



### New System Enters Old Debate

**N**atural grass has proved to be the decisive winner in the debate over artificial vs. natural turf athletic surfaces. Over the past two decades, facilities that had converted their fields to artificial surfaces have been gradually returning to natural turf.

Recently, a new field construction system entered the debate to make it more interesting.

The GrassMaster system offers a unique compromise to an issue that was previously black and white.

Holland-based Desso DLW began developing the GrassMaster system in Europe almost a decade ago. The system uses the same polypropylene thread fiber used to construct synthetic turf, but it weaves the material into a specially prepared, natural-grass field. The new field retains natural-turf benefits that players desire, while it gains durability to withstand high-use schedules.

To realize this new concept in sports turf, Desso DLW adapted the same machinery used to create artificial turf in the factory. Instead of threading polypropylene fibers onto a backing cloth, GrassMaster injects tufts of the same material directly into a natural-turf surface.

The system implants fibers up to 20 centimeters into the ground at two-centimeter intervals over the entire field. On average, only three fibers are injected for every 97 blades of natural grass.

The fibers are shorter than the surrounding natural grass, and they blend unnoticeably into the stand. Below the surface, they become permanently entwined in the rootzone.

Shortly after installation, the field is ready for high-intensity use. The new pitch provides playability that's comparable to natural turf, and it requires similar maintenance.

GrassMaster's biggest selling point is its durability. Desso DLW claims that its system prepares a field to handle approximately 800 hours of soccer training/matches per year. Treated fields should be continuously available for use, except under snow and freezing conditions. The synthetic fibers even help maintain the field's color as the season progresses.

Until recently, this technology was applied exclusively in Europe. But success stories on soccer fields in Holland, Germany, and Scandinavia have sparked interest in Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, and now the new technique has found its way to the United States.

Binghamton Municipal Stadium will open the first GrassMaster field in the Nation for play this spring. The Eastern League's Binghamton Mets are used to playing on a quality surface; you may remember the field as the 1994-95 recipient of the Beam Clay/sportsTURF/STMA Professional Baseball Diamond of the Year Award.

This will be a good first test for the system, since the installation field has already been validated for its outstanding quality. With other big names, such as the New York Giants, looking into the GrassMaster system, this could mark the beginning of an important new trend in athletic field construction.

*Steve Berens*

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### Tip o' the Month

### Eliminate Your Corners

by Floyd Perry

**S**ince 1839, when Alexander Cartwright created our national pastime in Hoboken, NJ, square corners have been a fact of life on fields at all levels of play. Unfortunately, this poses problems for grounds crews, since you can't drag square corners with a three-wheeled vehicle and a pull-behind drag.

To beat the clock and field conditions, we need to look to other options for success. Some progressive groundskeepers have created changes which go against the diagrams, but work in the real world:



**Double, turf-covered circles six-foot in diameter allow four hitters to go at the same time.**



**An oblong, ovular fungo area allows hitters and fielders to stay in the same area without turf tear-out.**

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Inside scallops reduce turf tear-out where players make their extra base turns.

A scallop effect around individual bases aids in quality dragging, and leads to fewer low areas where players lead off.



Drag-through entrances and exits reduce back-edge build-up. They also provide a means of completely removing the drag from the field.

Floyd Perry is author of three books: *The Pictorial Guides to Quality Groundskeeping: I - Covering the Bases; II - There Ain't No Rules; and III - Maintain It Easy, Keep It Safe.* He also produces two videos: *The ABC's of Grounds Maintenance: Vol. 1, Softball; and Vol. 2, Baseball.* For more information, call: (800) 227-9381, or visit his web site: <http://gms.simplenet.com>.

## Get Serious With STMA

### Application for Membership

The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) is an organization of professionals representing all segments of the sports turf industry. Our members work to combine the science of growing grass and the art of maintaining sports turf to produce playing fields that are both safe and aesthetically pleasing.

STMA provides members with a variety of benefits, including: education through regional institutes and conferences; support for sports turf research; facilities tours; a national awards program; access to the STMA National Conference and Exhibition; complimentary subscriptions to Sports Turf Manager and sportsTURF Magazine; and much more.

If you're serious about the sports turf industry, then it's time to become a member of STMA. Join today!

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#### Membership Category (please check one)

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| (must be in US dollars)   |       |

Total amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose payment (check, money order, Master Card, Visa, Discover or American Express) and send to:  
 Sports Turf Managers Association, PO Box 3480, Omaha, NE 68103-0480  
 For more information, contact STMA Headquarters at 800/323-3875

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