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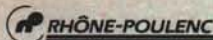
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VOLUME EIGHT, NUMBER THREE

MARCH 1992

MAIN EVENTS

8 DIAMOND OF THE YEAR: PORT ST. LUCIE CHANNELS TALENT

Rick Wise, CGCS, and Greg Kaufman, stadium superintendent, combine their talents to maintain high-quality sports fields at the St. Lucie County Sports Complex. The 6-1/2-field complex is the winner of this year's Professional Diamond of the Year.

14 STMA PROFILE: ON TIME AND ON BUDGET IN ST. LOUIS

Managing construction of the Billiken Sports Complex in St. Louis, MO, presented Richard T. Moffitt with a truckload of challenges. The \$5.5 million facility features the largest continuous synthetic sports turf surface next to 3.56 acres of natural sports turf.

18 MOUND CONSTRUCTION FUNDAMENTALS: FROM THE GROUND UP

The best pitching mounds are often those you never hear about. Ed Mangan, field director for the 1991 National League Champion Atlanta Braves is quietly building a reputation for himself as pitching mound craftsman. Learn some tips on how to build good-quality pitching mounds on your fields.

20 SPRING HELP FOR TURF

The ravages of fall play and winter weather can leave sports fields in poor condition when spring arrives. A program of core cultivation, seeding and topdressing can help bring fields back to life for the boys (and girls) of summer.

LINE-UP

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COVER: The St. Lucie County Sports Complex in Port St. Lucie, FL, won this year's Professional Diamond of the Year Award. Story on page 8. Photo courtesy: Rick Wise and Greg Kaufman.

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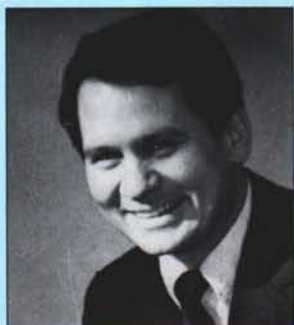
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THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

A MESSAGE TO MANAGEMENT



The most bizarre story I heard last year was about a respected college groundskeeper who did too good of a job. That's right, he made the athletic facilities and campus look fabulous. Other groundskeepers in his region visited him regularly to learn his techniques. His reward was a demotion and transfer, which he turned down.

The person who cut him off at the knees knew virtually nothing about sports or campus landscaping. She apparently had no understanding of what it takes to keep sports fields and campus grounds just alive, much less spectacular. But, she was the vice president of finance for the school whose job it was to keep expenditures down. She said the campus looked too good for such tough economic times and therefore the school must be spending too much. Instead of simply demanding a budget cut, she insisted that the groundskeeper be released.

The state university had won many awards for this groundskeeper's hard work and ingenuity. The president of the school praised him one month and turned his back on him the next. The groundskeeper left the school as clearly evidenced by the condition of the campus and the questionable safety of the athletic fields.

In another case, the owner of a professional sports franchise asked his groundskeeper to help design and build a practice facility. Half way into the project, the owner allowed one of his management staff to get involved. The new manager and the groundskeeper tangled, so the groundskeeper returned to his regular duties. Problems arose during construction, a consultant was called in at considerable expense, and finally the groundskeeper was asked back to fix and maintain the resulting mess.

Management, if you delegate authority to a skilled groundskeeper, stick with him. Hire a knowledgeable individual in the first place at a respectable salary and let him do his job. Experience has shown that the money you think you'll save in salary will be tiny compared to the cost of mistakes later.

I'm beginning to think that field injuries aren't caused by a lack of money or knowledge. Instead, they are the result of poor management decisions.

Bruce F. Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

MARCH

23-24 Athletic Turf Management Seminar, Providence, RI. Contact: National Institute on Park and Grounds Management, (414) 733-2301.

24 Sports Turf Institute and Grounds Operations Conference, Cal Poly, Pomona, CA. Contact: Dept. of Horticulture, Cal Poly, (714) 869-2219.

APRIL

13-14 Southeastern Turf Conference, Tifton, GA. Contact: Glenn Burton, Coastal Plain Station, (912) 386-3353.

JUNE

17-18 Midwest Grounds Management Conference, Midwest Association of Physical Plant Administrators and the Professional Grounds Management Society, Miami University, Oxford, OH. Contact: PGMS, 10402 Ridgland Rd., Ste. 4, Cockeysville, MD 21030, (301) 667-1833.

JULY

1 1992 Cornell Turfgrass Field Day, Pine Island, NY. Contact: New York State Turfgrass Association, (800) 873-TURF.

24 Midwest Sports Turf Institute, Sports Turf Managers Association, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. Contact: Greg Petry, Waukegan Park District, (708) 244-7275.

See STMA IN ACTION for information on Sports Turf Managers Association Events.

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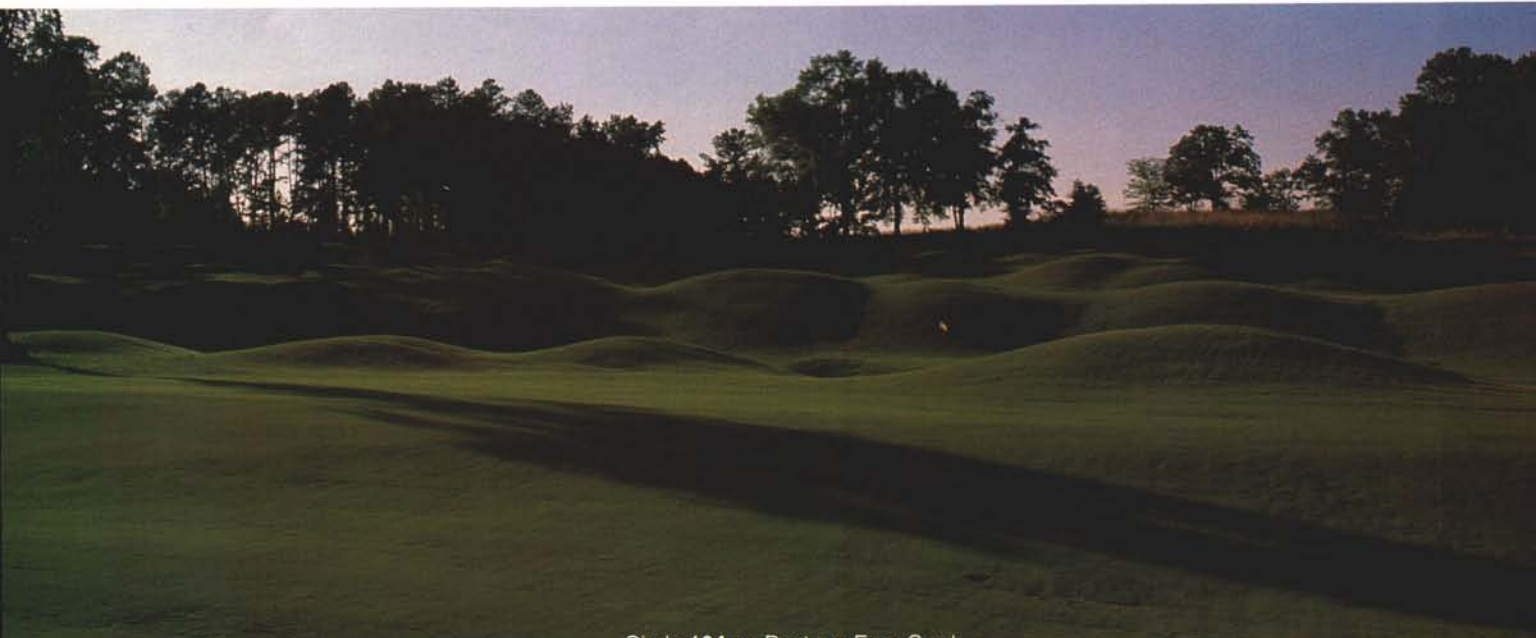
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Diamond Of The Year: Port St. Lucie Channels Talent

By Matthew Trulio



ST. LUCIE COUNTY SPORTS COMPLEX

The St. Lucie County Sports Complex, spring home of the New York Mets, is managed by T.J. White Development Corp. for St. Lucie County.

“When you have a bright young person, with a good active mind, you just have to listen to him.”



The New York Mets tune-up there in the spring. In the summer, their single-A farm club, the St. Lucie Mets, develops young talent on its six-and-a-half high-caliber diamonds. But the success of the baseball fields at the St. Lucie County Sports Complex in Port St. Lucie, FL this year's Professional Diamond of the Year award-winner, stems from a “two-sport” team: a baseball field manager and a certified golf course superintendent.

The key to their success is a combination of focusing their individual abilities, respect, and communication.

“Rick’s golf turf knowledge and input have just been invaluable to me,” says Greg Kaufman, stadium superintendent. “He’s my boss. I tell him what I want to do, and he adds suggestions, and then tells me if we can afford to do it.”

“Greg is our baseball man,” says Rick Wise, CGCS, project manager for St. Lucie West, 4,600-acre Thomas J. White

Development Corporation project that includes the sports complex. "When you have a bright young person, with a good active mind, you just have to listen to him. It's difficult to find people like that."

The sum of the whole, as they say, is greater than its parts.

From Appleton To Osceola

Kaufman got an early hands-on education under Bud Koehke, one of the most knowledgeable people in baseball diamond maintenance. At age 15, Kaufman worked for the Appleton, WI department of parks and recreation. Heading that department was Koehke, now at the Osceola Baseball Complex (last year's Diamond of the Year recipient) in Osceola, FL.

"When I was in high school, I worked on Goodland Field, the same field where I played high school baseball, and a field that the Chicago White Sox farm team used," Kaufman recalls. "Bud taught me everything I know about taking care of baseball diamonds."

Some years later, Koehke left Appleton to manage Tinker Field in Florida. Kaufman stayed with the department for awhile, but eventually left to work for Chemlawn and Leeds Landscaping as an applicator. Baseball, however, remained in his blood.

In June of 1989 he heard that Koehke was heading the baseball complex at Osceola, and he gave his former mentor a call. Koehke offered him a job and Kaufman headed down to Florida. Although he'd never lived in Florida, he had, in a sense, come home.

"I was back in baseball where I wanted to be," he recalls. "I love being close to it."

Wise: Setting A Course For Port St. Lucie

Like Kaufman, Wise has worked on grass since he was young. He has 18 years of experience in golf course maintenance and construction, all in Florida, and is a Lake City Community College graduate in golf course management. In addition, at one time he managed both a private golf course and the practice facil-



Left to right: Greg Kaufman, stadium superintendent, Rick Wise, project manager.

ity for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League. His *forte*, he says, has been managing multi-course operations, coming to St. Lucie West in 1988 from The Meadows Country Club, a 54-hole operation in Sarasota, FL.

"That's why [golf course architect] Jim Fazio brought me here," he says. "Including the St. Lucie West Country Club, there will eventually be five golf courses in St. Lucie West. But when the economy slowed, our construction slowed."

In 1990, Wise got involved with the St. Lucie County Sports Complex, working with the existing staff on implementing turf programs. The Mets organization, he recalls, became "comfortable" with him.

"They thought it wouldn't be a bad idea if I was involved in day-to-day operations of the facility," he says.

With assistance and cooperation of Phil Buck, director of parks and recreation for St. Lucie County, Bob Fromm, vice president of J. Thomas White Development, and Al Harazin, executive director and general manager of the Mets, Wise and his developer employer became responsible for maintaining the facility. The existing crew of county employees was invited to stay on to work as employees of Thomas J. White Development. Most,

Wise says, wary of working for a private developer in unstable economic times, opted to stay with the county.

"I ended up having to hire a new staff," says Wise. "That took a year of traveling to different baseball facilities and meeting with people. I had never managed a baseball facility before. Two of the people I met, Bud Koehke of Osceola and Floyd Perry, director of operations at Boardwalk and Baseball, spent a lot of time with me. They helped me immensely."

Based on Koehke's high recommendation, Wise offered Kaufman an assistant superintendent position in March 1991. They assembled their initial grounds crew, and the contract began a month later.

"The transition was extremely smooth," says Wise. "The existing staff stayed and worked with the new staff for a couple of weeks."

Kaufman, who took over for Budgie Clark, is now superintendent. His talent-laden crew includes Mike Mangano, his assistant superintendent, who previously worked for Essex County, NJ; Joe Skrabak, who worked for the Montreal Expos facility in Lantana, FL; and Brian Brady, who has a substantial golf course maintenance background.

continued on page 10

St. Lucie County Sports Complex Maintenance Scorecard

History: Completed March 5, 1986. Developer was Thomas J. White Development Corp. Approximate total cost was \$12 million.

Number of Fields: Six-and-a-half.

Maintenance Budget: \$304,000 per year.

Number of Crew Members: Seven full-time, three seasonal, golf course mechanics, and golf course spray technicians.

Turf-Type: Tifway 419 Bermuda

Skinned Areas: Basepaths, warning tracks—Morie Mix from Pebble Junction, 80 percent sand, 20 percent red clay. Mounds (all fields except stadium)—Morie Mix, 80 percent clay, 20 percent sand. Stadium field mound is made of Beam Clay mound mix. All skinned areas (mounds excluded) are scarified prior to each game.

Usage: Approximately 200 games and limited concert use.

Mowing: Infield and outfield, every day or every other day (depending on season) at 1 1/16-inch with Jacobsen triplex.

Irrigation: Rain Bird controller operating Hunter I-20 and I-40 heads. Summer watering cycles for all fields are 20 to 30 minutes in the morning and evening. Winter watering cycle for all fields is 20 minutes in the morning.

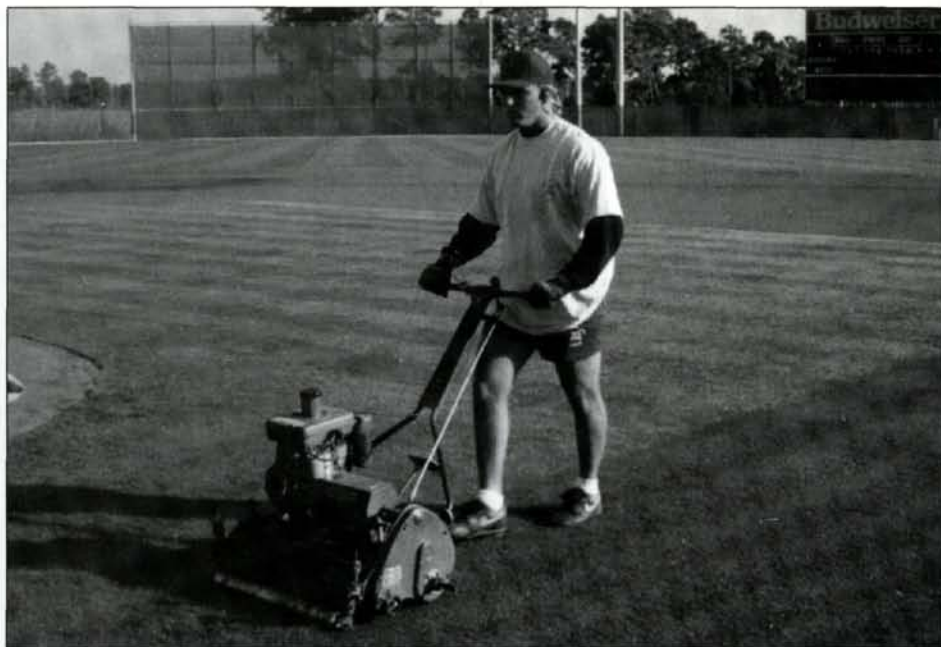
Overseeding: In November, with Fiesta II dwarf-type perennial ryegrass, at approximately 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

Fertilization: Lykes, supplied by Golf Ventures, Inc., 15-5-15 at one pound per 1,000 square feet, every six weeks.

Insect Control: Orthene sprayed as needed for Mole Crickets, Army Worm, and Sod Web Worm, nematocide application for nematodes applied in fall by Nematode Controllers, Inc., Brandon, FL.

Lighting: Stadium field only.

Future Plans: Mets-Dodgers summer league.



Brian Brady, mowing the infield with John Deere greens mower. Infields are mowed every other day. On game days they are mowed before every game.

Diamond Of The Year

continued from page 9

"Without these guys," Kaufman insists, "nothing we did would have been possible."

Aiming Higher

The situation Kaufman and his crew inherited was far from disastrous. The fields, one in the stadium, another outside the stadium with an artificial infield surface, another a "bunt and fundamentals" half-field, and the other four in a "clover" arrangement, were in decent shape. However, all of their skinned areas needed improvement.

"In these areas, we had problems with lips, clay, and drainage," Kaufman explains. "The problem was with the infield mix—it was about 80 percent clay. It was like concrete. Water could stay there for two weeks if you didn't remove it."

The superintendent and his crew removed three to four inches of the original infield dirt and then tilled these areas. They replaced the clay with a Morie Mix from a company called Pebble Junction in Alabama. It consists of 80 percent sand and 20 percent red clay, which Kaufman says creates a sharp contrast for the fields' Tifway 419 bermudagrass.

"I'm still adding to the infield dirt," he remarks. "So far, I've gone through about 200 tons of the mix."

"To take care of the lips, we brought

the clay up to the level of the grass," he continues. "We edge the fields every two weeks. First, we'll shoot a string out and edge along it. I also usually spray Roundup along the edges, carefully, because the bermuda will grow right into the clay if I don't."

Drainage, says the superintendent, is no longer a problem, but to keep the skinned areas at their best he instituted a rigorous scarification program. Not surprisingly, he learned it from his mentor Koehke.

The scarification routine is completed before each game. Kaufman's primary tool in the program is a Toro Sand Pro with a sand drag, provided by Hector Turf, Inc., in Deerfield Beach, FL. The drag, he explains, has approximately eight-inch teeth, and used in combination with machine's hydraulics, can scarify deeply.

He makes two scarification passes. The first is deepest—as deep as three inches—and done in straight lines along the basepaths. The area is then rolled with a one-ton roller and watered.

When the clay is almost dry, the second scarification is made. It is more of a grooming pass.

"I attach a three-by-six-drag behind the Sand Pro and scarify one to two inches deep," Kaufman reveals. "But I do it in a circular pattern I learned from Bud. What this does is give you a two-inch play-