

REBOUND

LETTERS FROM READERS

THE SEARCH FOR TOMORROW: A CRISIS LOOMS AHEAD

The lack of well-trained young men and women entering the field of horticulture is causing major concern at our nation's major agriculturally-related colleges and universities. Enrollments in agricultural areas, particularly ornamental horticulture, agronomy, and plant science, have dwindled significantly since the boom days of the 1970s.

Administrators at some institutions are considering major cutbacks in programs and faculty layoffs, while job prospects out in the field have never been better.

In California, there are probably five jobs available for each graduate. As a result, many positions either go unfilled or the employer must train employees himself. . . . and the situation is getting worse.

It is obvious that we are not doing a good job of selling our industry to American youth, and we are not recruiting the quality or quantity of students we need.

As an industry we all need to work harder to attract young people into the field, in order to fill the positions vacated by retirements and normal attrition. Significant industry growth is also creating new positions every day. The need for technically-trained individuals and people skilled in both management and communication is critical.

If each one of us would take upon himself the challenge of talking with and convincing one young person to enter the field, much of this crisis we face could be alleviated in a few short years.

Several factors may be responsible for the crisis in our education system:

1) Many students are opting for a two-year program of study, receiving a certificate of completion instead of a four-year degree. The incentive to pursue a four-year curriculum has not been overly encouraged.

2) The industry is desperate for individuals to fill job vacancies. Rather than insist upon four-year graduates, employers have taken all available candidates.

3) High school counselors are too busy with academics or discipline problems to be aware of the needs of our industry.

4) Parents are not encouraging their youngsters to pursue education plans in horticulture or similar fields because they envision or identify such vocations with the common gardener. In other words, we have an image problem.

5) Entry-level positions in our industry have typically been low-paid, low-incentive, and involve long hours.

It's not too late, but time is running out for some schools to salvage educational programs that are currently available. The attraction to the high-tech industries (computer science, business administration, and engineering) has been far greater from both image and monetary standpoints. Competitive positions are available with major companies beginning at \$30,000-plus and offering many perks.

We need your help immediately to prevent further erosion of our industry. Encourage a young person to pursue a four-year curriculum in horticultural or turf management available at his state university.

Many existing two-year programs include courses that are transferable to the four-year institutions. Sell these people on the service they will render to society by assuming a position in our industry. Be a big brother or sister. Tell them, show them, and guide them.

There is no greater joy or satisfaction than to watch a young person grow and develop within our industry. Whether they enter sports turf, golf turf, landscape management, contracting, nursery management, or similar professions, we need all of them. . . . now.

**Dr. Kent Kurtz, Professor
Dept. of Horticulture
Cal Poly - Pomona**

SUPER BOWL INQUIRY

I read with a great deal of interest the article concerning the preparation of the field at Joe Robbie Stadium for Super Bowl XXIII. This interest obviously was further heightened for me because one of the participants and eventual Super Bowl winner was the San Francisco Forty Niners.

It occurred to me after reading the article and watching the game on TV that one could draw certain inferences, reach some conclusions and have room for questions still to be answered.

One could easily infer from the contents of the article that the previous manager, Dean Kuykendahl, was largely responsible for some of the problems that existed prior to the playing of the game. I think that is patently unfair that there is not a comment on the part of Mr. Kuykendahl to give his side of the story. I empathize with him intensely because I also suffered the same type of agony during the 1981-82 playoffs at Candlestick Park.

I think it might be easily inferred that the P.A.T. system is one which is difficult to

understand. I do not believe that this is the case at all. Carrying that inference a bit further, when one looks at the two newest natural fields in the National Football League, Chicago's and Miami's, one could easily reach a conclusion that there is something wrong with the P.A.T. system. Again, I do not believe this is true.

It is true that the field was indeed dressed out in all her acrylic finery, but the clothes around her middle came off quicker than a stripper's at a stag party.

The use of pre-germinated seed, verti-slicing, topdressing — all of these are standard practices when maintaining an athletic field. But I am wondering, for example, if by verti-slicing the integrity of the existing bermuda was damaged and the subsequent topdressing gave the field an open-face sandwich result whose filling quickly disappeared.

With the availability of aerifiers that can pull a core at a depth of five to six inches, why core shatter? In essence, if we core shatter, aren't we really transferring an existing interface to a deeper interface within the soil profile? If 1,000 square feet of thickly cut sod was brought in, how do you stretch that into the 50 x 90 ft. area that is referred to in the article?

The intent of my letter is not to criticize, but to inquire so that all of us can learn from this particular experience. As I stated earlier, I empathize with the people at Joe Robbie Stadium. I know what it is like to have a field that is less than in its best playing condition. I have learned from my experiences and hopefully will continue to learn from the experiences of others, if they are willing to share them.

I am truly hopeful that *sportsTURF* will in the near future be able to publish an article dealing with some of my questions and perhaps the questions of others so that we might all continue to learn and grow.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I hope we don't allow ourselves to be painted into a corner from which there is no retreat. When asked an opinion of a field, I think it might be best to say that you have given it your best effort; it's your best hope that the field will measure up to play that day. Because when dealing with something as fragile as a field of grass, there simply ain't no lock.

**Barney Barron
Candlestick Park
San Francisco**

Thanks for your comments, Barney. As you say, we are all learning. I'm convinced that everyone involved at Joe Robbie

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DEMOLITION BEGINS FOR NEW WHITE SOX PARK

Before the first old building came down across the street from Comisky Park in Chicago this February to make room for the new White Sox Park, groundskeeper Roger Bossard knew exactly how he would build the new stadium's field. In fact, he had just completed building two fields to the same specifications at the team's spring training facility in Sarasota, FL.

The 45,000-seat, open-air stadium in Chicago won't be ready until April 1991. Yet Bossard has already ordered the sod, which will contain seven different cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass, from Evergreen Sod Nursery in Peotone, IL.

"The sod will be planted this May in a sand field," says Bossard. "It will be 14 months old when we finally install it on the sand-based field." He made similar arrangements in advance with Pursley Sod Farm in Florida for the Tifway 419 bermudagrass sod grown in sand for the Sarasota complex.

Bossard is working with HOK Sports Facilities Group in Kansas City, MO, on both projects. His specifications are based upon more than 20 years of personal experience in sports turf and input from a network of advisors, including his father, uncle and grandfather who were groundskeepers before him. He has advised various professional teams, universities, parks and schools over the years, and believes he has developed specifications that are effective and reasonable.

His concept is a foot-deep bed of sand on top of four inches of "bird's-eye gravel" surrounding perforated drainpipe spaced on 15-foot centers. Into the top three inches of sand he mixes fine-textured Turface soil

conditioner and sphagnum peat moss. The combination offers excellent drainage as well as adequate retention of soil moisture and nutrients.

Sportsfield Inc. of Blue Island, IL, built the fields for Bossard in Sarasota. President Jim Walsh and his crew worked from September to December, 1988, in Sarasota on the installation.

"Visitors can't believe the fields in Sarasota are only two months old," boasts Bossard. "We've got nine-inch-deep roots already because it has been so warm this winter." The training complex was overseeded with 30 pounds per 1,000 square feet of Ph.D. perennial ryegrass in December.

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Stadium gave it his or her best effort and learned from the experience.

I want to apologize to Dean for not explaining how hard he worked and how much he cared. Before he took the job at Joe Robbie he called for any advice I had. We talked many times during the past two years since the stadium opened, most recently after he had read the article. He obviously still cares a great deal about sports turf and hopefully will be back in a stadium in the future. He is doing quite well in landscape maintenance right now.

Obviously, the story was written before the Super Bowl. News stories written in other magazines and newspapers since the Super Bowl have been largely incorrect.

After talking to the key turf managers involved with Super Bowl XXIII, I think the best route to take is to let the dust settle for a couple of months before explaining what took place. Then those involved will present the facts and offer their advise on how similar problems can be avoided in the future.