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MARCH 2000

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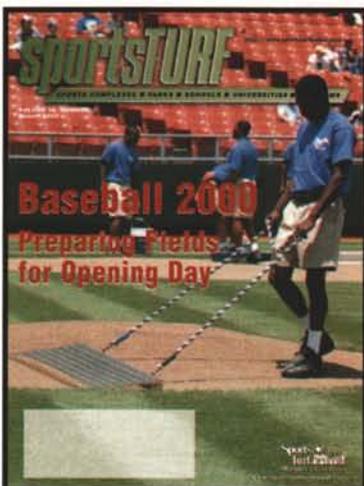
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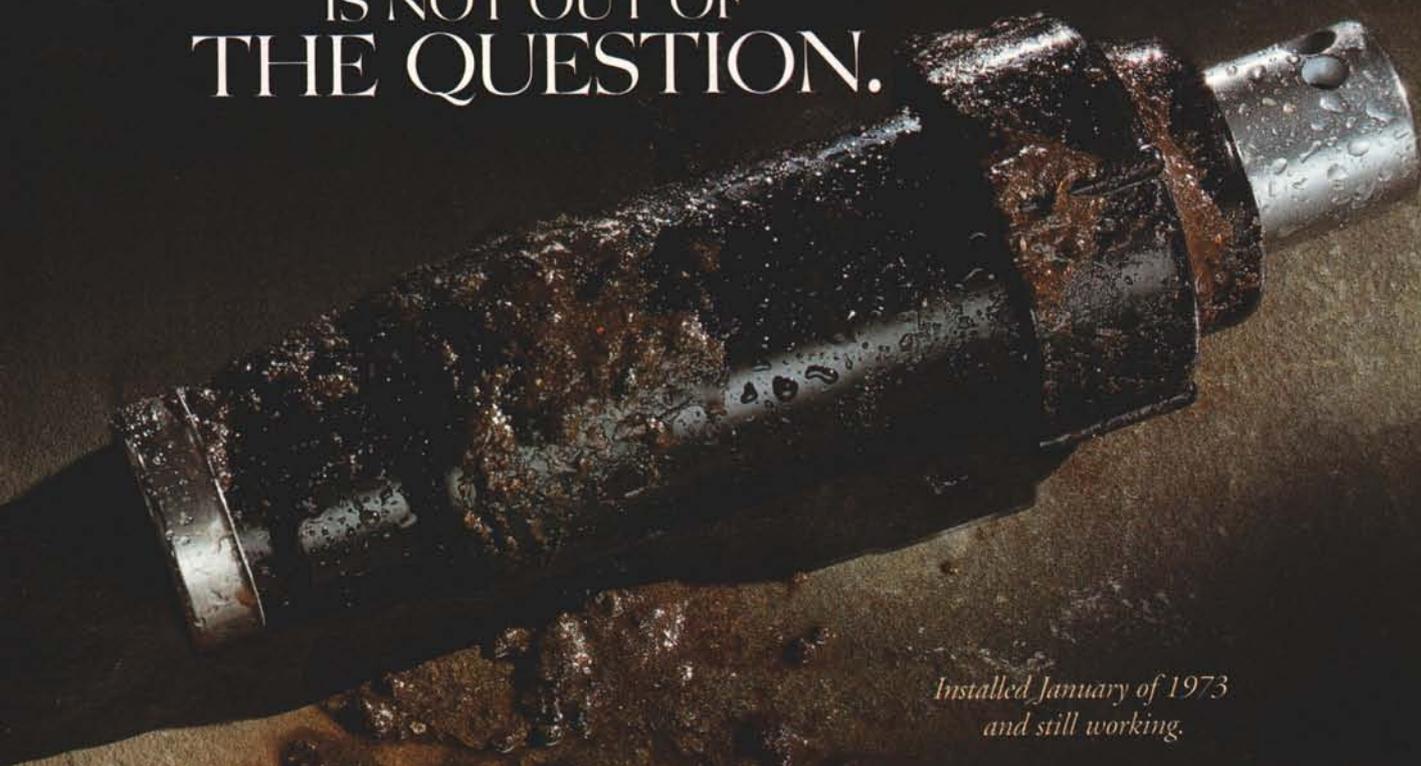
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### Play Ball!

Last month I began to hear a phrase on the television and radio, a phrase I had been waiting months to hear: *Pitchers and catchers report*—the four sweetest words to a die-hard baseball fan such as myself. More than suggesting the impending opening of another baseball season, the phrase reminds me that even though it's snowy and cold in Chicago, spring is right around the corner. And even though my beloved Cubbies will probably be out of the hunt by July, at least I can count on getting a nice tan in the bleachers at Wrigley, watching the ivy grow green and thick over the bricks of the outfield wall.

While the crack of the bat and the pop of rawhide meeting leather might draw the most public attention at Major League facilities this spring, they represent only a tiny fraction of the number of baseball players in organized leagues who are gearing up for the start of their seasons. Groundskeepers for thousands of parks across North America—whether they are from parks and recreation departments, colleges or professional stadiums—must begin preparing their fields just as hard as the players prepare themselves for the new season.

Hopefully this special baseball-theme issue of *sportsTURF* will assist all groundskeepers who manage a baseball field with tips and advice for making their fields as safe and attractive as possible. No matter who plays on your field—the 4-foot tall little league shortstop with his or her comically oversized hat and glove; the 50-year old pitcher for a park district league who can still baffle hitters with his knuckle ball; the 17-year old A Ball rookie, playing his first game for which he'll be paid; or last year's Major League Most Valuable Player, stepping up to the plate for his first at bat of the season—all players deserve a safe, consistent field. Be sure to check out all the articles in this issue for information you can apply to your field.

### Certification Update

The year 2000 marks the introduction of the STMA Sports Field Manager Certification program. At the annual conference in St. Louis this past January, Ross Kurcab was recognized at the awards banquet as the first applicant to successfully complete all the requirements to become a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM).

Since that time, four other STMA members have gone on to earn the CSFM status as well. Here is a list of the five current CSFMs:

Ross Kurcab—Turf Manager, Denver Broncos

Dale Getz—Athletic Facilities Manager, Notre Dame University

Eric Adkins—Agronomist, Northwestern University

Ted Baker—Superintendent of Parks, Highland Park Park District (Ill.)

Mike Schiller—Superintendent of Parks, Rolling Meadows Park District (Ill.)

Congratulations are in order for these highly-qualified and motivated individuals. Way to go!

If you haven't received an applicant packet and would like one, or if you have any questions about the certification process, contact STMA Headquarters: phone (800) 323-3875; fax (712) 366-9119; or e-mail SportsTMgr@aol.com. Good luck!

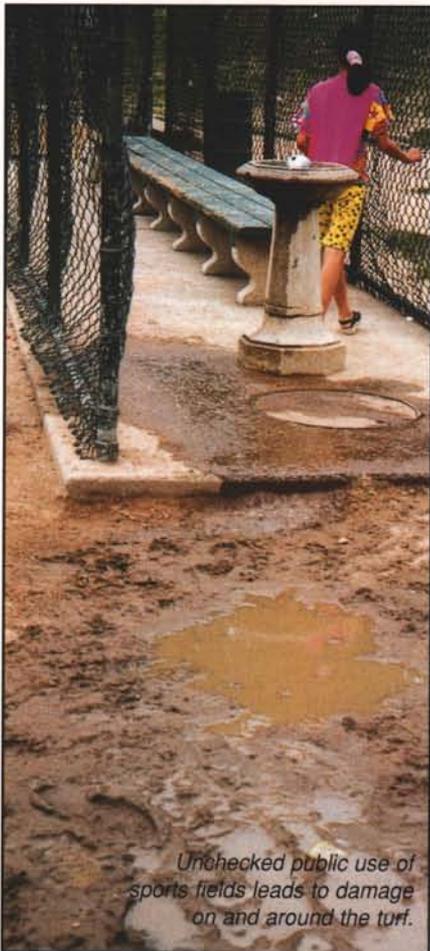
*Michael SanFilippo*

**Michael SanFilippo**  
(847) 427-2083

## Tip of the Month

### Controlling Field Traffic

by Floyd Perry



Unchecked public use of sports fields leads to damage on and around the turf.

Many school boards and municipalities are stretched to the limit in daily field care. Some parents say the maintenance staff just doesn't care about their facilities. I find that statement somewhat shallow because I know there is an honest attempt to prepare the fields properly. There's just too much extra traffic on the fields to get them game ready.

continued on page 12

# Calendar of Events 2000

## March 6-9

New England Regional Turf Conference & Show (NERTCS), Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence, R.I. Pesticide re-certification credits available. Contact NERTCS: (401) 848-0004.

## March 9

NYSTA's Western Regional Conference, Radisson Hotel & Suites, Buffalo, N.Y. Contact NYSTA: (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229.

## March 9-10

Ohio State University Sports Turf/Athletic Field Short Course, Camp Cheerful, Cleveland, Ohio. Cost: \$190. Contact Barb Bloetscher: (614) 292-7457.

## April 5

NYSTA's Adirondack Regional Conference, Hilton Lake Placid Resort, Lake Placid, N.Y. Contact NYSTA: (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229.

## 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 or (502) 562-1962.

## October 4-5

Southern California Turfgrass Council's (SCTC) Turfgrass Landscape and Equipment Expo, Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa, Calif. Contact SCTC: (800) 500-SCTC (7282) or (818) 764-5016, or expo@turfCouncil.org.

## STMA MESSAGE

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## It Was The Greatest

The figures are in and it's no surprise to all those in attendance that STMA's St. Louis Conference was a record-breaker. We had the greatest number of full-conference registrants, the greatest number of exhibitors and the greatest number of attendees at the Awards Banquet, Annual Meeting and educational sessions.

Review of attendee comments on those educational sessions show they were the greatest, too. Comments included many more like these: "These guys really know their stuff. I've already paid for all my conference expenses with the ideas I can put in practice back home." "Mike Veeck was such an inspiration. He put a new slant on how we do things, and why we do them." "The information from Tom Jadin's session is going to be the focus of our next staff meeting." "The workshop session was excellent. Two hours of in-depth information really hit what I needed to know." "The three round table groups I shared in were great; so much information shared and lots of contacts for future sharing."

The Seminar on Wheels session also drew excellent comments from the three busloads of participants, including this one: "There's so much to be gained by seeing other facilities and being able to ask questions on site." The trade show also generated great responses from both exhibitors and attendees. One exhibitor noted, upon picking up his registration packet and getting a copy of the attendee book for his company, "What a novel idea, that exhibitors might want to know what's happening. It's great to be welcome at all parts of the conference."

Maybe the greatest feature of our STMA Conferences is the fellowship and the networking. To me, the one-on-one and small group sharing of information is a learning experience equal to all other aspects of the conference.

So mark your calendars now for the 2001 action-packed and information-filled STMA Conference. It will be held Jan. 17-21, 2001 at the Tampa Marriott Waterside and the Tampa Convention Center, just across the street from the hotel. That's the week before the Super Bowl in the Super Bowl city. It's going to be super!

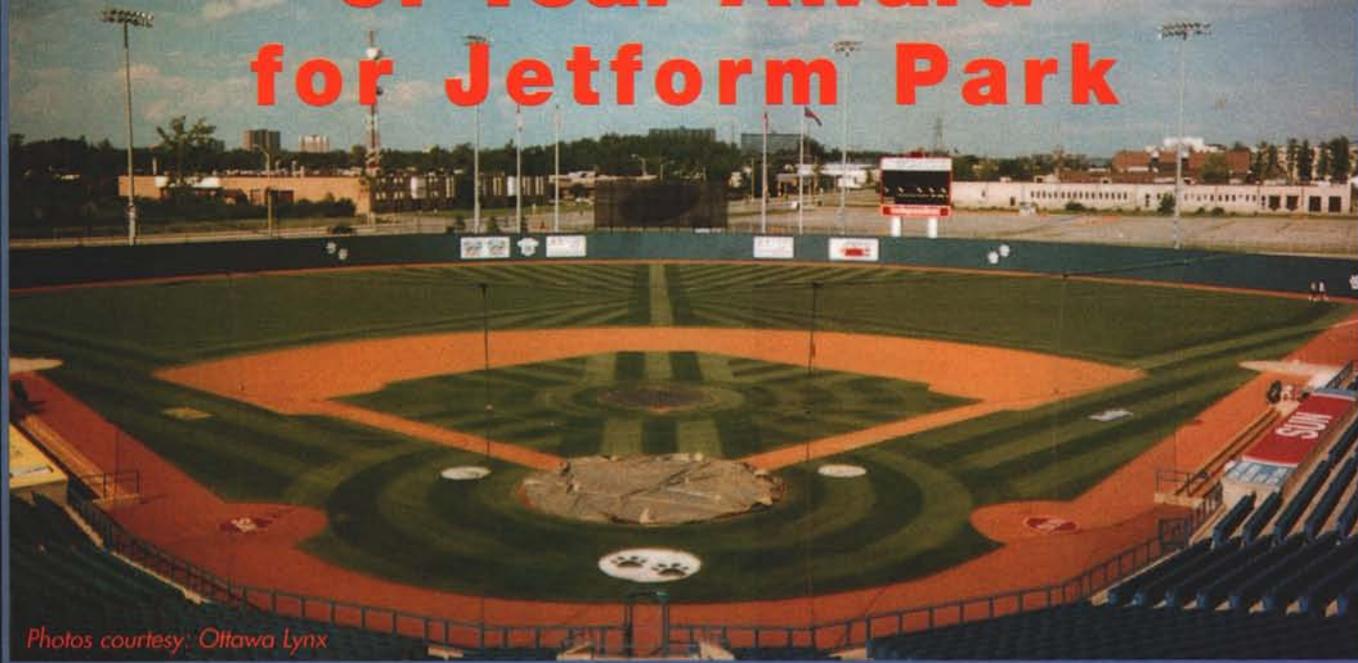
This year will be super for STMA as well. committee chairs have been appointed and are in the process of formulating their committees and establishing their goals. Check out the STMA Webpage for the list of chairs. If you're interested in serving on a committee, contact either the committee chair or STMA headquarters.

And there's other super news: The STMA board has approved the funding to start a foundation for research. Our technical standards committee has started working on some detailed information that will be accessible for STMA members. The strategic planning project is moving forward. The certification program continues to generate interest and draw applicants. Look for the CSFM (Certified Sports Field Manager) designation behind the names of those who have earned certification status.

STMA is hard at work producing the services you want and need to be more productive and to help you achieve the recognition you deserve.

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

# Groundskeepers of Ottawa Lynx Capture 1999 Diamond of Year Award for Jetform Park



Photos courtesy: Ottawa Lynx

*Jetform Park's grounds crew changes field patterns at the beginning of each home stand. While recognizing the importance of field aesthetics, the crew knows that a safe field is more important than an attractive field.*

by Bob Tracinski

**T**he 1999 STMA/Beam Clay/sportsTURF Diamond of the Year in the Professional Category is Jetform Park, home of the Ottawa Lynx, Triple A affiliate of the Montreal Expos. The stadium is located in Ottawa, 240 miles northeast of Toronto and 120 miles northwest of Montreal. The field is used six months of the year, from early April until late September.

The playing surface was installed at Jetform Park in September of 1992. Play began in 1993. A weeping tile, gravity-based system, embedded in gravel, provides subsurface drainage. The infield and outfield soil and the skinned area mix are only three- to four-inches deep. The soil profile is 60 percent soil and 40 percent washed sand, yet the infield turf drains at a rate of 7-inches per hour. The skinned area contains about 80 percent Beam Clay

infield mix with sand and calcined clay added at approximately 10 percent each. The turf is composed primarily of Kentucky Bluegrass varieties with some perennial ryegrass and turf-type tall fescue mixed in.

Peter Webb and Brad Keith are head groundskeepers for the Lynx. Webb started working on the crew in the summers while he was still in high school. He's worked on the field through its seven full seasons. Keith has been with the team for five full seasons. Initially the two worked under Al Dungey, now facility manager for Frontier Field, Rochester, N.Y., who was with the team until June of 1996, and with Jamie Whalen, now with the Carleton Golf & Yacht Club, who also was with the team until 1996. They took over as head groundskeepers four years ago.

Webb has a degree in kinesiology from the University of Western Ontario. Keith started out in political science at Carleton University and is now in his second year of law. Both are taking cor-

respondence courses offered through the Horticulture program of the University of Guelph and are currently working on the turf management course.

Webb says, "When I first started, we had a 14 person crew. But there have been tight times. The Lynx have been last in the League the past four years and the harsh spring weather makes it hard to draw great early-season crowds. We now have a grounds staff of four. Brad and I are full-time; Matt Horan and Steve Bennett are part-time. So our maintenance program has to be well planned and executed. Matt and Steve do a great job and are dedicated to achieving field quality. Everyone knows what needs to be done and who will handle each assignment. We have just 4-1/2 minutes after batting practice to get the field ready for play and we have the drill synchronized to the second."

With tight budgets, those part-time hours must be allocated carefully. For a night game, Horan generally comes in

during the afternoon to help set up for batting practice. Bennett comes in around 5:30 p.m. One of them will leave after the fifth inning drag, keeping the hours in balance.

The field's in-ground automatic irrigation system has 11 different zones and a total of 44 sprinkler heads. They're set to miss the skinned area as much as possible. Quick coupler connections are located behind second base, about a foot into the grass, and in front of each of the dugouts.

Webb says, "We have our sprinkler heads perfectly level and so well hidden the coaches and players don't even know where they are. We have to mark the heads with straws when we aerate to keep from hitting them."

### Coaxing Spring

The cold climate creates challenges. Winter moves in fast in the fall with snows usually continuing to be frequent and plentiful. Field snow removal begins in mid-March, and starts the process of coaxing spring's arrival. Webb says, "Our season opens anywhere from April 6 to 11. All early season games are in the afternoon; it's too cold to play or for anyone to watch us at night. It can snow into April and we have been snowed out on opening day."

Except for the bullpen mound covers, tarps are kept off the field all winter. They're moved from the parking lot storage area into a covered bay for winter storage so the crew won't need to dig and chop them out for spring use.

Microclimates within the stadium may produce a snow-free right field with 1-1/2-feet of snow standing in left field and a drift of snow along the screens by the bullpen mounds. The warning track is crushed brick topping gravel and snow lingers there as well.

Even with the snow removed, left alone, the turf wouldn't show much green until the end of April. Webb says, "As soon as grass starts showing in April and it's dry enough to step on the field, we hand rake the turf in two directions with a fan rake to get some air on it and get any mold out of there. We use our old black and white infield tarp, black side up, to keep a bit of heat in the turf and we hope for sun. By manipulating the tarps and turf we can get green-up about two weeks earlier. We leave turf height at one and three quarter-inches over the winter and obviously there's no growth to mow at this point. If conditions are dry enough, we roll in a pattern, covering the field with the reel mower, with

the reels disengaged to improve the aesthetics.

"After the first home stand, we'll apply an iron treatment to boost the green. The second week after the home stand, we dethatch, vacuum the debris and hand rake with fan rakes again to tease the turf into faster growth. We have turf to mow by the end of April and by mid-May we're usually mowing three to four times a week."

Manipulating the infield dirt can

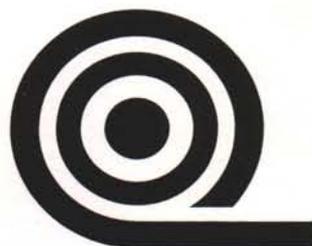
be even more delicate. Frost remains deep in the ground at the start of the season and may not have disappeared at the end of April. Keith says, "As the sun warms the surface, moisture rises from the frost layer below. The bullpens and any spots that get spring shade retain the frost longer. You can't put a tarp under the skin, so we have to monitor all the skinned areas very closely and play with it a bit to hit the right moisture



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content. We'll be working some areas heavily to speed drying at the same time we're irrigating other spots."

### **Coping With Heavy Scheduling**

The 1999 season included 72 Ottawa Lynx games; 51 Little League, Junior League or high school games; a charity game; a Junior Lynx Clinic for 200 youth; a Little League Clinic for 500; a Girl's Clinic; and several Major League tryout camps. Then there was the Stardust Picnic, a multiple-band concert, which drew 10,000 people. Besides the stage extending over second base and the edge of the grass and the sound stage set up over home plate, there were vending stands along the edge of the stadium wall. Webb and Keith put in almost 76 hours straight covering that event.

In addition, the City of Ottawa, owner of the Stadium, can book an event with only 24 hours notice as long as the event doesn't occur on previously



*From left to right: Jamie LaFramboise, stadium staff; Matt Horan, part time crew member; Pete Webb, head groundskeeper; Lloyd Moseby, Syracuse coach; Steve Bennett, part time crew member; Brad Keith, head groundskeeper.*

scheduled game days. And there's the annual "Diamond Dig" team promotion that not only brings fans onto the field, but also has them digging into it. While all this creates additional challenges for

the maintenance schedule, Keith and Webb understand the importance of such money-making ventures and the positive impact they have on the public's image of the Lynx.

## **Field Maintenance Schedule:**

### **General:**

- Snow removal as needed in March and April
- Spring turf and infield preparation in early to mid-April

### **Mowing:**

- Begins in April at 1-3/4 inch. Drop mowing height to 1-1/2 inches in late April or early May as warranted. Keep foul territory mowing height at 1-1/2 inches throughout the remainder of the season.
- In June, drop outfield mowing height to 1 inch; infield mowing height to 3/4 inch if moisture conditions allow it. Always vary mowing directions. Change field patterns for each home stand.

### **Fertilization:**

- Iron application immediately following first home stand.
- Take soil samples in late April; get separate results for the infield and outfield. Base fertilization program on soil test results. General application of 3/4-pound N, 1/4-pound P and 1/10-pound K per thousand square feet at six-week intervals.

### **Aeration:**

- Monthly, alternating coring and spiking, both always in at least two directions. If coring, schedule at end of home stand. If spiking, schedule at beginning of home stand. Collect cores.

### **Irrigation:**

- Adjust irrigation levels gradually to prepare turf for dry to drought summer conditions, using water sparingly

and irrigating infrequently, but deeply.

### **Pest Control:**

- No insect or weed problems
- Disease problems infrequent and generally controlled through cultural practices.

### **Painting and Lining:**

- Advertising painted on artificial turf used in coaches boxes, behind home plate and for fungo circles at start of every, or every other, home stand and when advertisers change. Maintained daily.
- Canadian flag painted in center field for July 1 and maintained throughout home stand.
- Turf lines painted; skinned area lines chalked for each game.

### **Skinned Area Maintenance:**

- Daily mound and home plate maintenance is performed immediately after games and these areas tarped.
- Brooming and leveling of skinned area edges, picking up of foul lines and nail dragging of the skinned area performed immediately after games.
- Bullpen mounds and plates are prepared on game day mornings.
- Finishing touches are made to the field mound and home plate.
- Skinned area generally nail dragged three times a day and watered five times a day, matching amount of water applied to moisture level of material and current and anticipated weather conditions. Keep subsurface firm, top 1/4 inch soft.