



Peoria Sports Complex's stadium draws capacity crowds during spring training. Photo courtesy: Phoenix Photographic & Associates.

## Spring Training in the Valley of the Sun

By Chris Bunnell

The old debate continues: Do contemporary athletes compare to our heroes of the past in their performance? Many say that modern ball players — even though they may be larger, faster and stronger — cannot match up to the likes of Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron or Pete Rose. While that debate rages on, there is little argument about playing surfaces. Almost everyone agrees they have improved — especially spring-training sites.

Free agency has created pressure to provide excellent workout facilities. A team can be more attractive to a player when it has a state-of-the-art spring-training site. Just as the modern athlete now trains year-round, modern baseball training facilities are being used constantly. Arizona is on the cutting edge of spring-training sports facilities, and all are kept up to Major League standards. There is no doubt that the fields and facilities have improved to meet the need of the professional athlete.

Currently seven Major League teams have spring-training sites located in the metro Phoenix area. This "baseball heaven" is all within a 15-



The San Francisco Giants warm up for the season at Scottsdale Stadium. Photo courtesy: Bill Murphy.

mile radius. To the south, the Colorado Rockies are located at Hi-Corbett Field in Tucson. The Arizona Diamondbacks and Chicago White Sox are planning to build Kino Park in Tucson similar to the Peoria Complex described below. All of the Arizona sites have been recently constructed, renovated, or planned for construction within the next year to bring the total of Major League teams to ten.

### Anaheim Angels

The Angels' facility in Tempe was improved by HOK Sports Facilities Group when the team moved out of Palm Springs, Calif. The Mariners previously played in this ball-yard. Tempe Diablo Stadium has a beautiful backdrop of Tempe Butte for dramatic effect. There are also two practice fields and a half field on site. The



Angels also have training fields located in the East Mesa area.

**Chicago Cubs**

The new 12,500-seat ballpark in HoHoKam Park, built for \$18 million, sits on the site where the Cubs have played since 1977. The playing field will remain the Dwight W. Patterson Field. The Cubs have been in Mesa since 1952. The newly constructed

state-of-the-art stadium is absolutely beautiful! The full field and a half field are located on site. Fitch Park houses additional training facilities and was renovated the same time the stadium was constructed.

**Milwaukee Brewers**

The current facility at Chandler was constructed by one of the STMA's founding fathers, Harry Gill. The club



HoHoKam Park in Mesa was completed this year for the Chicago Cubs. Photo courtesy: City of Mesa.

will be moving to a new site in 1998. The city of Phoenix will build a new stadium with 4 1/2 practice fields in West Phoenix.

**Oakland Athletics**

The A's built Papago Park Baseball Facility for spring training in 1995. The team plays in Phoenix Municipal Stadium and trains in this complex just down the road. This complex has four playing fields and two half fields. There are six "shooting gallery" bullpens with four mounds in a row. There are five indoor batting cages with mounds and four outdoor cages.

**San Diego Padres and Seattle Mariners**

This is the largest baseball training facility in the Major Leagues and is the prototype for many future sites. The Peoria Sports Complex, in the Phoenix suburb of Peoria, was constructed in December of 1993 for the spring of '94. This is an extensive facility for spring training with 12 full fields, two half fields and the stadium playing field. There are 105 mounds, including the five in the stadium.

**San Francisco Giants**

Built in 1992, Scottsdale Stadium was the leader in moving spring training to a more sophisticated state. The stadium was designed by the HOK Sports Facilities Group. The Indian School Park training facility houses the minor league players down the road. This site has four full fields and one half field.

*Chris Bunnell is grounds supervisor at Escondido School District in Escondido, Calif. He serves as president of the Southern California Chapter of STMA and teaches a class, Golf Course/Sports Turf Management, at MiraCosta College in Oceanside.*

Life  
is short.  
**SOD IT!**



GROWERS AND  
INSTALLERS OF  
PREMIUM QUALITY  
SOD AND STOLONS

P.O. Box 4563, Palm Desert, CA 92261 (800) 447-1840

Call 1(800) 817-1889 use **Fast Fax # 1090497**  
and/or Circle 109 on Postage Free Card