



Todd Jeansonne poses in front of Louisiana State's new baseball field.

# High-profile fields get new turf

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY is serious about sports. Their football team has won three national titles, including the 2007 BCS National Championship. Their baseball team has won the College World Series five times. So when it came time to replace the Tiger Stadium football field and build the new Alex Box Stadium baseball field this year, they had to make sure they found a turf worthy of the Fighting Tigers.

The football field was first on the agenda. Todd Jeansonne, assistant director of athletic facilities, was familiar with Bull's-Eye bermudagrass (aka MSB-30/Mississippi Choice), and insisted on it for the new field.

"Mississippi State had Bull's-Eye on their field and that right there is a great referral. I tried it on some practice fields after I saw it," Jeansonne said. "I am always looking for 'cutting edge' technology with turf in the industry."



**Top:** Washed sod at West Coast Turf's Scottsdale, AZ farm.

**Bottom:** Bulls-Eye bermudagrass close up.



Bull's-Eye was actually developed at Mississippi State by Drs. Jeff Krans and Wayne Philly. According to Krans, the plant's broad leaves and tightly closed canopy create a dense biomass, resulting in a "cushion of grass" so football players are running on top of the grass rather than through it. "It gives better traction for the players and less wear on the field," said Krans. "Also, the color is a deep, dark green, which is most desirable on athletic fields."

The turf density is what made Jeansonne a fan. "One of the best elements I found with this variety is that you play the game 'on' the grass and not 'in' the grass. Its vigorous growth pattern and plentiful stolons provides great footing for the athletes and they are always happy about that," he said.

The grass variety was chosen, but now they had to find it. When selecting turfgrass, purity is extremely important. Jeansonne decided to check out West Coast Turf's Arizona facility for himself. "I liked what I saw. The entire farm was well maintained with lots of attention to detail. It was the quality of the grass out there that sealed the deal."

Because they had plenty of time for grow-in, Jeansonne chose to sprig the field. In mid-May last year, 1,300 US standard bushels of Bull's-Eye were shipped from Scottsdale, AZ, farm to Baton Rouge and mechanically planted at double the normal rate.

How did the new field hold up in its first season? "It's only 4-5 months old, and I have to keep reminding myself of that. It showed some wear from use near the end, but a young field is going to show the wear more than a mature field," Jeansonne said. "It's going to only be better next year."


## New baseball stadium

Alex Box Stadium was the next order of business. A new ballpark was needed to accommodate the growing crowds and facilitate the state-of-the-art amenities necessary to continue the baseball program's winning tradition. They built the new stadium just south of the old one, and it will debut with the '09 season.

The San Diego Padres have had Bull's-Eye since the 2004 inauguration of PETCO Park, and the Arizona Diamondbacks played their 9th consecutive year on Bull's-Eye at Chase Field. The Rose Bowl and Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City have had success with the grass as well.

Grant Trenbeath, head groundskeeper for the D-backs, has a unique circumstance at Chase Field, as the ballpark is covered by a retractable dome resulting in a great deal of shade. "Bull's-Eye has been the backbone of our field all of these years mostly because it performs better in shade," said Trenbeath. "We

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tried other grasses, but this one is by far the best for our low light situation."

Jeansonne has sunlight issues as well. "We have an enormous roof over the stands which can sometimes make it tough to grow grass. One of the reasons I put in Bull's-Eye at the ballpark is because of the good shade tolerance."

After a 6-week delay caused by two hurricanes, the baseball field was finally put down in early October. The decision was made to use sod instead of sprigs due to the timing, so 103,000 square feet of washed sod was shipped from Scottsdale to Baton Rouge, and rolls were cut 3.5 feet wide and 30 feet long. Because the sod was soil free, each refrigerated truckload contained up to 16,000 square feet, making the nearly 1,500 mile drive an economically feasible option. The temperature was kept at 44 degrees F.

"I saw the turf when the trucks rolled in," said West Coast Turf spokesperson John Marman. "It arrived with minimal shocking and had excellent sod strength when it was installed. It was rooting in just 2 days."

The playing field contractor, Munie Green Care, applied "VermaPlex" (an all-natural microbial soil amendment) to the sod as each truckload was delivered, and daily at a rate of 2



Aerial view of "Death Valley," LSU's Tiger Stadium

oz./1000 sq. ft. Root growth within seven days of installation reached 3 inches.

"By the end of October I had roots up to 7 inches out there," Jeansonne said. ■

*This article was supplied by West Coast Turf, Scottsdale, AZ, [www.westcoastturf.com](http://www.westcoastturf.com).*

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