

F.O.Y.

Field of the Year

Stetson U celebrates back-to-back College Softball Field of the Year awards

LED BY SPORTS TURF MANAGER GEORGE J. MARSHALL, Patricia Wilson Field at Stetson University in DeLand, FL was awarded its 2nd consecutive STMA College Softball Field of the Year Award in 2009.



Built in 2003, Patricia Wilson Field is named for Patricia Maxcy Wilson, Stetson Class of '47 who played nearly every intra-mural sport she could. Years later, Wilson became a champion of Stetson's Division I athletics program as a member of the Board of Trustees. The facility was renovated in 2008-09 to the tune of \$750,000, as additions were made to the complex as well as upgrading existing facilities to reduce long-term cost and maintenance.

George Marshall, a retired fireman turned turf pro, is the field maintenance tech and, as he did last year in winning this award, Marshall points to his "staff," which is head softball coach Frank Griffin, associate head coach Vanessa Bataille, and assistant coach Joanna "JJ" Payette.

Marshall says, "Construction began on the softball complex in 2002 when Coach Griffin designed and hand-built the backstop and dugouts. He also hand-crafted the locker room and trophy case," he says. "Coach and his staff have added so much to the overall improvements to the facility."

Marshall reports the complex covers 2.8

acres, with 1.08 of it playing field, which sees nearly 600 hours of game and practice action, plus another 160+ for tournaments, camps, clinics, etc. The Tifton 410 bermudagrass gets overseeded in late November or early December after an application of pre-emergent, with 500 pounds of Eagle Supreme perennial ryegrass over the entire complex. The sand mix is composed of 80% coarse sand, 20% Canadian peat moss, with Turface on the infield. Drainage provided by slight valleys built into the terrain that empty into culverts and a retention area. Field itself has a 1% grade to outfield.

NOTES FROM MARSHALL'S AWARD ENTRY

"Having a limited travel budget for the softball team is offset by our ability to host many invitational tournaments. We range from 1-3 weekend tournaments during our fall ball month and 6-7 during our spring championship season.

"The past 3 years we have hosted our dis-



trict high school softball tournament as well as our own conference (Atlantic Sun) tournament. All the games and practices create a challenge since the majority of play is February through May, when the bermudagrass is dormant.

"This is why we overseed with winter rye; it helps with the wear on the field and helps it look better. We work on the main wear areas, the outfield positions, throughout the season with additional seed and fertilizer.



**You Won't See
Chris Morrow
On Any
Dallas Cowboy
Highlight Reel.**

But he's a real winner, week-in and week-out. Just ask the Dallas Cowboys coaching staff, trainers and players. You see, Chris takes care of two of the Cowboys most precious possessions - their two outdoor TifSport Bermudagrass practice fields. As Chris says, "Even though this is

a very young turf, the coaches and players like it a lot! There's better footing because of the healthy mat underneath, so it's much easier on the players and their joints." The TifSport growers are mighty proud that America's Team is now practicing on America's grass - TifSport.

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 The TifSport Growers

“With drought conditions the past few years, we’ve had to use rationed reclaimed water from the City of DeLand because of high demand. During our season water was being turned off twice a week for 24-32 hours each time. This made it especially challenging to coordinate herbicide, insecticide, and fertilizer applications around practice and game schedules.

“We paint our infield so it must be wet; at times we had to wet the lines and batter’s boxes with a backpack sprayer.”

SportsTurf: How has the recession affected your maintenance plans for 2010?

Marshall: With new regulations on chemical use, fertilizing, and water restrictions we are always challenged in some way. We try and keep up with maintenance issues so we don’t get too far behind, and look for new ways of doing things. Large projects have to wait until funding is available. If you’d like to sponsor a new scoreboard, please contact us.

ST: How do you work with your coaches to give them what they want while keeping best practices alive?

Marshall: Fortunately for me they are

willing to work with me. It’s not unusual to see the players or coaches pulling weeds or raking. If we pull a weed, we won’t have to spray it. If we pick it up, we don’t have to blow it.

ST: What are the keys to finding and retaining good workers?

Marshall: We are a small operation and I am the worker. However, I’ve always preached to my kids, treat people how you want to be treated.

ST: What do you like to do to relax and refresh yourself away from the job?

Marshall: I like to spend time with my family. My wife and I have a grown son and two daughters and we like to get together as much as possible. We slip away for a few days when we can, and boat and fish.

ST: If you could have any turf manager job in the country for a week, what would it be and why?

Marshall: I already have the best turf job in the country and a great staff and a great athletic director. And remember, I said they rake and pull weeds. ■



Maintenance Program

Aeration

3x/year

Late spring, summer, early fall

Fertilization

Monthly

Use various mixtures depending on desired growth and conditioning of grass. Use walk-behind rotary spreader; mixtures include 24-2-11; 15-3-15 with Ronstar; 21-0-0; and 22-2-11.

Irrigation

Average 4-5x/week

Varies with weather and temperature conditions; average 30-60 minutes per zone using reclamation water. Repairs made in-house as necessary.

Mowing

3x/week

Two times weekly in slower growing seasons.

Overseeding

Annually

Usually late Nov to early Dec; approximately 500 pounds of Eagle Supreme perennial rye is used on entire complex, 275 pounds on the outfield. Use walk-behind drop spreader.

Spraying

As needed for insects or worms; 2x/year with pre-emergent/post-emergent, middle fall before overseeding, late spring to eliminate rye for transition. Use 50-gallon pull-behind boom sprayer or 3-gallon backpack sprayer.

Tilling & Laser Grading

Annually

1x in December, contracted out.

Topdressing

Annually

1x in summer

Verticutting

Annually

1x in summer