



By Keith Labitska

Last December Saint Louis University was fortunate to host the NCAA Men's College Cup. Naturally, with any national event, there were some anxious moments and sleepless nights for all the people involved; especially those responsible for the care of the sports fields. When it was all said and done however, the field and the staff came through it with rave reviews.

The turf at Robert R. Hermann Stadium, on the university's campus, is a beautiful, 10-inch sand based Kentucky bluegrass field. We chuckle now when we look back at those few days last year but at the time there wasn't much laughing, or sleep. St. Louis was hit with an early winter storm that deposited an inch of ice and several inches of snow.

Two days before the storm hit the temperature was in the low sixties and the bluegrass, as well as the staff, was enjoying a nice day. We had the field, as they like to say at SLU, "tucked in" for the night. We had put on the grow cover as a preventative measure for the storm we knew was coming. But that storm hit

hard, first a 1-inch layer of ice, topped by 3 inches of heavy, wet snow.

As soon as we were able, we used everything in our discretion to remove what Mother Nature had left us. At one point we even tried using a F250 truck with a plow, but this proved too heavy. We did use three mini-tractors with rubber plow blades to push the snow and ice off of the protective cover.

Once all of the snow was off of the cover, we were left with the daunting task of removing all of the snow that was piled up on the far side of the field.

The field played and held up extremely well. Jeff Macko, Dorsey Lawrence, and the rest of the grounds staff could not have been more pleased in the way their crew responded to some very trying weather conditions. For this crew, plowing the soccer field lived up to the old adage, there is a first time for everything. ■

Keith Labitska is on the grounds staff at Saint Louis University. Pictures by Jeff Macko and Keith Labitska

Herman Stadium at a glance

Original cost: \$5.1 million

Renovation Began: March 17, 1999

Field sodded: May 25, 1999

Surface: Kentucky bluegrass

Surface Area: 155,000 square feet

Field Dimensions: 120 x 75 yards

Grade: No crown

Surface Variance: +/- 1/2 inch

Infiltration Rate: 10 inches per hour

Irrigation: 70 sprinkler heads, 23 valves, approx. 1.5 miles of piping

Rootzone: 10 inches, 8400 tons, 90% sand, 10% peat moss

Gravel Drainage Blanket: 4 inches, 3100 tons

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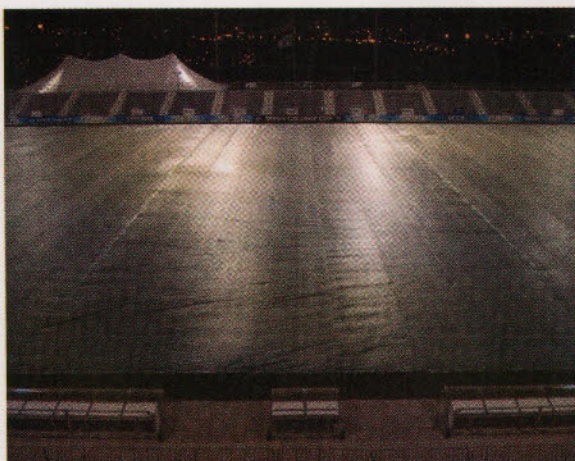
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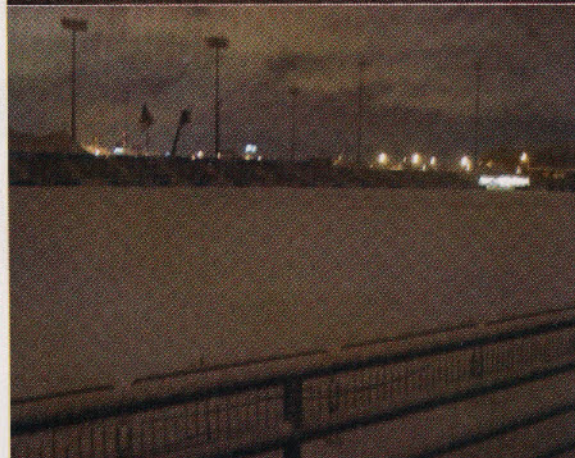


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Just as a precaution, since we had heard a storm might be coming, we covered the field the night before the game.



Imagine our surprise when we arrived at the field.



The storm hit hard, first a 1-inch layer of ice, topped by 3 inches of heavy, wet snow.



Jeff Macko, Dorsey Lawrence, and the rest of the grounds staff could not have been more pleased by the way their crew responded.

Getting prepared for '07 College Cup

Cary, NC and SAS Soccer Park are home to the 2007 College Cup, the NCAA men's soccer championship. Keith Jenkins, CPRP, the athletic facility supervisor for the Town of Cary Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources, and Jimmy Simpson, the

facility expeditor, answered some questions about preparing for this year's tournament:

SportsTurf:

1. How have you changed or will you change your field maintenance schedule for 2007 to prepare for the College Cup in

November? Is your number of events less than last year in leading up to Cup matches?

Simpson and Jenkins: We have been fortunate to host several college cups at SAS Soccer Park, including last year's Women's College Cup. Our field maintenance schedule for the 2007 Men's College Cup will not be



Above: SAS Soccer Park was home to the 2006 Women's College Cup, the NCAA women's soccer championship.



The newly formed USL Division One Carolina Railhawks play all of their home games at SAS.

very different from last year's schedule.

Prior to last season's Women's College Cup, we increased our number of aerifications and topdressings to help facilitate the firming of our playing surface, improve surface drainage, and to also increase both stand density and root density of the turf.

We have had a slight increase in the number of events we are hosting this year. The newly formed USL Division One Carolina Railhawks are now playing all of their home games at SAS, and several international matches have been hosted here in 2007 as well.

SportsTurf: What, if any, consultations have you had with the NCAA regarding the field itself?

Simpson: Currently, the only consultations I have had with the NCAA regarding the field was a conference call during which the committee asked questions about our maintenance practices and efforts to continually improve the playing surface at the park.

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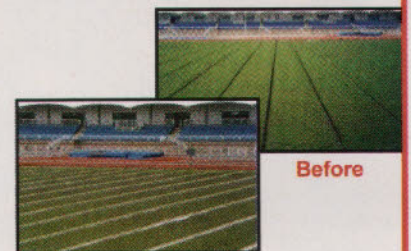
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FACILITY & OPERATIONS



The overall experience for players and spectators is of the highest importance.

SportsTurf: What type of turf is featured at SAS Soccer Park? Drainage system?

Simpson: SAS Soccer park has 419 Bermuda that is overseeded with perennial ryegrass. The field itself is completely flat with a 10-inch sand/peat rootzone and drain lines that are on 15-foot centers. We have a six-zone irrigation system on our stadium field that is fed by an onsite pond. The pond is supported by four wells that pump water into it 12 hours a day.

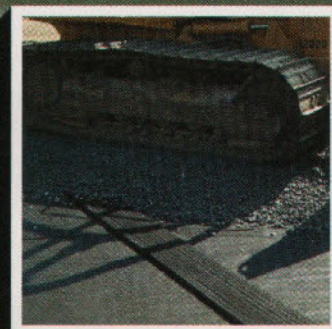
SportsTurf: What would be included on your "recommended checklist" for turf managers who host soccer tournaments?

Simpson: At SAS, we have many weekly tournaments on our outlying fields. Our preparation checklist does not change whether it is a recreation game or international soccer match we are hosting. At the top of my checklist is anything that is related to the safety of players or spectators. Safety is our number one priority, and I feel that it is our responsibility to pro-

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vide a safe, smooth playing surface with anchored goals.

The next thing on the list is the aesthetics of the fields and facility. We strive for an overall consistent and well maintained "look" for all events at SAS. This includes everything from having straight lines on the fields to how the benches are placed on the sidelines. After the fields are complete, we then take our "look" to the entire park. From the parking lot to the restrooms, the overall experience for our players and spectators is of the highest importance.

The final thing on our checklist is to get feedback from players, coaches, officials, and spectators to see where we can improve as a facility. ■



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