Perhaps turfgrass management’s answer to Mike Trout and Bryce Harper, a young phenom has emerged who not only manages his field but also plays on it and owns it (well, sort of). I received an email over the summer from a 14-year-old youngster touting the wiffleball field he had built in his backyard. The email was signed “Eddie Zajdel, Head Grounds Keeper and player, Plymouth Brewers, Plymouth MI.”

It read: “It all started 2009 when I constructed a little mound on the grass without my dad’s permission. He was a little mad but soon saw all the [fun] I was getting out of it, so then he let me carve out a keyhole and batters box for the rest of that season, he said but the problem is the money,” he concluded.

“Since then I have been making it better. [My goals] are to ‘sods up’ all along the lip edges and create a gate for anyone who wants to enter and indeed to protect it from the family dog. Currently we have 5 flood lights up and working and plan to install another 2 before the World Series. We also are having a home run derby and All Star Game on the 11th and 12th of July after a donation of red infield conditioner from Diamond Pro. Then the Brewers play by play radio announcer, Joe Block, is planning to come and announce a game during our World Series. Later this year I am going to meet the Tigers’ head groundskeeper, Heather Nabozny, for the second time.

I emailed Eddie and asked if he wanted to be a groundskeeper when he grew up. “Yes I did. I find passion in grass and dirt and I also enjoy getting my name out there. It is a feeling that’s very hard to explain but I know it’s good because I always want to learn more and work harder.”

Did he build a hitter’s park or a pitcher’s? “I would pretty much call it a hitter’s park because the distances are short and the field is kind of enclosed which makes or ideal for homrun hitters,” Eddie replied. He said he hadn’t won his own World Series yet because he always loses to his cousin, who plays for the Westland Tigers.

“One thing that I wish to accomplish in the future is not only becoming a groundskeeper but creating something like a public wiffleball field and starting up a league but the problem is the money,” he concluded.

Sounds like Eddie is already well-seasoned in many a turf manager’s lament! ■