

Installing Terraplas for a concert in June 2006.



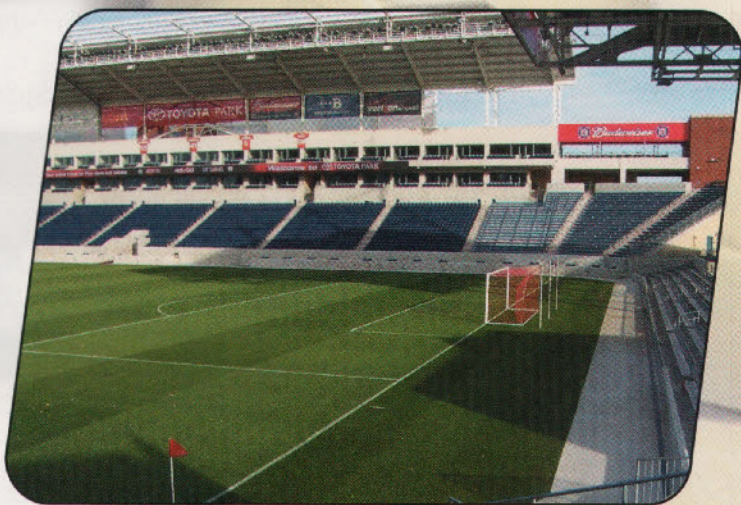
All 9,000 seats finally set up.

## **S**OCCER- specific **STADIUM** continues trend

oyota Park, paid for by the Village of Bridgeview, IL cost \$98 million to build and is the fourth soccer-specific "entertainment venue" in the United States. Located about 15 miles southwest of Chicago's downtown Loop, Toyota Park can seat 20,000 for a soccer game and up to 28,000 for concerts.



Day after early September Kenny Chesney show that was less than 12 hours before a home game. The last piece of Terraplas was removed 10 hours before the game started.



Last regular season home game in October.



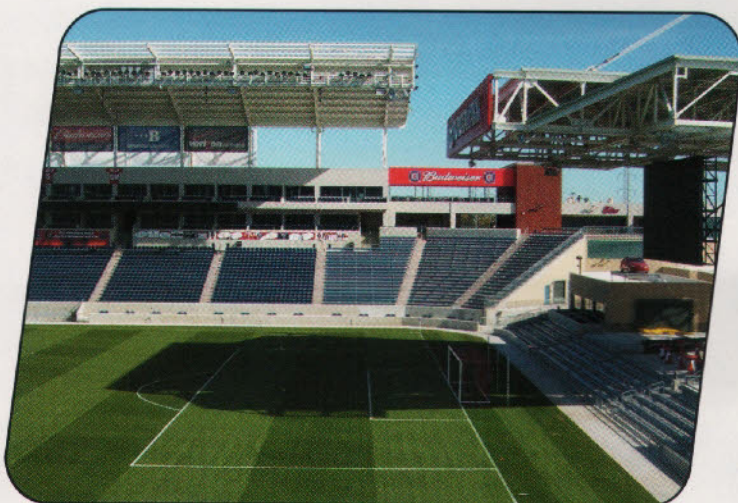
# FACILITY & OPERATIONS

AEG manages the facility for the Village, and Abby McNeal, CSFM, who also serves as Vice President of the Sports Turf Managers Association, manages the turf. The field is 95% sand 5% peat, built on top of 4 inches of pea gravel. It features sub-surface heating and a SubAir system to assist in growing the best turf around, McNeal says.

Built as home to Major League Soccer's Chicago Fire, it also begins serving as home in 2007 to Major League Lacrosse's Chicago Machine. McNeal says a typical annual schedule will include 30-35 soccer games and, for this year at least, eight lacrosse games. Concerts will be determined as the year progresses but so far four are planned for 2007, she says. ■



Chesney concert set-up with 10,000 seats on the floor and the full field covered.



Shade from roof over stage end that limits daylight to goalmouth.



Divots result from lots of play and not enough time to better mitigate the sod-to-sand rootzone.



Toyota Park, 20,000 seats for soccer and lacrosse 15 miles from downtown Chicago.



# Tarp tips: start with communication

By Marcus Dean

**T**arping can preserve the playing conditions of your field. If a tarp is put on properly it will prevent excess water from getting on your dirt and causing playability issues. Groundskeepers at all levels watch the Weather Channel and local stations and check internet sites, as well as use computerized weather systems trying to get an edge on Mother Nature. By using all the tools available, we can decide how much water our infield can take and at what moment we need to roll out the tarp to preserve playability.

In the past we've seen TV "highlights" of grounds crews battling with tarps. What fans don't understand is that once a game starts, everything is in the hands of the umpires, who can call for the tarp when THEY think it is needed. If the umps wait too long, they make it very

difficult for the crew to get the field ready after a rain delay or even the next game. These umpires have caused some of our colleagues to come under unwarranted criticism.

To help avoid this problem, if you know weather is going to be an issue for an upcoming game, **communicate** with every party involved in the tarping process (umpires, coaches, front office staff, and game workers) to ensure they know what is at stake with your field. Tarping is a lot easier when all parties involved know what the current situation is, what weather is coming, and what the playability consequences are if your dirt gets too much water.

Generally all levels of turf managers rely on their respective teams and any one else with a pulse to pull their tarps. Minor league managers rely on the front office staff to help pull tarp. If you don't have a willing

Dean stores his tarps on 20-foot, double-walled plastic drainage drums with 40-inch diameters.





# FACILITY & OPERATIONS

front office, sooner or later it will come back to bite you. At most colleges, the team puts the tarp on and reports, at the turf manager's discretion, for the removal or dumping of the tarp.

Of course the major leagues are a whole different situation. Most turf managers at that level have a staff of up to 30 on call for just the tarp. If there is a certain % of rain in the forecast, this crew knows to report to work. Some teams have full-time positions for a "tarp coordinator," the job being to make sure there are enough people there when the tarp is called for.

Just like caring for an infield, everyone has a different set up when it comes to tarping. There is not a right or wrong way to tarp, as long as we can preserve the playability of the skin we have tarped in the right way.

## University of Kentucky

Tarping at the University of Kentucky is a full time job. We tarp both baseball and softball fields year-round. Most of our tarping occurs between September and May (pretty much



Bungee cords connected to the dugout benches help hold down the softball tarp at Kentucky.



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# Dean's TARP TIPS

Use sand buckets instead of sand-bags. The buckets are easier to carry, stack, will not hold water, and will last longer. We use empty paint buckets and fill them about 1/3 with sand.

Make sure your tarp's seams run in the same direction as you are pulling, e.g., if you pull your tarp north and south, your seams should run north and south. Having your seams run perpendicular to the direction you pull your tarp may cause them to stretch and eventually leak.

Skin tarps allow some water to get on the edge of your dirt. They will keep the majority of your dirt dry but are not as effective as a full tarp. These wet spots are right where the shortstop and second baseman play, which raises a safety issue.

If you use players to help you pull the tarp, make sure they don't have cleats on (plastic or metal). The metal spikes will cut right through the tarp, and plastic cleats potentially can cause damage as well.

If the wind is blowing, you will need more people to pull the tarp. Do not hold on to the tarp if it starts to "blow up." It is not worth risking personal injury over a tarp.

When buying a tarp, I highly recommend getting one with straps. It is a lot easier to pull.

If you cannot afford a new tarp, shop around to see if someone in your area has one for sale. Do your homework though to make sure you are not inheriting someone else's problems. Buyer beware!

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**Sand buckets are easier to carry, stack, will not hold water, and will last longer than sandbags.**

the whole academic calendar). We tarp in the fall for fall practice, individual workouts, and camps; winter tarps in order to keep the field ready for practice in January; spring tarps are for in season games and practices; and summer tarps are for camps and high school games.

With both facilities in mind, we average pulling at least 150 tarps per year. All this tarping has its advantages; yes, that's right **ADVANTAGES!** We have developed great relationships with our two head coaches, John Cohen and Eileen Schmidt. Without their cooperation, all this tarping would not be possible. We can always count on a couple players and coaches from the baseball team to help pull off the tarp. If the softball team is practicing or playing, putting the tarp on is not a problem.

Our baseball tarp is a Covermaster 170 x 170-foot, 7-ounce tarp with straps. We store it behind the third base cut out. Without water, we can pull our tarp with four guys. With water we want as many people as we can get. Our tarp is folded three times using the half method (fold it over

in half once, then fold in half twice and finally fold in half a third time). We then roll it on a 20-foot, double-walled plastic drainage drum that has a 40-inch diameter. We hold our tarp down with 12-inch, T-handled spikes that our mechanic welded. He cuts one 12-inch section in half to get two handles, then welds a half spike on top of a whole spike.

We have a skin tarp for our dirt as well. The skin tarp covers the entire infield dirt as well as baselines, in four overlapping sections. We hold the skin tarp down with sand buckets. This tarp is used in December and January.

Our softball tarp is a 120 x 120-foot, 7-ounce Covermaster with straps. We have pulled that tarp, dry, with as few as three guys. Our softball coach requested that we fold this tarp accordion style. The tarp rolled up on the same size drum and stored behind the first base cut out. We hold the tarp down with 12-inch T handled spikes, sand buckets, and bungee straps attached to the benches.





12-inch, T-handled spikes.

We have a full infield of dirt, no dirt in front of the dugouts, with the grass starting along the back lip. The spikes are used in the grass, the sand buckets are used along our backstop, and bungee cords connected to the benches in the dugouts. The skin tarp is held down with sand buckets. We use the skin tarp when the skin will be covered for long periods of time, which allows us to keep the dirt dry while not putting any pressure on our grass.

Here is how some other turf managers work with tarps:

### Ray Sayre, Greenville Drive

Our tarp is 170 x 170-feet and we use an accordion fold that allows us to be quick and efficient when pulling the tarp. We roll it up on a 50-foot tube and store it just beyond the dugout on the third base side. This reduces the distance we need to pull the tarp, which is important when it is already raining.

During a typical day we will put the tarp on with 4-6 people but for games our tarp

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crew is 12-16 people. Once the tarp is on the field we use 10-inch tarp stakes to hold it in place. When winds pick up we also use our larger equipment on the corners and edges to help hold it down. Two large turf fans are used for air circulation under the tarp. This air will create a tarp bubble that can reduce water on the tarp and help minimize disease pressure on the covered grass areas.

Here in South Carolina we average about 45 tarp pulls each year. A lot of these are due to the afternoon showers we receive almost daily. We watch the weather constantly to follow weather patterns which together with our rain percentages form the basis of our tarp decisions. Usually a rain chance of 40% and higher will cause us to put the tarp on. I will not gamble with the weather; I have tried to out-smart Mother Nature in the past and it is not worth it. It is much easier to put the tarp away dry than it is to risk canceling a game and losing that revenue!

### Chris Pearl, Lexington Legends

Our tarp is located just past the umpire's cutout on the first base side. It is rolled up on a 28-inch diameter, double walled plastic drainage pipe. I have been part of 4-man crew to put it on. We accordion style fold using three folds. I use two blowers that came from the old inflatable at our kid's zone in the stadium. They are squirrel cage type blowers, which really produce a lot of air. The blowers are located at each coaching box and have an extension cord running to the dugout for power. I anchor my tarp with 12-inch nails put in the handles, twisted a few times, and set at an angle. I use the front office staff to help me pull the tarp when needed.

*Marcus Dean is the assistant sportsturf manager for the University of Kentucky.* ■





# ***Super Bowl XLI turf was MVP***

By Eric Schroder

**I**t may be akin to “preaching to the choir” but we here at *SportsTurf* would be remiss if we didn’t recognize and publicize the great job Ed Mangan, George Toma, Alan Sigwardt, and their crew did in handling the turf for this year’s Super Bowl in Miami.

Not only did these turf professionals have to deal with the “normal” Super Bowl, a.k.a. “The Biggest Game in the World” (apologies to World

Cup fans but this IS the USA we’re talkin’ about!), routine – hours and hours on the field of rehearsal time for pre-game and halftime festivities, but did you notice that steady rain throughout the game?

Luckily the players’ skills weren’t at all diminished by the conditions [insert joke here about “What skills?” when referring to Chicago QB Rex Grossman]. “About as bad of weather as you could throw the ball in,” Indianapolis quarterback Peyton Manning was quoted as say-

Photo courtesy of Dolphin Stadium.



ing afterward. And, "I was thinking, 'Has there ever been more rain in any game I've been in?'" from Indianapolis coach Tony Dungy. Did anyone see one splash, one slip, one divot, anything at all about the playing surface that affected any action in the Big Game? Right, neither did we.

And that's the point. Most Americans and millions of other earthlings watched a football game, played in a Florida downpour, and 99% of them didn't realize the field was perfect. It didn't enter their minds and **THAT'S HOW IT SHOULD BE.**

Meanwhile, you readers of this magazine were probably the only ones bragging to your fellow Super Bowl partygoers, "Look at that field!" What could have been a better advertisement for the wonders of natural grass?

"We put more water on the field the day before the game than fell on it during the game," NFL Field Director Mangan told us. "You have to keep these sand-based fields moist or they will fall apart on you."

"All the Super Bowls (he's done 17 now) are challenging in one way or the other; this is the first one where we've had rain on game day, but you have to prepare for the worst and hopefully get the best," said Mangan.

"The PAT system (Prescription Athletic Turf, can drain up to 3 in. of rainfall per hour) provides such great drainage, combined with some great turf on top of it, grown in a sand profile that perks real well,

well, we had a great field," Mangan said. "And that bermudagrass can hold a lot of water."

As for the indefatigable, 78-year-old Toma, who's been involved in prepping the turf for all 41 Super Bowls, he called the sod for #41 "The second greatest sod I've ever seen. After 48 hours of rehearsals, the only thing that was going to hurt that grass was fire," he told us.

Toma credited sod farmer "Eddie Boy" Woerner from Southern Turf Nurseries with growing the "Super" sod. He said Woerner's turf is grown on a sheet of plastic and will hold up under any conditions and in any part of the country. The turf was trucked in from farms in nearby Indiantown, FL and Tifton, GA and put down in 7-foot wide, 41-foot long strips, said Toma, and the whole field was done in 6 hours.

Toma told us the greatest sod he's ever seen was a paspalum variety Woerner grew on plastic for a 1999 game in the Superdome.

Boyd Montgomery, CSFM, sports fields district sales manager for Toro, who provided equipment for this year's field preparation, said, "The Super Bowl field was a testament to the fact that properly maintained natural turf can withstand the extreme conditions of practice, play, and weather. The sod used on the playing surface had an outstanding structure and thickness that provided the athletes with the footing and traction needed to perform at the highest level. The quality of the playing surface that Ed, George, and the turf crew provided was the true winner of this year's Super Bowl." ■

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## A call you can't refuse

*Editor's note: The "Q&A" column will return to this space next month.*

**G**rove Teates, president of Alpine Services, finally couldn't say "no." When you are asked to work on the grounds of the Washington Monument in our nation's capital, you don't say "no."

From the first fireworks display marking its dedication in 1885 and each subsequent Fourth of July, the Washington Monument has been the backdrop to mark our independence. The Washington Monument includes more than the large white-colored obelisk in the center of the National Mall and its reflection in the aptly named Reflecting Pool; this national park includes land where visitors stroll and picnic, and Washington, DC residents play recreational sports.

"For me, it's all about relationships in this business. When Champion Motor Graders came in, it was no different," said Teates, whose Maryland company builds natural turf athletic fields, as well as bases for artificial turf installations and equestrian arenas and rings. The company has worked in every state in the continental United States but remains a small, family operation with six full-time employees.

Although Teates had repeatedly turned down the Washington Monument job over a 2-week period, he was finally persuaded.

However, there was one stipulation – Teates would run the grader himself. "This was precision grading at its rawest form. And it's the only contract I've ever signed that named me as the operator," said Teates with a laugh.

Alpine's first assignment at the Washington Monument required about 3 weeks of grading approximately 45 acres. With no grade stakes or laser points to guide the grading, eyes did the entire job, which is why Teates was hand-picked for the job.

"It was going to be a tough job and we were very busy with other projects. I really didn't know if we could get it done but when your government calls, it's hard to say no," said Teates.

"The first day on the job site I was joking with Gary Abernathy at Champion that I needed a bigger blade," recalled Teates. "We normally works with a 10-foot moldboard. Three days later a bigger blade arrived."

The larger blade allows for a wider stance and better control and better response from your grader. "Because we couldn't use the lasers, we had to blend in as much as possible. This surprise new blade certainly made the job that much easier for me," said Teates.

Alpine's second assignment was to return to the grounds in the fall and grade the site's

football fields. This also included installing a significant amount of drainage in several key areas to resolve long-standing wetness issues.

"We are only too happy to help out a client like Alpine Services and hopefully, make their job that much easier," said Abernathy, president of Champion Motor Graders. ■



## OSHA reports safety is good business

**T**he Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has developed a new safety and health topics information page aimed at demonstrating that investment in workplace safety and health makes good business sense.

Making the Business Case for Safety and Health is a product of several alliances with OSHA. The page highlights information on how a comprehensive safety and health program can help employers save money while protecting their employees.

Workplace fatalities, injuries, and illnesses cost the country billions of dollars every year. In its 2005 Workplace Safety Index, Liberty Mutual estimated that employers pay almost \$1 billion per week to injured employees and their medical care providers. Even one serious workplace injury may affect the bottom line of a small business. Employers that implement

effective safety and health management systems may expect to significantly reduce injuries and illnesses and reduce the costs associated with these injuries and illnesses, including workers' compensation payments, medical expenses, and lost productivity. In addition, employers often find that process and other changes made to improve workplace safety and health may result in significant improvements to their organization's productivity and profitability.

Now that you know that investing in workplace safety and health may improve your company's productivity and bottom line, there are many resources from OSHA and other organizations to help you get started.

The following are examples of resources that may help you improve your organization's workplace safety and health and learn about OSHA's compliance assistance resources:

### OSHA's Onsite Consultation Program.

Using a free consultation service largely funded by OSHA, employers can find out about potential hazards at their worksites, improve their occupational safety and health management systems, and even qualify for a one-year exemption from routine OSHA inspections.

**Compliance Assistance Quick Start.** Use this step-by-step guide to learn about the compliance assistance resources on OSHA's website.

**Hazard Awareness Advisor.** OSHA, (1999). Designed to help general industry employers and employees identify possible safety and health hazards in their workplace, and to direct users to OSHA standards addressing those hazards.

OSHA has a wide range of publications on safety and health topics, including: All About OSHA. OSHA Publication 3302, (2006), 239 KB PDF, 32 pages; Job Hazard Analysis. OSHA Publication 3071, (2002); and Small Business Handbook. OSHA Publication 2209, (2005). ■