



The Big Get Bigger

This past November, I visited the Opryland Hotel Convention Center in Nashville, TN, to attend the Green Industry Expo (GIE). The event brings together three of the industry's most influential associations for one of the biggest

horticultural trade shows of the year.

The Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS), and Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) joined forces to bring out the best new products and services the industry had to offer. PLCAA Executive Vice President Tom Delaney reports, "PLCAA significantly increased its attendance over last year's conference in Charlotte, NC, and had one of its best conference showings this decade. Opryland was a big draw for all the GIE association partners, and we've received rave reviews on the whole show."

This high turnout reinforces the thoughts I expressed in November's Front Office. While small regional expos are posting disappointing attendance numbers, the big shows continue to grow.

Interestingly enough, this phenomenon may reflect the direction the green industry is taking. Like many other industries, ours continues to move toward consolidation. One of the most common topics discussed at GIE was the current wave of corporate buyouts of landscape contracting businesses. Large companies like TruGreen/ChemLawn continue to claim a bigger share of the market each year.

It's unclear how these developments will effect sports turf maintenance, but they're bound to have an impact down the line. There's a reason why America took on the great monopolies of the past, but that seems to be forgotten as giant, global mergers constantly fill news reports.

Stay tuned. . .

Fortunately, the STMA Conference in Mesa, AZ, promises to buck the trend of waning attendance that's been plaguing the smaller turf trade shows this year. The association plans to build on the success of last year's event, and there's plenty on the schedule to make the trip worthwhile (if being in Arizona in the middle of January is not reason enough).

One of the highlights will be the presentation of *sportsTURF's* Man of the Year, Dr. Henry Indyk (see pg. 8). We considered many well-qualified, deserving candidates during the selection process this year, but for Henry the honor is clearly overdue. His countless contributions to the industry and his years of service to STMA made Dr. Indyk an obvious choice.

If you can't make the trip this year, think about including it in next year's agenda. *sportsTURF* will bring as much of the action to you as possible in upcoming issues, but it will be impossible to replicate the multitude of educational opportunities offered this year.

Mark your calendar today for next year's conference in St. Louis Jan. 12-16.

Steve Berens, Editor
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Tip o' the Month

Fungo

Hitting

Areas

by Floyd Perry

Most pre-game batting practices involve multiple areas of activity, and many of those activities go on simultaneously. One section of the field that creates a tremendous amount of turf stress is the fungo hitter's area.

Here are some ways groundskeepers have solved this problem:



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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A large, six-foot by 10-foot clay rectangle creates sufficient area for two people to alternate hitting directions.

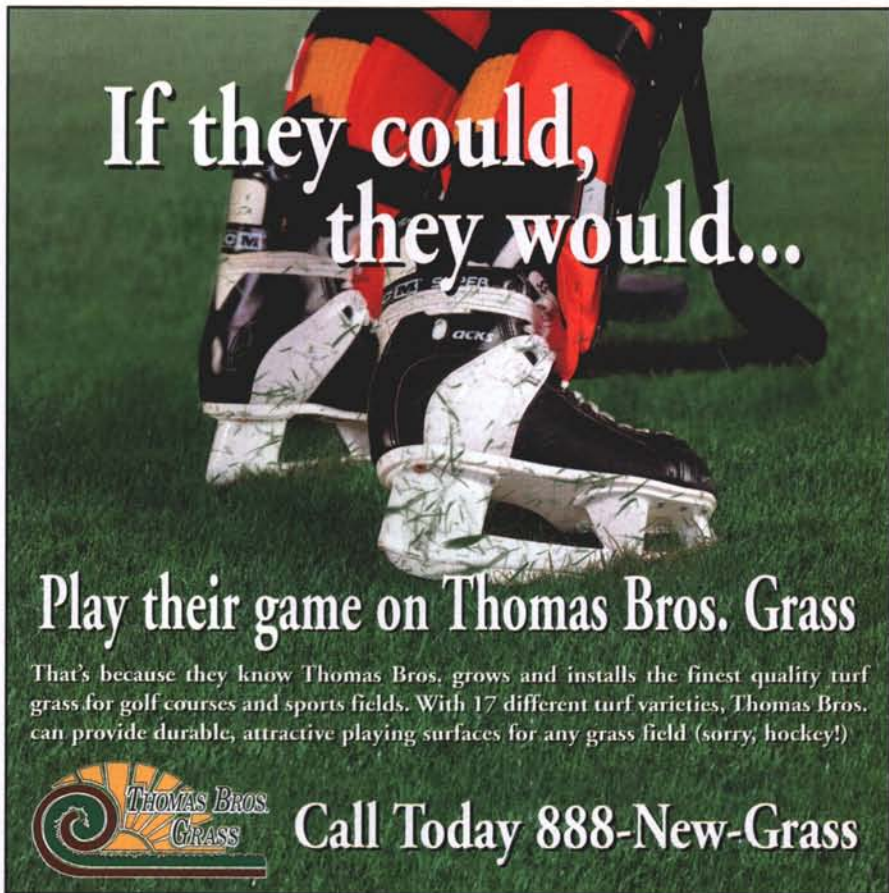


A six-foot, octagonal artificial surface gives a neat appearance and sufficient hitting surface.



A full artificial hitting square along the baseline aids in fungo hitting, and avoids turf tear-out around home plate.


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>.



If they could, they would...

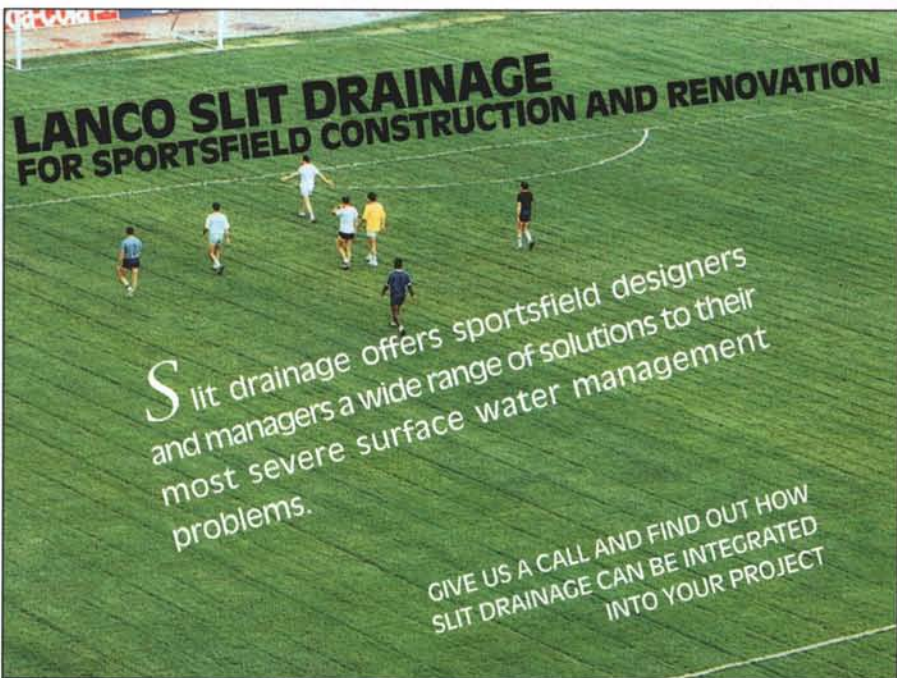
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