

## Exploring Equipment:

# Greens Mowers Make Cut in Majors

What do Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, CA, and Jack Murphy Stadium in San Diego, CA, have in common, besides being homes to Major League Baseball teams? Both use greens mowers to care for the turf. That's not surprising, given both the high expectations of today's players and fans, and the top-notch cut only greens mowers can provide.

At Dodger Stadium, head groundskeeper Al Meyers uses a Jacobsen Greens King™ IV to maintain the outfield at a cutting height of approximately 7/16-inch. The low height of the cut enables the ball to move quickly through the outfield grass.

If that weren't enough, Meyers also uses Turf Groomer conditioner on the greensmower. He credits the device with controlling thatch and grain in the bermudagrass field. Grain can cause a baseball to move back and forth, or "snake," as it rolls over the turf. Meyers says even a slight back-and-forth movement will affect how a fielder plays the ball.

"If the fielder goes to charge the ball and the ball has a tendency to be a little squirrely, there's a good chance he'll be a little more tentative," Meyers explains. "If the ball rolls true, the player can be more aggressive."

At San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium, where Steve Wightman is stadium turf manager, a Jacobsen riding greens mower is used. Similar to Dodger Stadium, the height of cut at Jack Murphy has been lowered to increase the speed of the ball.

Three years ago, Padres management wanted a fast infield and a slower outfield, Wightman recalls. In 1992, it was just the opposite; the infield was cut at 9/16-inch, and the outfield was cut at 1/2-inch.

"That doesn't sound like much of a difference, but when you're talking about hybrid bermuda, it makes a world of difference as to how fast the ball goes through," Wightman asserts. "That's because of the tremendous thickness of the canopy. There's an awful lot of leaf blades in 1/16 of an inch. Because all those little leaves act like

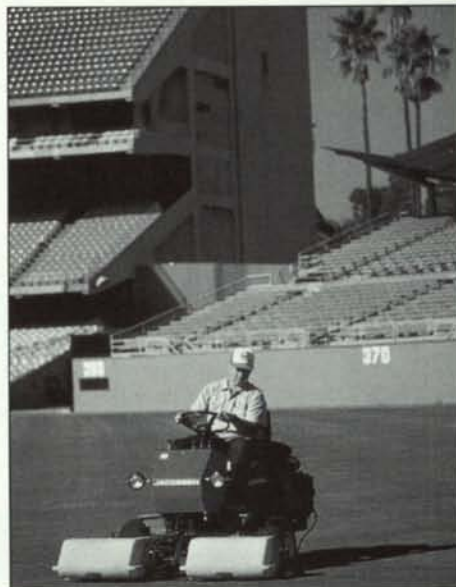
brakes, they really do slow the ball down."

Using a precision greens mower produces a consistent quality of cut, even at 1/2-inch. Wightman also uses Jake Turf Groomer to get the "snakes" out of Jack Murphy Stadium's turf.

"Each time you mow, you're laying down the blades of grass in the direction you're cutting," Wightman explains. "So you mow one way on one pass, and on the very next pass you're mowing the other way. You're laying the grass in two different directions."

Although Wightman and his crew changed the mowing pattern daily, there was still up to a six-inch "snake" on the ball. When turf groomers were added, the snake disappeared.

"With the groomers, we've been able to virtually eliminate any snake," says Wightman. "They've been a great help in that respect." □



Demands from players and fans for top-quality turf make greens mowers a must at major-league ball parks. Photo courtesy: Jacobsen.

A black and white photograph of a massive tree trunk in a rainforest, showing its thick, textured bark and the dense canopy above. The foreground is filled with various tropical plants and ferns.

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