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MAIN EVENTS

10 The Beam Clay 1995 Football Field of the Year: Demaree Stadium, Merrillville, IN
Demaree Stadium is part of a 70-acre athletic complex at Merrillville High School. "Turf is a living, dynamic thing," says Superintendent Don Wirick. "With nearly 100 acres of sports turf fields, we have to be flexible." Bob Tracinski profiles the 1995 Football Field of the Year and the man who keeps the grass green.

14 Get a Grip on Your Irrigation Program
Precise water management begins with an irrigation audit. Auditing a system means a better understanding of the pressure, soil, water and infiltration rate relationships of sports fields. Engineers at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo have developed an auditing program that provides the tools needed to tune up your sprinkler system.

18 Establishing or Improving Turf with Hydraulic Seeding
Hydraulic seeding is perhaps the most efficient way to establish turf for a new field or to overseed a previously established field. It’s easier than mechanical seeding and less expensive than sodding. Whether you do the job yourself or contract it out to a specialist, hydraulic planting offers the turf manager both control and convenience.

21 Field Playability: Measuring Performance
The World Soccer Federation wanted consistent playing conditions at all World Cup venues. Steve Cockermah of the University of California at Riverside and John Kiesling, agricultural operations shop manager at UC-Riverside, combined to develop a unique tool to measure the playability of a soccer field so that a standard could be defined and matched at all venues. Cockermah details the development of the UCR Fieldgauge and describes the field-testing process.

24 Turf of the Month: Creeping Red Fescue
Creeping red fescue is one of the few turfgrass varieties that is actively avoided by turf managers. It is very rarely used on athletic fields and then only as part of a bluegrass/ryegrass mixture. However, its shade tolerance and low maintenance requirements make creeping red fescue useful for very specific applications, such as under permanent bleachers, where shade tolerance and low-maintenance needs are important qualities for a turfgrass.

LINE-UP

5 STMA Message
5 STMA in Action
6 Front Office
6 Calendar
23 Industry Happenings
28 Rookies
30 Classifieds
30 Ad Index

On the Cover:
The UCR Fieldgauge was used to measure field-playability conditions at all nine World Cup Soccer venues in the United States. Photo courtesy: Rudy Khan, UC-Riverside.
STMA MESSAGE

LOCAL CHAPTERS ARE KEY

The Colorado Chapter of the STMA began meeting in 1991. A group of interested professionals at a Colorado State University turfgrass conference decided to start a local organization to deal with the problems inherent to the arid West and the growing demands on sports facilities.

We are mainly a park and school-district organization; however, we are lucky to have a handful of professional stadium groundskeepers who take time to share their knowledge.

This brings me to the point I would like to emphasize: STMA is the cover organization. Its purpose is to educate and promote the sports-turf industry worldwide. It is the chapter’s responsibility to carry that same message to the local level. What works at your site or field needs to be shared. What doesn’t work is equally important, as you may save someone from repeating the same mistake. Participate with your local chapter to bring ideas and workshops together. Join the National STMA and support your profession.

Some helpful points for chapters include the National STMA Chapter Start-Up Guide, which contains information on how to form a chapter. Don’t be disappointed if it takes some time.

CHAPTER NEWS

Midwest Chapter: SPECIAL REMINDER — Take Me Out to the Ball Game is the theme of the July 19 meeting of the STMA Midwest Chapter. The event will begin with a tour of the Rockford, IL, Park District Sportscore, site of the STMA 1994-1995 Soccer Field of the Year. This site was one of the practice facilities used for World Cup Soccer. The workshop will focus on establishing and maintaining turf in high-traffic areas. Further details will be announced shortly.

For information on these meetings, charter bus arrangements for the July meeting, or other upcoming activities, call the Chapter Hotline at (708) 439-4727.

Colorado Chapter: The Colorado chapter is planning an August 24 Seminar/Workshop at the Pleasantview Sports Complex in Boulder. Make plans now to tour the facility and nine sand-based fields of this new, state-of-the-art soccer complex. More details will be announced soon. Please RSVP your plans to attend to the 24-hour CCSTMA Hotline/FAX: (303) 438-9645. For more information on the Seminar/Workshop, the Colorado Chapter or other upcoming activities contact: Ross Kurcab, Denver Broncos, at (303) 649-9000.

Southern California Chapter: For information on the Southern California Chapter and upcoming activities, contact Chris Bunnell at (619) 432-2421.
SETTING STANDARDS FOR FIELD CONSISTENCY

Problem-solving is one of the most important skills a turf manager can have. Sometimes solving a sports-turf problem is a simple matter of applying logic to the situation. Some situations, however, call for creativity more than logic. Steve Cockerham of the University of California at Riverside applied some creativity to the problem of field consistency and came up with the idea for the UCR Fieldgauge pictured on the cover of this month’s issue.

This month’s cover shot may remind you of the ramps Evel Knieval used for his motorcycle stunts. Actually, it’s more like a stimp meter for athletic fields. While nobody expects sports-turf managers to cut their fields to USGA greens standards, consistency between fields is an important factor, particularly in the case of a major event that is conducted at several different venues, such as the World Cup soccer matches. Cockerham and John Kiesling, agricultural operations shop manager at UC-Riverside, designed a unique tool that measures the action of a soccer ball on turf. They tested all nine U.S. venues for World Cup soccer and with the help of the field managers attempted to create consistent conditions for players at the venues.

The UCR Fieldgauge (sometimes called the “Cockerham Fieldgauge,” despite Cockerham’s objections) has obvious applications for sports-turf managers who coordinate operations at large soccer complexes in terms of keeping field conditions consistent from field to field. Logically, the concept could be extended to baseball fields. (Sports-turf managers with an entrepreneurial streak may want to think about designing a version of the fieldgauge for baseball.) While individual field quirks, such as Fenway’s Green Monster or the wind at Wrigley, are part of the game and probably always will be, field consistency should be a desirable quality, and we should not have to resort to plastic grass to obtain that goal. While some may argue that certain teams benefit from a “fast” or “slow” infield, the outcome of a baseball game should be decided by the talent of the players, not the condition of the field.

Sports-turf managers should be more like baseball umpires: objective, nonpartisan experts charged with the responsibility of getting the field in the best condition for competition — for both teams. Most sports-turf managers try to do just that, despite the fact that few guidelines for creating field consistency have been set. Perhaps the UCR Fieldgauge is a step in that direction.

Mike Augsdorfer
September

7-8 Southwest Horticultural Trade Show, sponsored by the Arizona Nursery Association. Phoenix Civic Plaza, Phoenix, AZ. Includes "Turf Stress Management," presented by the GCSAA and Sixth Annual Xeriscape Conference. Contact: (602) 966-1610

9-12 American Society of Irrigation Consultants Annual Conference, "Broadening Our Horizons." Georgia Tech University, Atlanta, including tours of major 1996 Olympic venues. Contact: Wanda Sarsfield, ASIC, (510) 516-1124. Fax: (510) 516-1301.

12-13 University of California, Riverside, Turfgrass Research Conference and Field Days, UC Riverside campus. Contact Susana Denney, Department of Botany and Plant Sciences, (909) 787-4430.


October

5-6 Texas Turf Irrigation Association convention and trade show, Grapevine Convention Center, Dallas, TX. Certified Irrigation Professional CEU courses will be offered. Contact: TTIA, (817) 598-0907.

6 Application deadline for the winter session of the Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Management School, January 3-March 8, 1996. Contact: Cook College Office of Continuing Professional Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, (908) 932-9271.

9-12 Forty-ninth Northwest Turfgrass Conference and Golf Tournament, sponsored by the Northwest Turfgrass Association. Skamania Lodge and Conference Center, Stevenson, WA. Contact: (206) 754-0825

12-13 Texas Turf Irrigation Association convention and trade show, San Antonio Municipal Auditorium, San Antonio, TX. Certified Irrigation Professional CEU courses will be offered. Contact: TTIA, (817) 598-0907.


19 Colorado Chapter STMA Golf Tournament and Annual Business Meeting. Contact: Ross Kurec, (303) 649-9000 or David Rulli, (303) 982-8528.

November

9-10 Golf Course Expo, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL. Contact: (207) 846-0600.

Send announcements of your events two months in advance to:
Editor sportsTURF
68-860 Perez Road, Suite J
Cathedral City, CA 92234
Fax: (619) 770-4380

Get Serious With STMA
Application for Membership

The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) is an organization of professionals representing all segments of the sports turf industry. Our members work to combine the science of growing grass and the art of maintaining sports turf to produce playing fields that are both safe and aesthetically pleasing.

STMA provides members with a variety of benefits, including: Education through regional institutes and conferences; support for sports turf research; facilities tours; a national awards program; access to the STMA National Conference and Exhibition; complimentary subscriptions to Sports Turf Manager and sportsTURF Magazine; and much more.

If you're serious about the sports turf industry, then it's time to become a member of STMA. Join today!

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“Promoting Better and Safer Sports Turf Areas”

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The 1994-1995 STMA Football Field of the Year:

Demaree Stadium, Merrillville, IN

By Bob Tracinski

The nearly 70-acre high school sports complex at Merrillville, IN, is one of the largest in the region. It features three baseball diamonds, two softball diamonds, two physical education multiuse diamonds, four soccer fields, four football fields, a golf driving range and target green, and two band practice fields. A running track surrounds the main soccer field. The jewel of the facility is the football game field, Demaree Stadium.

Planning for the complex began nearly 10 years ago. It would be part of a massive, $56-million renovation project at the high school, incorporating the main campus, the district’s transportation facilities and the sports complex on a 100-acre plot, an extensive undertaking for the town.

Community support was marshaled from the beginning. Meetings and hearings involved school and city officials, faculty, staff, students and parents, engineering and construction professionals, and always, the community at large. Consideration was given not only to the initial physical facility, but also to long-term maintenance, playability and fan comfort. The concrete stadium, with locker rooms, weight training facilities, a press box and a hospitality room, would focus on a newly reconstructed, sand-based field. By the time the project came up for a vote, it received strong taxpayer support.

In addition to the high school, the city has seven other schools, with a property total of nearly 800 acres. Two of the middle schools have athletic fields — a football/soccer field and a baseball/softball field — bringing the total sports turf close to 100 acres.

Officials decided the sports complex, combined with the existing properties, would require a full-time grounds superintendent. They sought an applicant who would have the mechanical experience to take care of the equipment and could learn groundskeeping. At the same time, Don Wirick, an auto mechanic with 14 years of experience, was considering a change. When word of the position filtered through the grapevine, Wirick applied — and landed the job.

Initially, Wirick wasn’t concerned about tackling the groundskeeping part of the task. He’d always had a lawn and, as he says, “Growing grass isn’t extremely difficult — until you put a lot of people out there playing on it.”

Merrillville’s native soil, a sandy clay, is the base for all the rest of the sports fields. An extensive subsurface drainage system runs beneath all the athletic fields. The system leads to a retention area and moves through a filtration series of water baffles until it ends up in a small lake at an adjoining park.

At the site of the stadium field, soil was excavated to a depth of 16 inches. A tile drainage system was installed in 4 inches of coarse sand. This was covered with a 12-inch layer of the modified soil mix of 85- to 88-percent sand and 13- to 15-percent native soil.

Wirick says, “We were able to use a local source for the soil mix. The contractor

The base turf is Medalist Premium Bluegrass Mix, which is overseeded with Medalist Gold Perennial Ryegrass during the playing season if the turf canopy runs thin. Photos courtesy: Don Wirick.