

Design and material selection for newest MLB facility

THE DIAMONDBACKS AND ROCKIES are doing something never done before in Major League Baseball.

The new spring training facility shared by the NL West rivals is the first professional complex built on Native American land. Salt River Fields at Talking Stick is on 140 acres of land shared by

the Salt River Pima and Maricopa Indian communities near Scottsdale, AZ. Designed by HKS architects, the facility was built by Mortenson Construction and features tremendous views of Camelback Mountain, the McDowell Mountains, Four Peaks, Red Mountain, and the Superstition Mountains.

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The crown jewel of the complex is the 11,000-person capacity stadium, featuring a few other “firsts.”

The video scoreboard is the largest Spring Training board in baseball, measuring 24-by-48 feet and featuring LED technology. Also, the positioning of the field and the roof structure ensures that 85% of the seating bowl will be in shade by the late innings...

Interview with Joe Traficano, West Coast Turf

SPORTSTURF: Who made the decision to install your sod on these fields, what is that turfgrass, and are all the fields employing the same variety?

TRAFICANO: Grant Trenbeath, head groundskeeper for the Arizona Diamondbacks and Mark Razum, head groundskeeper for the Colorado Rockies were the primary decision makers in going with Tifway 419 hybrid bermuda-grass. This variety is used exclusively throughout the entire complex including all landscape areas.

ST: What reasons did they give for going with that particular variety?

TRAFICANO: Both Grant and Mark have grown and maintained this variety throughout their careers and were familiar with its growing characteristics; it is the most commonly used bermuda on sports fields and golf courses in Arizona.

ST: How many fields are there at the complex? Approximate total acreage?

TRAFICANO: There are 13 fields total; each team has six practice fields and the main stadium field that is shared. Along with the fields each team has pitching mounds, bunting fields, half fields, and agility fields for conditioning. West Coast Turf provided 35 acres of Tifway 419 sand base for all the playing surfaces and 15 acres of Tifway 419 native base material for all the landscape areas around the complex.

ST: How far in advance was the type of turf decided upon, and did WCT grow particular acres specifically for this project?

TRAFICANO: West Coast Turf was contacted in January 2010 to hold 1.2 million square feet of Tifway 419 Bermuda sand base for an approximate June 2010 installation date. Typically for this sized project you would contact the sod supplier at least 8 months in advance so the sod can be held until it was time for installation. We knew that the project was going to be built before our initial meeting and made a decision in Fall 2009 not to oversee any material projected for the complex so it would be in prime condition when needed.

So for this project the short window was not an issue at all due to several factors, one being that we are a large sod supplier and had the inventory to handle the quantity and time frame required for the project. Secondly, we have worked with all the parties involved in the construction and lastly, West Coast Turf currently grows our turf on land that is leased from the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. The construction team said the [Native American Community] was pleased to be using turf that was grown on their land for this project.

ST: What challenges does Marshall Jennings, the on-site turf manager there, face in this first year, in your opinion?

TRAFICANO: The biggest challenge in my opinion would be having to oversee the turf installed in summer and then having to bring in sod that was overseeded in late November through January due to schedule of the project. It is always recommended that new turf installed in the summer not be overseeded and let it have 1 year to establish and mature, but we all know that is not always possible, especially in this situation. These fields need to be in prime condition for spring training and here in the Southwest the Tifway 419 Bermuda goes dormant. ■