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December 1997 41
Vigoro and UHS Form Alliance
IMC Vigoro has formed a business alliance with United Horticultural Supply (UHS) of Tampa, Fla., to represent IMC Vigoro's turf fertilizer products throughout Florida. The alliance calls for UHS to market and sell Par ex fertilizers, containing IBDU slow release nitrogen and V-Cote controlled release nitrogen and potash, to golf course superintendents and landscape companies.

Steve Jackson, Gulf States division manager for UHS, will head up the UHS sales team. UHS has sales offices in Delray Beach, Ft. Pierce, Hastings, Immokalee, Parrish and Waverly, Fla. IMC Vigoro is headquartered in Winter Haven, Fla.

Chiefs Choose Magnum and Fairfax
For Arrowhead Stadium, the Kansas City Chiefs have "drafted" Royal Seeds' Magnum Perennial Ryegrass Blend: three improved perennial ryegrasses featuring Omni, Royal's wear-tolerant, endophyte-enhanced perennial rye. A bluegrass blend featuring Fairfax Kentucky bluegrass will be used with it. According to a Royal Seeds press release, "Fairfax is the top-ranked bluegrass for wear tolerance and sod strength."

The turf areas outside Arrowhead Stadium are being planted with Royal's Turf Tall Fescue Blend, which features Bonanza II.

Lofts Joins Rescue of Giants Stadium
The turfgrass sod being used for the state-of-the-art, transportable natural field at Giants Stadium contains two Lofts Seed varieties, Ram 1 and 1757. The innovative field is necessary because one of the stadium's tenants, the New York/New Jersey MetroStars, requires a natural turf for their major league soccer games, but Giants Stadium is fitted with artificial turf.

The project involves covering the artificial surface with 6,100 turfgrass modules, each 48 inches square. "We are excited to be involved with this project. My hope is that the Giants and Jets will give up the artificial turf and decide to play on Lofts turfgrass varieties, too," says Ken Budd, president of Lofts Seed. The Giants and Jets are evaluating the performance of the transportable field this year and may consider converting to the natural grass system next year.

Toro Devises Green Scale
Turf managers have been known to agonize over the color of their turf. Healthy grass has not always translated into the greenest in the eyes of all those scrutinizing the turf. From owners to spectators, everyone has a different opinion of green.

For more than three years now, The Toro Co.'s Diagnostic Services have been using near infrared reflectance spectroscopy (NIRS) to analyze grass nutrients and provide turf managers with specialized prescriptions for growing healthy turf. During the Florida Turfgrass Association's annual show, Toro introduced turf analysis equations for bermudagrass, known as the Universal Green Turf Scale (UGTS), to scientifically monitor and measure nutrition levels that result in green grass.

With UGTS, Toro can analyze the greenness of the grass and prescribe nutrient applications, based on Toro's equations, to bring turf to a healthy green.

Rice Tries Latest Technology
Rice University's new football practice field has a rootzone that includes 90% sand and 10% Fieldschoice, a soil amendment from Premier Environmental Products. The field was sodded with Texas-certified Tifway 419 bermuda.

Jim Eagle of Eagle Turf in Fort Worth, Texas, was a consultant to the project for Lamb & Barger Engineers of Houston. "Lamb & Barger wanted a rootzone mixture that incorporated the latest technology for growing ... grass," said Eagle. "By using Fieldschoice, the practice field will drain well and the problems associated with compaction will be reduced. We anticipate fast growth of the rootzone within two to three weeks, the roots will be three to five inches deep."
In his 55 years as a sports turf manager, George Toma has dealt with a lot of crises. Barry Mohon, longtime construction supervisor for West Coast Turf in Southern California, remembers one in San Francisco's Candlestick Park in January 1993 after a rain-soaked divisional playoff game between the 49ers and the Washington Redskins.

The teams had mangled the field, and Mohon was called in to help repair it for the next game, the NFC championship.

Getting the Job Done

The "scariest experience I've had in my 33 years in the business" is how Barry Mohon describes the resodding of Candlestick for the NFC title game between the 49ers and the Dallas Cowboys.

Many people may remember the photos in newspapers around the world showing the resodding of the field for the big game. Mohon headed the team from West Coast Turf that worked hand-in-hand with George Toma's crews, which included stadium personnel.

Mohon sums up the conditions that week as they attempted to strip the field and cover it with thick-cut sod: "We had so much water on the field that they had to dig a hole in the end zone to collect and pump it out of the stadium. We pulled a tarp behind us as we laid the sod."

The water came from a weather system that had stalled over Candlestick Park and was dropping an average of two inches of rain per day on the field.

Mohon had no idea what Toma would do in the next 60 minutes. Waiting the results, he pulled his troops together under a tarp to get away from the rain and to pump coffee into their water-soaked bodies. As they sat there contemplating how they would provide the "services as promised" that West Coast Turf is known for, they heard the sound of a helicopter approaching.

Appearing through the clouds and fog, the helicopter landed on the parking lot. Out of the haze walked three men — the mayor of San Francisco, the owner of the San Francisco 49ers, and Toma.

Rain was now coming down in buckets as Mohon watched the two businessmen walk onto the muddy field with Toma to observe the dilemma. The men stood there for a moment, and turned to Toma, who was speaking.

"I couldn't hear what was being said," Mohon remembers, "but George was waving his arms, and these two guys in suits were standing listening to George explaining the solution. As the two men left, their helicopter circled the stadium for one last look.

George walked back to us with a smile on his face and that bright inner glow in his eyes."

The problem had been solved. The mayor agreed to send in a park-and-rec crew to alleviate the labor shortage so the job could get done on time. The field on game day was rough around the edges, but the playability was excellent, earning Toma a spot that year on sports commentator John Madden's "All-Madden Team."

For his "what it takes attitude" in preparing Candlestick for the January 1993 NFC title game, George Toma became the first groundskeeper to be named to football commentator John Madden's "All-Madden Team."

A storm dropped an average of two inches of rain per day on the field. Known for, they heard the sound of a helicopter approaching.

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Stephen H. Guise, president-elect of the STMA, is sports turf manager for the Sports Turf division of Valley Crest, Calabasas, Calif.

If you have a story or anecdote you would like to share, call (562) 425-2449 or write it down (include your name and phone number) and mail it to Ashman & Associates, 3164 North Greenbrier Road, Long Beach, CA 90808.
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