The sprinkler head package was 115 Toro 640-series Check-O-Matic units.
"OVERSEEDING WITH RYE JUST INCREASES THE MAINTENANCE COST. IT IS SOMETHING I DON'T CHOOSE TO DO." - KOWALSKY

of solvent-weld PVC pipe. Included in the project was 3880 feet of 1-inch 200 pipe, 6180 feet of 1.5-inch 200 pipe, 6020 feet of 2-inch 200 pipe and 1960 feet of 2.5-inch 200 pipe.

Scruggs furnishes the design work for 90% of Turf Service's athletic field projects, including the American Hebrew Academy. As a rule of thumb, he estimates the cost of fittings at 30% of the total cost of pipe.

"We try to pay special attention to common wear patterns of athletic fields and zone sprinklers to irrigate these areas accordingly," says Mike Young with Turf Service. "For example, we almost always zone the system on football or soccer from end zone or goal to end zone or goal.

"Experience has shown us that the most wear takes place in the middle of the field (each side of the 50 yard line) and that should run separately. Even in situations where the water supply is adequate to irrigate end zone to end zone, the irrigation requirements of a playing surface will vary.

There are other, practical considerations. "Large zones limit your management options," he adds.

All valve boxes are kept off the playing surfaces.

Turf Service manages the athletic field turf complex, including all of the mowing. "We will apply approximately three-quarters to a full inch of water during the summer growing season per week," Young says. There are no plans to use the irrigation system for fertigation or similar uses.

"Our biggest problem was managing the water in the D shafts of the field," TS says. After some puzzling, they came up with a fairly straightforward solution. "We decreased the size of some of the nozzles to eliminate some wet areas."

American Hebrew Academy's main goal is to provide a liberal Jewish boarding school education for students in grades 9-12. In addition to college preparatory courses, the students delve into Jewish studies, athletics, and other school activities. Classes never are larger than 12 students per teacher.

Sports play a big role in student life. The school completed a new 88,000 square-foot Athletic Center in January 2005 that will be home to its 8-lane swimming pool, wrestling, lacrosse, field hockey, aerobics, dance, fencing and a rock climbing wall.

American Hebrew Academy has the largest closed-loop geothermal system in the world. The 500 wells that feed the system are located under the grandstands at the soccer stadium. There are two separate well systems that provide geothermal heating for all of the buildings on the 100-acre, largely wooded campus.

The geothermal system was in place before the soccer field was built.

As a premier athletic installation, the crew at American Hebrew Academy chose to outsource the sports turf to TSI. "If I have questions about what they are doing, I contact the company and be sure they stay on course," Kowalsky says.

Problems are few. TSI maintains both the soccer and baseball fields and the practice facility. "That process is more involved than the grounds maintenance," Kowalsky says. "We don't use reel mowers on the rest of campus. It is simply more cost-effective right now to outsource and TSI does a great job."

Outdoor lighting is currently being installed on all of the outdoor fields.

In addition to the mowing, aerification and top dressing are functions of the maintenance program and are performed as needed.

While the athletes at the American Hebrew Academy are happy with the field, the installation brings a special glimmer of pride to the installers. The irrigation team pulled together to make it all happen and there are plenty of high-fives to go around.

"We always appreciate the opportunity to work with Ralph Stout at Southern Seeding and Chad Price at Carolina Green," Young says.

Speaking for the team, Young adds, "We are proud of the finished project and feel fortunate to have been a part of it."

Chris Harrison is a veteran turf writer based in Ohio.