

# THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

## Going In Style



**W**ith players' salaries gone far beyond ludicrous, their disdain for fans skyrocketing, and their Superstar egos matched only by those of the owners, it's nice to see that something in Major League Baseball is getting better.

Ballparks. Today's Major League ballparks are being designed and built with the fan, as opposed to the seating capacity, in mind.

Two real, natural turf gems opened this season — the Cleveland Indians' Jacobs Field and The

Ballpark at Arlington, home of the Texas Rangers. Both venues seat far less than the average park constructed in the 1960s and 1970s.

While I haven't visited either Jacobs Field or The Ballpark at Arlington, by most accounts they have grace and style similar to Camden Yards in Baltimore or Comiskey Park in Chicago. All four parks were designed to recapture the historic look and feeling of classic diamonds, such as Wrigley Field.

Two groups are served by this "nostalgic" trend. First, the fans are treated to a game played in a more intimate, much smaller venue. The "worst seat in the house" at Jacobs Field or The Ballpark at Arlington is better than the average seat at many domes and stadiums.

Perhaps most importantly, the field is not an afterthought in the new "classic" parks. This may be a positive by-product of today's finicky, professional Superstar ball player, who wants only the best surface and facilities, and the owners, who may be starting to realize that a safe surface is one of the best insurance policies against injuries to high-priced stars. It's no accident that the two newest fields in Major League Baseball are *natural* turf.

Third, the ballpark owners and surrounding businesses will benefit through better attendance. Who *wouldn't* want to watch a game at one of these intimate venues?

For the sports turf industry, these parks are good omens indeed. Any highly visible improvement in the industry also elevates it a notch. You'd expect the kind of press Jacobs Field and The Ballpark at Arlington received from *Sports Illustrated*, but the fact that the *Wall Street Journal* chose to cover their openings in a March issue is quite significant.

More and more, from Little League to Major League, from Pop Warner to the NFL, fields are beginning to matter, as do the professionals who care for them. They've been important all along, yet it's taken time for the decision-makers at the professional level to see beyond the bottom-line, or to understand that an intimate venue, coupled with an outstanding natural surface cared for by a first-rate professional, can actually improve it.

Matthew Trulio

# EVENTS

CALENDAR

## JULY

**4-8** World Scientific Congress of Golf. St. Andrews, Scotland. Contact the Sports Turf Research Institute/World Congress of Golf at 44/334-75560.

**24-26** Texas Turfgrass Association Seminar. Arlington, Texas. Contact Shirley Duble at (409) 693-1656.

**19-21** 3rd Annual Midwest Grounds Management Conference. Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. Contact: Chuck Scott (309) 438-2032 or fax (309) 438-7955.

**13-16** American Association of Nurserymen Conference. Baltimore, MD. Contact: (202) 789-2900.

**24-26** International Lawn Garden and Power Equipment Expo. Louisville, KY. Contact: (502) 473-1992.

## SEPTEMBER

**11-13** Golf Europe '94 Munich. Munich, Germany. Contact Jerry Kallman, Jr., Kallman Associates at (201) 652-7070.

**18-21** Florida Turfgrass Conference. Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Contact: (407) 898-6721.

## OCTOBER

**5-6** Southern California Turfgrass Expo. Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa, CA. Contact: (619) 723-0947.

**10-13** Northwest Turf Conference. Seaside, OR. Contact: (206) 754-0825.

## NOVEMBER

**6-9** International Irrigation Exposition. Atlanta GA. Contact: the Irrigation Association (703) 573-3551.

Send announcements on your events

two months in advance to:

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