Figure 2: Prior to renovation with Sahara bermudagrass, Carlos Benavides' turf consisted of a hodgepodge of various cool- and warm-season grasses on a very rough surface. Courtesy: Seeds West.

hand-held spreaders at a rate of 2 lbs. per 1000 sq.ft. They raked the soil in two directions to ensure seed-to-soil contact.

Sahara seedlings emerged seven days after seeding. The grounds crew waited two more weeks to mow the young grass for the first time. Only 41 days after seeding, the new turf faced its first soccer tournament. The Sahara variety held up quite well. The turf was rolled after the tournament, and as figure three demonstrates, Mr. Benavides was very happy with its performance.

New and improved varieties

The commercial acceptance of Sahara and similar varieties changed the turfgrass industry's view of seeded bermudagrass. Today, due to its density and durability, many turfgrass professionals promote bermudagrass as an ideal base for all kinds of sports turf. Worldwide usage of bermudagrass seed for turf has grown an estimated 40 percent since 1990.

Interest in establishing bermudagrass turf from seed and acceptance of varieties like NuMex Sahara fueled a demand for the development of more seeded varieties. Turf professionals wanted continued improvement of turf density and overall quality, starting at the level of the seed.

In 1994, a new group of improved turf-type seeded bermudagrasses met these demands. New varieties, such as Sultan and Yuma, featured significant improvements over Common bermudagrass, but also provided increased turf density and improved overall turf quality over NuMex Sahara.

Current trends

The use of bermudagrass for general purpose and sports turf applications continues to increase. The new denser seeded bermudagrasses are earning respect for improved characteristics on golf course fairways and sports fields around the world.

In less than 10 years, seeded turf-type bermudagrass has experienced tremendous advances. Over 15 varieties of seeded turf-type bermudagrass are currently commercially available. Turf professionals now have a range of options when choosing certified seeded bermudagrasses and certified seeded bermudagrass blends for their projects.

What does the future hold for seeded bermudagrass varieties? Turf professionals continue to seek varieties that possess greater turf density and improved overall turf quality, while retaining greater similarity to vegetative bermudagrasses. New varieties of the next century will also attempt to improve cold tolerance for transition zone and shaded area usage.

It may not be possible to predict exactly what the seeded bermudagrass of the future will look like, but one thing is certain: bermudagrass from seed isn’t just common anymore.

Brenda Dossey is an Agronomist and serves as Vice President of Sales for Seeds West, Inc., Yuma, Arizona.

Figure 3: Only 41 days after seeding, the new turf faced its first soccer tournament. Mr. Benavides was very happy with its performance. Courtesy: Seeds West.
Drowned by Bertha, the University at Albany's Athletic Fields Rise to a Giant Challenge

by Dennis Smith

"The Giants are coming!" This was the official announcement at the March '96 news conference held by New York State Governor George Pataki, Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings, and University at Albany President Karen Hitchcock. After several months of reviewing potential sites, the New York Giants football team named the university as the summer home for their training camp for the following two years.

The "easy" part was done. Now, as agreed by the university, state and city officials, and local business sponsors, the existing football, soccer and practice fields had to be upgraded to accommodate nearly 160 New York Giant players, coaches and support staff for their four week stay in July and August.

In the end, three months of constant effort would completely rehabilitate most of the fields. This mammoth task would include the re-sodding of more than a quarter-million square feet, and would require more than six thousand hours of manual labor. The improvements would be another step forward for the University at Albany, which had been upgraded to a Division II sports program in 1995.

At the start of May, just two months before training camp was set to begin, Giants Athletic Field Coordinator (and former University at Albany Assistant Director of Facilities) Karl Scharl started looking to update the University's equipment to prepare for the event. "We were facing some serious work ahead, and needed to make sure we had the proper equipment to get the job done right," explained Scharl.

The first task involved the main football and soccer fields. These were the only fields that did not require total rehabilitation. Time constraints prohibited the installation of a new irrigation system, so the maintenance team set out to upgrade the existing equipment. The team installed a versatile rotor that allowed insert nozzles of 5-24 gpm. They went on to aerate the field in three directions using a 42-in., three-point tractor-driven aerator with 3/4-in. slotted tines. The team proceeded to break up the dried plugs with a heavy-duty drag mat.

The Giants scrimmage on their new practice field at the University at Albany during training camp, 1996. Courtesy: Toro.
The existing turf had to go,” added Wimble. “It had 80-90 percent weed content, which we needed to destroy.” A local company came in to roto-till the existing sod. They also supplied 270,000 sq.ft. of a new combination blue-grass blend mineral sod to complete the job.

Before sodding began, Liburdi and Wimble discovered a significant drainage problem in the fields. “The existing irrigation system was more than 20 years old and had leaking mains,” explained Liburdi. “We began a drainage project around the perimeter of the four fields using 8,000 ft. of 6-in. drainage material.” The lateral drainage lines were installed on 20-ft. centers, and trenches were back-filled with appropriate filter sand.

The team tested the drainage sys-
Continued on pg. 36

The grounds crew overseeded the fields with a triplex ryegrass mixture to prepare for the Giants. Courtesy: Toro.

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Continued from pg. 33

tern early, and it worked very well.

"Almost to the day we began laying the
sod, mother nature really became
uncooperative," recalled Liburdi.

Nearly 50 inches of
rain fell between May
and mid-July that year.

"To make matters
worse, what remained
of Hurricane Bertha
came along on July 6.
It dumped 5-1/4 inches
on us in about four
hours, but the fields
were playable about
days later," said
Liburdi.

In most soil condi-
tions, laying sod would
have been nearly impos-
sible with so much rain-
fall. Fortunately, the
campus was built on the
former Albany Country
Club, and it was blessed
with a sandy soil and a
thick layer of organic matter.

Supervised by Wimble and Liburdi, a
crew of 17 laid sod from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00
p.m. for 21 consecutive days. After treat-
ing the fields with a biostimulant, they
cut the 4-ft. wide, 60-ft. long sod rolls at a
half-day in an attempt to dry the soil.

As the crew rolled
out the sod, they signif-
ically reduced rutting
in the saturated ground
by renting a tractor
with large balloon tires.

Because conditions were so wet,
Liburdi employed a helicopter for a
downdraft over extremely wet spots
to dry them enough to
be sodded.

A deep-tine aeration
helped the new turf
drain, and aided the
new roots in penetra-
ting the soil profile.

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ting the soil profile.

Additionally, since aera-
tion was practically
non-existent in the uni-
versity's program, the
depth of 1/2-3/4 inches.

The team rolled out 270,000 feet of sod, four feet at a time.

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percent sedge peat. They followed by broadcast overseeding the fields with a triplex ryegrass mixture. As the sod began to establish, a slow release fertilizer enriched the soil at the rate of 1 lb. of Nitrogen per 1,000 sq.ft. Finally, the crew sprayed the fields with liquid iron, with an omni-directional wetting agent, and with a microbial biostimulant to enhance color and improve rooting.

As stipulated by the Giants, all of the fields were mowed with a two-wheel drive, 72-in. wide-cut triplex reel mower with eight-blade hydraulically-driven floating cutting units. The crew maintained a grass height of 1-1/4 inches, and for the first time, they mowed the football field in a striping pattern.

When New York Giants management arrived in July, they were extremely pleased with the results, particularly in light of the adverse weather conditions the crew was forced to overcome. However, early in training, during an afternoon practice following a previous night’s rain, Giants Head Coach Reeves felt the field was too soft.

“I was concerned about the safety of my players, as well as the possibility of tearing up a quality field unnecessarily,” recalls Reeves. Head Groundskeeper Wimble applauded the coach’s decision to move to another practice field, observing, “It was nice to see that Coach Reeves was a ‘turf guy.’” At a press conference on July 18, Reeves remarked that the University, state, city and local businesses “had completed a wonderful job in a relatively short period of time.”

Perhaps the greatest testament to the achievement came from a person with “hands-on experience.” Giants Quarterback Dave Brown remarked, “The turf provided great footing, and allowed our team to get through camp with fresh legs because it was so soft. The condition of the fields can be attributed to the people who worked on them and to their equipment.”

In an effort to protect the university’s investment, Scharl and Wimble developed a maintenance plan to keep the new athletic fields in quality shape. With these efforts, and with future plans to upgrade its other fields, the University at Albany continues to build a higher athletic profile. This commitment to quality paid off when the Giants agreed to use the university’s fields during training camp for six more years.

Dennis Smith represents CME Public Relations for the Toro Company, Minneapolis, MN.

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March 1998 37
Spraintime Fertilization: Getting An Edge
by: Tony Koski, Ph.D.

In recent years, the concept of late-season fertilization has become a mainstay of most cool-season turfgrass fertilization programs. It has even become a common practice on the warm-season species in the transition zone and South. This is an agronomically sound, research-proven fertilization technique. However, we all know that good quality turf can not be sustained without some kind of early-season fertilization.

Stimulate color, not growth
This is a good rule of thumb for the average turf that is not subjected to intensive wear. However, on a heavy use soccer field, N must be applied more frequently to stimulate the growth that promotes better wear tolerance and speeds recovery from intense foot traffic.

Common sense must be used in determining frequency and amount of fertilizer to apply. The proper amount will vary with species, desired quality level, and designated application for which the turf is used. Annual N requirements for cool- and warm-season lawns are shown in Table 1. Most turf managers do not generally make monthly N applications. Instead, they rely on residual activity of fertilizer sources to carry them from one fertilizer application to the next.

Use N to fight diseases
We have long known that over- or underfertilization, especially in the spring, can result in turfgrass disease problems (Table 3). For example, red thread can be a problem during moist, cool springs on fine fescues and perennial ryes if they are underfertilized and not growing at a satisfactory rate. On the other hand, diseases like striped smut can become severe if susceptible Kentucky bluegrass cultivars are fertilized excessively during the spring.

Research at Cornell University and other universities is now showing that nitrogen sources may play an important role in the suppression of certain diseases. Although much work must still be done, it appears that natural
organic fertilizers and composts, when used as turf fertilizers, can sometimes reduce the incidence or severity of diseases like brown patch, necrotic ring spot, red thread, dollar spot, and pythium root rot. Still, the use of these materials should not be considered a cure-all. The relative success of their use can vary with fertilizer and location. It appears that base material, production/composting process, disease pressure, and the environment into which these fertilizers and composts are introduced all influence the degree of disease suppression. It is also well-known that the acidifying effect of ammonium-based fertilizers can help reduce the severity of take-all patch on bentgrass and spring dead spot on bermudagrass over time. It should be emphasized that the simple use of a fertilizer will not in itself counteract the negative effects of poor soil preparation and improper cultural practices which may predispose turf to disease problems.

Fertilize with grass clippings

Grass clippings continue to be shown as legitimate and important nutrient sources when returned to turf areas. Research here at Colorado State University and elsewhere has shown that the quality, color, and density of cool-season turf species are noticeably greater when clippings are regularly returned to the lawn. In addition, the severity of rust and red thread may be dramatically reduced on ryegrass and bluegrass lawns where clippings are returned.

Local and state laws increasingly encourage recycling of clippings. It is generally conceded that the return of grass clippings does not contribute significantly to thatch accumulation, but that the organic matter returned is rapidly converted to a form which is beneficial to turfgrass systems.

Be a responsible fertilizer user

While most available research indicates that careful fertilizer use presents negligible risk to most ground and surface water sources, any fertilizer application has the potential to cause contamination via the processes of surface runoff or leaching. Use of water-soluble fertilizers on sandy soils where precipitation (or irrigation rates) are

---

**Table 1: Seasonal N requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cool-Season Species</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bentgrass</td>
<td>1 to 3</td>
<td>3 to 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Pecos</td>
<td>0.5 to 2</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kentucky bluegrass</td>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Kentucky bluegrass</td>
<td>1.5 to 3</td>
<td>3 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perennial ryegrass</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
<td>4 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall fescue</td>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>3 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheatgrass</td>
<td>0 to 2</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-Season Species</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahiagrass</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermudagrass</td>
<td>1 to 4</td>
<td>3 to 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo grass/Blue grama</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>2 to 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpet grass</td>
<td>1.5 to 3</td>
<td>4 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centipede grass</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Augustine grass</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
<td>5 to 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoysiagrass</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
<td>5 to 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lower rates are for shorter growing seasons and/or on heavy soils. Higher rates are used when growing season is longer, soils are sandy, precipitation rates are high, and clippings are routinely removed.

---

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Table 2: Characteristics of N fertilizers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fertilizer Name</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Source of Nitrogen</th>
<th>Moisture Dependence</th>
<th>Low Temp. Response</th>
<th>Residual N Activity</th>
<th>Salt Index (per N)</th>
<th>Leaching Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quickly-Available N Fertilizers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammonium nitrate</td>
<td>33-00-0</td>
<td>ammonium nitrate</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>rapid</td>
<td>04-06 weeks</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammonium sulfate</td>
<td>21-00-0</td>
<td>ammonium sulfate</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>rapid</td>
<td>04-06 weeks</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammonium phosphate</td>
<td>18-46-0</td>
<td>diammomium phosphate</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>rapid</td>
<td>04-06 weeks</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urea</td>
<td>46-00-0</td>
<td>urea</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>rapid</td>
<td>04-06 weeks</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slowly-Available Fertilizers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulfur-coated urea</td>
<td>22-38%</td>
<td>urea</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>10-15 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONCE</td>
<td>24-35%</td>
<td>urea, nitrate, ammon.N</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>15-36 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scots Poly-S</td>
<td>16-40%</td>
<td>urea, methylene urea</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>12-24 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slowly-Soluble Sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBDU</td>
<td>31-0-0</td>
<td>isobutylidene diurea</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>10-16 weeks</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>mod.low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ureform Reactiton Fertilizers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitroform</td>
<td>38-0-0</td>
<td>ureaformaldehyde</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>10-30 weeks+</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLUF</td>
<td>18-0-0</td>
<td>urea, ureaformaldehyde</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>06-10 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrafine</td>
<td>40-0-0</td>
<td>methylene ureas</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>07-16 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methylene urea</td>
<td>39-0-0</td>
<td>methylene ureas</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>07-09 weeks</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coron</td>
<td>28-0-0</td>
<td>urea, methylene urea</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>07-09 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-Sure</td>
<td>28-0-0</td>
<td>triazine, urea sol.</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>06-09 weeks</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Organic Fertilizers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringers</td>
<td>5-9% N</td>
<td>blood, bone, seed, meals</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>10-12 weeks</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustane</td>
<td>5-2-4</td>
<td>composted turkey waste</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>mod.</td>
<td>10-12 weeks</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milorganite</td>
<td>5-6% N</td>
<td>activated sludge</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>10-12 weeks</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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