netlon) made in England and to follow USGA specifications so closely. Dr. James Beard, professor of agronomy at Texas A&M University in College Station, recommended the combination based upon his involvement with a similar track surface at the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club.

"The only major difference between the way we'll maintain our track and a golf green, is the cutting height will be higher," Granath explained. "It's really a ten-acre, curved golf green with grids mixed into the topmix."

In May, the course was excavated to a depth of 20 inches with the subgrade sloping toward the infield. Six-inch perforated drain pipe were installed along the inside curve and connected to catch basins every 100 feet. The drain pipe are covered with four inches of pea gravel, followed by a two-inch choker layer of coarse sand. "The choker layer prevents the finer sand above



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from moving into the gravel below," says Granath.

The top 14 inches of rootzone is a mixture of 90 percent selected sand and ten percent peat. The two-by-four-inch plastic grids were mixed into the top six inches of sand with a loader before being installed. The grids, with half-inch openings, interlock with each other and the turfgrass roots to resist tearing by the horses' hooves.

Ten acres of Tifgreen 328 hybrid bermudagrass from Foster Turf Farms in La Quinta, CA, was installed by Sports Turf & Facility Management of Anaheim, in eleven days. Another half-inch of the sand/peat mix was topdressed over the sod.

Because the track was widened, the irrigation system had to be upgraded to Rain Bird 87 pop-up rotary sprinklers regulated by a specially-designed computerized controller from SW Racing Systems. The system will also include fertigation.

Granath, and a turf manager yet to be hired, have until October 4, 1989, to get the new course established.

"Turf races are growing in popularity," said Granath. "They allow many European horses, which are trained and race on grass, to compete successfully in this country. But their meets are short and give turf managers a chance to repair damaged turf courses. We are looking for a turf surface that can stand up to an extended racing season."

BRAVES HIRE KOEHNKE TO MANAGE FIELDS

The Atlanta Braves recently hired Brandon Koehnke as the team's head groundskeeper for Atlanta/Fulton County Stadium and its minor league operations. At age 24, Koehnke became the youngest head groundskeeper in the Major League. He took over the Braves' position vacated by Sam Newpher.

Koehnke, a former minor league ball player, was previously assistant groundskeeper for the Houston Astros at Osceola County Stadium & Sports Complex in Kissimmee, FL.

Koehnke is the son of Bud Koehnke, head groundskeeper at the Oseola spring training complex. He grew up in Appleton, WI, where his father was recreation director for more than 20 years. As a teenager, the aspiring ball player helped maintain Goodland Field in Appleton, home field of the Class A White Sox Foxes. His success as a player earned him a baseball scholarship to the University of Central Florida. Upon graduation he played professional baseball with the Boise (ID) Hawks for two seasons.

In 1986, the Astros hired Koehnke to help his father at Oseola. This past April he had to decide whether to take a job as a minor league coach for the Cleveland Indians or the position in Atlanta. "I decided to be a major league groundskeeper instead of a

minor league coach," explained Koehnke.

Atlanta/Fulton County Stadium, shared by the Braves and the Falcons, has a P.A.T. System. The Falcons recently announced they will move in 1992 to the Georgia Dome currently under construction.

CORNELL PUBLISHES ATHLETIC FIELD GUIDE

Three turf specialists at Cornell University have teamed up to publish a comprehensive guide to athletic field care titled "Athletic Field Maintenance: A Guide for Sports Turf Managers." Norman Hummel, Jr., Joseph Neal, and Martin Petrovic each contributed to the publication which is intended primarily for grounds managers at schools and parks.

The guide covers a wide range of topics from establishing and maintaining durable natural turf fields to care of skinned areas. Among the subjects included are field drainage, thatch control, fertilization, turfgrass selection, mowing, irrigation, seeding, and control of weeds, insects and diseases. The focus of the booklet is cultural management of newly seeded, overseeded and established turfgrass areas.

Copies of the guide can be purchased for \$3 each by writing: Cornell University Distribution, 7 Research Park, Ithaca, NY 14850.



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