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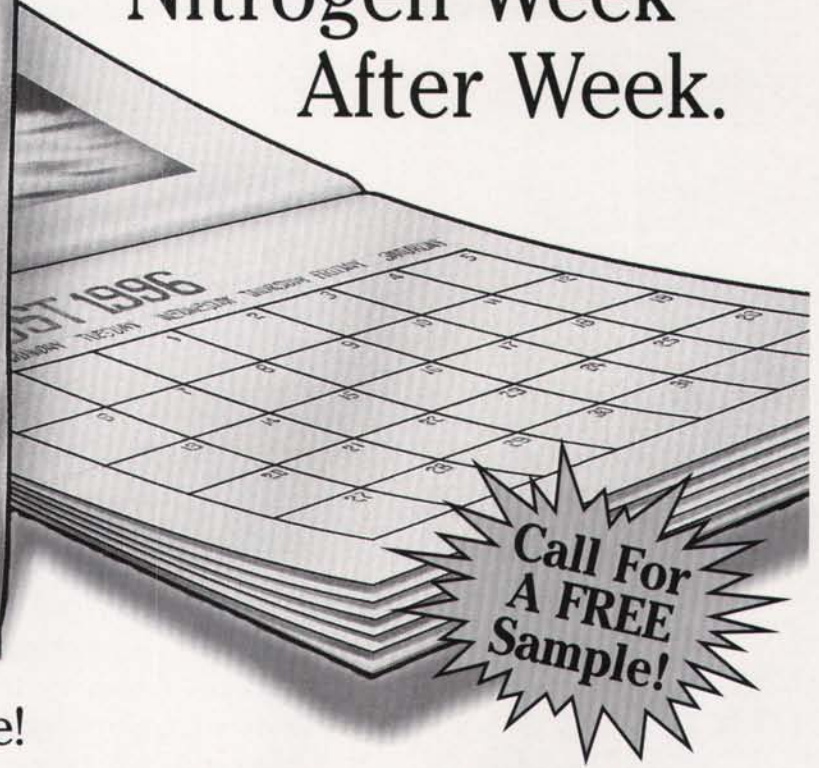
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AUGUST 1996

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A mowing pattern enhances the Colorado Rockies' Coors Field.  
Photo courtesy: Mark Razum.

# STMA MESSAGE

## Meeting the Challenges



By Mike Schiller

**G**reetings from the Midwest. This sure has been a strange year weather-wise for most parts of the US. Here in the Mid-

west, we've had everything from a cool, dry early spring to late-spring, early-summer floods to our current dry period. Mother Nature continues to challenge all of us involved with turf management, but that is what makes this business so interesting. The challenges keep us alert.

The summer is slipping by and all of us are preparing our facilities for the fall sports barrage. With the likes of soccer and football, and the wrap-up of pro-level baseball, the ever-present question — "What's the weather going to

be like?" — makes even the best turf manager concerned.

In this issue, you'll find an article on STMA's 1995-1996 Football Field of the Year. Take a good look at your own fields as you go about the preparation of your turf for the fall challenges. Is one of your baseball, softball, soccer or football fields up to the challenge of entering the Field of the Year competition for 1996-1997? If you think it might be, just call Steve Trusty at 800/323-3875 for details on how to make an "official" entry.

Not only does the Field of the Year Award give you much deserved recognition from your peers, it also helps bring your field and your program into focus at the local level with your facility owners, your area's "movers and shakers" — and financial decision makers" and with the general public of your community. Sports turf management is a tough job that — done well — has far-reaching benefits. The Field of the Year Award program helps spread that word.

The Olympics have come and gone, and the facilities sure looked great on TV. I love the winter Olympics, but it sure was nice to see how all the events took place in Atlanta. I extend a hearty congratulations to all those involved whose top quality turf management made us proud.

Lots of effort and coordination went into the success of the Olympics — planning, strategy, and hard work. That is what our education and conference committee has been doing — working hard to put together an excellent program for STMA's annual meeting January 15 to 19 of 1997.

The Colorado Chapter also has been working hard to make our stay interesting and enjoyable, and to show off the beauty of Colorado. One of the tours will even include a behind-the-scenes look at the Olympic Training Center facilities.

What we need is *you*. Make plans now to be part of the great learning opportunity at your annual meeting and conference in Colorado Springs.

I would love to get to meet each of you in the Rockies.



## 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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# THE FRONT OFFICE

## OPINION PAGE



### Tough Surf Turf

**S**outhern-zone turf managers who have salty, watery sites where they cannot maintain bermudagrass might find relief in seashore paspalum. The often-ignored species recently came to attention through a chart Robert Carrow included in his 1994 report "Wear Tolerance of Sports Turf Areas." For warm season grasses, the chart showed only two species that rated "Excellent" for both "Wear Tolerance" and "Soil-Compaction Tolerance": hybrid bermuda, of course, and seashore paspalum.

Richard Duble, author of this issue's overseeding article, speaks favorably of the species both in the second edition of his book, *Turfgrasses: Their Management and Use in the Southern Zone*, and on his Texas A&M Internet site <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/turf/turf.html>. Duble describes the stolons and leaves of seashore paspalum as slightly coarser than those of common bermudagrass. He tells of a golf course, King's Crossing, in Corpus Christi, TX, that is covered with seashore paspalum except for the putting greens. "I was impressed with the appearance and playability of the grass," he says. "Perhaps most striking was the uniformity of the turf and the complete absence of other grass species." In another paragraph, he says the quality of the turf was "very good. It was evident that the grass produced the finest turf at mowing heights below one-inch. Studies conducted by Texas A&M University at College Station also suggest that the grass develops higher shoot densities at lower mowing heights."

In Argentina, Duble observed a native seashore paspalum, with finer leaves than our variety, that had been planted on golf greens and mowed twice daily at 1/8 inch: "Under that mowing regime seashore paspalum produced as fine a putting surface as Tifdwarf bermudagrass. But more important, the grass completely crowded out stands of hybrid bermudagrass..."

Seashore paspalum therefore seems aggressive and apparently is not a heavy feeder. "At low annual rates of nitrogen application, seashore paspalum maintains density better than bermudagrass," says Duble. He recommends less than four pounds a year; more nitrogen than that promotes scalping. If the species has a disease problem, Duble fails to mention it. But he does describe its tolerance for salty, wet sites. At the Texas golf course, he says, "Seashore paspalum was found growing along the edge of the water on several holes — water that often contained 4,000 or more ppm salts. It was also the only grass species found growing in saline outcroppings of soil along roughs and ditch banks. Its salt tolerance appeared to be great."

Standing up against cold and drought stress, the species is less tolerant than bermudagrass. The zone of adaptation of seashore paspalum, Duble believes, is similar to that of centipedegrass.

#### NTEP Re-funded

Because of species like seashore paspalum that deserve further study, we're glad to report that the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) is back in the money again. In response to its proposal to cut the NTEP from its 1997 budget, the USDA received literally a record number of complaints and has reinstated the NTEP's budget. Those who wrote or called, your voice was heard.

# EVENTS

## CALENDAR

### August

**20** Wisconsin Turfgrass Field Day, sponsored by the Wisconsin Turf Association in cooperation with University of Wisconsin Extension. O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, Madison, WI. Contact: Audra Anderson, (608) 854-6536.

**23-26** Florida Turfgrass Association 44th annual Conference and Show. Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, FL. Contact: (800) 882-6721 or (407) 856-5767.

**29** Turf Rodeo, hosted by Florida Sports Turf Managers Association in conjunction with Florida Parks and Recreation Association. Rolling Hills Country Club, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Contact: John Mascaro, (305) 938-7477.

**31** At the Epicenter, a tour of the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes' baseball stadium hosted by Southern California Sports Turf Managers Association. Epicenter Stadium, Rancho Cucamonga, CA. Contact: Chris Bunnell, (619) 432-2421.

### September

**1-19** Groundskeepers Management Academy. Kissimmee, FL. Contact: Floyd Perry, Grounds Maintenance Services, (800) 227-9381.

**26** 17th Transition Zone Turfgrass Field Day. Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Contact: Sandy Rhoads, (800) 818-2732 or (618) 536-7751.

### September/August

**29-3** Groundskeepers Management Academy. Peoria, AZ. Contact: Floyd Perry, Grounds Maintenance Services, (800) 227-9381.

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# Mowing “Pattern Masters”



Dave Mellor, assistant director of grounds for the Milwaukee Brewers, “etches” a pattern into the infield. Photo courtesy: David Mellor.

## Share Their Secrets

By Steve and Suz Trusty

**F**lick on the TV set to catch a baseball game and the first thing that grabs your attention is the intricate pattern etched in the turf. For couch potatoes and fans in the stands, this marvel of mowing and tender loving care puts baseball's turf in the top echelon — far, far better than the maybe not-so-green grass of home.

Here, three “pattern masters” — Gary Vanden Berg, director of grounds, and David Mellor, assistant director of grounds, for the Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Club and Mark Razum, head groundskeeper for the Colorado Rockies Baseball Club — share their secrets.

Vanden Berg says, “I remember entering this same County Stadium as a kid taking in a game with my dad and being overwhelmed by the awesome expanse of grass. It had an indescribable aura that captured the spirit of baseball for me. That's what we're trying to create for today's fans.

“The patterns also help improve the image of groundskeeping a bit. We don't just mow grass and move dirt. Sports turf management is a complex combination of art and science.”

Mellor adds, “Safety and playability will always be the top priority. The infield skin in baseball is really the most important. That's where much of the game is played and where a

groundskeeper makes his name. Ours has come full circle from tough shape in 1988 to prime condition today. Once that skinned area is in top shape, you have the time to concentrate extra effort on the turf.

“A pretty field that plays poorly won't cut it, while an ugly field that plays well can be acceptable. That ugly field may be the only way to achieve safe, playable status for that game with the resources available and time frame and weather conditions involved. In this area of turf management, sometimes it's necessary to take short-term actions to get in a game that aren't in the best long-term interests of the field agronomically. Knowing when, why and how to accomplish the best possible solution for both short- and long-term field use is one of the major challenges of this profession.”

Vanden Berg and Mellor were both young players hooked on baseball who, through injuries, ended up traveling a different route but retain the player's eye for how the field will play. Vanden Berg says, “The pattern should have no effect on the players' game, and that's part of doing it well. Ideally, the field itself is in such great shape it ceases to be a factor, allowing the players to concentrate totally on the game. They really notice the pattern when they review game film or watch highlights on TV.”

All three of these pros borrowed from golf course equipment technology and use techniques to integrate patterns into their fields. They praise the technological advances, especially over the last ten years or so, in turf varieties, fertilizers, mowing and other field care equipment that acknowledge the importance of the sports turf category and allow managers to do more precise maintenance, including the patterns.

### First: Thriving Turf

They point out the need to start with healthy grass.

Mellor says, “The Brewers' fertilization program is fine-tuned to turf needs. Extra potassium provides more wear tolerance and a residual effect that keeps that pattern holding longer. We rotate the Scotts micro-nutrient rich granular STEP product and PBI-Gordon's liquid Bov-A-Mura mixed with iron and manganese to keep levels high, but not into the ‘overcharge’ range.”

Turf varieties make an impact. Vanden Berg and Mellor have selected the darker green cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass as a base and added limited quantities of high-quality, dark-green perennial ryegrass as needed. Primed and pre-germinated bluegrass cultivars are used for fill-in overseeding as much as possible.

Mellor says, “The field was resodded in 1995 with 100 percent Kentucky bluegrass. As of mid-June in 1996, perennial