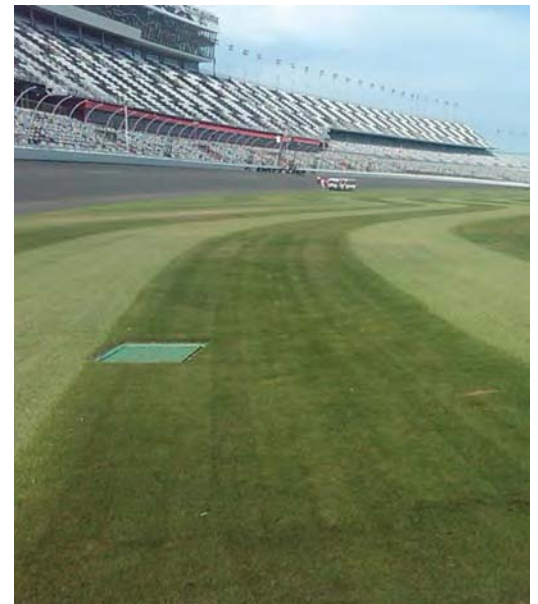
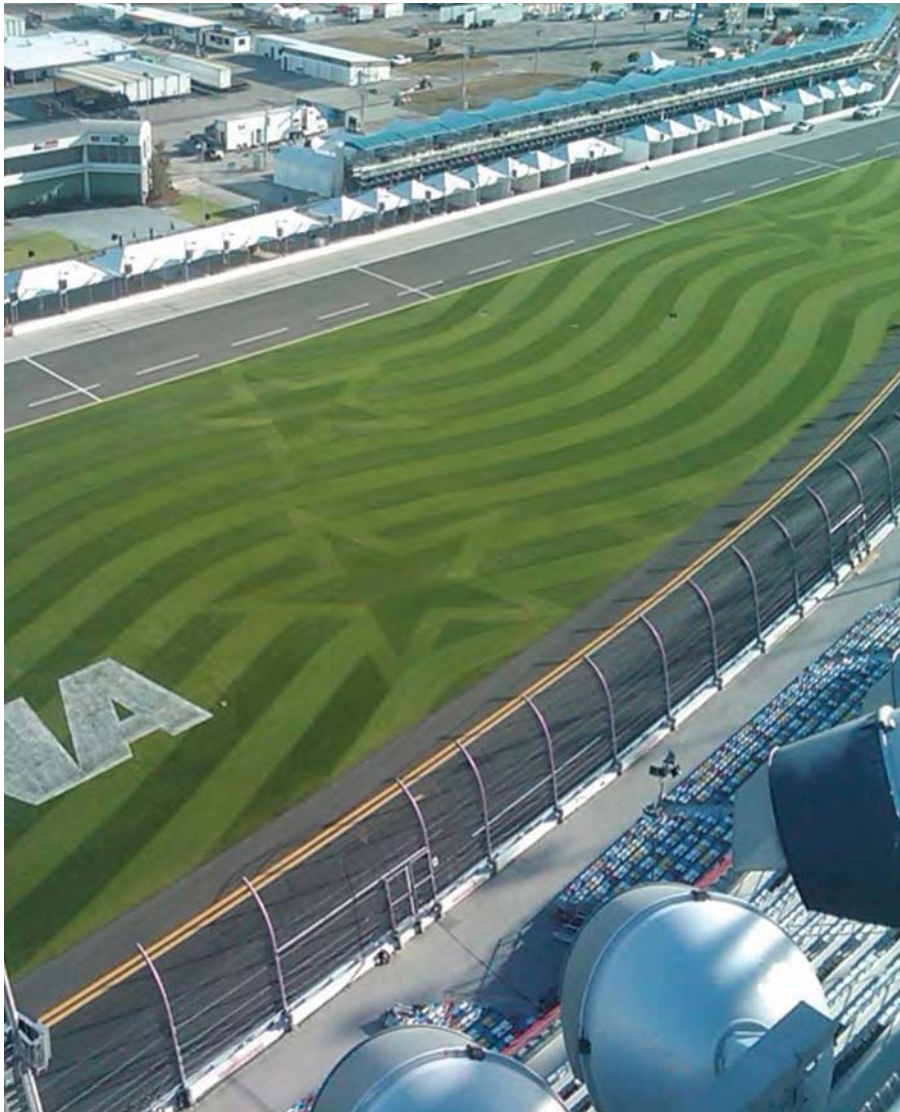


DAYTONA infield turf overseeded to produce stunning visual

THE GORGEOUS TURF SHOTS on this page, courtesy of Gary Morgan from Agrium Advanced Technologies, of the 6-acre grass infield at famed Daytona International Speedway, reflect thinking outside the box by Sam Newpher, the Speedway's grounds supervisor; his crew, Dan Brown, Bob Pearson, Perry Horton and Chris Hanson; and Speedway President Joie Chitwood, who suggested

sowing stars and stripes across the field.

Newpher said he was asked by his boss, director of track operations Andrew Gurtis, to get creative a few years ago in trying something different in prepping for the Daytona 500, the Super Bowl of stock car racing and, almost by accident, he ended up alternately striping with annual bluegrass and darker-colored perennial ryegrass, which worked well. "We wanted to get even jazzier this year," he said.



"It was fun to do,"

Newpher said. "The five of us have a lot of experience getting ready for Speed Week and we were blessed with perfect weather, good temperatures and virtually no rain, so we could irrigate only when we wanted. The grass grew in perfectly."

He and the crew had a number of ideas but in the end Chitwood approved a stars and stripes, alternating waving banner theme of Newpher's. "It was fun to do," Newpher said. "The five of us have a lot of experience getting ready for Speed Week and we were blessed with perfect weather, good temperatures and virtually no rain, so we could irrigate only when we wanted. The grass grew in perfectly."

"In the past we seeded the 'football field' as we call it with perennial ryegrass and mowed patterns in it," Newpher said. "We'd keep an eye out for disease and so on, but this year because the poa annua is tenderer, we did a preventative fungicide program instead of a curative program. We also have added one pound of nitrogen once a month and will until the races are over (in February)." It took 6 days to complete the overseeding.

But this time around, over Thanksgiving week last year, the crew planted the two grasses based on a plotting by Kenny Bogner with Missouri Turf Paint, who has painted the Speedway logo on the

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— Sam Newpher

grass for many years. Bogner helped them design a pattern of smoothly waving stripes and six 60-foot stars. Bogner marked out the pattern and Newpher's crew went to work planting and fertilizing. Morgan reports that Signature Trilogy BT 3-way perennial rye blend was applied at 600 lbs/acre. Annual rye was applied at 600 lbs/acre, he said.

Morgan also said that pH acid and Revert are applied monthly because the Ca/Na levels are so high from the lime rock under the asphalt that drains into the turf and the poor water that is used for irrigation out of Lake Lloyd (pH 8.2). Normal base saturation levels are: Ca, 95%; H, 1.6%; Mg; 2.2%; and K, .7%.

For fertilizer, Morgan reports that primarily 10-10-10 50% XCU and Signature 18-24-12 25% XCU were used. After the turf is cut down to 1.75 inches, Feature 6-0-0 was used only on the Trilogy BT at 6 lbs/acre rate to darken it up and make the contrast even more dominating. Newpher said the day after the Daytona 500, where traditionally the winner spins doughnuts on the infield turf, he and the crew tear up the "football field" to prepare for a motocross race held in the infield area. "While you might think that we'd hate that we don't mind because it gives us a breather," he said. "The turf is just window-dressing and that's just fine with us."

After the motocross, Newpher said the crew will start sprigging once again with Tifway 419 in preparation for the next NASCAR race at Daytona, the Coca-Cola 500 in July. ■

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