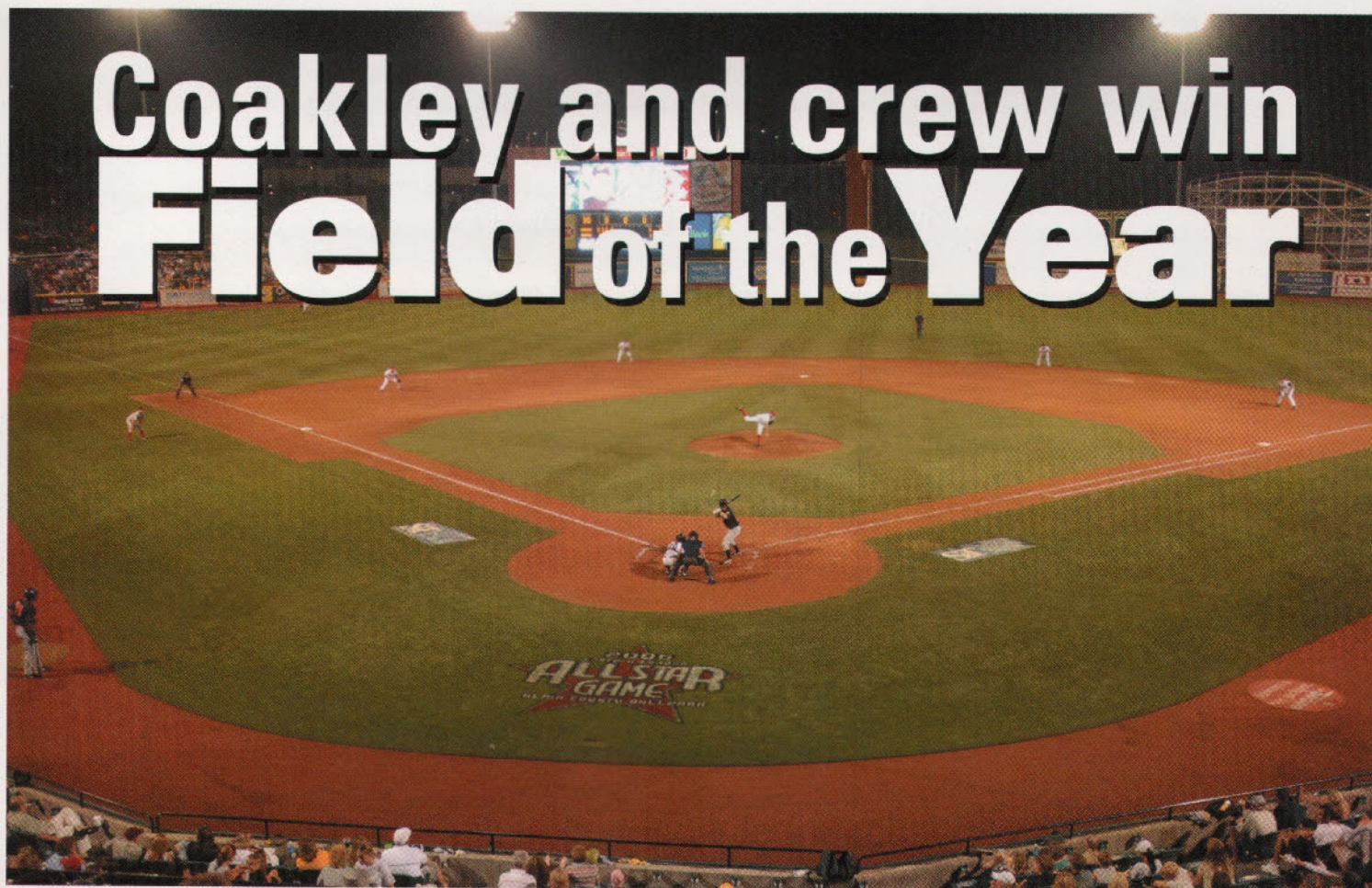


Coakley and crew win Field of the Year



In the competitive category of Professional Baseball, winning an STMA Field of the Year Award is impressive. The 2006 winner is Blair County Ballpark in Altoona, PA, along with sports turf manager Patrick Coakley, CSFM, who also was named national Class AA Sports Turf Manager of the Year for 2006. Minor League Baseball and STMA co-sponsor those awards.

Recognition also should be extended to Coakley's assistant, sports turf manager Lisa Guinivan, and his seasonal crew, Craig Replogle, Chris Krozel, and Bobby Hughes.

SportsTurf caught up with Coakley in early February:

ST: What are your specific responsibilities in this job?

Coakley: I oversee the playing surface for the Altoona Curve, the AA affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates. This includes all budgeting,

personnel, purchasing and scheduling outside events, developing responsible IPM and maintenance schedule. The day to day maintenance involves mowing, edging, infield skin maintenance, mound and plate repair, all chemical applications, aeration and other supplementary cultural practices. We also handled some of the larger landscaped areas of the ballpark and will be taking over all landscaped areas in 2007. Curve Baseball, LP also owns the State College Spikes. Matt Neri is the sports turf manager at that location and we try to help one another out when needed, which is a nice resource in emergencies.

ST: Do you plan any adjustments to your maintenance plan in 2007?

Coakley: Our maintenance plan worked very well this past season. Our turf was as strong as it has ever been, under the most challenging weather conditions we have had since I arrived in 2003. The only adjustment we are going to make is adding a little more nitrogen over the entire season. We had enough room to add

some N and still be just less than six pounds for the year. This, I hope, will give us just a little more kick without having the growth get too crazy. Of course, we always are prepared to adjust on the fly due to weather conditions or whatever other unknowns come our way.

ST: What is the most important piece of equipment or product in your program?

Coakley: I can't point to one piece of equipment or product that stands out because it is truly the combination of everything that made our plan work. For the skin areas, the Rahn groomer attachment on our Sand Pro is an essential tool. We switched to an organic fertilizer this season, Nature Safe 9-0-9 in combination with White Gold 0-0-24 with 14% Ca. We aerated aggressively this season so our aerator and core harvester were obviously important. If you take any of these components out it would affect the total outcome so it is hard to point to one and say it is the most important. If you want to pick out one thing, look at the people. Lisa and our part time guys take a tremen-

Above: Blair County Ballpark hosted the Eastern League All-Star game in 2006.

dous amount of pride in our field. Our final results are a direct reflection of their efforts.

ST: What attracted you to a career in Sports Turf Management?

Coakley: My original plan was to be a minor league general manager. The problem was my first job was in Albany, GA. Being a Massachusetts native, I had a slight communication problem in the south, so sales proved difficult. It was decided that I should be moved to the grounds crew so that the amount of people that I came in contact with could be limited. After many seasons I developed much more of an aptitude for caring for infields and turf than I did selling fence signs. Once I committed to the grounds everything took off for me. I realized that working on the field is what I truly wanted to do. It has worked out great, but people still can't understand me when I speak.

ST: What do you like to do when you are away from work?

Coakley: Well, it doesn't much matter. My two-year-old daughter, Riley, has made it quite clear that there is no need for me to think independently. She tells me where to be and when, and has been known to physically move me if I do not comply. So I guess



Patrick Coakley, CSFM, keeps busy on his field and chasing daughter, Riley.

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FIELD OF THE YEAR



Assistant Sports Turf Manager Lisa Guinivan at work.

you could say my main interests are "Barney," "Blue's Clues," running in circles, and the occasional game of "Ring around the Rosie."

ST: What are your biggest challenges and how do you approach them?

Coakley: Weather is always a challenge because you never know what you are going to get and you have absolutely no control over it. The best approach is to anticipate as best you can and have a plan B, C and D.

Keeping people and myself motivated over a long season can be hard. You have to encourage peak performance, consistently over a long season, without sparking a mutiny. You have to try to recognize when people need a break and are sick of listening to you.

If you run a marathon, stopping to stretch occasionally can actually improve your time. Trying to grind it out without a break will wear you out. You have to know when it is more beneficial to refuel so you don't break down the last month of the season. That makes time management and working efficiently essential. ■

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