



Sports turf in Spain

BY MIKE TARANTINO

I had the opportunity to travel to Spain with the Nomads girls under-18 and girls under-16 (my daughter Kelli's team) when they participated in the 10th Costa Blanca Cup played in the city of Benidorm.

While I was busy trying to come up with ways to make this an educational trip for Kelli, e.g., speaking Spanish, etc., I realized I could make it educational for myself as well.

We began in Barcelona where the teams trained at El Montanya resort, which has a full soccer training facility on the grounds. Using an interpreter, I spoke with members of the grounds staff about their maintenance practices. Their turf is a mix

of Bermudagrass, Kikuyu, and ryegrass, which they affectionately refer to as a "Heinz 57" and say it's the best they can do.

El Montanya goes through extreme temperature changes, teens in the winter and 90+ degrees in the summer. I learned that this facility is used for training only so that's why the maintenance is minimal. Weekly reel mowing, fertilization every 6 weeks dictated by weather conditions, and irrigation (through aboveground impact heads) as needed was about it.

We bussed to our game sites, built with Spanish federal government funds, and then turned over to local governments to operate and maintain.

Our first game was at a beautiful venue in Benidorm that featured mostly well groomed Bermuda. They mowed this field three times a **(continued on page 35)**

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SAFE Wants to Hear from YOU!

The Foundation for Safer Athletic Field Environments (SAFE) was created by the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) to provide research, educational programs and scholarships geared to sports fields. The SAFE Foundation Board of Trustees continues to move forward on following the parameters set to help SAFE meet its the goals established during their spring Board Meeting in Chicago.

The Board recognizes the fact that SAFE has much work to complete before it can supply the sports turf industry with the desired level of programs. Additional funding is needed to fulfill all three arms of our mission: the scholarship program, research and education. SAFE's major thrust for 2004 is seeking greater funding for sports specific research, finalizing the research criteria, and beginning assessment of research projects for funding. The Board continues to make positive steps in all of these areas. Progress has already been made on the research criteria and development continues on the forms for research grant applications.

SAFE encourages sports turf managers to provide their input on specific areas of sports turf related research needs by contacting SAFE by phone at 800-323-3875 or via email: SAFE@st.omhcoxmail.com.

These research suggestions will augment the information gathered in

an earlier call for research recommendations. It is the intent of the SAFE Board and the SAFE Research Committee to identify key areas of research needs and then solicit these needs to the researchers. Thus it is important that this information on key areas of research needs come from STMA members, STMA Chapters and other sports turf managers. SAFE will focus on research that is applicable and repeatable; practical research that meets the needs of sports turf managers.

Next, significant scholarship funding is available thanks to the funds raised through the combination of the Jacobsen-sponsored SAFE Golf Tournament, and the Raffle, Silent and Live Auctions held in conjunction with the STMA Conference held in San Diego last January. The SAFE Board has authorized the allocation of up to \$18,000 in direct Scholarship dollars and funds toward travel and lodging expenses to allow the recipients to attend the STMA 2005 Conference in Phoenix. Scholarship application information and application forms are sent directly to STMA Student and Educator members as well as to 2- and 4-year Colleges and Universities offering turf programs. These materials also are posted in the SAFE section of the STMA website.

(continued from page 31) week with a reel mower and have an aggressive fertilization program, including applying a high nitrogen product during the peak growing months. The program includes winter and spring applications of high phosphorus and potassium, supplemented with iron and sulfur. A combination of core and slice aerations are done bi-monthly, based on use.



Topdressing material is applied after each core aeration with seeding of an annual rye during winter. The irrigation system is conventional, controller, remote control valves and gear-driven rotors. The system is adjusted daily according to weather conditions and scheduled events. The site is used for club and semi-pro soccer, as well as track and field events.

The same landscape management company that maintains this facility also

handled the field at our next venue, Alfaz Annexo.

We then went to Alfaz Estadio, which had two soccer fields that needed care. Local volunteers maintain this field and so there is no maintenance program or resources available, other than donations. The volunteers filled low spots with topsoil, and most areas had good stands of the Heinz 57 played fine.

Our final stop was Calpe, which was another impressive facility, with one turf field and one synthetic. Our game was at night and so there were no grounds personnel around to talk to, but the turf was Bermuda mowed tight, and it was a deep shade of green indicating some fertilization and irrigation was being used.

Whether it is wear spots, lack of resources, or a lack of trained professionals, the one constant with turf management in the US is we all have similar problems. **ST**

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