

from the sidelines

# Messenger shoots self in foot

Some reports on our April issue are in and they are not pretty. First, in our story on Blue Valley School District's Field of the Year-winning football field, we ran two "before" photos showing winterkill's effect on the field instead of one "before" and one "after" shot. The latter showed just how well Jody Gill and his crew in Overland Park, KS, overcame the problem. Please see pages 38-39 in this issue to find out how they did it. My sincere apologies to everyone at Blue Valley SD for this regrettable mistake.

Also, I heard loud and clear from some readers who took exception to what they thought was too much, as well as unbalanced, coverage of synthetic turf in April. Our coverage was in no way an implied endorsement by the Sports Turf Managers Association of any products.

We were responding to interest in the subject that was on display at the STMA annual conference last winter. And we devoted space to synthetics because it was part of April's Editorial Calendar. Our major focus will continue to be providing useful information regarding natural turf as well as other material of value to turf and facility managers. I pledge to be more vigilant in seeking balance in our monthly coverage.

Sometime later this year, an STMA Task Force made up of turf managers, researchers, and synthetic reps will complete a White Paper addressing why one might select a certain type of field, using 15 criteria the Task Force is developing. This unbiased, fact-based document will be published in *SPORTSTURF* as well as elsewhere.

Now for some good news . . .

In case you missed it, *USA Today* had a neat item in its April 4 Baseball Opening Day special section. After its survey of players, coaches, managers, and scouts about major league baseball's infields revealed Petco Park as the favorite in the National League, the paper interviewed Luke Yoder (Mr. Hole-in-One) to "find out what makes a great field."

Luke, whose title is "Director of Landscape and Field Maintenance," shared these interesting tidbits:

On mowing: "Grass mowed in a pattern every day develops a grain that can cause the ball to move erratically."

On his "spike test": "When a player walks or runs around the field, you want to have spike marks but not footprints." Luke goes on to say he tests by sticking a key into the field; it should go in easily and when pulled out the dirt shouldn't break apart.

On the infield "lip": "You should be able to put a blindfold on, put one foot on each surface (outfield grass, infield dirt) and not feel the transition."

Next thing you know, Luke'll have his own Bobblehead Doll Day at Petco . . . but he wouldn't be the first turf manager to experience it!

Yes, Thomas Marks, head groundskeeper for the AAA New Orleans Zephyrs for 7 years (and former star pitcher for the University of New Orleans) will be honored with his own bobblehead doll, which will be given away on May 20. Now that's professional respect! Congratulations, Thomas.



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