

# TURF STUDENTS BUSY ON LEFT COAST

BY DAVID GREEN, PH.D.

**T**urfgrass management at California Polytechnic State University (better known as Cal Poly, SLO) continued to grow in 2003-04. With numerous activities and post-graduate job opportunities, Cal Poly students actively prepared for their future careers while having some fun along the way. Some of the highlights from 2003 include building a new teaching golf green, turfgrass research, hosting a joint meeting, competing in the annual Collegiate TurfBowl at the GCSAA meeting, and golf social outings.

A unique opportunity for our turfgrass students during 2003 was the construction of a new 9,000 square-foot teaching green. This green was designed by students to demonstrate the differences in turfgrass growth and management between the USGA and "Push-up" styles. Students were actively involved in the entire construction from design, through site analysis, construction, and final turf propagation.

Other experienced-based learning achieved by Cal Poly's students included a diverse array of internships from across the country. Some of these internships included sport field management with The Brickman Group in Pennsylvania and prestigious golf courses such as Rancho Santa Fe and Meadows Del Mar in San Diego County, and Poppy Hills in Monterey.

In addition to the normal coursework and internship requirements, Cal Poly's turf-

grass students are heavily involved in applied research. During the past year these students have been actively involved in improving management techniques of seashore paspalum and annual bluegrass for golf course and sports field use. One example of this was conducted by recent graduate Joe Prygodzynski, who examined weed control on seashore paspalum by integrating commercially available herbicides with saltwater.

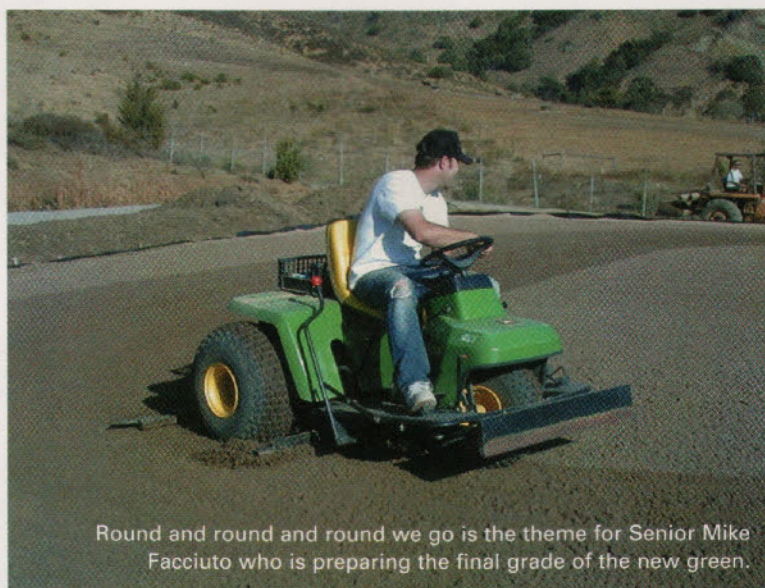
One other recent achievement by our students this year was placing in the top 10 at the Collegiate TurfBowl at the GCSAA conference in San Diego. This competition includes a comprehensive 3-hour exam that would challenge the most experienced turfgrass manager. Students competed in teams of four, with more than 70 teams participating. Cal Poly's placement in the top 10 ranks them with

other elite turfgrass programs such as Iowa State, Penn State, Ohio State, and Rutgers.

Although the students worked hard this year they once again found time to get together to have a good time. Several organized (and unorganized) golf outings at local courses provided occasions for the students to relax and have fun. Additionally, the students had a great time in organizing fundraising events such as 'closest-to-the-pin' contests at local golf courses and their annual putting course for Cal Poly's Open House.

More information can be found at [www.calpoly.edu](http://www.calpoly.edu). **ST**

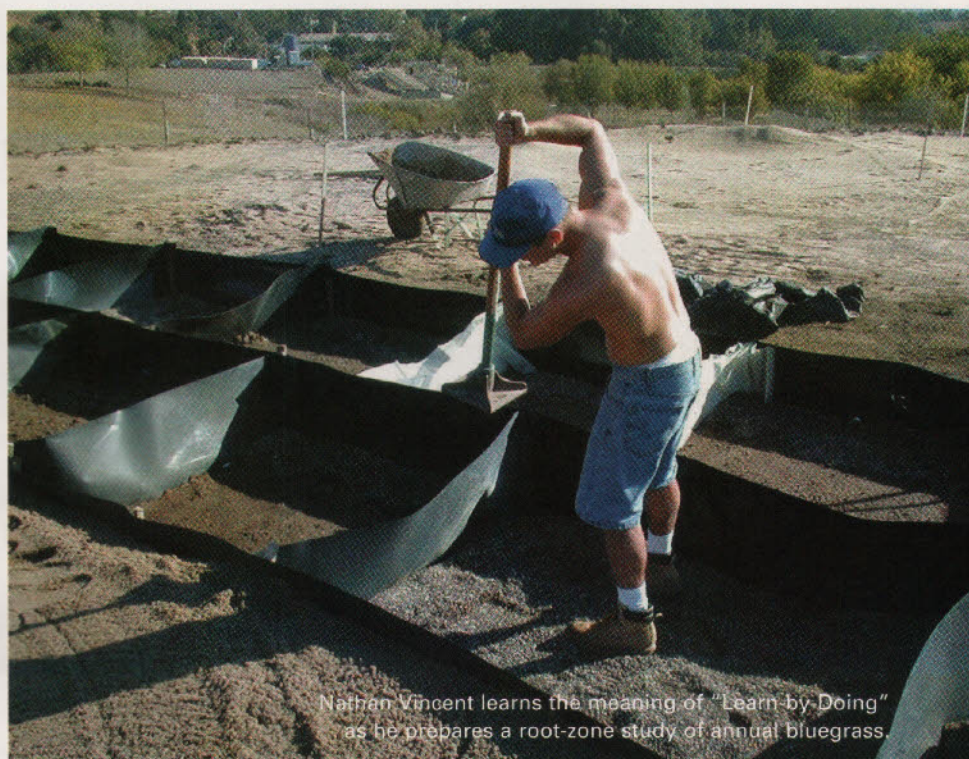
*Dr. David Green is a professor of turfgrass science with the Environmental Horticultural Science Dept. at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo.*



Round and round and round we go is the theme for Senior Mike Facciuto who is preparing the final grade of the new green.



Recent graduate Mark Weitz is hard at work spraying a green for anthracnose during his internship at Rancho Santa Fe Golf Course.



Nathan Vincent learns the meaning of "Learn-by-Doing" as he prepares a root-zone study of annual bluegrass.

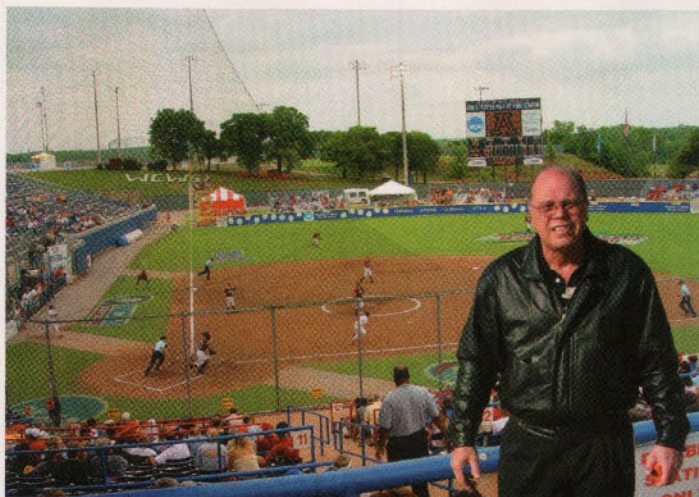


# USA SOFTBALL FACILITY IN GOOD HANDS

**S**PORTSTURF recently talked with Johnny McClung, long-time turf manager for the USA Softball facilities in Oklahoma City, OK:

**ST: Describe your duties and the facilities at USA Softball.**

McClung: I am responsible for the maintenance and overall operation of the physical plant. This consists of the Amateur Softball Association National Office and grounds and the Don E. Porter ASA Hall of Fame Stadium four-field complex. We maintain the four fields during the season and during the off-season for upgrades on a consistent basis, plus we have a staff that must have ongoing training including safety programs.



**ST: Tell us how you prepare your infields for Olympic-level softball games.**

McClung: I guess you could say we're in the spotlight. With the NCAA College World Series televised on ESPN, we have to be ready for this and other prestigious events. The playing surface has to be near perfect. We have to be prepared for any problems and of course the weather can threaten at any time in Oklahoma. The demands are high and we strive to meet every challenge as best we can.

**ST: What's the most frustrating part of your job?**

McClung: Tournament directors, coaches, umpires, and others can be very demanding at times and, on occasion, a little unreasonable. With so many different personalities, you really have to love your

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job and be as flexible as possible. The one thing you can't control is the weather and of course it gets very tense during rain delays. Being prepared for the worst is the best you can do. With as many games as we play per day, softball damage does occur and the quality of the fields is very difficult to maintain. As always, safety is a top priority with our staff.

**ST: What would you recommend, generally, to someone facing the task of building or rebuilding a softball field?**

McClung: Usage, budget restraints, and the level of play are three important factors that always should be considered. Grass is grown by the inch and killed by the foot with a cleated shoe on it. Lawsuits can rob a sports program and unnecessary injuries can cost someone their career. A well-maintained park is a safer park. Regular inspections can identify hazards so they can be eliminated.

**ST: What have been the high point and low point of your career in field management?**

McClung: The high point is to realize the fruits of your labor. This is evident when ESPN televises the Women's College World Series and our work is shown nationwide. Of course this results in many positive comments, not only from people attending the event but also from people throughout the United States. We maintain our fields for youth tournaments almost the same way we prepare them for prestigious events. To our staff, there is no difference. We strive for excellence. A benefit is to see the little kids' eyes when they see the stadium for the first time—all the work is worth it.

The low point is when teams that travel long distances and aren't able to play because of rain. There is nothing you can do. It's disappointing because our staff goes all out to ensure that everyone can play ball at our facility. It's the best in the United States and we all are very proud of it. **ST**

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