

# 49ers win...

## STMA Field of the Year



The Sports Turf Managers Association awarded the 2006 Professional Football Field of the Year to the Marie P. DeBartolo Sports Centre's natural grass fields. These national awards are judged on playability and appearance, innovative solutions employed to maintain the field, effective use of budget, and the development

and implementation of a comprehensive, sound agronomic programs.

"This past year I thought it would be great to enter the 49ers natural grass football fields into the contest to see how we matched up with the rest of the nation. To my surprise and delight we won the award," says Rich Genoff, head groundskeeper for the 49ers. "Having been in the sports turf industry for more than

30 years, it was quite a thrill to receive this prestigious award, and it is great to be honored by my peers in such a competitive industry. Ryan Snead (49ers assistant groundskeeper), who by virtue of his hard work out on the football fields, was a key player in helping to win this award."

Situated on an 11-acre site in Santa Clara, CA, the Marie P. DeBartolo Sports Centre



provides San Francisco 49ers players, coaches and staff with all the necessary components for daily practices, weekly game preparations and general overall operations in one functional, state-of-the-art setting. Two national grass practice fields with underground drainage and watering systems allow for workouts in all Northern California weather conditions.

**SportsTurf:** What attracted you to a career in sports turf management?

**Genoff:** I was attracted to sports turf through my work as a caddy as a young kid, and then later when I was also caddying in the 19070's when I was in my twenties. I was also on the golf team in high school so it was my exposure to golf that got me going.

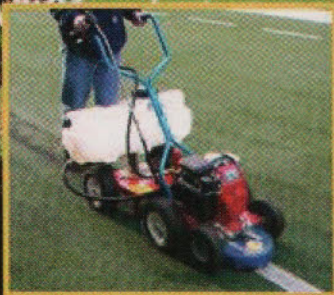
I had the privilege to work at some beautiful country clubs when I was young, and the turfgrass was like the most beautiful green carpet I had ever seen. The actual start of my career began at Atlanta Country Club. I was caddying for the big table; the golfer I was



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working for missed his putt on the 18th hole and it cost him a lot of money. After he missed he took a huge divot out of the green. Part of the caddy's job is to repair divots, so I went to a bunker and got the sand I needed to repair the divot, and then I went to the pond and got some water and watered it in.

Two days later the superintendent asked me if I would like to go to work for him, and I took the job.

**ST:** What are your specific responsibilities in this job?

**Genoff:** Grow and maintain the football fields and grounds. Everything starts with the fields and I work out from them. I have been very fortunate in my career, the places that I've worked have allowed me to do all the work. It started at Santa Clara University, where they allowed me to convert Buck Shaw Stadium from football to baseball and back to football. I did a total of sixteen conversions over my 8 years there. This gave me the opportunity to learn about and operate heavy equipment, grading tractors, very large rollers, and backhoes.

My normal duties include equipment operation, pest control, irrigation, field painting (including endzone art), managing the field, leading the crew, setting up and overseeing of all training camp field work, building things such as our conditioning hill, which was shaping 750 tons of soil to meet the coaches' request.

Only on rare occasions do I use a contractor. To put it all together, my career has been very rewarding inasmuch as I have done everything that covers all aspects of sports field maintenance and management.

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**ST:** What's the greatest pleasure you derive from your job?

**Genoff:** My greatest pleasure is working with, and watching the natural order at work, and the opening of training camp when the fields are absolutely perfect.

**ST:** Do you plan any adjustments, large or small, to your maintenance plan in 2006? Did you purchase any new equipment or product for this year?

**Genoff:** No, I don't plan any adjustments. We did buy a new painting machine. With the advent of new and improved synthetic playing fields, the San Francisco 49ers decided to invest \$1,000,000 in a new Sportex football field at the training facility. The new field allows us to always have a field available during inclement weather, and it allows extra time for rest and repair of our natural grass fields.

**ST:** How do you see the sports turf manager's job changing in the future?

**Genoff:** Sports turf managers are in trouble with the advent of the new and improved synthetic field surfaces. I understand geography, and that it is difficult to maintain fields where you have to battle the weather. However, our industry will never stop improving the varieties of grass available to be used for sports turf, and the young people choosing to work in our industry I'm sure will be as hard working and innovative as their predecessors. So the biggest challenge to the new sports turf manager will be more flexibility and greater expertise. ■



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