

ALPENROSE STADIUM, Portland, OR

- ◎ **Level of Submission:** Schools/Parks
- ◎ **Category of Submission:** Softball
- ◎ **Head Sports Turf Manager:** Mike Hebrard
- ◎ **Title:** Head Groundskeeper
- ◎ **Education:** Master's Degree in HPE
- ◎ **Experience:** Mike was the bullpen catcher and head groundskeeper for the Amarillo Gold Sox (Texas League) AA affiliate of the San Diego Padres, 1979-82; lawn seed sales, Pro Time Lawn Seed, 1985-93; owner of Athletic Field Design, 1993 to present, all athletic fields grass and synthetic.
- ◎ **Other crew to recognize:** Jesse Johnsen, Sammy Field & the Alpenrose staff; also Anthony Paul Murillo, Bob Proctor, and Andy Hebrard.
- ◎ **Original construction:** 1956
- ◎ **Renovation:** 2010
- ◎ **Reason for renovation:** There are approximately 180 games a year plus family picnic games. With the ESPN 2 coverage for the Little League Softball World Series, we try and make Alpenrose Stadium a true showcase for Little League International, Alpenrose Dairy and District 4, AFD supporters and sponsors.
- ◎ **What was done:** Sod cut and lips removed from grass edges, topdressed with washed sand, aerated and slice seeded with perennial ryegrass and fertilized. The outfield has been topdressed with washed sand for the past 10+ years with a 1/4" each year. Due to skin infields the past 3 years, an elimination of fungicides application since we didn't have to try germinate grass in 90+ degree weather.
- ◎ **Turfgrass variety:** Perennial ryegrass
- ◎ **Rootzone composition:** Native soil, clay/loam, sand added with renovation
- ◎ **Overseeding:** We topdress first, this allows the aerator to push sand into soil profile, and since the plugs get coated with sand, they tend to dry out quicker and allow them to break up more when slice seeded. We don't have the resources to remove the plugs, so this also allows us to reuse the soil to fill in low spots. If we aerate first the plugs are matted into the soil profile when it topdressed. We seed at 7 lbs per 1000 sq ft and topdress with 25 cubic yards of washed sand topdressed.
- ◎ **Drainage:** No drainage system.

Challenges

The most unique challenge for the grounds crew was the short window we had in converting Alpenrose Stadium from a traditional and regulation little league baseball playing surface to a traditional and regulation softball playing surface, and back again.



This process consisted of having to strip the normal grass infield and install a softball skinned infield. More than aesthetically pleasing, we had to install a playing surface that was more importantly a safe playing surface, a playing surface that allowed for better and more consistent playability for players, as well as coaches and umpires. All of this had to be done with only 26 days of preparation.

We had from July 13 to August 7 to pull off this enormous task, as the World Series ran from August 8 through August 15. This gave us 19 days in the month of July and 7 days in the month of August. We had to remove the turf and its netting without taking out too much (native) soil and disturbing the grade of the infield. This was a very labor intensive process that took the majority of man hours, budget dollars, materials cost, and equipment use.

In order to preserve as much of the infield soil as possible and without disturbing the grade of the field as much as possible a traditional sod cutter was used. Additionally, we had to remove all existing turf and scraps from the infield with as little disturbance to left field as much as possible. The left field gate serves as the only entrance and exit for equipment used on the field.

We saved many, many man hours by using an experienced and expert ASV operator that completed this task with precise operation. This lightweight piece of equipment with rubber tracks served as an excellent piece of equipment in allowing very, very little disturbance to the grade of the infield and the turf in the outfield. Also, ¾" plywood was laid from the left field gate through left field to the edge of the infield dirt between shortstop and third base to serve as protection to the turf. By using the ASV a whole 1/4 day was saved in what would have been a normal a full day process.

We had to research and find the best quality of dirt to be transported in to install this newly skinned infield. This dirt had to be clean, free of rock and waste debris and more importantly, this dirt had to be of World Series quality that would provide a safe, consistent and stable playing surface that any levels of fast pitch softball would want to play on. We also had a language barrier with crew that added to our challenge.

SportsTurf: Your job is different from most FOY winners. Please describe what your company does and tell us who some of your customers are.

Hebrard: Going into my 20th year of basically doing any type of athletic field work that a school, park or college might need. I started off by cutting lines for the local high school football fields and of course they asked if I could do numbers and yard marks, then asked if I could do logos. I responded I never have done that before, so gradually I learned on

everyone else's dime. That was also the 1st year that the Local Little League District 4 bid on bringing the Major Girls Softball World Series to Portland and having Alpenrose Dairy and their fields hosting.

I do football and soccer layout and lines for most of the high schools in the Portland area and have established what I call the Corn Dog Circuit which is small schools that are over an hour's drive. I have also done specialized painting on synthetic turf for local colleges such as Oregon State and Pacific University as well as most of the lacrosse on grass and turf. Also I maintain youth baseball fields, aerating, topdressing, slice seeding, laser grading and layout working with the league volunteers.

SportsTurf: What channels of communication do you use to reach your customers' coaches and administrators? Any tips on communicating well?

Hebrard: I try to attend, present or display at their annual clinics or conventions and advertise in their directories. I try to stay away from the tournament publications as they are only used for a short period of time where as a directory even with our high tech web tags still gets looked at all year. I usually donate a lawn art certificate to their auctions that promotes other things I can do as well as places a value on the work. I try to attend other sports at big events even basketball. I usually have some wise guy say, "What are you going to do paint the court?" I was involved with college basketball for 9 years and was an assistant coach when we played Indiana State and Larry Bird. And I have painted outdoor basketball courts as well.

SportsTurf: What do you find most enjoyable about your job? What do you find most distasteful?

Hebrard: Going to a disaster and leaving later in the day with everyone happy and the game going on! I really enjoy painting the logos for special events, birthday, golf tournaments and ball games. I always have someone ask me why I don't have the crew paint them. And I usually say why would I want to pay someone to do the fun stuff?

As for the bad stuff, it is keeping the equipment running! I have very specialized equipment and have most of it modified to my needs. I probably have more than 20 small engines to operate machines and more than six paint machines. Back ups for a back up. My wife said she can envision my son Andy taking over the business and me repairing the equipment. I said I don't like doing now, why would I want to do it if I was trying to retire?

SportsTurf: How did you get started in turf management? What was your first sports turf job?

Hebrard: Upon moving to Amarillo, TX to be an assistant basketball coach for West Texas State, I had a couple people I knew on the AA affiliate of the San Diego Padres the Amarillo Gold Sox. So I went to a couple of games and was dumbfounded when I saw how bad the field was! One of my jobs with the college was to sell tickets to our basketball games and the guy that just bought the Gold Sox always got involved in the community. He saw in my bio that I caught a little in college and asked if I wanted to be their bullpen catcher. I told him since we had no obligations with basketball in the summer that I might try and get a job where I could get off early to work out with the team. He said why don't

you help the head groundskeeper? Well the first day I ended up telling the old guy what to do and I didn't know anything. Needless to say I brought up the level of work which he couldn't keep up with and left by the end of the month. Well when the mound was crummy the night before, I'm in the bullpen with the pitchers and they tell me what they thought, I take ground balls from the infielders, they told me what they thought, I shag flies with the outfielders and they told me what they thought. So I learned by fire! Also I would get a roving instructor come in town and give me some pointers as well as going on a road trip and get to the yard early and talk to other groundskeepers.

SportsTurf: What changes if any are you considering or implementing for the winning field in 2012?

Hebrard: Well since getting in the room at 2 in the morning after receiving the FOY award, getting up @ 5 for the flight back to Portland arriving at 12:30. Hoping to get some sleep before our Old Timers Banquet, (Dale Murphy, our guest speaker) Since my wife and I are involved in the organization she wanted to go early so I cleaned up and went with her. I also buy 2 tables to thank people that have helped me during the year, and had to help someone draw the tickets for the raffle prizes in another room when I heard my name called. The Organization presented me with a Merit award for my work with youth baseball fields including Alpenrose Stadium. Coincidentally, Dale grew up in Portland and played at Alpenrose and mentioned that some of his best memories of playing baseball happen there. Upon presenting the award to Carl Cadonau of Alpenrose Dairy he mentioned to me that he wants to convert the East field into the New Intermedi-

ate level playing surface that Little League International is now promoting. Just need to remove 27 curly willows, add another 50 feet all around and build a 5' retaining wall! I want to have an interactive contest for Softball World Series follower to have a chance to vote on which pattern we do on the infield. I'm still trying to get the upgrade of the electrical power to the fields so that we can improve the lighting, hope to get some drainage on one of the fields each year and just simply maintain our strive for excellence!

SportsTurf: How do you see the sports turf manager's job changing in the future?

Hebrard: More attention to detail and budget. I can see that the use of cell phones will be invaluable to the groundkeeper as the instant acquisition of apps allows for a quick accurate answer to their needs. Plant of disease recognition, field measurements, Google earth and so on! Less and less help but more versatile equipment. ■

The STMA Field of the Year Awards began in 1988 and are given annually in baseball, football, softball, soccer and sporting grounds in three levels: professional, collegiate and schools/parks. A panel of 11 judges independently scores the applications and the winners are announced at the STMA Annual Conference and Exhibition. Winners receive signature clothing, complimentary conference registration, three night's accommodations and a trophy for display. The Field of the Year Program is made possible through the generous donations of Carolina Green Corporation, Ewing Irrigation Products, Hunter Industries, and World Class Athletic Surfaces, Inc.

Natural Turf. Synthetic Turf.
Your Turf. TurfBreeze.



Pictured Bryant-Denny Stadium | University of Alabama

TurfBreeze fans on trailers are ideal for promoting air movement in stadiums and on sports fields.

TurfBREEZE

info@turbreeze.com | 803 641 6663 | www.turbreeze.com



GRACO

Introducing the **NEXT BIG THING** in field marking!

FieldLazer™ S90

The World's First Battery Powered, High-Pressure Field Marker

*Brighter, Longer-Lasting Lines with 1/2 the Paint
Easy to Use and Clean • Eco-Friendly*

© 2013 Graco Inc. Form No. 347587 Rev. A 1/13 Printed in U.S.A.