

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE



Opening Day

Opening Day may be a month away for many in the sports turf industry, but in a way, this issue of *sportsTURF* is my Opening Day — my debut as the editor. Before I throw out the first pitch, so to speak, I'd like to say thanks for the warm welcome I've received from virtually everyone I have talked to in the industry. I appreciate the cooperation of everyone

who contributed articles, interviews, photographs or other information for this issue.

Opening Day is always a special day — sort of like Christmas in April. Everyone is filled with anticipation and hope. This year, however, that sense of excitement and anticipation is tempered by concern, confusion and even fear. The players' strike, which has rendered the major-league version of the game as dormant as Bermudagrass in winter, has left fans bewildered and angry.

Turf managers at major-league ballparks share the concerns of the fans. Many supervise unionized groundskeepers who may be caught in the middle of a power struggle. Already some unions that represent truck drivers who transport hot dogs and other items to stadiums have suggested that they will not cross picket lines in support of the players. Major-league turf managers are justifiably concerned that unionized grounds crews may follow suit.

I spoke with two grounds-crew supervisors, Mark Razum of the Colorado Rockies and Frank Caparelli of the Chicago Cubs. Both men see the dispute between the players and owners from a unique perspective: They are currently labeled "management personnel," but they both have walked in the shoes of their unionized crew members. Neither takes sides in the dispute. Like many fans, they have little sympathy for ballplayers who are not satisfied with making millions of dollars for playing a kid's game. Despite their management status, they do not necessarily agree with management's stand either.

Both Razum and Caparelli agree that the Major League Baseball Players Association's subtle threats toward replacement players and minor leaguers who might play in major-league ballparks are creating an atmosphere of tension and fear. Furthermore, they say, the Major League Baseball Players Association misrepresents itself as a union. "There's no way anybody can convince me that the players' association is a union," says Caparelli. He and Razum point out that major-league baseball players have *never* honored picket lines in other work stoppages, such as the umpires' strike several years ago. Why, they ask, should any union support an organization that has historically turned its back on other unions?

Fortunately, the game of baseball is not the exclusive property of major-league players, and most of us do not need the talent of a Frank Thomas or Roger Clemens to say "Play Ball!" Major-league turf managers, however, may find themselves in that position. If only for the sake of turf managers and the many others whose livelihoods are threatened by this situation, I hope these multimillion-dollar crybabies can resolve their differences by Opening Day.

Mike Augsdorfer
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EVENTS

CALENDAR

MARCH

17 "Innovations in Green," sponsored by Cuyamaca Community College Botanical Society and the UC Cooperative Extension. El Cajon Community Center, El Cajon, CA. Contact: Dee Landis-Maranhao, (619) 670-1980, ext. 262 or Steve Wightman, (619) 525-8272.

19-22 Golf Development Expo VII, The Wyndham Hotel and Palm Springs Convention Center, Palm Springs, CA. Contact: (800) 208-6508.

28-30 "Practical Approaches for Effective Erosion and Sediment Control," "Bioengineering Techniques for Streambank and Lakeshore Erosion Control," and "Design Methods for Channel Protection and Streambank Stabilization" sponsored by the International Erosion Control Association. Portland, OR. Contact: IECA, (800) 455-4322 or (303) 879-3010.

April

2-5 Computer Conference, sponsored by American Water Works Association. Norfolk, VA. Contact: (303) 794-7711.

8-10 The Green Business Conference and Trade Show, sponsored by Eco Expo. Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA. Contact: (818) 906-2700.

12 Turf Day 1995, sponsored by Automatic Rain Co. Alameda County Fairgrounds, Pleasanton, CA. CDFCA credits pending. Contact: (415) 323-5161.

25-26 "Sports Turf Management for Professionals," University of California, Davis, Extension. Contact: (800) 752-0881. Outside California, call (916) 757-8777.

Send announcements of your events two months in advance to: Editor, **sportsTURF Magazine**, 68-860 Perez Road, Suite J, Cathedral City, CA 92234. Fax (619) 770-8019.