field of the year

Bowlin Stadium in Lincoln is College softball showcase



owlin Stadium in Haymarket Park, in northwest Lincoln, NE, won the 2004 STMA College Softball Field of the Year Award. Jennifer Roeber, the University of Nebraska's Assistant Athletic Turf Manager, was honored as chief caretaker of the winning field.

Bowlin's field is sand-based and built according to USGA specifications, and features a Kentucky bluegrass blend of Arcadia, Award, NuGlade, and Freedom II.

Roeber's cultural practices allows her to forego using insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides. The infield is MarMix red sand-clay topped with red Diamond Pro infield conditioner. The four-zone irrigation system features Toro 640 heads with six quick couplers.

Roeber says, "I am in charge of the softball field and also help take care of the baseball field that is used by the University baseball team and the Lincoln Saltdogs, a Northern League independent team. We also care for the landscape inside and outside of the ballpark facilities.

"The most important thing I like about my job is being able to do what I love and that is care for turf at a first-rate softball and baseball complex," Roeber says. "I also like my job because the coaches and players treat me with respect. The coaches and girls appreciate the work that is done for them to have a field that they can proudly call their home."

Roeber says she became interested in a career in turf management when I started working for a lawn service in high school. "Studying turfgrass management in college also was a way to stay involved in a sport that I loved."

Solving problems

"The biggest problem that we faced was the field didn't have adequate drainage on the edges of the infield and dugouts. The clay was all the way to the wall and there was only four little drains," says Roeber. "All the water from the tarp and seating bowl drained on to the clay.

"To fix the problem we took the clay out to the foul lines and put in drain tiles and sand for a base. Then we made a warning track against the wall and dugouts. Next we put in a strip of grass that was between the warning track and the clay. The improvements have helped; we don't have to worry about pulling the track off to find water under it and the dugouts don't wash full of conditioner."

The Huskers' field has an advantage over most: a SubAir system that offers reg-



Maintenance Program

Jan/Feb

Begin heating the field to allow practices Plow/melt snow to allow practices Manage infield rain tarp to allow practices Irrigate turf as necessary to prevent winter dessication Maintain sub-surface heating system Attend STMA annual conference

March

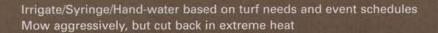
Warm field to prepare turf for home games Begin bi-weekly liquid fertilization program to jump-start turf (30-0-0, micronutrient package, biostimulant, and wetting agent) Begin mowing turf daily Irrigate turf as needed

April/May

Fertilize bi-weekly with 17-0-34 at rate of 1/2-lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. Apply extra fertilizer to wear areas as needed Apply seed to areas as needed Continue liquid fertilization program bi-weekly Mow turf daily to 7/8-in. height using triplex ride-on reel mower Irrigate as needed

June/July

Reduce amount of N applied to field to help disease control Continue liquid fertilization program bi-weekly



August

Mow turf daily to 7/8-in. height Fertilize with liquid and granular products bi-weekly Irrigate/Syringe/Hand-water based on turf needs and event schedules Spot-treat diseased areas if necessary following standard IPM

September

Continue bi-weekly fertilization program Irrigate/Syringe/Hand-water based on turf needs and event schedules Mow field 4-5 times per week to 7/8 inches

Oct/Nov

Core aerate the entire field with 5/8-in. hollow tines at the rate of 25-30 holes per square foot Topdress field with 90:10 sand/peat mix to match rootzone Continue granular and liquid fertilization programs Mow as needed Irrigate as needed

December

Prepare equipment for upcoming season Take vacation

ulated airflow, allowing sub-surface heating, which in turns allow practices when most fields in the north aren't open. Of course, this means Roeber and crew sometimes need to remove snow from the infield cover before January practices. They use a tractor with a rear blade (featuring a rubber edge) to push snow off the infield tarp to the warning track, then use a blower to remove it from the track and bullpens.

Rhonda Revelle, Nebraska's head softball coach, said in a letter to the STMA: "I have been a part of Nebraska softball for 20 years . . . the new stadium and the pride with which Jennifer and her staff maintain and innovatively improve it has affected Nebraska Softball in every way imaginable. Bowlin Stadium has become a very important rung in our recruiting process. Athletes are able to see the pride and the tradition of our program."

Bowlin Stadium has hosted NCAA Regional tournaments in two of the three years the national tournament has existed.



