

# Lakewood Memorial Field

## 1998 STMA High School Soccer Field of the Year

by Bob Tracinski

**L**akewood Memorial Field of Lakewood, CO, is a dedicated soccer facility that only hosts varsity games. That's not an easy role to fill, but the facility handles the responsibility well. The Lakewood grounds crew's excellent work made the field STMA's 1998 Soccer Field of the Year in the High School division.

### Field use

Lakewood Sports Stadium Manager Dick Buelter explains, "The Jefferson County Public School District is the largest in the state of Colorado. It has an enrollment of 90,000, and currently has 17 Senior High Schools. Lakewood Memorial Field is the venue for both the boys' and girls' varsity soccer games.

"Our field is used during September, October, and November for the boys'

season. Play takes place on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, with three games each weekday, and three or four games on Saturday. The girls' season is held during March, April, and May, with two games on the field every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

"Each school hosts seven home games for both the boys' and girls' seasons. During the fall, Lakewood handles

## Maintenance Schedule

### • March

- ✓ Spring break: Core aerify in two directions, drag in cores
- ✓ Soil test
- ✓ Fertilize (100,000 sq.ft.) with 20-10-5, 8S, 1Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.

### • April

- ✓ Slice aerify in two directions every two weeks
- ✓ Fertilize (100,000 sq.ft.) with 20-10-5, 8S, 1Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.

### • May

- ✓ Fill in low spots with planters mix
- ✓ Core aerify in four directions
- ✓ Fertilize (100,000 sq.ft.) with 20-10-5, 8S, 1Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.
- ✓ Seed (45,000 square feet) with Sports Turf Mix at 4 to 5 lb. per 1,000 sq.ft.
- ✓ Topdress with sand mix (new in 1999)
- ✓ Drag field

### • June

- ✓ Spot sod
- ✓ Fertilize seeded area with 18-46-0 fertilizer at 1/2 lb. N per 1,000 sq.ft., two applications one week apart
- ✓ Core aerify sides of field (55,000 sq.ft.) and broadcast Champion Turfgrass Mixture in weak areas
- ✓ Fertilize sides of field (55,000 sq.ft.) with 20-10-5, 8S, 1Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.

### • July

- ✓ End of month: Core aerify field in two directions

### • August

- ✓ Core aerify field (100,000 sq. ft.) in two directions
- ✓ Fertilize (100,000 sq.ft.) with 20-10-5, 8S, 1Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.
- ✓ Broadcast 100 lb. Champion Turfgrass Mixture over goal mouths, assistant referees' running paths, and center of field

- ✓ Slice aerify (100,000 sq. ft.) in two directions two weeks prior to start of season

- ✓ Fertilize (100,000 square feet) with 20-5-10, 8S, 3Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.

### • September

- ✓ Fertilize (100,000 square feet) every two weeks with 20-5-10, 8S, 3Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.
- ✓ Slice aerify in two directions every two weeks

### • October

- ✓ Slice aerify (100,000 sq. ft.) in two directions
- ✓ Fertilize (100,000 square feet) with 20-5-10, 8S, 3Fe at 1 lb. of N per 1,000 sq.ft.

### • End of regular season

- ✓ Core aerify in two directions
- ✓ Drag field

### • End of playoffs

- ✓ Core aerify in four directions
- ✓ Leave plugs over winter

approximately 85 percent of them. A typical boys' season will total 85 to 95 games on the field, with 76 of those games played in the seven weeks of the regular season, and the remainder played during the three weeks of play-offs. During the spring, we handle approximately 50 percent, bringing the girls' season total to a more-workable 55 to 60 games on the field."

### History

In 1946, Lakewood Memorial Field was dedicated to students who lost their lives in World War II. Initially, the facility hosted Lakewood Senior and Junior High School track and football events.

Buelter notes, "Boys' soccer became a sanctioned sport in the fall of 1974. After three years of play at the individual school sites, coaches petitioned the Department of Athletics for a dedicated soccer venue. Because Lakewood Memorial Field was no longer being used as a game site, it was selected as that venue. Girls' soccer was added in the spring of 1978."

Lakewood is one of three facilities

dedicated to varsity sports within the Jefferson County Public School district. The other two facilities are Jeffco Stadium, with Sports Stadium Manager Dave Rulli; and Trailblazer Stadium, with Sports Stadium Manager Jim Herrmann. By Hanson, Manager of Stadium Operations for the district, oversees all three facilities.

Hanson notes, "The unique part of our four-person crew is that we're the dedicated staff for our three stadiums. We used to burn in lines for the individual high schools and drag their tracks, but those responsibilities now are back to the schools. Our volume dictates our existence."

"With the use level at all three facilities, I let the individual stadium managers make most of their own maintenance calls on their fields, and I've never been disappointed in their decisions."

Cooperation is a big factor in the success of all three facilities. Buelter notes, "It's easy to bounce ideas off each other, a kind of internal networking situation." Hanson adds, "We're all four members of the Colorado Sports Turf Managers Association, and three



STMA President Steve Guise (left) presents Manager Dick Buelter the Field of the Year Award at the Association's annual banquet. Courtesy: STMA

of us are national STMA members. That's not mandated, but a choice made to increase the education level and networking outreach."

Continued on pg. 22

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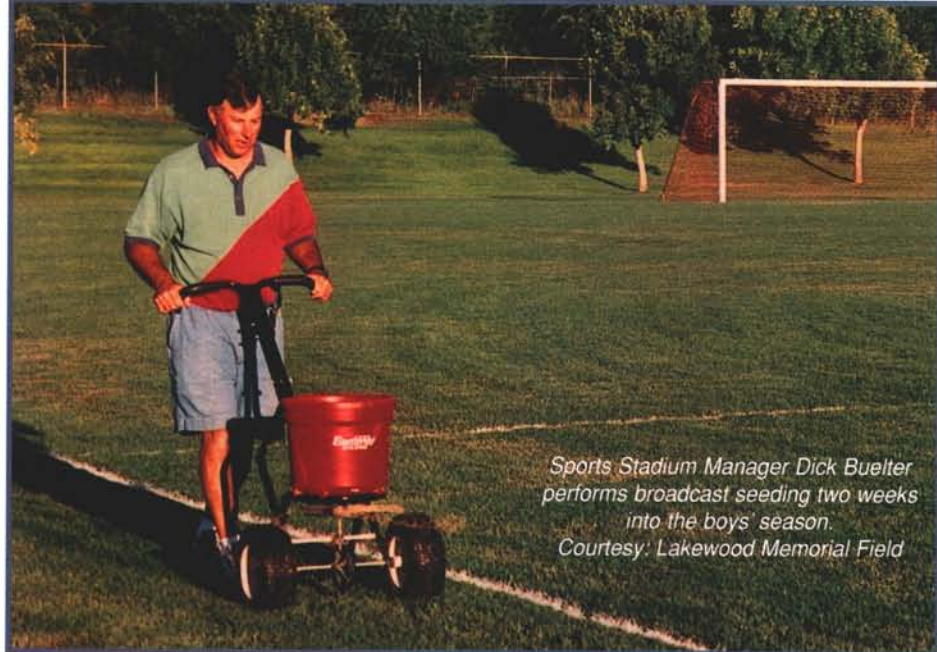
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Sports Stadium Manager Dick Buelter performs broadcast seeding two weeks into the boys' season. Courtesy: Lakewood Memorial Field

Continued from pg. 19

### Growth

Like many facilities around the country, Lakewood must continually adjust to accommodate community growth. Buelter explains, "The district will open another high school next year, which means five more

football games and seven more soccer games each fall and spring. With regional growth, we probably will add another two high schools within the next five years.

"The up side of this is it works, due in large part to the high caliber of our people. We've developed the

maintenance system over the years and continue to fine-tune it.

"The district allows us the luxury of downtime for rejuvenation on all three fields. We also have the authority to cancel games prior to the scheduled start if field conditions warrant it. Our standards on that are basic: if you wouldn't send your own child out there, don't send someone else's."

### Field stats

Lakewood field consists of original heavy-clay native soil. The soil has been augmented over the years through topdressing with a planter mix consisting of 1/3 top soil, 1/3 peat, and 1/3 wood fines.

This same mix was used to augment a section of the field approximately 80 feet wide from goal to goal for a resodding project in 1995. The same sod, grown on a sandy-loam soil, has been used for goal mouth replacement, and additional sand has been incorporated into that area. The best drainage on the field is in the high-wear area.

With the age of the field, it's impossible to identify the original bluegrass cultivar. Replacement sodding has consisted of newer bluegrass varieties.

### Maintenance

#### • Mowing

Buelter says, "Though we'd like to keep the turf shorter, we maintain a 2.5-inch to 2.75-inch height. We need that extra cushion of protection due to the volume of play.

"During the summer I mow Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Once the fall season begins, I mow every game day to have the aesthetics set in. That drops to twice a week, generally Tuesday and Friday, as temperatures drop and turf growth slows."

#### • Seeding

Following core aeration in four directions each May, Buelter seeds with Sports Turf Mix containing A34 and SR 2100 bluegrasses, and SR 4200 and Manhattan III perennial ryegrasses at four to five pounds per 1000 square feet. In June, he over-seeds weak areas of the sides of the field with Champion Turfgrass Mixture containing SR 4200, SR 4100, SR 4010, and SR 4000. In August, Buelter broadcasts this mix over the goal mouths, the center of the field, and referee running "paths."

#### • Painting

Buelter tackles field lining and marking on Monday or Tuesday, prior

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to the week's first games. He monitors conditions on Friday, and touches up the paint if necessary. During the first painting of the season, he adds Primo to the paint to slow turf growth and extend paint life.

#### • Irrigation

Buelter says, "Before 1997, we had a manual irrigation system with quick couplers. Prior to the start of the girls' season in 1997, a five-row, modified Hunter football field irrigation system was installed by the athletic crew utilizing I-40 sprinkler heads.

"After that installation, we installed an irrigation system on the west bank of the complex, also using I-40 heads, and to the north of the concession stand using Rain Bird 1800 pop-ups. Lakewood now has three acres of irrigated turf."

#### • Equipment

Equipment purchased for the three district facilities is for their exclusive use, and they've gradually built up a fairly complete assortment. Whatever Buelter doesn't have on-site, he can borrow within the system.

Use of the John Deere 455 tractor, AerWay aerator, Ryan 48-inch pull-behind aerator and Turfco Top Dresser is coordinated between the three facilities.

#### • Scheduling

Field maintenance must be coordinated with event scheduling and Colorado's widely fluctuating weather conditions. Buelter says, "During the boys' season, fertilization must take place when no games are scheduled to allow for proper irrigation. Aeration and broadcast seeding are done in conjunction with fertilization. Timing always depends on the weather patterns to avoid too much water during these processes.

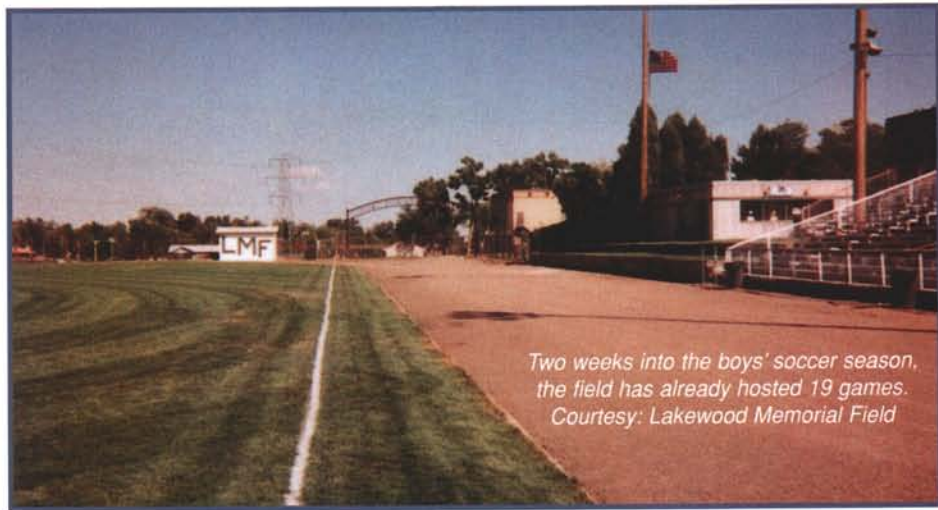
"Springtime in the Rockies, the period of heaviest snow, coincides with our girls' soccer season. The east-west field orientation lets the spring sun help with snow melt and field drying.

"At times, we need to plow snow away using a rubber blade attached to our jeep. We follow that by dragging the field with a six-foot by 10-foot chain drag. That stands up the grass and allows the air and sun to help dry the field to allow play.

"We delay starting up the irrigation system until weather patterns warrant it. While we like to aerate every two weeks during the season, the weather dictates when aeration can occur."

#### Future plans

Always working to improve field



Two weeks into the boys' soccer season, the field has already hosted 19 games. Courtesy: Lakewood Memorial Field

conditions, Lakewood started top-dressing with the same sand material used at Jeffco this year, rather than using the planter mix. Buelter notes, "We've built up an adequate supply of organics, so now we're filling the aeration chimneys with sand. It also smoothes out the field surface a bit. Eventually we'd like to build up a sand cap to improve surface drainage."

Buelter is also trying to move away from the old football and track

appearance at Lakewood. The immediate plan is to fill in the west end of the stadium and extend the grass outside the track to create a larger warm-up area. The long-term goal is to remove the track and widen the field. The gradual process will be determined by budget and manpower restraints. 🏈

*Bob Tracinski is business communications manager for John Deere in Raleigh, NC. He is public relations co-chair for the National STMA.*

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