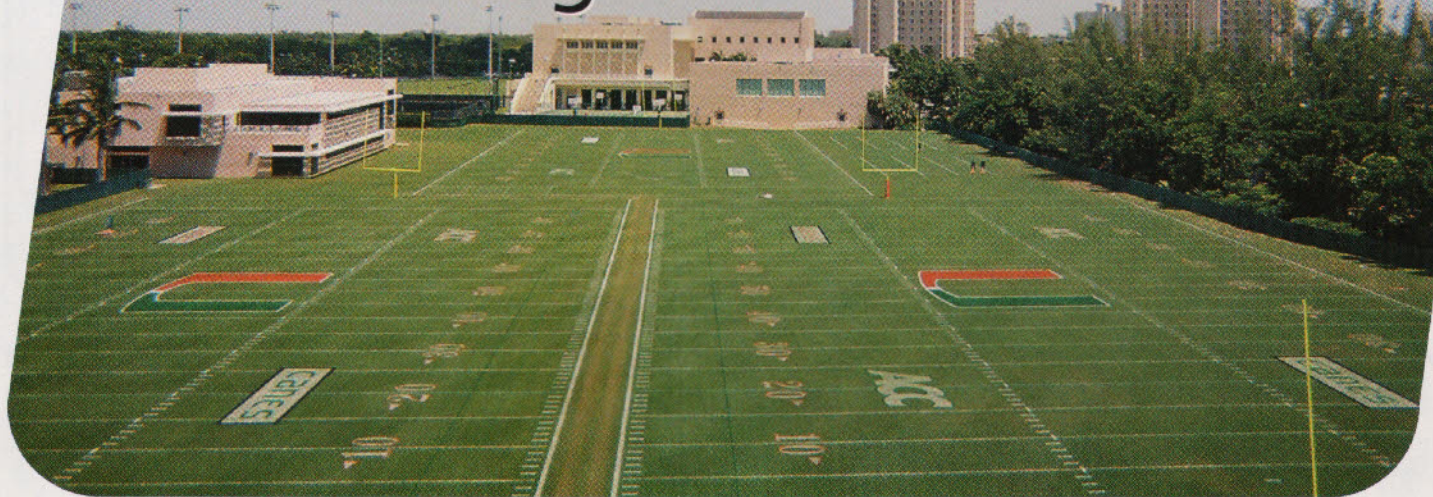


MIAMI'S Greentree Facility is college football's best



Chris Denson and his crew are to be congratulated for winning the Sports Turf Managers Association's 2006 College Football Field of the Year Award for their work at the University of Miami's Greentree Football facility. Crew members include Benny Avila, Jose Gutierrez, Geovani Dearmas, and Chris Hughes.

Built in 1998, the Hurricanes' 6.5-acre practice facility features GN-1, is built on 100% sand, and includes a gravity flow drainage system. Denson says one of the three fields has a fiber mat under the turf that initially was installed to provide stability in the sandy subsoil. Now it inhibits root penetration, so after trying to break through it with a GA-60 aerifier without success, Denson has the field on a heavy topdress program.

"I did try a GA-30 aerifier with core tines but when the tines wore down they formed a barb," he said. "It actually penetrated and pulled fibers out of the ground without disrupting the turf but it didn't get much for aer-

ification. I'm looking to do this with the GA-60 when the tines are worn."

Denson says all the area's sod farms have stopped producing GN-1 and though his sodding needs are minimal, there are spots, such as where carts run and entrance areas. "Since it's only a few hundred square feet at a time, it's not worth bringing GN-1 from out of state," he said. "We have set aside a small area that we do almost no maintenance on, and we cut the thatch off with sod cutters, roll up our turf, and transplant when we need to.

"Then we topdress both areas lightly with sand. It needs a little time to grow in but this allows us to keep the field the same variety."

Denson and/or crew check for problems daily, and report the fields are in use almost daily as well, whether for conditioning, camps, or practices and training camp. "We have a beneficial microbe germinating system that provides live microbes daily," he said. "These microbes are sprayed three times a week on various fields and watered in.

"We purchased a new turf vacuum at the

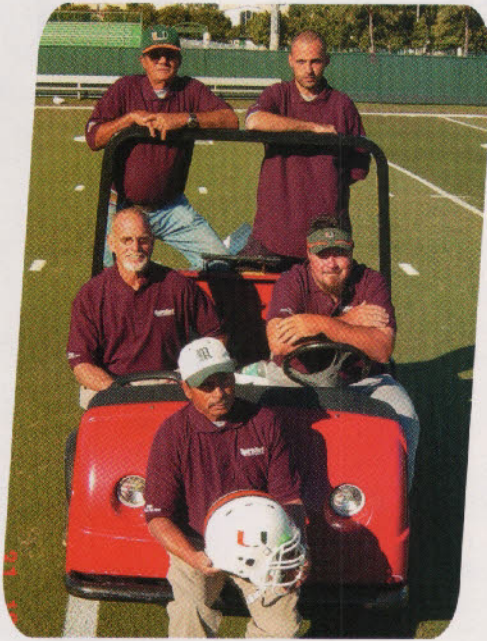
beginning of the year. We will probably rotate out a few paint machines in the near future and some of our smaller pieces of equipment during the year," he said.

"I have done a few small additions/subtractions to my nutritional program from what test results are showing. We were also able to get in one extra verticut and aerification this year due to the subtraction of a winter camp. Everything else is staying the same," Denson said.

Denson said he knew when he finished high school that he wanted to be involved in some area of the turf industry.

"I have always been a big sports fan and I saw a chance to be involved with that. As I looked into the options and varieties of sports turf careers, I just knew that was what I wanted to do. It is a unique experience growing up rooting for a particular sports organization, and then having the opportunity to be a part of that organization later on," he said.

As athletic grounds manager, Denson's responsibilities include maintaining the athletic equipment and surfaces. "We take care of all



Greentree Facility crew: Front of cart, Jose Gutierrez; sitting at left, Jack Hughes; sitting at right, Chris Denson; standing at left, Benny Avila; and standing, right, Geovani Dearnas.

aspects of the turfgrass and a few things with the hard surfaces, tennis courts, track, stadium bleachers, etc., through the course of the year," he said. "There are few areas of common ground throughout the athletic department that we maintain. We also set up for most of the sporting events held within the athletic department."

What's the greatest pleasure he derives from his job?

"I would have to say the student athletes. You get to see them mature a lot at this level. It is an honor to be around the few that walk away with the big contracts, but the ones that leave with a degree in hand and become successful in the real world, that's what it's about," he said. "It sure is satisfying though, when all the work is done and the finished product is laid out. Lines are bright, turf is cut, logos down, it is as close to perfection as you can get and it's just a beautiful sight."

What's the biggest headache? "The biggest headache we run into is probably hurricanes [no pun intended]. So much preparation goes into getting ready for one along with still hav-

ing the normal schedule to keep up with. They can cause so much damage and the cleanup just goes on forever. They are something I can definitely do without."

Denson also works part-time at Dolphin Stadium. "As anyone in the industry knows, it can sure be tough at times to balance work and family," he said. "I have a beautiful fiancée, Kelley, who supports me more than I could ever ask. Between my full-time position with the Hurricanes and my part-time position with Dolphin Stadium, she understands what time is involved for each season and event. We just have to schedule our time around what is already scheduled. We do not have any children right now, but I hear things change a little when that happens. We will just have to wait and see for that." ■

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