

FROM THE PUBLISHER



Is it the summer workload, or is there really disenchantment in the ranks? Recently I have had a number of calls from golf course superintendents and sports turf managers. They said their summer hours were playing havoc with their family lives. They felt unappreciated and lacking in the respect they thought they deserved. They lamented that they were underpaid and overworked.

After listening to the gripes for a while, I can see their point of view. It is one thing to own your own business and put in long hours. Hopefully it will be very profitable and you will reap the rewards. It's quite another to work for a corporation or municipality on a fixed salary.

I'm concerned. Are we beginning to see an exodus of professionals from the industry? Will the talented people leave for greener pastures? Such moves don't happen overnight; they evolve slowly into action. But if, in fact, disenchantment has set in, can those moves be far behind?

I look at a multi-million-dollar golf course or sports complex as I would view the physical plant at any large institution. It would be absurd to think that anyone would erect a 20-story building and not consider hiring a professional plant engineer to run the place. These qualified people would receive a salary commensurate with the size of the property they have to manage. They would also receive the respect their position deserves.

City managers, school administrators, presidents of golf clubs, and greens committee-men need to take a hard look at the professional turf manager. He has been entrusted with complete responsibility for millions of dollars' worth of landscaped property. Accordingly, his superiors need to respect the vital position a superintendent holds—and come up with a compensation package on a level with those enjoyed by other physical-plant managers.

Equally as important, they can't expect him to put in 16-hour days, seven days a week, or burnout will become a major problem. As more sports complexes and golf courses come on line, the demand for managerial skills will increase. If we lose these talented people they will be very difficult to replace.

Perhaps it's because there is a shortage of top professionals that we are beginning to see more contractors being used in areas that were once the exclusive domain of the golf course superintendent and the sports turf manager. New companies are sprouting up, offering turf-management services on a contract basis. Organizations like American Golf Corporation and Servicemaster offer programs on contract. Some sports arenas and golf courses use contractors for a complete renovation and rebuild. Others contract out the entire maintenance. In either case, we are seeing another niche being carved out. I am sure that some of those managers who left the clubs are now involved in these new enterprises.

This could be a way to go for professionals who experience burnout at one complex. The idea of being an independent businessman may appeal to them. There are pitfalls, to be sure: They will have to learn the business end of the business. They will have to learn how to use their labor corps most effectively and efficiently, because every wasted man-hour will cost them money.

I do feel that many of you turf professionals have most of the skills to begin with. Certainly you have the field skills; otherwise you wouldn't be in your present position. All of you develop budgets and work within those budgets, so many of the necessary business skills are already in place.

I believe our industry is changing, albeit slowly. I feel that the schooling and expertise you have developed in the field will put you in a position of strength in the months and years to come.

Now—how do we get the corporate executives and the bureaucrats to appreciate your very special talents?

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

SAFETY MEANS YEAR-ROUND CARE



July is the month when a large number of schools and colleges attempt to bring their football and practice fields back in shape after two months of neglect. Since the end of spring soccer and intramurals, the condition of their fields has been a low priority with infrequent mowing, very little irrigation and hardly any attention to compaction or weed control. It's not surprising that many of these fields become accidents waiting to happen during the summer.

For three years I lived next to a high school in northern Ohio. The varsity football field was right behind my house and I used to jog around

the track every evening. I couldn't help but notice how this field deteriorated between May and July. The mowing stopped the last week of spring quarter and did not resume until three weeks before the football team started practice in August. By late June, the field looked like a pasture ready for baling into hay.

In late July, the hottest and driest time of the year, the school hired a contractor to chop down the half-dormant turf so the school's rotary mowers could take over. After the groundskeeper raked up the piles of clippings, a drum aerator was pulled across the field by a tractor. It bounced along on the tips of its tines penetrating less than an inch. Fertilizer and what looked like annual ryegrass were spread over the worn out center of the field. Finally, a rented surface irrigation unit was brought in to soak the field for two weeks.

To be honest, I was amazed at the recovery of the turf. When the freshmen suited up for tryouts in August, the big green field must have added to the challenge of trying out. By the third game of the season, however, the bare spots were back. It never failed, at least one game was played in the rain, leaving behind hard ridges of dirt in the bare spots. It wasn't long before the team had two or three injured players watching the games from the sidelines.

Sports turf management must be a year-round process, geared to the needs of the turf, not the vacation schedule of the maintenance staff. Turf will not provide the dense, resilient surface it needs for sports when maintenance is abruptly stopped for three months during the summer.

Since I've lived in the West, I've noticed the tremendous difference an irrigation system and year-round maintenance make on the quality of athletic fields. An irrigation system requires a commitment that forces the maintenance staff to pay regular attention to the condition of fields. These schools have the same vacation schedules and budgets as schools in other parts of the U.S. Granted, they have no choice. Turf won't grow here without irrigation. But, from May through September, there aren't many places in this country where turf will grow well without irrigation.

School and college administrators have a growing awareness of their institution's liability for field-related injuries. If they look into the primary causes of poor fields, they quickly discover the answers are consistent, year-round maintenance, some type of irrigation and increased control over field use. These factors apply regardless of the school's location.

Administrators are learning that they don't save money by reducing field maintenance in the summer. They only expose themselves and their schools to the larger, unpredictable cost of field-related injuries later in the season. Wise administrators are increasing their summer maintenance programs and reducing their exposure to senseless injuries, higher insurance premiums, and legal fees. The best way to provide safe fields will always be year-round maintenance.

Bruce Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JULY

22

Kansas Turfgrass Field Day, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS. Contact: Larry Leuthold, Horticulture Dept., Waters Hall, KSU, Manhattan, KS 66506. (913) 532-6173.

28

Missouri Turfgrass Field Day, South Farm, University of Missouri, Columbia. Contact: Dr. David Minner, Dept. of Horticulture, 1-40 Agriculture Bldg., Columbia, MO 65211.

AUGUST

6

Recreational Liability Seminar, National Geographic Society Auditorium, Washington, DC. Contact: National Society of Park Resources, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302, (703) 820-4940.

9-12

Park Planning and Maintenance School, Clarion Hotel, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: Frank Cosgrove, P.O. Box 6900, Colorado Springs, CO, 80934, (303) 632-7031.

11

Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Day, Rutgers Soils and Crops Research Center, Halls Mills Rd., Adelphia, NJ. Contact: Dr. Henry Indyk, Soils & Crops Dept., Cook College, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, (201) 932-9453.

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University of Rhode Island Turf Field Day, Turf Research Farm, Kingston, RI. Contact: C.R. Skogley, URI, Plant Sciences Dept., Woodward Hall, Kingston, RI 02881, (401) 792-2570.

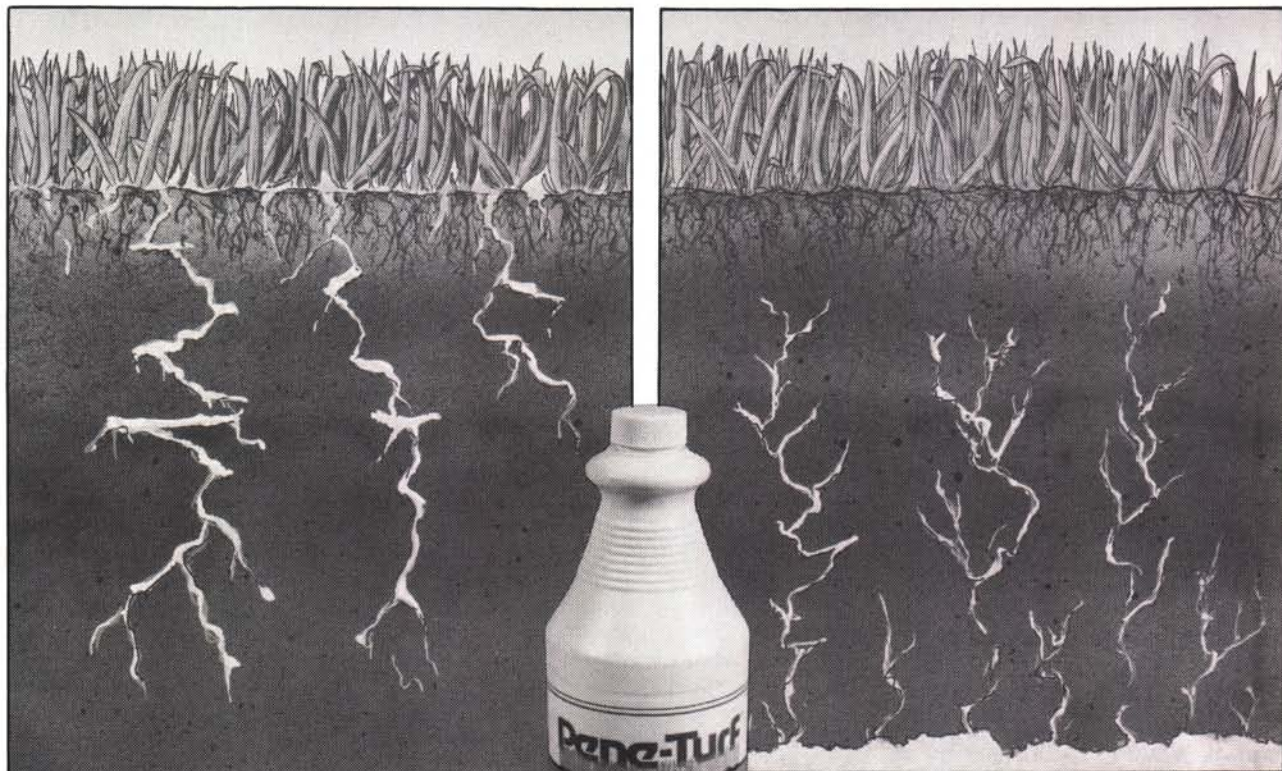
SEPTEMBER

10-11

Alabama Turf Conference, Auburn Conference Center/Best Western, Auburn, AL. Contact: Alabama Turfgrass Association, P.O. Box 70, Auburn, AL 36831. (205) 887-6916.

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Turf Races Are The Spice Of Life At Suffolk Downs

And they're off! the track announcer broadcasts to the crowd as ten high-strung thoroughbreds lunge out of their gates onto the emerald green turf oval at Suffolk Downs in East Boston, MA. With those words and the ring of the starting gate, the betting windows close and thousands of spectators begin to shout encouragement to the horses they bet on moments before.

Turf races are a favorite of the fans at Suffolk Downs. Grass provides an extra factor for bettors to contemplate, as well as a brief taste of racing as practiced in England, France and Australia. There's something classy about jockeys racing eight 1,200-pound horses over the tall grass as they battle for the lead. For a few seconds during the less than two-minute race, fans forget the statistics the racing form, their superstitions and their luck to enjoy the beauty of the sport.

The turf races are a pleasant change of pace because only one out of every 15 races is run on the turf course. Three days each week, between Memorial Day and November, the racing secretary at Suffolk Downs writes two turf races on the card (racing schedule). All other races are run on the mile-and-a-quarter-long dirt course.

The popularity of turf races has grown

steadily since 1958 when Suffolk Downs built a seven furlong turf oval inside its dirt course. At first none of the owners wanted to race their horses on the turf. American thoroughbreds have traditionally raced on dirt tracks while their British and European counterparts race on turf.

In the early '60s, American horsemen started to discover that buying foreign horses was an economical way to build up their breeding and racing programs in "the States." To increase the value of these imported thoroughbreds, as well as the stud fees for the stallions, they needed to race them on U.S. tracks. Since these horses had raced on turf in their homelands, they performed better on turf than on the dirt. The demand for turf tracks started to increase.

"Today turf tracks are popular with fans, horsemen and track owners," says Christopher Scherf, director of services for the Thoroughbred Racing Association of America in Lake Success, NY. "You wouldn't build a track today without one."

More fans bet on turf races than dirt races. "Variety is the spice of life for fans," says Scherf. "With nine races on the card, seven on the dirt and two on the turf, fans might skip betting on some of the races on the dirt course, but they make a point to bet on both turf races." As a result, the tracks



Turf races are a favorite of horsemen and racing fans.

often get their best handle (amount wagered) on turf races. The larger the handle, the more money the track makes.

Horsemen like tracks with both dirt and turf courses because it gives them another option. Some horses run better on turf than on dirt. "The turf is also easier on the horses because it has more give than the dirt," explains Scherf. "In the past few years, turf races often have a fuller and more competitive field (group of horses in a race) than those on dirt courses. There is a definite growth in the popularity of turf races."

But, don't expect to see the 100 major race tracks in the U.S. and Canada convert their dirt courses to turf. "In England, race meetings are generally less than a week long," says Scherf. The turf has three months to recover before the next meet. In this country, race meetings last for months. Some tracks, like Suffolk Downs, have both a winter and summer meet for year-round racing. "There is no way turf can stand up to that kind of punishment."

At Suffolk Downs, the dirt and turf courses have been managed by one family since 1935. Steve Pini, general foreman, is the third generation of his family responsible for providing a safe racing surface at the famous New England track.

Nicholas Pini, Steve's grandfather, was a construction foreman in 1935 for Joe Tomasello when his company turned 208



Rocks and debris are periodically removed from the dirt course with a rockpicker.



at Suffolk Downs.

acres of mud flats next to the Atlantic Ocean into Suffolk Downs in just 60 days. Massachusetts legalized pari-mutuel betting that year. To take quick advantage of the opportunity, the officers of the Eastern Racing Association hastily selected the East Boston site and hired Tomasello to build the track as rapidly as possible.

Pini was one of 3,000 men hired by Tomasello that winter to build the race track. Together with 36 bulldozers, 24 power shovels and more than 600 trucks, the men completed the racing strip, the first concrete grandstand in the country, stables, clubhouse, judges stand, administration building, roads and landscaping. Tomasello met the deadline at a cost of \$2 million.

The ten-furlong (a furlong is one eighth of a mile) dirt track was built with 125,000 cubic yards of loam transported from Lexington, MA. The late William Almy Jr. and Francis Kelley supervised the construction of the dirt track which horsemen rated as one of the fastest in the country after it opened in April. Nicolas Pini assumed responsibility for its maintenance.

"It was more like a fairground than a race track back then," says Steve Pini. "The total season, or meet, was from the beginning of April to the Fourth of July." The rest of the year Suffolk Downs was rented out for boat shows, car shows and all kinds of outdoor events. At the end of the meet, all

but a skeleton crew was laid off until the following spring.

After the Korean War, Nick's son Charles joined the crew at Suffolk Downs as a laborer and equipment operator. Out of all 200 acres of grounds, stables for 1,350 horses, and the grandstands, it was the track that interested him most. He took special pride in the condition of the course. He'd arrive at the track each morning at five to get the dirt course ready for warm-ups at 6 a.m. Much of the equipment used to loosen and groom the dirt was built by him. He insisted that the crew get the machinery onto the course immediately after each race. At the first sign of dust, he'd order the water trucks onto the course to wet down the dirt before the next race. Precision was required to get the job done in less than 15 minutes. Pini would time the crew and, if one of the crew wasn't taking his job seriously, he'd find himself cleaning stables the next day.

When Charles took over the general foreman's job from his father in the late '50s, he approached the racing association board about installing a turf course inside the dirt oval. The track still had a single, 60-day meet. On a modest budget and without much consideration to drainage, Pini hauled in more truck loads of loam for the 65-foot-wide oval, sowed common Kentucky bluegrass and installed 75 quick-coupler sprinklers below the inside rail. Once es-

tablished, the bluegrass was mowed at six inches to provide a soft cushion for the horses and the jockeys. The turf course would remain exactly as built for the next 27 years.

In the late 60s, new owners wanted to extend the racing season as long as possible. It decided to add a winter meet. Not only would it produce more revenue for the track, it would enable horsemen to generate more income to counteract their escalating costs. More and more horsemen were depending upon "syndicates" (groups of investors) to pay their bills.

For nearly 20 more years, Charles Pini did his best and used every trick in the book to keep the dirt course open during the wet, cold Massachusetts winter. Without major renovation of the track, he was able to keep the horses running. The number of race days per year climbed from 60 to 200.

During this period, he hired his son Steve to help him maintain the track during his high school summer vacations. The union crew had grown in size from less than 20 to nearly 60 as Suffolk Downs became a year-round facility. More and more of his time was spent managing people. He wanted to improve the drainage on both the dirt and turf courses. Unfortunately, during the next 15 years when he and his son worked together at Suffolk Downs, the opportunity never came along.

When Charles Pini died unexpectedly two years ago and Steve was asked to take his place, his first thought was of the drainage work his father had never been able to complete. Horses will race on a sloppy track if they have to, but owners don't like the extra risk involved. An injured horse can't win purses. It boils down to the fact that owners decide where their horses race, especially if they are good. The better the horses are that race at a track, the bigger the crowds will be. A track has to attract good horses, winning jockeys and fans to be successful.

Edward (Buddy) LeRoux, Jr., who until recently was part owner of the Boston Red Sox, led a group of investors in the purchase of Suffolk Downs in 1986. LeRoux has played a major role in Boston sports, having served as trainer for both the National Hockey League Boston Bruins and the National Basketball Association Boston Celtics. His most amazing feat was rising from trainer of the American League Boston Red Sox to part owner in nine years. He believed the success of the Bruins, Celtics and Red Sox could be repeated for the sport of horse racing. With LeRoux's urging, his partners in Belle Isle Limited Partnership immediately explored ways to improve the track facility.

Pini saw the chance to improve both courses and was thrilled to become involved in a track improvement program. Steve had always sought advice from the track engineer and superintendents from tracks he respected. That winter Pini had the top four inches (more than 6,000 cubic yards) of track mix scraped off and stored. Then he had

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Turf Races

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the scrapers remove another 14 inches of dirt and clay that lay below the track.

Fourteen inches of limestone dust was then trucked in and spread as the new base for the dirt course. Instead of acting as a barrier to drainage like clay, the stone dust allows excess moisture to pass through. At the same time, it holds on to a portion of the water to act as a reservoir for the soil above during dry conditions.

Instead of putting the original track mix back on top of the stone dust, Pini brought in four inches of mason's sand. His plan was to keep the track dry during the winter and spring with the sand. The following May, when the rain tapered off and temperatures started to rise, he'd remove the sand and replace it with the dirt he had stored the previous fall. It was a tremendous task, but

above the stone dust is pushed into windrows. A Harley rock picker lifts up the windrows of soil and removes any object larger than one-half inch. "Trainers will tell you if rocks are starting to show up," says Pini. "Of course, I hope the equipment operators see the rocks before the trainers do. It's their job to make sure that track is safe."

When the crew isn't loosening or cleaning the mixture of sand, silt and clay, they are wetting it down to firm it up. From 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. during the summer, Pini's crew uses 3,000-gallon tank trucks with boom sprayers to wet down the dirt course. Three percent of the dirt is clay to hold on to this moisture during the day. "It's not as simple as wetting down a baseball infield," explains Pini. "You really have to get it just right. Horses are very sensitive about their feet and the traction they get off the dirt."

Horses have to work harder on a soft or

the soil needed to dry out after rains. It would take a week for the turf to be dry enough for racing after heavy storms. Even then, there would be wet spots long after the rest of the turf was dry. Pini thought he could double the number of races on the turf oval if he could get better control over moisture.

He'd heard about wetting agents from a friend that worked for Rochester Midland. The localized wet spots made him think that something in the thatch or soil was preventing the water from draining. He mixed 40 gallons of Penetrate wetting agent in the 2,500-gallon tank of a water truck and sprayed the entire turf course. "We noticed right away that the turf course was taking irrigation water more quickly than before," states Pini. "The wet spots also disappeared. That summer we were able to race on the turf course the day after a hard rain, instead of a week later. Our number of turf races increased from 50 to more than 100 during the summer meet."

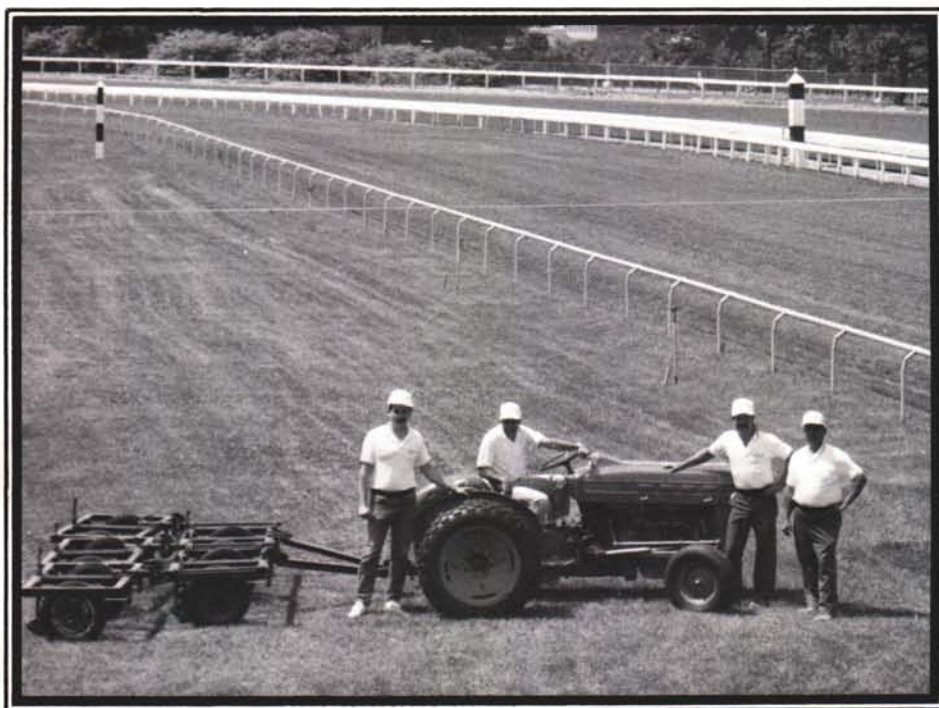
That spring when Pini aerated the oval he noticed the tines penetrated deeper than before. "We were finally starting to make a dent in the turf after nearly 30 years of racing," he remarked. It gave Pini hope that he would not have to rebuild the soil beneath the oval.

More than two inches of thatch had built up at the base of the bluegrass. Pini wanted a shorter turf, one he could repair quickly. He called the Lofts Seed office in Arlington, MA, to get some advice on seeding. General Manager Jerry Zuccala happened to answer the call. Normally, Zuccala would have passed the call on to one of his salesmen. "I guess the thought of working with Suffolk Downs captured my interest," he remarks.

Pini invited Zuccala out to the track. "Steve already knew about turf-type perennial ryegrasses," says Zuccala. "He planned to scalp the bluegrass, remove the thatch, aerify heavily and overseed with ryegrass. This was February and he had to have the course back in shape by May. I suggested he use a blend of ryegrasses instead of just one type and institute a schedule of fertilization and weed control."

Zuccala provided Pini with a maintenance schedule for the seven-acre plus turf oval starting April 1 and ending in the second week of November. To help the turf recover from the frequently severe Boston winters, Pini's crew applies Lofts Professional Lawn Food (25-5-10) at the rate of one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. A third of the nitrogen in this fertilizer is slow-release, sulfur-coated urea. It also contains needed phosphorus, potassium and iron to help the turf recover from any winter damage.

In mid-May, in addition to an application of wetting agent, Pini controls young broad-leaf weeds with 26-3-3 Professional Weed and Feed containing Trimec. It takes 20, 54-pound bags to cover the entire turf course. "Since we mow the course fairly high (3-4 inches) and keep it thick," says Pini, "we don't have too many severe weed problems."



Third generation track foreman Steve Pini and his hand-picked crew (left to right) Anthony DeFelice, Mike DeSimone and John Coppola.

it enabled the track to increase its number of race days from 200 to 265 per year.

"We can make the change in two days," says Steve. "After the last race on Monday night, we bring in three front-end loaders, a dozen dump trucks, three graders and three spreader boxes. We don't race on Tuesdays or Thursdays. By 6 a.m. on Wednesday, most of the track is back in for warm-ups. By 1 p.m., the entire track is ready for the first race."

Nobody fusses over dirt like the field crew at a horse race track. They are constantly mixing, screening, dragging, rolling, and brushing the dirt. Before every race they loosen the surface with a harrow before dragging it smooth. Suffolk Downs uses four different harrows depending upon how deep Pini wants the soil worked.

Rocks that work their way to the surface are removed with a rock picker. The dirt

"cuppy" track. They may become exhausted by the time they reach the stretch. A hard surface puts all the shock and strain of racing on the horse's feet. There's no forgiveness in case of a slip or fall. The dirt has to give just enough for the horse's hooves to get a grip without slipping. "Getting the dirt in condition before the races start is one thing," says Pini. "Keeping it that way for all races is something else."

Having solved the drainage situation on the dirt course, Pini turned his attention to the turf oval. The Kentucky bluegrass was so tall it couldn't be rolled effectively to repair divots. Turf tracks are rolled in the opposite direction of the traffic after each race to smooth out ridges and push down divots. Even the pull-behind aerator could hardly reach the soil through the thick blanket of foliage.

The tall turf also blocked out light and air

A half-rate of fertilizer is applied in mid-June and again in mid-July to help the turf recover from the six to eight races held on it each week during the summer meet. As temperatures begin to fall in September a full rate of the fertilizer is made for the same reason.

Overseeding divots takes place regularly throughout the summer, but in late September the entire course is overseeded with a blend of three perennial ryegrasses called Triplex. First Pini aerates the course. He can't lower the height of cut, so he irrigates after spreading 250 pounds of seed per acre. By November, the young ryegrass has filled in badly worn areas near the turns and along the rail when Pini makes one final full-rate application of fertilizer. In October he makes a second application of wetting agent to prepare the soil for the heavy winter snow and rain.

"We seem to have eliminated the thatch problem for good," says Pini. "Controlling the moisture and compaction has certainly helped. By getting rid of the wet spots and seeding worn areas with the fast-germinating ryegrass, we end up with better turf overall." He also credits cutting the turf with a pull-behind seven-gang reel mower three times a week at about four inches for keeping clippings under control.

The difference in the turf oval at Suffolk Downs is so noticeable, the Boston Globe did a story based on interviews with the horse trainers on how improved the track is. "It's a credit to Steve that he sought advice and made the turf course a priority when he has so many other areas to worry about," Zuccala remarks.

In addition to the turf surface, Pini has increased the amount of landscaping in the infield. The turf course is surrounded by a neatly-trimmed hedge to emulate British tracks. A large horseshoe-shaped bed has been planted with thousands of marigolds and geraniums. In the center of the bed are the initials S.D. in privet hedge.

"Now that the turf course is getting the recognition it deserves, things are going to happen a lot faster."

The track was not the only area he was improving at the time. He also renovated the clubhouse landscape, updated the irrigation for this area, and added numerous hanging baskets and plant beds near the grandstands. All the trees around the track have been mulched with bark.

"I'm fortunate to be able to do many of the things my grandfather and father wanted to do," says Steve. "Extending the season has been good for the track and the sport. It was tough at first, but we have learned ways to keep the course in condition during the winter and to provide trainers with safe and reliable dirt and turf courses."

Pini hand-picked Anthony DeFelice, John Coppola and Mike DeSimone out of 60 track workers to maintain the turf course. "My father help build it and it's where I started," explains Pini. "Tony and John share my feelings toward the course. Thirty years ago, my father believed that turf racing would be big one day in this country. If you think about it, that's not very long ago. We've had to learn alot in a short period of time while taking care of everything else at the track. Now that the turf course is getting the recognition it deserves, things are going to happen alot faster."

Pini's work is not complete by any means. An architectural firm has been retained to design the renovation of the entire track facility. Belle Isle also has plans for an arena-convention center, major hotel and indoor parking garage for the 50-year-old facility. "The planned additions should enhance the racing operation," says Al Curran, president of Suffolk Downs. "It should all add up to an improved racing facility and operation—one that fans will take pride in along with us. We want to please not only our longtime racing faithful, but also attract new fans so that Suffolk Downs will be bigger and better than ever." ☞

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FIRST PAN PACIFIC TURF CONFERENCE SET

More than 400 turf specialists from Hawaii, Japan, the Philippines, China, Australia and the U.S. are expected to attend the first annual Pan Pacific Turf Conference, set for September 24-25 in Honolulu, HI. Dr. Charles Murdoch, turfgrass specialist at the University of Hawaii, originated the idea of the conference ten years ago. He wanted managers of turfgrass in Pacific Basin countries to have a place to gather and share their knowledge.

The Hawaii Turfgrass Association is sponsoring the event with Wayne Ogasawara as chairman. The list of speakers is impressive. Murdoch heads the group that includes Dr. Jim Watson of Toro, Dr. James Beard of Texas A&M University, Dr. Joe Duich of Pennsylvania State University, Dr. Jeff Krans of Mississippi State University, Dr. Elliot Roberts of the Lawn Institute, and Dr. Norman Hummel from Cornell University. Watson will lead the seminar on sports/athletic turf management.

Topics of specific concern to the Pacific Basin are salt tolerant warm-season turfgrasses, ground water pesticide contamination and diseases of warm-season grasses. There will also be a considerable amount of attention paid to golf course management, including a two-day pre-conference seminar sponsored by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Interested sports turf managers can obtain additional information by writing Wayne Ogasawara, Hawaiian Fertilizer Sales, 94-155 C Leowaena St., Waipahu, HI 96797.

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO CAMPUS FIELDS

When the athletic trainer at Towson State University in Baltimore, MD, questioned the safety of the main practice field for spring football training, the word quickly spread to University President Hoke Smith. Injury liability is a growing concern of university administrators. The field was immediately closed and the coach had to locate another one for the team's month-long spring practice.

Smith called athletic director Bill Hunter and assistant athletic director Joe Ardolino into his office for an explanation. Normally, you might expect the grounds supervisor was in deep trouble.

"It was a blessing in disguise," reflects Paul Thomas, the grounds supervisor months later. "I was given an opportunity to describe some of the problems I face with field scheduling, maintenance budgets, personnel and managing turf in the transition zone." Ardolino supported Thomas to the president and agreed there was room for improvement. It became clear that the users

of the fields could help out more if they knew more about what was involved in field maintenance.

Smith decided the best way to handle the situation was to form a sports turf safety committee consisting of Ardolino, Thomas and representatives of university departments that use the fields to discuss problems and to come up with solutions. Members of the physical education staff, the intramural staff and the auxiliary enterprises department that rents the fields out to local organizations, were selected for the committee.

"It boils down to cooperation, understanding and money" says Thomas. The state university has a prescribed number of staff positions and a limited budget. On the other hand, none of the money generated by renting the fields or sporting events was being returned for maintenance.

"Like most colleges, we were depending solely on the Physical Plant Department to cover all maintenance expenses and handle all the work," explains Ardolino. "We play 18 sports on six fields during the school year and a camp uses them in the summer—they get no rest." Spring events would wear out the dormant zoysiagrass/tall fescue turf. After two years without overseeding and an inadequate irrigation system, the fields were deteriorating.

Once the committee heard Thomas' problems, they went back to their departments to see what compromises were pos-

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CANADA

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416-451-3952

sible. This summer, the committee will make its recommendation to Smith. The departments have already agreed to pay for three contract maintenance workers just for the sports fields. The infield of the baseball stadium has been renovated with contributions from the teams and area contractors.

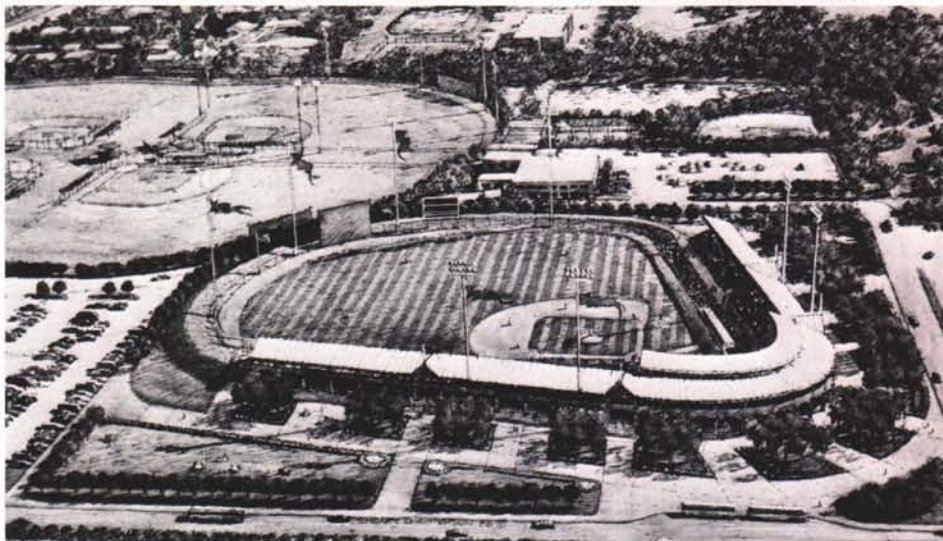
"It's just a beginning we hope," says Ardolino. The committee is also exploring the areas of poor construction, and insufficient drainage and irrigation. "By the time we're done, we hope to have a five-year phased-in plan for the president. The Department of Physical Plant simply can't do it alone. Our final recommendation will be for the field safety committee to meet twice each year to review the conditions on campus and to recommend important capital improvements for sports."

SEMINAR TO ADDRESS PARK INJURY LIABILITY

The National Society of Park Resources is sponsoring a one-day seminar on recreational injury liability on August 6 at the National Geographic Society Auditorium in Washington, D.C. James Kozlowski, an attorney and frequent contributor to the *Recreation and Parks Law Reporter*, will be the featured speaker.

"Park systems operate on detailed budgets which must be planned months and

SARASOTA RENOVATES TRAINING CENTER FOR WHITE SOX



The city of Sarasota, FL, is doing all it can to make the Chicago White Sox feel right at home in the spring with a new \$8.5 million stadium to be constructed at the existing Ed Smith training complex. In addition to a new 7,500 seat stadium, the city will also renovate the training complex to include new team facilities and parking. HOK, the architect, is also working with the White Sox and the city of Chicago on a proposed new stadium to replace Comiskey Park.

sometimes years in advance," reports Kent Blumenthall, assistant director of the National Recreational and Parks Association. "An injury law suit can seriously impact a park's budget, so park directors and superintendents are trying to control or anticipate

legal expenses. That is why the NSPR division is offering the seminar."

For further information contact the National Society of Park Resources, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302, (703) 820-4940.

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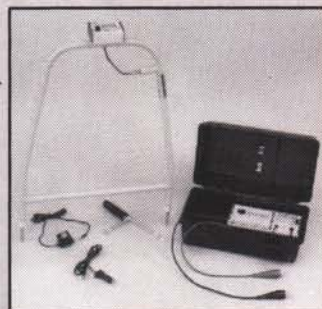
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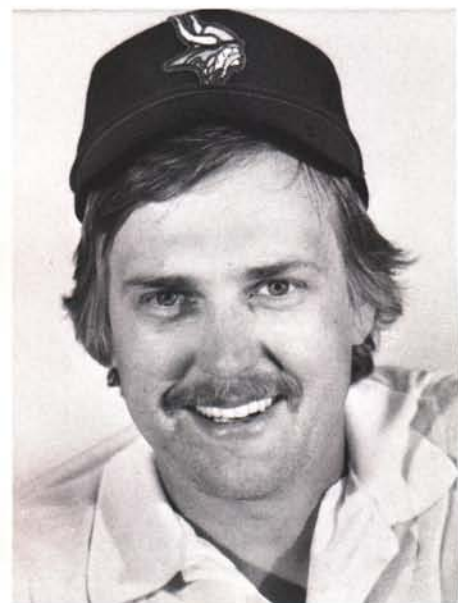
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Wembley Stadium ready for more than 80,000 British football fans in August.

Wembley Stadium: “Super Pitch” of American Football



Sam Monson

If you ask a British sports fan to name the most famous American stadium, he'd probably say Yankee Stadium. If you ask an American sports fan to name the most famous British stadium, he'd say Wembley Stadium. Four years ago, the American probably would have had a hard time even thinking of the name of one British facility. The National Football League (NFL), the international press and two groundsmen have changed all that.

For 51 weeks of the year, the pitch and surrounding dog racing track at Wembley are sacredly British. More than half of the stadium's 100,000 capacity crowd stands throughout rugby and soccer matches and dog races. They can't sit down, they don't have seats—just a place to stand. But they do have a roof overhead to protect them from the daily rainfall while the players on the pitch get soaked.

Bookies take bets as they walk through the stands like hot dog vendors. While a

portion of the crowd may be sipping tea and nibbling biscuits, the more vociferous fans are likely to be downing pints of ale. And naturally, the best seats in the house are permanently reserved for the Royal Family.

In 1984, Ralph Miller, the sales and promotions manager of Wembley, thought it would be sporting for the “Yanks” to bring over two NFL teams for “a little exhibition” of American football for British soccer and rugby fans. The British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) had introduced the sport to pubs across the Isle by telecasting the Super Bowl. The patrons of these pubs were intrigued by the rugged but strategic nature of the game. They began to organize amateur and semi-pro teams with their pubs as sponsors.

American brewers saw it as an opportunity to expand the market share of their products in the thirsty nation by supporting the growing popularity of football. With some encouragement from Anheuser-