

field of the year

Blue Valley SD overcomes winterkill to earn FOY "II"

Editor's note: In our April issue, we ran two "before" photos of the football field at the Switzer District Athletic Complex in Overland Park, KS, rather than one "before" and one "after" photo. Grounds coordinator Jody Gill and his crew at Blue Valley School District did a fantastic job of overcoming winterkill as he described in last month's coverage, which was one of the reasons the field earned

the STMA's 2004 Football Field of the Year honors in the High School/Parks category.

Our sincere apologies to Jody and everyone at Blue Valley for this major mistake. Here we present the correct photos, and also Jody's description of how he handled the winterkill.

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Winterkill 2004

Although we have been growing and transplanting our own Bermudagrass since 1996, we had not suffered significant winterkill until January 2004. We knew we had a major problem when turf areas from the size of a truck to entire fields were not showing signs of greening by mid-May 2004. By early June, it was clear that we had lost more than 20 acres of turf on 31 fields, including about 60% of the SWIDAC field. Turf loss like this would be catastrophic for most organizations, but for our crew, it was just an inconvenience.

Fortunately, our turf farm was healthy and green. Field usage schedules were modified. The crew worked tirelessly, harvesting and hauling some 40,000 bushels of sprigs and planting 2-3 fields per day until we finished in late June. All turf was re-established and all fields were back in service by late August 2004.

The Switzer District Athletic Complex is not only a shining star for the Blue Valley School District but also a source of pride for the Grounds Services Department.

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