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VOLUME 15, NUMBER 8

AUGUST 1999

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Bob Tracinski profiles STMA's 1998 High School Softball Field of the Year.

### Main Events

#### 14 NFL Techniques for Better and Safer Fields

Rich Genoff, Ross Kurcab, and Steve Wightman extend advice accumulated from years of experience maintaining grounds for National Football League facilities.

#### 24 Tip o' the Month: Logos and Field Decorations

Steve Wightman offers tips that will help keep your fields looking professional, whatever the level of play.

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Courtesy: Comet Stadium

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### Southern Hospitality

Last month, I traveled to Baton Rouge, LA to participate in the South East Conference Turf Managers Meeting. Jeff Kershaw and Harvey Crenshaw of Louisiana State University (LSU) hosted this year's meeting, which brings together college/university-level turf managers, researchers, and even assistant athletic directors (if you count Bucky Trotter) to discuss current issues and persistent problems.

I have to give these guys credit — they sure know how to throw a meeting. The group's small size created a casual and comfortable atmosphere, and I was able to have conversations with just about every attendee during the three-day event. Everyone made me feel very welcome, despite my Yankee origins.

Building lines of communication has been a persistent theme since I've been with the magazine, and the topic figured prominently at the meeting. In his recent article, "Growing Pains," Scott Gaunky asked, "Wouldn't it be great if you could get the coaches and others who use your fields into a classroom to educate them in turf survival?" The SEC meeting made great progress in this direction, and it came close to fulfilling Gaunky's wish.

LSU Athletic Director Joe Dean welcomed attendees to open the conference, before turning the floor over to Head Football Coach Gerry DiNardo. The Coach recognized the important role the grounds staff plays in LSU's program, and he expressed his appreciation. He and Kershaw acknowledged that they don't always agree, but both cited communication as a means to come to terms.

These guest presentations took up only a small fraction of the meeting's schedule, but they accomplished a great deal. To build bridges of communication, you must first build respect. Bringing coaches and athletic directors into these meetings allows them to more fully appreciate the scope of sports turf management. When these decision makers see sports turf managers coming together to share ideas as professionals, they may be more apt to listen when it comes time to make decisions about fields.

Professionalism was another major theme of the meeting. Dr. Gil Landry of the University of Georgia held an open discussion on the topic to gauge people's views.

Gil cited the STMA for its contributions to building respect and recognition for all sports turf managers. He joined Bob Campbell in urging attendees that were not already members to join the organization.

Attendees seemed to agree that certification was a good way to promote professionalism. Most were anxious to see what the final STMA Certification program will look like. The group agreed that professional conduct and appearance must be maintained both in the office and out on the fields, and that balancing these two sides of management is fundamental.

Overall, the meeting was a great success. Other speakers included Dr. Jeff Higgins of Percell Technologies, Dr. Grady Miller of the University of Florida, and Dr. Mike Goatly of Mississippi State University. I even wound up on the schedule by some dumb luck, but I won't bore you with the details.

**Steve Berens, Editor**  
(773) 755-4611



#### August 17

Cornell Field Day, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Contact Joann Gruttadaurio: (607) 255-1792.

#### August 18

Sports Turf Association's (STA) 12th annual Field Day, Guelph Turfgrass Institute, Guelph, ON, Canada. Contact STA: (519) 763-9431.

#### August 18

University of Rhode Island Turf Field Day, Kingston, RI. Contact Dr. Bridget Ruemmele: (401) 874-2481.

#### August 18

Michigan Turfgrass Field Day, Hancock Turfgrass Research Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. Contact Kay Patrick: (517) 321-1660.

#### August 18

Ohio State University (OSU) Turfgrass/Horticulture Research Field Day, OSU Turfgrass Research Facility, Columbus, OH. Contact Kevin Thompson: (888) 683-3445, ext. 3151.

#### August 23-27

Floyd Perry's Groundskeepers Management Academy, Colonial Heights, VA. Other dates and locations: Aug. 30-Sept. 3, Orlando; Sept. 12-16, Dallas; Sept. 19-23, Denver; Oct. 10-14, Davis, CA. Contact Grounds Maintenance Services: (800) 227-9381.

#### August 26

University of California (UC) Cooperative Extension Turf and Landscape Research Field Day, UC Bay Area Research and Extension Center, Santa Clara, CA. Contact Dr. Ali Harivandi: (510) 639-1271.

### September 14-15

Turfgrass Research Conference and Field Day and Landscape Management Research Conference and Field Day, University of California, Riverside, CA. Contact Susana Aparicio: (909) 787-4430.

### September 14-18

University of California-Riverside Extension seminar: "Turfgrass Management Intensive Institute," Riverside, CA. Contact Jan Crump: (909) 787-5804, ext. 1621.

### September 15

Texas Turf & Ornamental Field Day, Texas A&M-Dallas Research and Extension Center, Dallas, TX. Phone: (972) 231-5362.

### October 28

Sixth annual Southeast Texas Grounds Maintenance Conference, Montgomery County Fairgrounds, Conroe, TX. Contact Patti Jones: (409) 539-7822.

### November 9-11

Turf and Grounds Exposition: "Committed to Excellence: Plants, People, the Environment, and You," OnCenter, Syracuse, NY. Contact NYSTA: (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229.

### November 13-16

Green Industry Expo, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD. Contact Eleanor Ellison: (770) 973-2019.

### December 6-9

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation's 33rd annual Conference and Show, Greater Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, OH. Contact Kevin Thompson: (888) 683-3445, ext. 3151.

### December 7-9

Georgia Turfgrass Association's 30th annual Conference and Trade Show, Cobb Galleria Centre, Atlanta. Contact Sherry Loudermilk: (770) 975-4123.

## 2000

### January 12-16

STMA 11th annual Conference & Exhibition, St. Louis. Contact STMA: (800) 323-3875 or (712) 366-2669.

## STMA MESSAGE



## Field of Dreams

When I think about my favorite sport, baseball, I think back to the movie, *Field of Dreams*. The actual field used in the movie was built by Neal Beeson, a long-time California STMA member. I'm reminded of this field

when I look at our STMA 1998 High School Softball Field of the Year.

The award is a dream come true for Head Softball Coach Mark Cuthbertson, J.V. Coach Joe McLearn, and Freshman Coach Bruce Moritz. This coaching team doubles as the field's grounds crew. Their dream only became reality through lots of hard work — and it shows.

My congratulations on this well-deserved award go out to them, along with a thank you for reminding us how a school and community can combine efforts to produce and maintain better and safer fields. If you are also maintaining great fields, and think you may be pretty close to that award-winning status, please contact STMA Headquarters for information on entering your field for consideration.

This issue of *sportsTURF* is one for the library. There's an article detailing field maintenance techniques used by some of STMA's NFL members. I'm pleased to report that the number of STMA members with NFL and MLB facilities has increased over the last few years. We appreciate the more active role these individuals have taken in sharing their expertise with others in the industry. STMA will also continue to invite them to use the national association as a forum for their own networking. After all, that's what STMA is all about — sharing information and expertise to help all sports turf managers as they strive for uniform excellence in their own field conditions.

More good news — it's coming! After more than two years of hard work, the STMA Certification Committee is nearly ready to formally introduce the Certified Sports Field Manager Certification Program.

The Committee presented a block of materials for the STMA Board of Directors to review this past June, and it was approved. In late June, the Certified Sports Field Manager exam was tested by members of the Committee and several Chicago-area STMA members. At this point, the exam is going through its final review and it will be completed soon. The certification information package is in the final stages of development.

In conjunction with STMA's 11th Annual Conference & Exhibition in St. Louis, those who have met qualifying criteria, have completed the appropriate forms, and have been pre-approved to take the certification test will be able to do so January 16, 2000. The test will also be offered under proctored conditions at pre-approved testing locations throughout the year to those who are qualified and have been pre-approved to take the exam.

Even more good news — the Conference will again offer excellent educational sessions, time to interact with top industry suppliers, Seminar on Wheels tours, and opportunities to network with others in the industry. Get this great Conference on your calendars now: January 12-16, 2000.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Guise". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

**Stephen Guise, STMA President**  
**(714) 704-0403**



# Comet Stadium

1998 STMA High School Softball Field of the Year

Courtesy: Comet Stadium

by Bob Tracinski

When Mark Cuthbertson came to Comet Stadium as assistant softball coach in 1994, the field was essentially unchanged from its 1980 development to accommodate the new fast-pitch softball program at Ohio's Genoa High School.

Grass and weeds had been scraped off the heavy-clay native soil and topped with a thin layer of coarse masonry sand to form the infield. The Athletic Boosters built dugouts and erected a backstop and sideline fences.

Then, Cuthbertson explains, "Something occurred in 1994 that would forever change the way we viewed our athletic facilities at Genoa High School. Our boys' baseball facility was named Beam Clay's National Field of the Year."

## Dedicated team

Cuthbertson was named Head Coach following the 1994 season. As is the case with many high schools, Genoa's paid coaching positions evolved to include unpaid groundskeeping tasks.

Coaches Cuthbertson, McLearn, and Moritz form the maintenance crew. Cuthbertson does all the mowing, edging, aerating, and chemical application. The remaining maintenance is split among the three coaches as evenly as possible.

Generally, each coach handles game-day preparations for his home

games. Team members tackle most of the post-game maintenance and the post-practice touch-up work.

In 1994, the weed-ravaged softball field wasn't even included in the budget with the baseball and football fields. Cuthbertson says, "I decided that, if it were at all possible, within four years we would have a softball facility of the same caliber as the boys' 'Field of Dreams.'"

## Field improvements

Genoa High School is a small rural facility with a very limited budget, but an unlimited community spirit. The field improvement plan was based on funding by donations and lots of volunteer labor. Cuthbertson and staff also enjoyed support from Athletic Director (now High School Principal) Jim Henline.

Cuthbertson says, "Henline's first big contribution was an offer for us to dismantle an old stable building at a former seminary in nearby Perrysburg. We could rebuild it as a multipurpose shelter house / storage / concession building. He even came with a group of volunteers to do the work.

"Within a few weeks we had our new building in place, complete with vinyl siding, electricity, and phone — all done with no cost to the Board of Education."

Henline also authorized use of fertilizer and weed-control chemicals usually reserved for the football and

baseball fields. It was the first time softball had been afforded this status.

The school had just purchased a small pull-behind core aerator for the football practice fields. Cuthbertson repeatedly put it to use. He says, "The field had ended up as a mix of grasses and weeds — heavy on the weeds. With little field use scheduled in the summer of 1994 and moderate temperatures, I made multiple fertilizer applications using the different fertilizers on hand, and used a lot of weed killer.

With a greatly reduced weed population, we adopted an aggressive overseeding and fertilization program in the fall. Pre-emergence control of the persistent crabgrass was scheduled for spring of 1995 — even if I'd have to buy it myself. And we started begging for an outfield fence."

Early that spring, volunteers installed the fence. "While the installation was in process, we again were shown how people in our community embrace the endeavors of people like us," noted Cuthbertson. "One morning, two boiler pipes, 24 feet in length, mysteriously appeared in the left field. They were just what I'd wanted for our foul poles, and I'd only told two people about it. To this day, no one has stepped forward as the supplier."

By March 1995, Comet Field was much improved, and the previous year's softball program expanded. Cuthbertson says, "When people would say the field was so much nicer,



**STMA President Steve Guise (left) presents Coaches/Groundskeepers Mark Cuthbertson (center) and Joe McLear (right) the Field of the Year award.**

*Courtesy: STMA*

Yankees fan, so I tracked down the name of Dan Cunningham, their groundskeeper; called him; told him what we wanted; and he told us exactly what to do and even recommended some products to try.

"I requested samples of what he suggested and similar products. We started plotting the final details of Phase Three. In the meantime, we continued our aggressive maintenance program of aeration, fertilization,

we'd promote the next project. They all bought into it.

"We staged our first softball clinic for young girls, and earned enough funds to buy paint for volunteers to paint the dugouts. For the first time, the summer softball association asked if they could use our facility. Phase One was complete."

In late summer 1995, Cuthbertson learned of an old scoreboard at a community softball field that was being replaced by a housing addition. A phone call confirmed that it was theirs for the taking. A few more calls rounded up the donation of the 12-conductor underground cable, and the funds for a new control panel.

Again, the volunteer brigade sprung to action. Cuthbertson says, "Right after the scoreboard was in place, a folded American flag appeared in my mailbox. My full-time job is as a process technician at an oil refinery. When I told people at work about the flag and need for a flag pole, another mysterious surprise occurred.

"One morning, a 25-foot long, heavy-gauge section of boiler pipe appeared at the field. All I needed to do was get the concrete and set it in place.

"Also that summer, volunteers helped us install the bullpens. We completed our Phase Two by purchasing much-needed softball equipment and uniforms. By spring of 1996, our facility was becoming the envy of our opponents."

#### **Infield renovation**

In 1996, Cuthbertson and McLear took the J.V. and varsity softball teams to Atlanta for pre-season scrimmages. The teams played on the manicured turf and crushed red brick infield of Kennesaw State College and the girls loved it.

Cuthbertson told them that they'd have their own red infield in two years. He says, "I'm a big New York

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overseeding, and weed control."

The Athletic Boosters agreed to fund the softball infield renovation. "Because the field had been tiled well for its previous agricultural use, internal drainage is good," notes Cuthbertson. "With no crown and the shallow layer of masonry sand over the heavy clay, there were some high and low spots, and surface drainage was a problem."

McLear and Moritz tapped their fire department connections for infield reconstruction volunteers. Moritz also secured a pile of clay removed from a nearby limestone quarry. Another fire department member volunteered his equipment and services to do the grading.

The athletic department paid for rental of a commercial roto-tiller. The crew used it to till the existing heavy clay and masonry sand to a four-inch

depth. They topped this layer with approximately 100 tons of the quarry clay.

The coaches used the school's front-end loader to level and work in the

final grade.

The crew topped the infield with coarse masonry sand, which formed the playing surface for the 1997 season. This provided a softer finish than desired.

Funds from 1997 clinics and other donated materials led to the installation of an outdoor batting cage, and Phase Three was complete. Cuthbertson says, "We started Phase Four late in the summer of 1997, when two picnic tables were donated for our shelter and 32 Austrian pine trees were planted around the outfield fence by our Vocational Agriculture Department.

"I liked some features of the field at Ohio Northern University, where my daughter plays, and decided to make the infield surface smaller, going to the rule-book minimum, and having grass areas down both foul lines and behind



Courtesy: Comet Stadium

clay. During the process, they spotted a small vein of blue gumbo clay. They dug it out and put blocks of it inside the dugouts for later use. The volunteer grader operator completed the

Northern University, where my daughter plays, and decided to make the infield surface smaller, going to the rule-book minimum, and having grass areas down both foul lines and behind

*Continued on pg. 13*

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