

Ryan Field, Northwestern University

- **Level of Submission:** College
- **Category of Submission:** Football
- **Head Sports Turf Manager:** Randy Stoneberg
- **Title:** Supervisor of Grounds
- **Education:** High School
- **Work History:** I have been employed by Northwestern University since January 1985. Starting as an

entry level worker, I have worked my way up the ladder to Supervisor of Grounds through hard work and long hours. Networking and the STMA has helped me through just about anything and everything.

- **Full Time Staff:** Joe Berube and Rich Thorn
- **Original construction:** 1926
- **Turfgrass variety:** Freedom III

Kentucky bluegrass, Everest Kentucky bluegrass, Award Kentucky bluegrass, NuChicago Kentucky bluegrass, and Low-Mow Grass seed mix.

- **Rootzone composition:** Sandy loam, 85% sand (using USGA mix)
- **Overseeding:** After every coring or slicing, we overseed with 200 lbs of Low-Mow Blue. Starting 4 weeks before our first football game of the year, we overseed weekly with 50 lbs of Low-Mow Blue, so the seed is germinating throughout the playing season. We push extra seed behind each goal post and sidelines on an as-needed basis.

- **Drainage system:** The field itself has a herringbone pattern gravity drainage system on 15-foot centers.



A sideline drainage system handles excess water from the stands. Both systems channel into the storm sewer system. This system has proved it can handle even the worst rains, draining the turf flawlessly during a home game September 12, 2008, the second-rainiest day in Chicago history, when 6.64 inches of rain dumped on the city. Streets flooded and many fans could not get to the stadium at all, but the field performed at its expected level of excellence.

- **Other activities:** Dinners on the 50-yard line, football summer camps, graduations, and commercial video and photo shoots.

CHALLENGES

Northwestern's Ryan Field is known as the "Wrigley Field of College Football" and is a historic gem among college stadiums. To enhance its beauty, 900 purple and white mums designed to be in full bloom for Homecoming are planted each year at the north end.

In 2005, Ryan Field was re-sodded and

Ryan Field Equipment List

- 2011 John Deere Gator
- 2011 Verti-Drain (leased)
- 2010 Toro 3500 Sidewinder Rotary Mower
- 1998 Cushman Boom Sprayer
- 1996 Toro Topdresser
- 1996 John Deere 955 Tractor
- John Deere AerCore 1500
- 1996 Goossen Sweeper

by the fall of 2007, 50% of the field was covered with *poa annua* grass. "Our media department distributed a press release explaining what *poa annua* is because media kept saying the field was diseased," wrote Supervisor of Grounds Randy Stoneberg in his award application. "Even Coach Pat Fitzgerald was quoted as saying his field had acne because of the pimple effect on TV."

In the spring of 2008, NU sprayed Roundup on the *poa annua* and killed almost half of the field before overseeding with a ryegrass and bluegrass mix. Dead spots did not grow back as fast as needed, so in the fall of 2008 agronomist Tim Van

Loo, CSFM, began a *poa annua* "Game Plan" before he moved on to a position at Iowa State. That game plan has been continued by Stoneberg and expanded to other fields with great success.

The game plan is composed of three steps, beginning with the application of selective herbicide Prograss during very specific times in November, December and March for best results. This process leaves the *poa* looking dead in the spring. While some will survive, the goal is to reduce the amount each year. This goal has been surpassed with tremendous results.

The second step is to overseed with ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass. Ryegrass can be seeded 2-3 weeks after the final Prograss application while Kentucky bluegrass can be seeded 6 weeks after that date.

The third step deals with any *poa* that comes back. First, a plant growth regulator called Trimmit is applied to slow the growth rate of *poa annua* and allow the Kentucky bluegrass and ryegrass to have a competitive advantage. This keeps remaining *poa* spots smaller and easier to kill the following year. ■

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