

Another gem in Cooperstown

BY ERIC SCHRODER

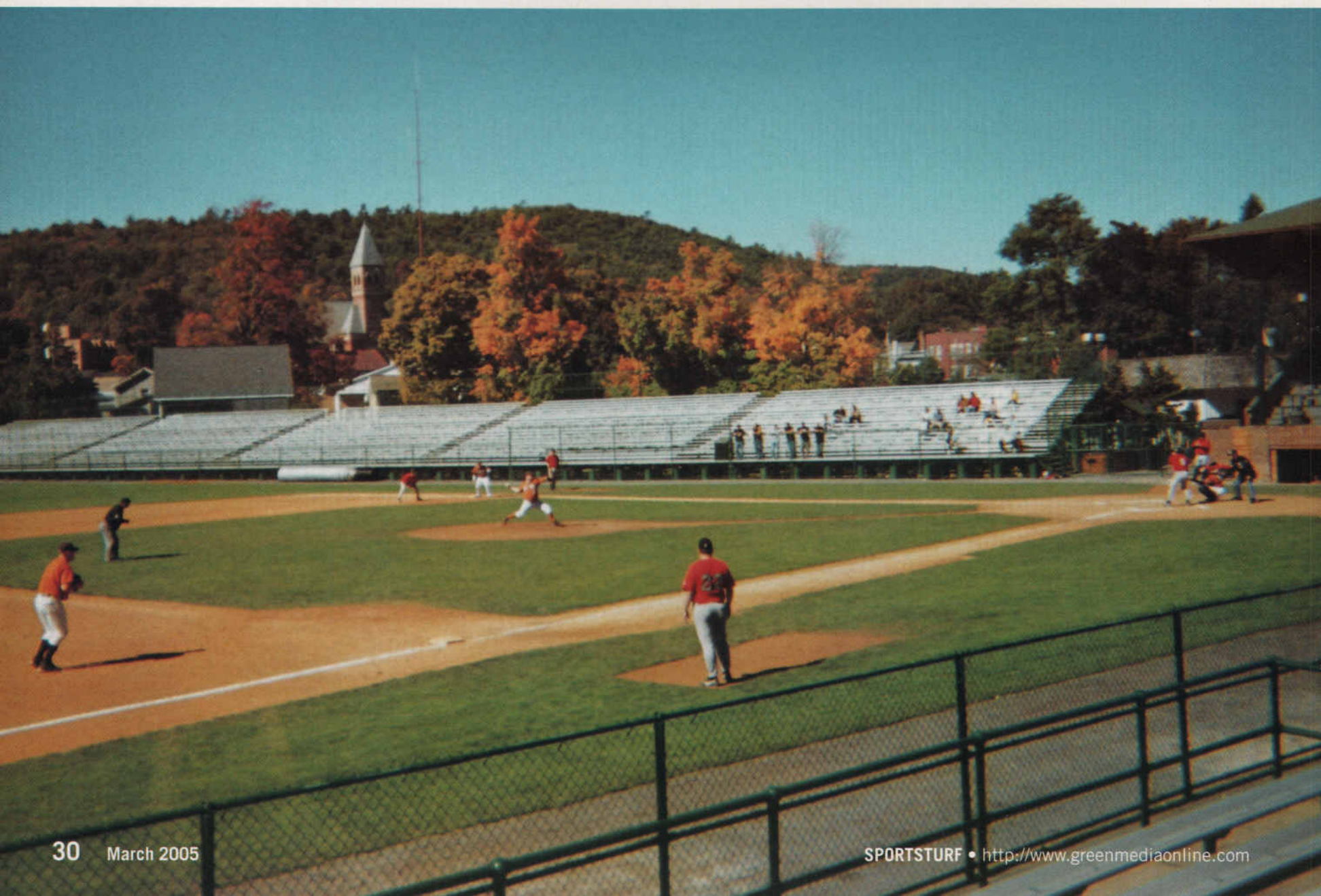
Doubleday Field, named for the alleged father of baseball, won the 2004 Sports Turf Managers Association's Field of the Year in the Schools/Parks category. Owned and operated by the Village of Cooperstown, NY, home of course to the Baseball Hall of Fame, Doubleday Field is maintained by Joe Harris and Greg Lippitt alone, with some seasonal assistance in the summer.

Harris says the first official game was played on the site of the present stadium in 1920, and the grandstands that are there today were built in 1939. While the annual Hall of Fame (HOF) game featuring major league teams from each circuit

gets all the publicity, Harris reports that normally three games a day are played on the field, seven days a week, except for about 4 days before the big leaguers come to town. Last year from April 10 through October 19 the field hosted 354 total baseball games, from Pony Leagues to high school ball to Legion games and semi-pro to over-40 league games.

Joe and Greg are the lifeblood of the facility; beyond the demands of turf management, they are responsible for all other aspects of maintaining Doubleday Field, from painting to cleaning up debris. Joe says at one time the village provided him extra help for the HOF game but these days, it's just he and Greg.

Harris credits mentors such as City of Buffalo's head groundskeeper Jim Hornung and John Liburdi of Heritage Park in Albany with teaching him the most about turf management, though he's also been through the well-known "School of



"Trial and Error" as well as having taken some courses at Cornell University. He also says the New York State Turfgrass Association continues to be a terrific resource of information.

Highlights and lowlights

Joe recalls the time when the Nabisco Corp. rented the field for a corporate outing that included some HOF players, including Brooks Robinson and pitcher

Phil Niekro. "They needed a catcher so I got my 18-year-old son who'd caught in high school, and next thing you know, he's on the field as Niekro's batterymate. Quite a moment for both of us," he says.

Greg relates a not so neat story about how he discovered at 5 AM on Monday of HOF Week to find some vandals had done a number on the field's dark green, wooden outfield fence. "Our schedule that week is so tight so before we could paint over it, we had to dry the fence, and we ended up using paper towels and doing it by hand!"

Asked what his dream job would be, Greg says, "I'm content at Doubleday. We're always meeting new people, and we see the tournament regulars who come through every year, which is nice.

"It's fun to watch older people being taken back to their youth when they get on that field," Greg says. "We are proud being part of Cooperstown and keeping the field in shape."

Doubleday Field hosted its first-ever concert last summer when 16,000 fans came to see Bob Dylan and Willie Nelson. Joe says, "We fenced off the infield, put the stage in center field, and the concession stands and portajohns on the warning track. After the show we had to take down the stage and clean up the field that night because we had a game scheduled for 5 PM the next day. We ended up working for about 36 hours straight!

"Our biggest challenge with all the play we get is keeping certain wear areas looking and playing well, of course. To help reduce the amount of new sod used in these wear areas, I spray Roots 1-2-3 and iron with 25 gallons of water every 10 days," says Joe.

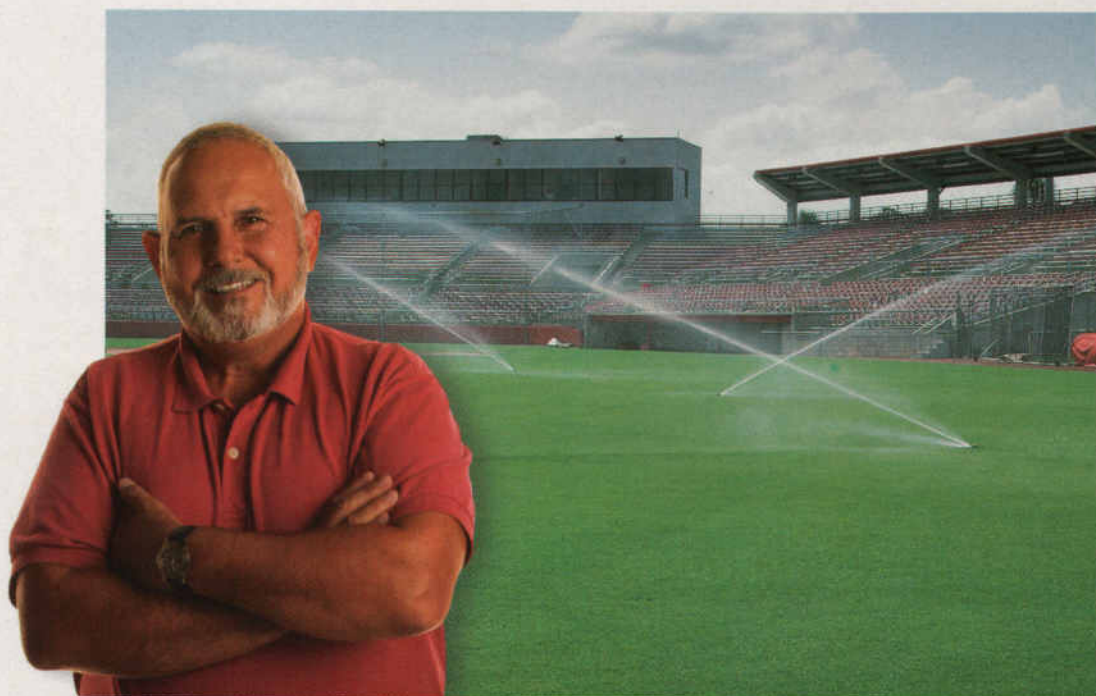
2004 Doubleday Field budget

- Materials and supplies—\$13,000
- Equipment—\$15,250 (we also share some equipment with local golf course)
- Continuing Ed—\$800
- Electricity—\$1,100
- Telephone—\$1,200
- Meteorlogix (weather services)—\$588

Equipment Lineup

- New Holland TC 29 with bucket loader and a 72-in. mower deck with tow-behind vacuum and bagger
- 70-in. National Mower triplex unit
- Smithco infield groomer
- 6-ft. drop spreader
- 25-gal. North Star sprayer
- 4th Verti-Drain
- Edger rite
- Hand mowers and trimmers
- Cub Cadet Big Country

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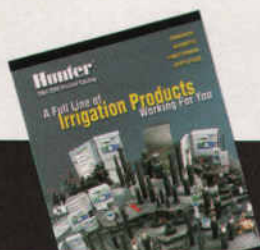


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Maintenance highlights

May

Fertilize 7-1-14 at 1/2-lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. Twice a month, spray infield and straps with Roots 1-2-3 at 3 oz. per 1,000 sq. ft. Mow three times weekly at 1 1/4-in. Daily scarifying, hand raking, and field lining. Overseed with ryegrass in worn areas. Aerate infield and straps with solid tines. Water as needed.

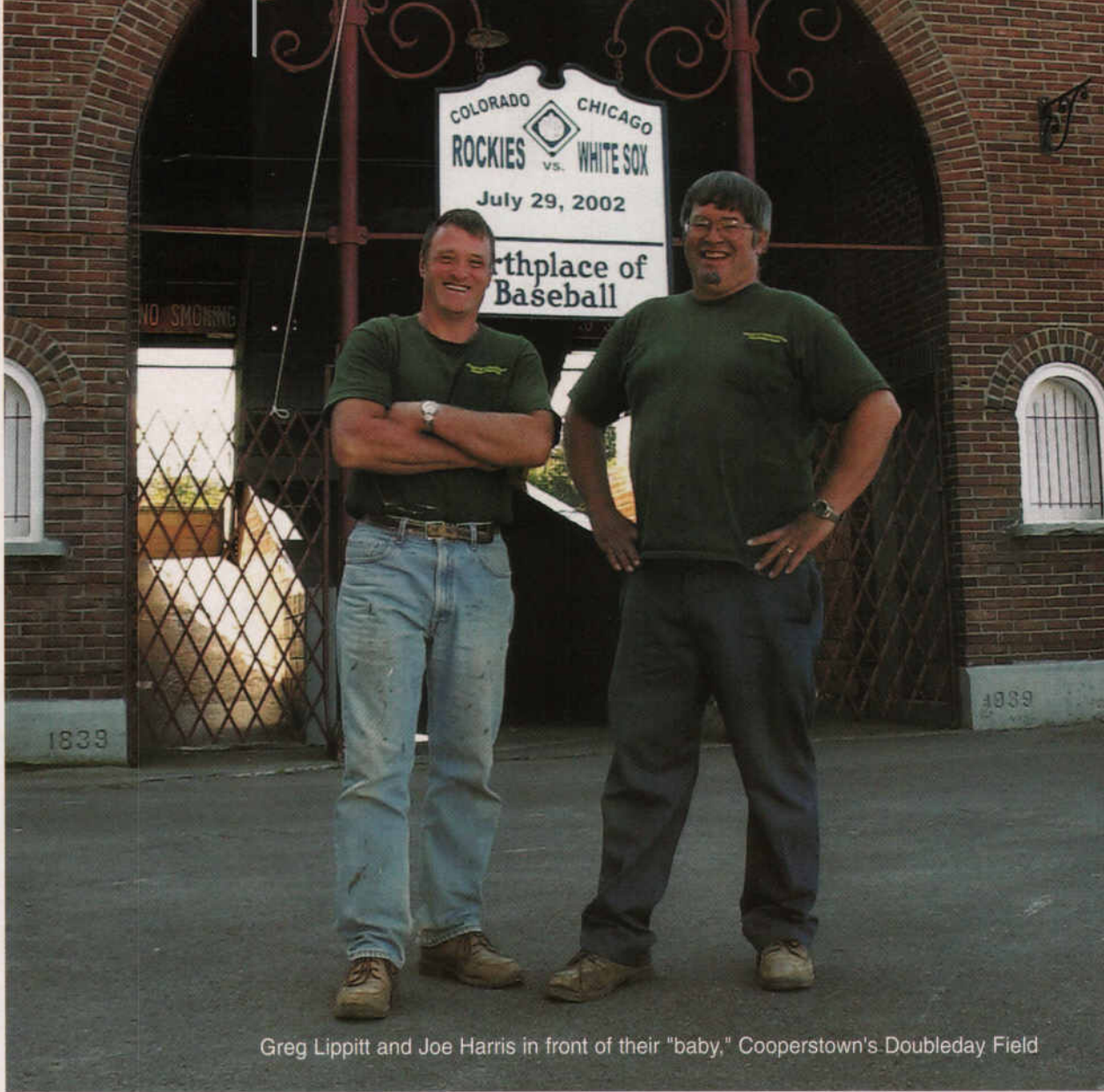
July

Fertilize 12-1-12 at 1/2-lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. Twice a month, spray infield and straps with Roots 1-2-3 at 3 oz. per 1,000 sq. ft. Mid-month, spray outfield with 1 1/2 oz. Prospect and 2 oz. NutriGROW per 1,000 sq. ft. Mid-month, core aerate field. Mow three times a week at 1 1/4 in. Daily scarifying, hand raking, and field lining. Broadcast entire field with bluegrass seed; overseed with ryegrass seed in worn areas. Water as needed. Spray warning track with Round-Up.

October

Fertilize 7-1-14 at 1/2-lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. Mow as needed at 1 1/4-in. After mid-month, field is closed, so we re-sod the worn areas. Remove outfield mats; blow out the sprinkler system. Rototill infield and add infield mix where needed. **ST**

Eric Schroder is editor of SPORTSTURF.



Greg Lippitt and Joe Harris in front of their "baby," Cooperstown's Doubleday Field

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