## John Deere scouting report from



Grant Trenbeath, head groundskeeper for the Arizona Diamondbacks. To the right, Trenbeath mows the outfield with the John Deere 2653A Utility Mower.



Golf Course



# Phoenix.

AND SHARAS



The Bank One Ballpark's retractable roof can open or close in slightly less than five minutes. Either side of the roof can be opened to maximize sunlight on the turf and minimize it on the interior steel and concrete.

"This ballpark is unique to anything that's been done before," says Grant Trenbeath, head groundskeeper for the Arizona Diamondbacks Baseball Club, major league baseball's newest team. Like the Diamondbacks, Trenbeath was in his inaugural season as a major league groundskeeper during 1998. And it was a learning experience, to say the least.

"It's a world inside itself," observes Trenbeath about the Bank One Ballpark. "The roof, the air conditioning, the shade line, not to mention the heat factor. Also the newness of the park. There's a maturity process that goes on and it takes a certain amount of time to establish that."

To help bring a rookie field up to major league standards, Trenbeath relied on a proven veteran. "I've worked with John Deere equipment in the past, so when I was approached about using John Deere, it had my full support." The John Deere 1200A Field Rake and the 220A Walk-Behind Mower are mainstays in the Arizona infield.



"John Deere takes their time, so by the time they come out with



something, it's much higher quality. Prime example is the Aercore 800. I've messed around with other aerators and that's the Cadillac." But according to Trenbeath, it takes

more than equipment to make a winner. "Most groundkeepers will tell you the equipment is only as good as the service. And John Deere to me is the best service-wise. And that's peace of mind."

"You can go up and down our line of equipment - the 1200A Field Rake, the 2653 Utility Mower, the 1800 Utility Vehicle, the 220A Walk-Behind Mowers - all of them are mainstays here at Bank One."

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## **VOLUME 16, NUMBER 7**

## **JULY 2000**

## **Cover Story**

## 8 Great Results at Central Park's Great Lawn Bob Tracinski profiles The Great Lawn in Central Park, winner of the 1999 STMA/Beam Clay/sportsTURF Softball Field of the Year, Municipal/Parks and Recreation Category.

## Main Events

18 Maintenance Tactics for High Traffic Areas Learn Abby McNeal's seven tactics for maintaining safe and beautiful fields in high traffic locations.

Aeration: A Prescription for Sick Fields 24 Dr. John Stier describes the benefits of aeration, as well as the different types of equipment available to turf managers.

## 28 Sustainable Saltwater Irrigated Sports Field Developments

With the availability of fresh water an ever-growing concern, saltwater irrigation is becoming a more realistic option for sports fields. Learn how to make it work for you.

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On the Cover:



The Great Lawn in New York's Central Park Photo Courtesy of: Sara Miller

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## SportsTURF The Front Office



## Neighborhood Diamonds Get Brand New Shine

In October of 1997, Ball Park Franks commissioned a survey to determine what parents thought about the condition of community parks and the importance of these parks to their children. The results of that survey are alarming.

A sample of 1,000 adults nationwide with children between the ages of 6 and 11 was asked what they thought about the parks in their neighborhood, and 90 percent of the parents said they do not allow their children to play in a community baseball field or park close to their home. One of the major issues in this decision was the condition of park equipment and grounds (73 percent), which ranked higher than factors such as the age of the child, the location of the park and concerns about the activities of other park users.

While these parents expressed their displeasure over the state of the parks in their areas, they also recognized the importance of them to their children. More than 80 percent felt that places such as community ball fields and parks are important to the development of their children.

Shortly after the survey was taken, dozens of employees from the local Ball Park Brands plant in Philadelphia came together with area volunteers to help clean up a long-neglected neighborhood ball field in the city's Fairmount Park, launching the Ball Park Great American Clean-Up program. Since that time, clean-ups have been held in cities across the country, including Los Angeles, Cleveland, Denver, Boston and Minneapolis.

"We've been participating in this clean-up for several years now, and it's extremely rewarding and worthwhile every time," said Greg Sykes, President of Ball Park Brands. "Seeing what dedicated volunteers can do in a community is admirable. You get a true sense of how much time and effort citizens are willing to invest in their future."

This past spring, 130 volunteers gathered on a beautiful morning in Chicago to revitalize a field in Chicago's East Garfield Park. Comprised mostly of United Way volunteers and neighborhood families—including several little-leaguers—the group helped beautify the park by cleaning up trash, planting trees and flowers and improving the play lot. A new scoreboard was added for the baseball field, thanks to a grant from Ball Park.

"Through the 'Great American Clean-Up,' kids and their families in East Garfield Park will have another positive outlet and a clean, safe place to play ball," said Susan Norris, Director of Volunteer Initiative at United Way/Crusade of Mercy. "We're pleased to be involved in this worthwhile project that involves so many people coming together to benefit children and youth."

The fields chosen for renovation are selected on a year-by-year basis. Ball Park goes into large markets and solicits the help of the local United Way in finding a park that needs repair, then helps organize and fund the clean-up.

This is a great way to take a field that has fallen in disrepair and turn it into a safe, friendly and inviting destination for children. If you know of a field in your area that could use a serious makeover, or you are interested in offering your turf managing skills to this effort, send a letter to:

Ball Park Great American Clean-Up 432 N. Superior St. Toledo, OH 43604

Michael San Filippo

Michael SanFilippo (847) 427-2083

## Tip of the Month

## Your Athletic Field and Your Child

## Part I

by Floyd Perry

uestion: What can be frozen, baked, trampled, starved, dehydrated, saturated, compacted, cut too short, not cut at all, overfed, underfed, sliced, probed, smothered, painted and kicked, and still survive?

Answer: Quality athletic turf grass

For the lawn maintenance company that crosses over and handles quality athletic turf on a contract basis, remember to treat your new baby (sports turf) just like your family lawn with time tested methods.

## **Two Work Forces**

Some say that with the "Mow and Go" contractor there is a lack of caring and concern for the athletic property since most times it's a bid project and the low bidder bites the bullet to get the job. Some say with the hourly employee it's "TIl do the best I can, but leave the rest to someone else."

Let's reverse the issues. Let's be service oriented first. Let's assume that it's low bid, but high quality. Let's treat our low bid school project like a top end estate account and still stay within budget. Here are some easy ways of creating referral business, creating a professional image and leaving a lasting impression at the same time. Treat your athletic field like you would treat your child!

continued on page 31

# **Calendar of Events**

## July 19-21

**Turfgrass** Producers International's (TPI) 33rd annual Summer Convention and Field Day, Spokane, WA. Contact TPI: (800) 405-8873/(847) 705-9898; fax (847) 705-8347; Turf-Grass@msn.com. Web site: www.TurfGrassSod.org.

## July 22-24

**Outdoor Power Equipment** Institute's (OPEI) 17th annual International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo (EXPO 2000), Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, KY. Contact Sellers Expositions: (800) 558-8767/(502) 562-1962; fax (502) 562-1970. Web site: http://EXPO.mow.org.

## July 27

Green Industry Professional Field Day and Trade Show, American University, Washington, DC. Will include: sports turf maintenance. For more information, call (703) 250-1368.

## August 15

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

## August 23

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

## August 30-September 2

WorldScape 2000, a special millennium edition of CalScape Expo, Fairmont Hotel, San Jose, CA. Contact California Interior Plantscape Association: (707) 462-2276; fax (707) 463-6699; cipa@cipaweb.org. Web site: www.cipaweb.org.

## STMA Message





# Strategies Guide Development

s summer settles in, it's apparent that many sections of the United States are experiencing major drought conditions. This, like so many

other weather-related situations, is a factor over which the sports turf manager has no direct control, yet one that impacts most parts of his or her management program.

In talking to those experiencing this drought, I'm seeing again and again that most have developed a strategic plan for dealing with water stress situations. They've done their research and established action steps to deal with what is likely to occur. They've worked with the governing bodies on water use to explain their current programs and to communicate their needs in terms of player safety and turf survival. They've set guidelines to adjust irrigation programs to fit prevailing and anticipated reductions and restrictions on water use. They've set up monitoring programs for weed, insect and disease infestations with action levels adjusted to fit the stress levels of the turf. They've worked with field user groups to keep them informed of field conditions and aware that some use cutbacks may be needed. They're planning ahead, making adjustments for the most effective use of their resources to achieve the best possible results. This is smart management.

STMA is doing much the same thing. Since my last column, the STMA Strategic Planning Committee met in Maryland for a facilitated two-day planning session. Prior to this meeting, all the attendees and many others were contacted by phone by the facilitator and his staff to gather questions, concerns, ideas and suggestions about STMA and the sports turf industry-today and far into the future.

Following that session, a preliminary report was issued incorporating the initial input and the results of the two-day meeting. The STMA board devoted part of its regularly scheduled June meeting to taking the preliminary strategic planning report a step further. They refined a set of five key strategies to build upon the main themes that had emerged from the previous segments of the project. Next, they began developing action steps to move those strategies forward.

Two action initiatives began immediately after the board meeting: development of detailed financial guidelines by the Finance Committee and research into the development of a Resource Center, with the Education Committee working in conjunction with the Chapter Relations Committee. More action steps will follow.

I'd like to personally thank all of those involved in the strategic planning initiative. Your input has been and continues to be essential to the developing and refining process. Many of the key items mentioned have been bubbling on the back burner for a number of years, waiting for the association to gather the resources to make them happen. Some of these items are new, driven by the growth of the industry and ever-changing technology. All will work together to make an even stronger impact on the association, the industry, and the general public's perception of both the profession of sports field management and the professionals doing the management.

Rich Moffatt STMA President (314) 977-2956

**Rich Moffitt** (314) 977-2956



CENTRAL PARK AND ITS GREAT LAWN ARE THE OUTDOORS for the people of New York City. As a part of the City of New York parks system, they **BELONG TO THE PEOPLE**. LOCATED IN THE *heart of the city*, this green space is the **MOST PRISTENE AND BEST MANIGURED** the City has to offer and it attracts users like a **MAGNET**, drawing approximately **THREE MILLION** of them each year. As a must see tourist attraction, it ranks near the Statue of Liberty. The great Lawn ranks at the top in field quality as well, carning

STMA'S SOFTBALL FIELD OF THE YEAR HONORS IN THE MUNICIPAL/PARKS AND RECREATION CATEGORY.

The Great Lawn was designed in the 1930s by the American Society of Landscape Architects, under the influence of Robert Moses, then the City of New York Parks Commissioner. In 1997, the Great Lawn restoration was completed by the Central Park Conservancy, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and various contracted consultants. This \$18.2 million multidimensional renovation project focused on the approximately 11 acres within the Great Lawn oval and the additional 2 acres adjacent to it. Included were the six softball fields within the oval and the two softball fields just

outside the oval, the pond, pinetum, obelisk, basketball courts and the surrounding landscape and pathways.

Russell Fredericks, turf program manager, says, "The un-permitted activity on the fields and lawn, the annual concerts and other special events and heavy daily use, coupled with the relatively heavy native soil, lack of irrigation and inadequate drainage, had taken their toll. The softball fields that had been



The Great Lawn serves as an ideal location for New York City's residents and visitors to play and relax.

installed in the 1950s still had clay infields for play, but no lawn remained on the outfield areas.

"Extreme care was taken by our in-house capital projects division, under the direction of Vice-President Chris Nolan, to preserve the character and atmosphere of the original design and the existing landscape throughout the project. The existing trees were preserved, as was the native soil profile around the trees. The existing grades were preserved throughout the project site. New trees and shrubs were planted. The pond was completely refurbished and new marginal plants were installed." A sand-based soil profile was installed within the oval and in the turf areas of the field and lawn of the adjacent 2 acres. The material is 90 percent sand with a combination of other inorganic materials and between 3 to 4 percent organic matter. An extensive drainage system was installed throughout the sand-based area. There is no field lighting, and there are no bleachers around the fields.

Fredericks adds, "The Great Lawn's sophisticated irrigation system now consists of a central pump station and an Osmac 5000 Toro irrigation system with 275 athletic pop-up heads. We use the same style adjustable heads for

the infield areas with changes in the nozzles and arcs.

"The outfields and other lawn areas are between 80 and 90 percent Kentucky bluegrass, consisting of five different varieties. The remaining percentage of the lawn area turf is a combination of three varieties of perennial ryegrass. We've added turf-type tall fescues, chewings fescue and creeping red fescue beneath the large trees."

Under a contract with the City of New York/Parks and Recreation, the Conservancy, under the direction of the Central Park

Administrator Doug Blonsky, handles day-to-day operations, ongoing maintenance for turf and horticulture and litter pickup and removal.

In his position as turf program manager for the Conservancy, Fredericks is responsible for park-wide turf maintenance, working together with Vice President of Operations Neil Calvanese. From the time he joined the staff in the fall of 1997, the turf program has quadrupled, growing in area, equipment and staff. The newly renovated North Meadow ball fields have just opened, adding seven baseball, five softball, and six soccer fields—an

8 July 2000



additional 20 acres of fields and lawn turf. That's a total of 26 ball fields and approximately 70 acres under a high-level, high-visibility turf maintenance program of the approximately 300 acres of turf in the 843-acre park. Along with coordinating the program, Fredericks directly oversees the turf crew of four full-time and four seasonal personnel working the athletic field turf and turf areas, the North Meadow staff of eight and the reservoir crew of three zone gardeners. He coordinates with Great Lawn Supervisor Maria Hernandez, who directly oversees three full-time employees and four seasonal employees working on the daily and weekly tasks in other horticultural areas. This entails maintenance and installation of trees, shrubs, perennials and the marginal plantings around the pond. Hernandez also oversees the volunteers who assist in those tasks.

Fredericks says, "An innovative measure, used park-wide in the horticultural area, is the zone gardener management program. A section supervisor and several 'zone gardeners' take care of the same areas (zones) every day They form a common bond with regular park users and help encourage their stewardship and sense of ownership over their park."

To keep the Great Lawn in top condition, field use is on a permitonly basis and only passive recreation and low-impact sports are allowed on the Lawn. The Lawn also is closed to activity during inclement weather. Entrance sites are changed frequently to avoid damage. A black, vinyl-coated range fence surrounds the oval. As turf begins to show stress at any entrance site, that section is closed and another section opened. The previous area is then aerated and overseeded.



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Fredericks notes, "There are some who don't use the Lawn gently. People do walk across it in their in-line skates, roll their bicycles over it, or participate in a pickup soccer game—cleats and all."

#### **Orchestrating Concert Survival**

Even passive activity makes its mark. Consider the concerts, at least four each summer. The two Metropolitan Opera concerts each draw over 25,000 attendees; the two

Philharmonic Orchestra concerts each draw approximately 50,000. Two of these concerts are held in June and two in July, when the turf generally is the most stressed due to heat, humidity and limited natural precipitation.

Fredericks says, "With

set-up and teardown, concerts are three-day sessions. We've developed systems to minimize damage. The stage is set on the north end of the Lawn, in the two adjacent ball fields. We use plywood pathways for the trucks and other heavy equipment, picking up each section of plywood once they get into place. We don't place plywood under the tractor-trailers, the sound booths and speakers, or any chairs we place on the Lawn. We use a turf tractor with a forklift to move speakers and sound booths to the Lawn. For those three days, the crews also must work necessary maintenance around the concert equipment. This often entails hand watering of the turf to ease it through the stress.

"The crowds are great, generally very well-behaved. They bring blankets or folding chairs, or both, and picnic along with the concert. We channel them into the Lawn area through barricades and, as individual's stake out their places, natural walkways develop

within the oval. With 25,000 or more people moving back and forth along the same paths, wear lines form.

"Once teardown is completed, the entire turf area is raked, aerated and overseeded, with intensive overseeding concentrated in the wear lines, stage

area and everywhere trucks and equipment were placed. These spots do stick with us and require extra attention for an extended period."

#### **Fertilization Factors**

- RUSSELL FREDERICKS

Fredericks has developed a comprehensive fertilization program to manage the sand-based turf areas through the wide-ranging climatic conditions of New York

continued on page 13



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DO SHARED BY ALL THOSE WITHING CENTRAL PARK

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