



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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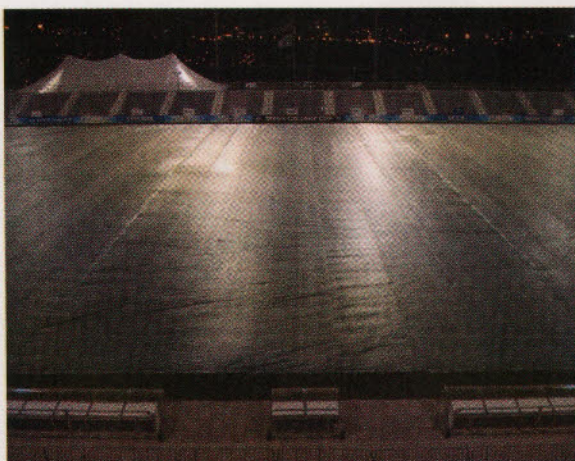
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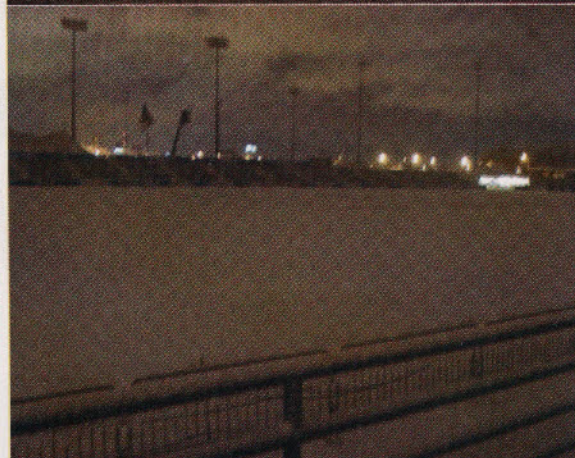


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Just as a precaution, since we had heard a storm might be coming, we covered the field the night before the game.



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.