Kyle Field’s turf the “13th man”?

The football stadium at Texas A&M University in College Station is home to the 2004 STMA College Football Field of the Year. Leo Goertz, athletic fields maintenance manager, and his assistant manager, Craig Potts, deserve congratulations for this award.

The famous home of the “12th Man,” Kyle Field was built nearly 100 years ago, from 1927 until 1972, it featured a native soil, natural grass surface, then, as was the trend, Astroturf was installed. In 1996, the A&M athletic department began reconstruction of the surface, removing the plastic, asphalt base, and 16 inches of subsurface.

This subsurface was compacted and 4 inches of pea gravel was added along with drainage pipe. A 12-inch sand rootzone meeting USGA standards was placed over the pea gravel and laser-graded to an 8-inch crown, fumigated, and planted with Tifway 419 washed sod. Irrigation is provided by an electronically controlled system that consists of seven zones with 57 Hunter I-40 heads and is capable of applying 1/2 inch of water an hour.

Kyle Field sees action 8-9 months a year, most heavily between May and November. Besides Aggie football demands, the field also see Corps of Cadets final review as well as numerous media functions. The summer finds hundreds of young athletes on campus for football camps, and in the fall the field hosts high school playoff action as well.

The band
The university’s renowned Fightin’ Texas Aggie Band, a military style marching band, creates issues for Leo and Craig. The 400-member band’s routines are intricate and include many members’ stepping in exactly the same spot. This creates considerable wear, especially in the vital middle of the gridiron. The toughest part is Friday morning’s pre-game practice, which damages the field the day before the football game. Add in traditional Friday night Midnight Yell practice and the fact that the field is open to fans after every home game!

Water management is a big issue. Summer temps of more than 100 degrees combined with 100% humidity aren’t good for turfgrass. Also, the municipally supplied irrigation water is high in sodium, a problem within a problem. The maintenance staff watches carefully for signs of stress and reacts to those signs with deep and frequent watering. Wetting agents and turf conditioners are sometimes used to maximize water infiltration and retention.

Goertz and Potts are responsible for all A&M’s varsity
athletic complexes. With baseball, soccer, softball, tennis and track, it totals more than 21 acres of turf. The soccer field will host this December's NCAA Women's Championships.

**Equipment Used**
- Toro 5500 5-gang fairway mower
- Toro Multi-Pro 1200 sprayer
- Toro Multi-Pro sprayer
- Toro Workman 3200 w/ utility bed
- Toro Workman 3300 w/ topdresser
- Toro 5400 HL sweeper
- John Deere 955 utility tractor w/ loader bucket
- John Deere Aercore 1500
- John Deere 6x4 Gator
- Club Car utility vehicle
- Parker Estate sweepers
- Graco 3500 line laser airless painters (3)
- National 8400 belt-driven verticutter
- Smithco Sweep Star P48 turf sweeper
- 1-ton construction roller (rented)
- Club Cadet walk-behind edger
- String trimmer
- Stick edger

**In-season maintenance program**
(Fungicide and weed control applied as necessary throughout the year; painting of field done as needed.)

**July/August**
- Mow daily at 5/8 inch
- Fertilize biweekly with 21-0-18 at rate of 0.5 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.
- Irrigate as needed
- Core aerify, sweep, and roll field with 1-ton roller
- Aerify using 1/2-inch needle tines
- Topdress with sand that matches original field profile

**September**
- Mow daily at 3/4 inch
- Fertilize biweekly with 21-0-18 at rate of 0.5 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.
- Irrigate as needed
- Aerify using 1/4-inch needle tines as schedule permits
- Apply foliar application of iron as needed

**October/November**
- Mow daily at 3/4 inch
- Fertilize biweekly with 21-0-18 at rate of 0.5 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.
- Irrigate as needed
- Aerify using 1/4-inch needle tines as schedule permits
- Overseed with 5 lbs. perennial ryegrass (Futura 2000) and 10 lbs. annual ryegrass (Pantera) per 1000 sq. ft.
- Apply foliar application of iron as needed

**December**
- Mow as needed at 1/2 inch
- Irrigate as needed

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