

Field of the Year

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Continuing Tests

Winter moved in early, and the field was freezing tight just as the season ended. Coach McCarney held one more on-field practice. Prior to freeze-up, crews aerified, topdressed with a 1/3-inch layer of rootzone mix and applied a dormant seeding of a bluegrass blend and a fungicide preventive for snow mold. Then they tarped the field for winter.

When the tarp was removed in mid-March of 1997, winter had wiped out most of the perennial ryegrass, but the existing bluegrasses were in good shape, and the dormant seeding was taking hold. With cool weather prevailing, turf growth was slow — the field required mowing only twice prior to the April 16 spring game.

Spring core aeration was made in one direction at 2 1/2-inch spacing. Andresen collected the cores, and continues to do so, to guard against contamination by any soil residue from the



Since washed sod wasn't deemed a workable option for a bluegrass football field, sod with an 84 percent sand-base was secured for Jack Trice. Photo courtesy: Mike Andresen.

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To avoid paint in the high-stress area of mid-field, logos are restricted to the margins of the field.

sod. Another core aeration, along with seeding and topdressing, was performed in mid-May. Deep aeration with 1-inch tines to an 8-inch depth followed to break up any sub-surface compaction.

Protecting the new turf of Jack Trice Field put extra stress on the practice field. Prior to the conversion, many practices were held on the artificial-turf game field. Besides the increased wear, the low-lying practice field was flooded five times during heavy rains in 1996.

"Development of a new practice field is now under way," says Andresen. "The existing native soil was removed and will be replaced with a 10-inch sand rootzone. The new layout also will give us the option of creating two 70-yard fields parallel to and overlying the standard field configuration, so we can spread the wear."

As at all Division I schools, football is just one of many sports, and crews must spread the workload so no field is slighted. ISU has the only dedicated cross-country course in the Big 12 and has hosted national and conference championships.

All fields get a workout. For example, 1,200 youngsters converge at ISU each June for a football passing camp. Twenty-five 60-yard fields are set up

to handle the weekend competition that culminates with three championship games.

"Jack Trice Field is the site for all three championship games," notes Andresen. "It's great to see the attitude of the young athletes when they come out on the field. And catching the attention of these potential college players is part of our job, too. The field plays a public relations role as a symbol of the status of the school."

Topnotch Resources

For the success Jack Trice Field has enjoyed so far, Andresen is quick to credit the consulting team. Dr. Norm Hummel served as a consultant throughout the construction process. Dr. David Minner and Dr. Nick Christians, both of the topnotch ISU Turfgrass and Horticulture Department, have been involved since the conversion idea took shape. John Newton, golf course superintendent of ISU's Veenker Memorial Golf Course, provides expertise in the day-to-day management of sand-based turf and also shares equipment.

A member of STMA, Andresen taps into the resource of other STMA members, too. He especially notes the assistance in sand-based turf management from Jesse Cuevas of Rosenblatt Stadium in Omaha, Neb., and the

snow removal techniques picked up from Ross Kurcab and Troy Smith of the Denver Broncos practice facility.

His "home team" consultants — wife, Kim; son, Mark, 13; and daughter, Kristen, 11 — have some experience themselves, from Sec Taylor workouts, and all three still help out at that stadium.

Andresen also notes the continuing dedication of the excellent staff. The expertise of Dale Roe, sports turf manager, has been invaluable, especially in areas such as field painting, in which Andresen's baseball background gave him limited prior experience. Andresen also gives special praise to Dick Doyle, stadium systems analyst, who handles maintenance of ventilation, electrical, plumbing, security and irrigation systems, and mows when his schedule allows.

"We have the best crew members anywhere, with one or two interns and three to eight part-time employees from the ISU turfgrass program, who really understand turf and the work ethic," Andresen says. "The hands-on experience gives them sports turf as another career option, and I hope those looking for employees will take that into consideration."

"Because of the internship program, we're in a constant state of training, but having students who already have a sports turf interest makes that training more of a fine-tuning."

Developing Relationship

"The honeymoon continues as we develop our relationship with the new field," says Andresen. "We're very aware of the challenges others have faced with sand-based fields and are constantly on the lookout for problems and continue to confer with other STMA members and our consulting team."

"This field conversion was a major step for ISU, but we're convinced it was the right one. Prior to the 1996 season, the media had decided that if Troy Davis didn't gain his 2,000 yards it would be the fault of the natural turf field. But the field held up — and Davis surpassed his goal. It's our job to keep this field in top shape for ISU, the Athletic Department — especially the coaches and players — and for the public perception of natural turf fields." □

Bob Tracinski is manager of public relations for the John Deere Co. in Raleigh, N.C., and public relations co-chair for the national Sports Turf Managers Association.

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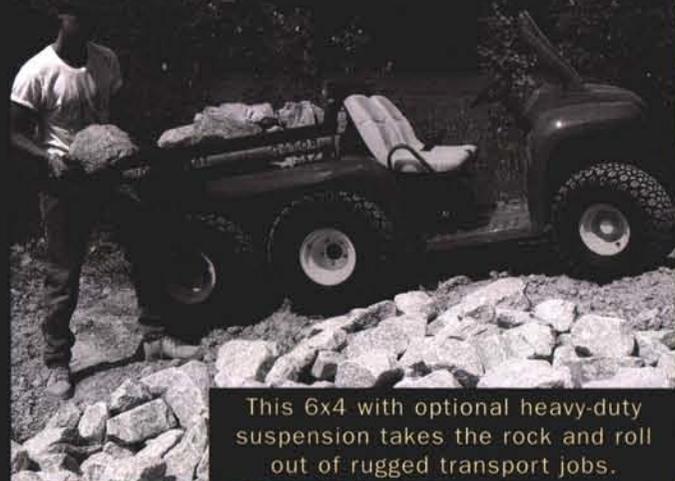
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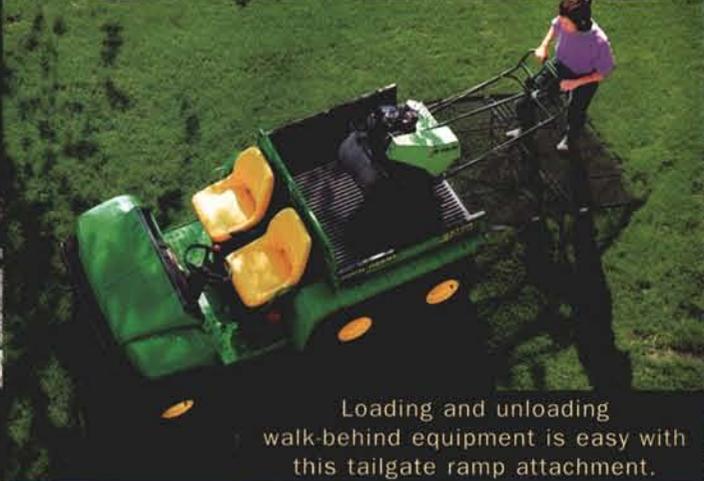
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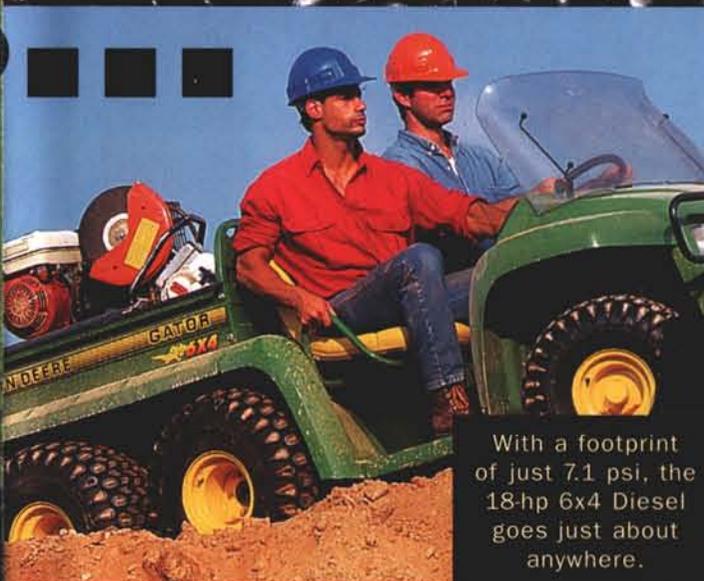
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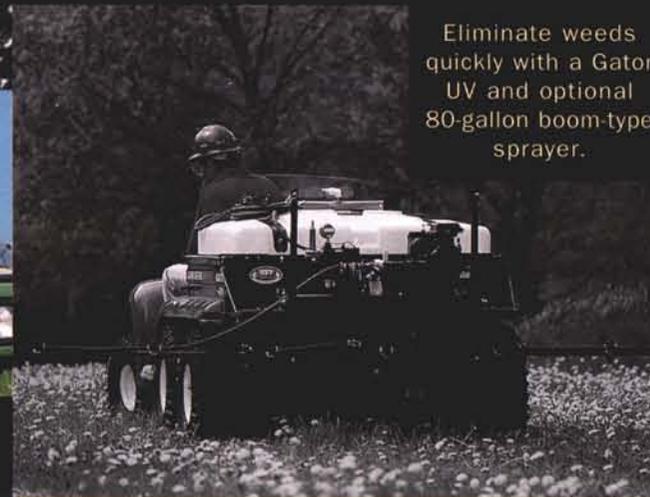
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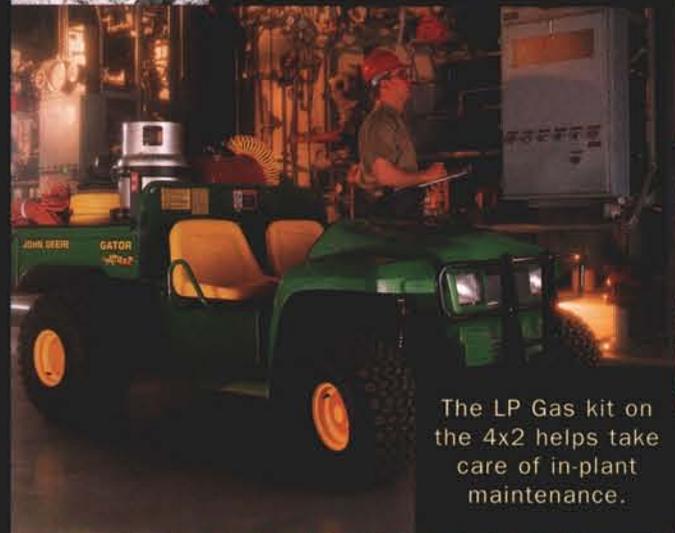


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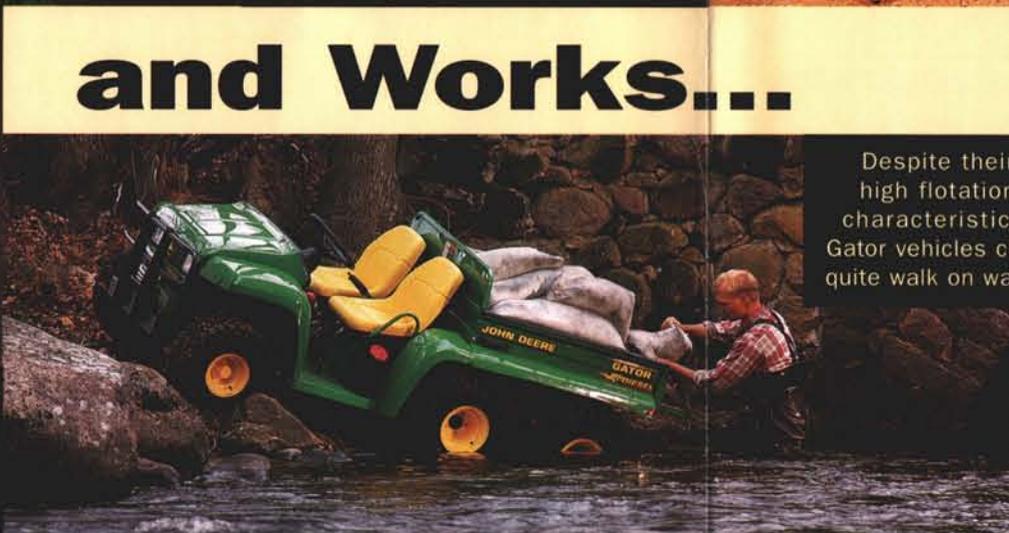


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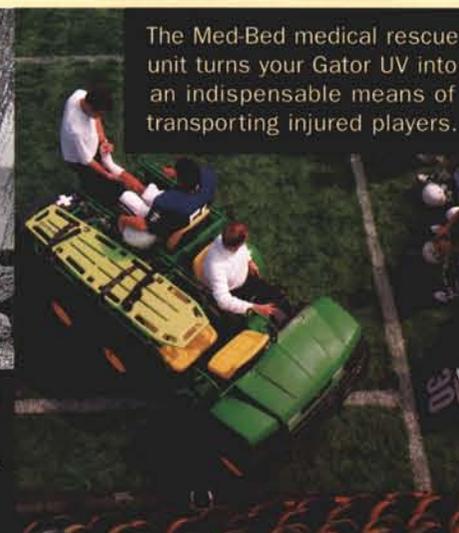


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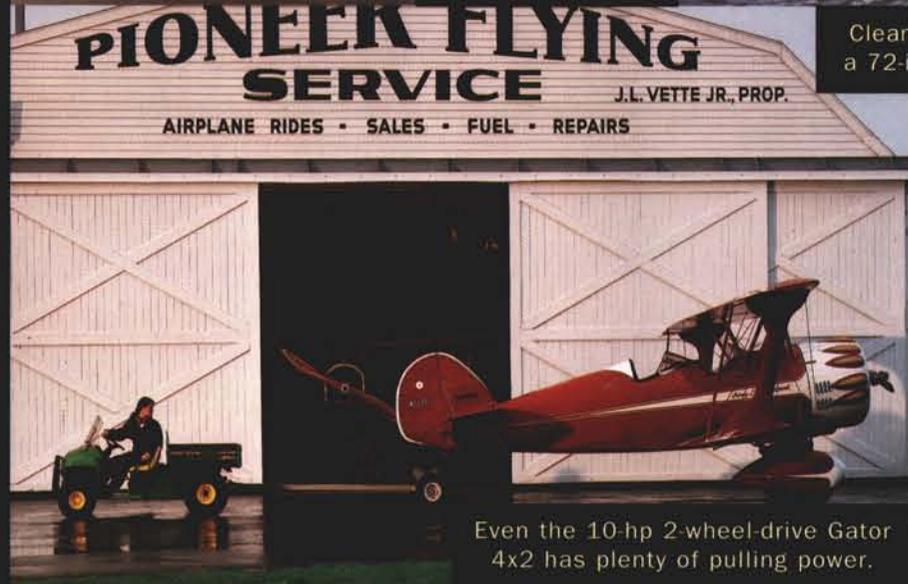


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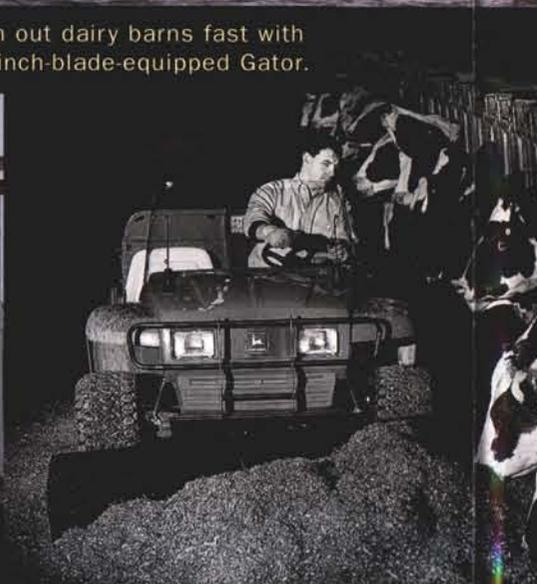
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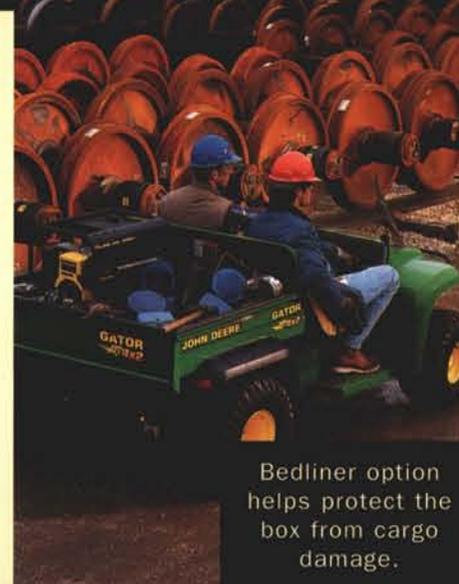


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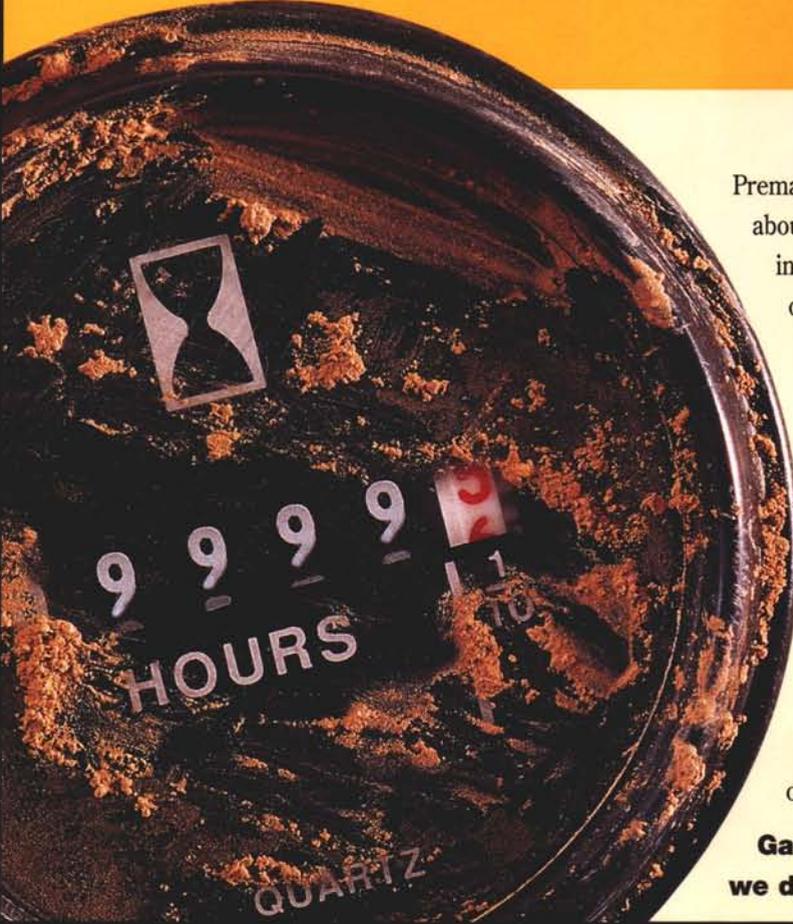
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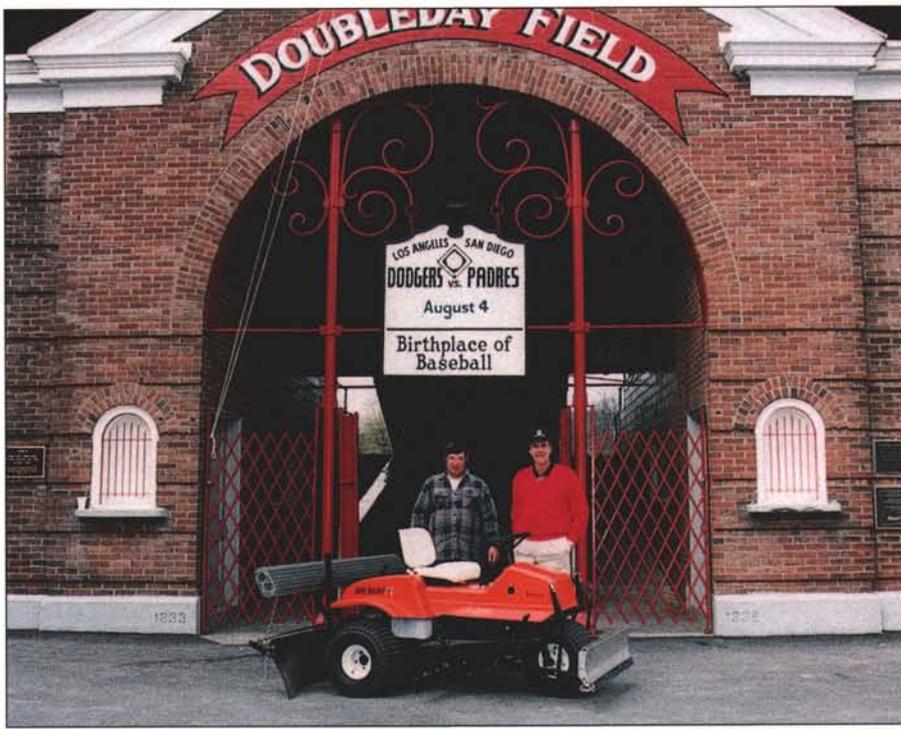
Hall of Fame is Not Doubleday's Only Game

Several weeks ago, on August 2-4, Cooperstown was the focal point of the baseball world for the 57th consecutive year as the game's all-time greats converged on the upstate New York village to honor the four 1997 Hall of Fame inductees: knuckleballer Phil Niekro, chosen by the Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA); and Tommy Lasorda, Nellie Fox and Willie Wells — chosen by the Veterans Committee.

For the 51st year, celebrations included a Hall of Fame Game — this year between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the San Diego Padres (the first Hall of Fame Game between National League clubs). As usual, the game was held at Doubleday Field, a small-town, picturesque stadium where the old appropriately meets the new and 13-year-old amateurs play on the same turf as the Major League pros. For those who haven't seen this unique ball park, now 77 years old, this page offers a quick peek.

Part of the Boom

The field was named in honor of Abner Doubleday, the mythical father of baseball, and is owned and maintained by the village of Cooperstown. It was built during the baseball-park building boom of the 1910s and officially opened in September 1920 with a game between Cooperstown and the neighboring community of Milford. In 1938, with support from the Works Projects Administration (WPA), additional land was acquired, a new diamond was constructed, wooden grandstands were built, fencing was installed, and the entrance was landscaped.



Joe Harris (left), head groundskeeper at Doubleday Field, visits with Don Smith, of Smithco, at the baseball field's front gate. Photos courtesy: Don Smith.

Fame came a year later, in 1939, when Cooperstown, the purported site of baseball's 1839 invention, hosted season-long celebrations of the game's mythical centennial birth date. In June, at the height of the festivities, the National Baseball Hall of Fame was established. It attracted 25,000 fans that year and now hosts more than 250,000 visitors annually.

Hard-Working Field

As befits a Hall of Fame diamond, Doubleday Field is used with great frequency. Its season typically lasts from mid-April to mid-October, and just about any team that plays with bases 90 feet apart can schedule games there. During the 1997 baseball season, 300 to 320 games will be played on the field. That's about four times the number of games played on the typical Major League field.

Responsibility for maintenance of the field falls on a single person, Joseph "Joe" Harris, who's been head groundskeeper since 1990 and handles practically all maintenance requirements, although additional, part-time help is employed during the heaviest-use months. Maintenance includes taking care of approximately 84,000 square feet of turf. In the outfield, it grows on the area's original native soil and in the infield, which was rebuilt in 1984, on a New York State Greens Mix, consisting of sand and Dakota Peat. In

addition, there is approximately 40,000 square feet of warning track and infield skinned area to groom.

During the baseball season, the field is either fully or partially conditioned every day. "We condition with the scarifier every day, and mow about three times a week," says Harris. The pitcher's mound and home plate area are conditioned after every game.

Other than the renovated infield and the modern machinery that grooms the surface, little else has changed at Doubleday Field. The original wood grandstands remain. They hold 9,800 people. The distances to the outfield fences are 296 feet to left, 390 to center and 312 to right. Together, they add up to one of the most celebrated fields of dreams. □



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Post-Season Baseball Diamond Renovation

By Jim Puhalla

If you keep the diamond in shape, baseball season is a lot of work — mowing, dragging, filling holes and performing pre-game first aid. After the season, most field managers want a break from the diamond, a few rounds of golf and time to work on the football field, thinking there's plenty of time for the baseball diamond next spring.

If that scenario sounds familiar, you might want to reconsider. The plain fact is this: the four to six weeks after the competitive season is a crucial time in preparing the diamond for next season. Most of the renovation steps that can really make a difference in the quality of your field will require at least two weeks, and maybe a month, to settle. If you wait until next spring, chances are good that either you'll find yourself out of time for renovations, or you'll have players on the field before it's ready.

But a few days' work now can substantially upgrade the diamond for next year — and save time, money and headaches in the bargain. If you do the right things now, you'll be able to approach next season knowing your field is ready.

Skinned Area Improvements

1. Lip Removal.

Every season, dragging and weather push lots of dirt into the grass edge. That forms a lip that interrupts the drainage contours, and keeps rain from draining off

into the grass. This lip also causes bad hops on grounders, and it becomes so uneven that players trip.

In order to remove the lip completely, you may need to re-grade as much as 3 to 5 feet into the grass, especially if the lip hasn't been removed for years. Use a sidewalk edger on small lips (1 to 3 inches) or a sod cutter on wider lips and mounded ridges. Remove some of the soil underneath to restore the correct grade, and then install new sod.

2. Regrading Skinned Areas. If you remove a large mounded ridge or grass hill along the edge of the skinned area, you'll probably need to regrade the skinned area to get a consistent slope. Before you make any major

grade changes, perform a topographical survey verifying that the grade changes you are considering will really improve the surface drainage. In most cases, it won't be necessary to add soil; but where the skinned area is dished, you may have to add soil to bring it up to the proper grade. This is the best time to add skinned area soil, because there is plenty of time for settling.

Forget internal drainage on skinned areas. If a muddy skinned area was a major headache during the season, you may be considering the installation of drains before next year. Our advice: forget it.

Although installed drain systems

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A field will take weeks to stabilize after you fix a problem like this. The post-season is a good time to remove the grass-edge lip or mounded ridge that causes puddles.