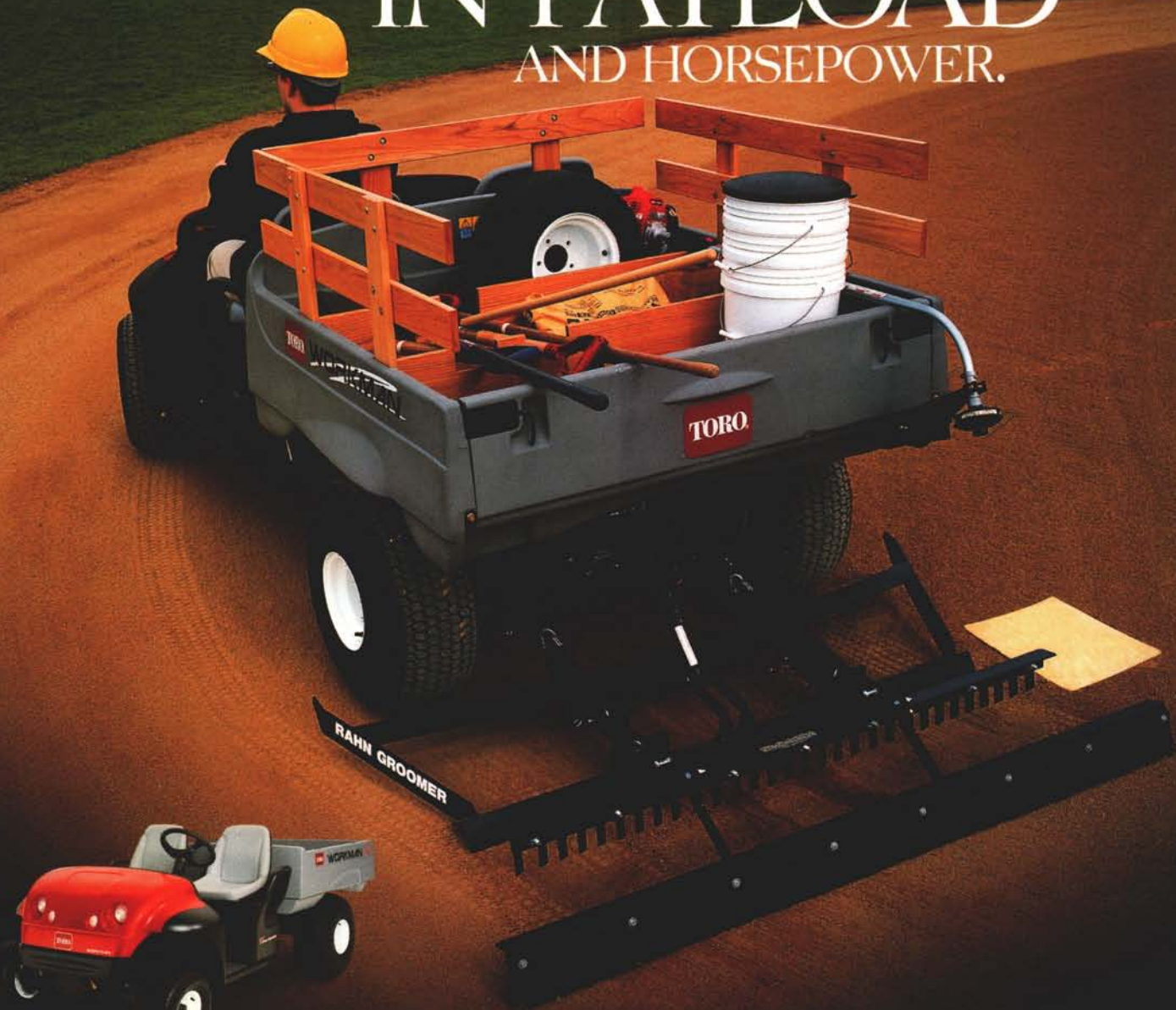


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## PROGRAM

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 9

SEPTEMBER 2000

### Cover Story

#### 8 Field of the Year

Cox Soccer Complex earns STMA 1999 Field of the Year honors in the Municipal/Parks and Recreation Division.

### Main Events

#### 16 New Warm Season Grasses

Dr. Gil Landry explains which new seed varieties can withstand the rigors of a sports field

#### 18 The Consequences of Overseeding

How to choose the right grass for overseeding your field, and tips on how to successfully do the job.

#### 21 New Mulches for Renovation Projects

George Hamilton discusses traditional mulches, as well as the benefits of new pelleted paper mulches.

### Web Site Content

[www.sportsturfonline.com](http://www.sportsturfonline.com)

#### STMA Newsletter

#### Editor's Review: Industry News

#### Show Calendar

#### Reader Survey

#### Rookies

### Line-Up

- ◆ Front Office .....6
- ◆ Tip o' the Month.....6
- ◆ Calendar.....7
- ◆ STMA Message .....7
- ◆ Equipment Focus ....24
- ◆ Rookies .....26
- ◆ Chapter News .....30
- ◆ Classifieds .....41
- ◆ Advertisers' Index ....41
- ◆ Q&A.....42

### On the Cover:



STMA members examine the turf at the multi-chapter meeting at the University of Notre Dame  
Courtesy STMA

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#### STMA OFFICE

1375 ROLLING HILLS LOOP, COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51503

PHONE: (800) 323-3875

E-MAIL: [SportsTMgr@aol.com](mailto:SportsTMgr@aol.com)

WEB SITE: [www.sportsturfmanager.com](http://www.sportsturfmanager.com)

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GROUP CONTENT/  
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## Walking into a Career

Nearly a year and a half ago, Dave Walker went to Alexian Field in Schaumburg, Ill., home of the Northern League's Schaumburg Flyers, to apply for a position as a part-time game-day grounds assistant. He was hired, and spent the summer working under the tutelage of Head Groundskeeper Steve Erickson, formerly of the Triple A Iowa Cubs.

Walker, who at the time was studying law enforcement, had no experience caring for a baseball field. "I'm a huge sports fan, a die-hard Cubs fan, and I just thought it would be a fun thing to do," he said.

Walker's first season as a groundskeeper was also the Flyers' first season in Schaumburg. Alexian Field had been recently constructed for the independent Northern League Flyers, modeled after Chicago's Wrigley Field, with the same field dimensions and appearance from the outside. That year, players and crew grew accustomed to the field together.

When the 2000 season began, Walker, who had enjoyed his experience from the previous season, moved up to become a full-time staff member, where he planned to continue his hands-on education from Erickson. Three games into the season and all that changed.

Erickson was offered the position of head groundskeeper at PNC Park, the new, natural grass stadium opening in 2001 for the Pittsburgh Pirates, replacing Three Rivers Stadium. Schaumburg suddenly needed a head groundskeeper.

"I guess I was in the right place at the right time," said Walker.

Now Walker, 21, finds himself in charge of caring for the turf at a relatively high-profile field. While it doesn't get the attention of its major league cousins to the south, the 7,000-seat Alexian Field is almost always packed with families from the northern suburbs of Chicago who appreciate the comforts of a smaller park and the fan-friendly attitude of the Northern League.

He's not lacking help, however. Erickson is in contact with him at least once a week, and he has received plenty of advice from Roger Baird, head groundskeeper for the Chicago Cubs. And, as a new member of the STMA, he will have plenty of old turf pros willing to offer their advice. Most importantly, he knows he still has a lot to learn.

Walker no longer envisions a career in law enforcement. Like many of you, he has unexpectedly stumbled into a profession that he loves. He laughed, not winced, when he told me of rolling a wet tarp one morning with only seven people; he didn't flinch when he talked about working some days from 6 a.m. until midnight.

"It's a great feeling, being out on the diamond all day," he said. "I love being out there, mowing the grass, dragging the infield. The best part is getting the respect of the players, hearing them praise the field."

Congratulations, Dave. Welcome to the STMA.

Michael SanFilippo  
(847) 882-1942

## Tip of the Month

### Aeration

by Art Wick, Lesco Inc.

Taken from "Athletic Field Turf Maintenance Handbook."

Athletic fields should be systematically aerated a minimum of three times per year. Heavy aeration (six to eight times over the area) in the spring prior to fertilization and/or overseeding is recommended followed by light aeration (one to three times) in late summer or early fall prior to fertilization. Aeration at these times should be followed by dragging with a chain drag or a section of chain-link fence.

At the close of the fall playing season, again aerate at the heavy rate but do not drag the area following aeration. By allowing the aeration holes to remain open, freezing and thawing of moisture in the holes will improve the effectiveness of aeration. Where a field is in constant use, it is sometimes necessary to give it additional aerations during the season. Where areas receive heavy and frequent use, light aeration every 10 days to two weeks during the playing season may be beneficial. A good rule to follow is to aerate whenever the turf begins to show the effects of soil compaction.

For more information on Lesco or the "Athletic Field Turf Maintenance Handbook," contact Lesco: 20005 Lake Rd, Rocky River, OH 44116-1545; 800-321-5325.



# Calendar of Events 2000

## September 15

Troubleshooting in the Landscape: Identifying and Solving Tree and Landscape Problems, Doubletree Hotel, Ontario, CA. Contact Ted Stamen: (909) 787-5804; sciences@ucx.ucr.edu. Web site: www.ucr.extension.net/ns/ns.html.

## October 2-3

Mississippi Turfgrass Association's (MTA) annual Conference and Trade Show, Hilton Hotel, Jackson, MS. Contact MTA: (662) 325-0517. Web site: <http://msgrassnursery.com/mta>.

## October 4-5

Southern California Turfgrass Council's (SCTC) Turfgrass Landscape and Equipment Expo, Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa, CA. Contact SCTC: (800) 500-SCTC (7282)/(818) 764-5016; fax (818) 764-3363; expo@turf council.org. Web site: [www.turf council.org](http://www.turf council.org).

## October 6-7

Washington State Nursery & Landscape Association's inaugural Emerald Expo, Stadium Exhibition Center, Seattle, WA. Contact Julie Ellenhorn or Susan Solomon: (877) GREEN55/(425) 865-9709; emeraldexpo@jps.net. Web site: [www.emerazldexpo.com](http://www.emerazldexpo.com)

## November 4-7

Green Industry Expo, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, IN. Contact Sims Moore: (770) 973-2019.

## November 14-16

Turf and Grounds Exposition, OnCenter, Syracuse, NY. Contact New York State Turfgrass Association: (800) 873-8873/(518) 783-1229.

## STMA Message

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## Striving to be Number One

Who is number one? Which NFL football team will take the Super Bowl title? Which college team will end the season at the top of the rankings? Predictions were already splashed across newspaper pages, flying over radio and television and much debated via the Internet while NFL football was still in pre-season games and before the season opener of college football.

The quest to be the best is the driving force behind any competitive sports program and that's as it should be. Striving to be number one provides each athlete and each team with the incentive to work that much harder on conditioning, to study the play book that much more, to sharpen skills in each individual component of game performance.

Great athletes welcome good, tough competition. They've learned from experience that matching their own performance against that of other great athletes helps improve the output of all the competitors. Each athlete analyzes and fine-tunes their strategies, preparing as much in advance as possible for the varying circumstances they may encounter. Once the game begins, focus is the key. While the great athletes see the big picture, they never lose sight of how they fit into it. Whether making an offensive or defensive move, they anticipate where and when acting to produce the desired outcome.

Sports turf managers function much like great athletes. They also work hard on conditioning themselves for the challenges ahead, they study the "play book" of design, construction and maintenance practices available to them and sharpen their skills for excellence in execution of those skills. Sports turf managers continually analyze and fine-tune their strategies in preparation for the varying circumstances they will encounter.

They take advantage of educational and networking opportunities, such as the STMA Annual Conference & Exhibition, Jan. 17 to 21, 2001, in Tampa, Fla., to key into the excellent educational and networking opportunities.

They also must keep focused on the big picture while determining where, when and how to act to produce the desired outcome. Sometimes they must act in advance by making all necessary preparations for specific events or conditions—including such defensive actions as covering the field to protect it from anticipated weather conditions. Sometimes they must act after an event, repairing damage that has occurred to the field or taking steps to create conditions that will minimize the effects of damage on the next field use event.

While sports turf managers seldom perform in the spotlight, the effects of their strategies and the effectiveness of the implementation of those strategies makes a major impact on the game. Which leads to this reminder: The STMA Field of the Year Program is one method of acknowledging top programs and showcasing those fields that have proven their performance. If you have a field that you believe is worthy of Field of the Year honors in soccer, softball, baseball or football, remember that in order to be considered, all entry materials must be sent to STMA Headquarters no later than Oct. 15, 2000.

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



# FIELD OF THE YEAR



## Cox Soccer Complex Earns STMA 1999 Field of the Year Honors In the Municipal/Parks and Recreation Division

by Bob Tracinski

Constructed in 1969 as a municipal baseball park, W. L. "Bill" Cox Memorial Park of Farmers Branch, Texas, underwent major changes in 1988. The baseball fields were eliminated and were replaced by what has become one of the premier soccer facilities in the North Texas region. So good, in fact, the Cox Soccer Complex earned STMA 1999 Field of the Year honors in the Municipal/Parks and Recreation Division.

The soccer complex offers the kind of flexibility needed to serve the active soccer programs of various age and skill levels. The premium full-size field number 5 is parallel to another full-size field, number 4. The three smaller soccer fields located in the North end of the complex are designated as fields 1, 2 and 3. For tournament play by those 12 and older, these three small fields are converted to a third full-size field, designated as number 6.



Grounds crew members stand behind the freshly painted logo for the Conference USA soccer tournament. Courtesy: City of Farmers Branch



Robin Edwards, parks maintenance supervisor for the Cox Soccer Complex, accepts the Field of the Year Award from Steve Guise, past president of the STMA  
Courtesy: STMA

Robin Edwards, parks maintenance supervisor, says, "Scheduled play on the Cox Complex includes hosting eight competitive tournaments each year, including the NCAA's Conference USA Women's tournament during the first week of November in 1998 and 1999. The adjacent elementary and middle schools use the field continuously throughout the year for physical education activities. It's the home field of the local high school's girl's soccer program and the site of their daily practices beginning in December, a pre-season tournament and weekly games that start in January. Recreational league play runs Monday through Saturday during the months of February through May and August through November. Camps and clinics are held through the week during June and July."





Spectators pack the sideline to watch a game in rainy weather. Courtesy: City of Farmers Branch

The city has five softball fields, five baseball fields and the potential of 16 soccer fields of different sizes. But getting those soccer fields takes some conversion. Like a magician's mystifying sleight of hand, the crews of the City of Farmers Branch transform two baseball outfielders into four soccer fields. At each baseball field, they pull down the outfield fence and convert the space to two soccer fields for the under 6 and under 8 leagues. Often they must work this transformation in a day. There may be league practices on Thursday evening, followed by a weekend soccer tournament, followed by Monday practices, followed by more of the 30 league games in an "average" week.

Edwards says, "In 1988, a lighting system was installed in the Cox Complex capable of manual and/or computerized programming. Cox Field 5 is lighted by four 45-foot poles supporting 5 metal halide lamps each. Also in 1988 a state of the art irrigation system was installed on the Complex, including Toro 640 series rotor heads and a Rainbird ISC controller. Recent system renovations have included replacing that controller with an Irritrol MC-24 B + controller, installing a harness for a TRC remote control, and replacing some heads with Hunter I-25 rotor heads.

"The new concession and restroom facility was completed by the start of the 1998 spring season. The concession stand opens to the north at Field 5 and to the east into a gated breezeway. Also in 1998, while preparing for the NCAA's Conference USA Women's Soccer Championship, Field 5 was widened to 210 feet. In order to accomplish this, a light pole was moved approxi-

mately 30 feet to the southwest. A scoreboard was donated and installed by Coca-Cola in conjunction with the Carrollton/Farmers Branch Independent School District.

"Seating arrangements are contingent on tournament needs. We have moveable bleachers in both 21 foot, five row, and 15 foot, three row configurations and can seat up to 500 for

large tournaments."

The city population of approximately 26,900 climbs during the business day to 85,500. Edwards adds, "We are blessed with a strong tax base and supportive City Council that provide the funding necessary to maintain athletic fields to very high standards. Still, escalating requests for field use and budgetary con-



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An average week of play at Cox Complex includes two days of league practices, 30 league games and a weekend soccer tournament. Courtesy: City of Farmers Branch

straints call for innovative solutions.”

#### Schedule coordination

The soccer tournaments range from 30 teams to more than 160 teams. Anne Bauwens Coe, athletic program coordinator for the city,

says, “We’ve developed a win-win relationship with our local hotels and motels that aids our program. We work with the various soccer clubs on setting up tournaments and negotiate rates with the hotels and motels to generate room use. One soccer

tournament over Thanksgiving generates over 600 rooms with all tournaments combined generating approximately 2,200 rooms in an average year. We further stimulate the tournaments’ economic impact by supplying attendee packets that include such community promotion items as maps of local restaurants. A portion of the hotel-motel tax revenue has been budgeted to cover certain costs associated with these tournaments: tents, staff members on-site, portable restrooms, etc. In turn, we don’t charge the clubs for this, or for the field use or lighting costs but the clubs are expected to generate a certain number of room nights in our hotels.”

Coe works with each tournament director months before the event. She develops a master calendar for all on-field events. Each Friday, she provides the crews and the administration with the following week’s field use schedule so they can monitor any unauthorized use and coordinate maintenance and on-site services accordingly.

*Continued on page 13*

## PRODUCT SHOWCASE

### Jaydee Drive Liner



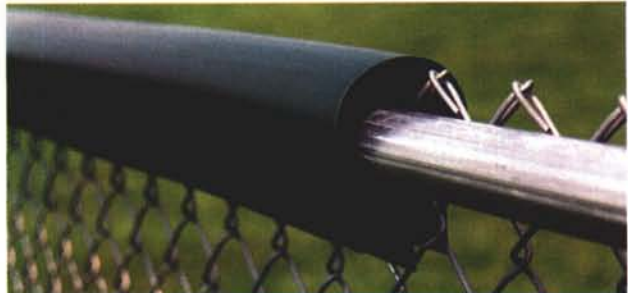
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