

Workshop draws 70 to upscale local fields

BY JERRY ROCHE

"Build it and they will come." Not groundskeeper Tim Lewis's exact words, but close. What Lewis actually said was: "Our new fields have already started to pay for themselves in rentals."

Lewis's fields at Bohlken Park in Fairview Park, OH, were the site of an October 2002 workshop sponsored by Baker Vehicle Systems, Macedonia, OH. More than 70 Cleveland-area sports-turf managers attended.

"This year, we ran baseball games from mid-March to mid-October," Lewis said. "We had 91 games on Field No. 1."

The park (four baseball fields, one girls' softball field and one soccer field) was shut down in June 2000, and re-opened in June 2001, after crews had laid 600 yards of new sod. When the park re-opened, it featured a baseball field with one of the few grass infields in the area.

"The four baseball fields have 31 irrigation zones with 150 heads," Lewis told the gathering. "The infields are a mix of sand, silt and clay, topdressed with Diamond Pro and Turface, which do a tremendous job when mixed together. There's also a strip of sod around the outside edge of the three dirt infields to keep the infield mix from going onto the concrete and going down the drains when it rains."

Lewis spent 19 years as a groundskeeper at old Cleveland Municipal Stadium, which was home to the MLB Indians and NFL Browns. "When the kids play here, I want them to feel like they're at Jacobs Field," he said, referring to the Indians' current home field.

Rob Palmer of Weed Pro, Sheffield Village, OH, said

that the fertilization schedule is based on a late-fall application. "We apply three pounds of nitrogen from September to late November," he said. "And we check the soil pH twice a year, because if the pH is off, you don't get the result you want from the fertilizer. As a general rule of thumb, the program we use at Bohlken Park would work on a number of clay-based fields."

Greg Elliot, head groundskeeper for the new Lake County Captains Class A minor-league baseball team, suggested urea. "It's the cheapest fall fertilization product, and it's quickest [to green up] when it heats up in the spring," he said. "If you don't have irrigation, one pound of organic nitrogen in the summer might be the way to go. But you should rotate the products you use frequently."

Paul Gillen of Aerway, Ontario, Canada, demonstrated his aeration equipment. He was pleased with the turnout. "Athletic-field managers should do more of this thing," he said, "where they can meet and learn from each other at the local level. There are plenty of distributors who are glad to sponsor this kind of event."

Fairview Park Rec Department director Tim Pinchek and Rick Baker and Ron Wolf of Baker Vehicle Systems organized the event. Test equipment and product information were provided by Aerway, National Mower, Jacobsen, Steiner, Excel Hustler, Turfco, Smithco, Cushman, Broyhill, Soil Reliever, Ryan, Kioto, Diamond Pro, ProSource One, Harmony Products, and Ryan/Textron. **ST**

Jerry Roche is editor of Landscape & Irrigation.



Diamond Pro and Turface do a "tremendous job when mixed together," says groundskeeper Tim Lewis.