



# DICK'S SPORTING GOODS PARK, Commerce City, Colorado

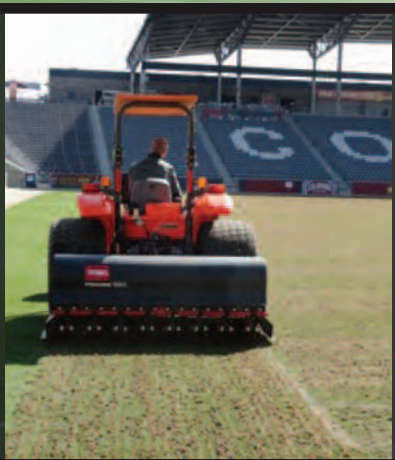


# F.O.Y.

## Field of the Year



- ◎ **Level of Submission:** Professional
- ◎ **Category of Submission:** Soccer
- ◎ **Head Sports Turf Manager:** Bret Baird
- ◎ **Title:** Turf Manager
- ◎ **Education:** Bachelor's degree from Michigan State in Crop and Soil Sciences
- ◎ **Experience:** May 2001-May 2006, Assistant Turf Manager, Denver Broncos; May 2006 to present, Turf Manager, Dick's Sporting Good Park
- ◎ **Other crew to recognize:** Phil McQuade (current STMA Board member); Cody Witham; Manuel Garcia; and Brad Youn
- ◎ **Original construction:** 2006; won STMA Field of the Year Award in 2008
- ◎ **Turfgrass variety:** The field is 100% Kentucky bluegrass. The original sod was grown with the following varieties: Brilliant, North Star, Moonlight, and Blackstone.
- ◎ **Overseed:** Our current overseeding mix consists of 100% Kentucky Bluegrass with the following varieties: Rugby II, Brooklawn, Prosperity, Moonlight SLT, and Orfeo.



- ◎ **Rootzone composition:** 90% sand, 10% peat; field features SubAir forced air soil heating system.
- ◎ **Drainage:** 6-inch drainage pipes on 10-foot centers across field.

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## CHALLENGES

One of our largest challenges this year is the extreme amount of practices on our field. Our new coach has stated he would like to train in the stadium the day before every game. In my opinion one practice is more destructive than a game. For example a goal keeper performing practice drills may make 15 cuts in the exact same spot during practice but during a game his 15 cuts are spread throughout the entire goal mouth. Our coaching staff always uses cones for warm-up drills. We work with them on proper placement but all 28 players still cut in the exact same spots opposed to a game where the wear is spread throughout the field.

The timing of practices could not be worse—the day before a game when we have to paint. To combat that, this year we have had to paint the field on Thursday instead of on Friday for a weekend game. The paint for the game is not as bright and the game is played on a chewed up field.

Another challenge this year was a 3 day PHISH concert over Labor Day weekend. The stage was placed on the field directly over a goal mouth. We had a less-than-desirable field covering. Although we specified 100% translucent flooring the suppliers sent us field covering that was two different colors. Sixty percent of the flooring was translucent and 40% was a grey non-translucent. We were not made aware of this until the day before the show when the flooring arrived and by then it was too late to change suppliers. Where the gray covering was we received severe leaf burn from the high temps during the weekend. The field was uncovered on Monday and we hosted an MLS game on Wednesday and two college soccer games on Friday. On Saturday we had US/Canada lacrosse game with practices for each team in the morning. On Sunday we had a season-ticket holder party on the field with various soccer type games and drills on the field for 300 people. Our main concern was extreme wear on the weakened, burnt turf. Although we made it through the weekend, the field was much more worn than it would have been if we had not weakened 40% of the field by being covered and exposed to extreme temperatures just days before.

Year in and year out one of our largest challenges is keeping this field in the best possible condition while also taking care of the rest of the complex. The same crew that takes care of our stadium field is also responsible for the rest of the complex which, beside the stadium field, includes a sand-based practice field, two synthetic fields and 21 native soil fields.

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Unique to MLS is the length of the season. Our first event was on March 10 and our last event is November 10. Our season begins and ends with the field in dormancy. Our concern during these times is keeping high wear areas in good enough condition that they can re-grow once the soil is warm enough. If we do not constantly monitor these high wear areas and talk to user groups about proper usage the field will never make it out of cold months with enough crowns to re-grow once warm.

**SportsTurf:** What type of turf do you have on your field? What is the soil profile? What would be your perfect turf/soil combination for your “dream field”.

**Baird:** We have 100% Kentucky bluegrass, on a 90% sand 10% peat profile. I have my ideal; the 90% sand 10% peat has been excellent.

**ST:** How do you balance your family life with work demands?

**Baird:** We have an outstanding crew.

**ST:** Did you or are you planning on making any adjustments, large or small, to your maintenance plan in 2013?

**Baird:** No.

**ST:** Did you purchase any new equipment or try a new product this year?

**Baird:** No.

**SportsTurf:** What's the greatest pleasure you derive from your job?

**Baird:** The joy the athletes get while competing on the field when it's in top notch condition.

**SportsTurf:** What's the biggest headache?

**Baird:** Trying to rationalize irrational people.

**ST:** How do you see your job changing in the next 10 years?

**Baird:** Trying to manage turf in a more environmentally friendly way especially in regards to water use. ■

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.