Cup games also were played there during a May and June schedule that brought 43 events to the field. Then there are the concerts that fill every possible open slot in this already packed schedule. High intensity, the phrase LeGros uses to describe it, is an obvious understatement.

He says, “On field events from late April through early December have averaged between 140 and 150 per year since the 1996 reconstruction. From May 1 to August 1, 2001, the use has been the equivalent of an on-field event every 1-1/2 days.”

Field reconstruction

The field reconstruction was designed to enable the heavy use schedule. The original heavy clay, native soil was excavated to 2-feet. A concrete field-level curb was added between the playing field and the existing asphalt track. A sub-surface drainage network of 8-in perforated pipe was installed within the crushed stone subgrade layer. This was topped by an 18-in. layer of USGA spec profile consisting of 75 percent sand, 15 percent peat and 10 percent top soil. The in-ground irrigation system provides full field coverage with Toro 640 pop-up heads. Big roll Kentucky bluegrass sod formed the playing surface for the 1996 season.

“The field was put to the test by torrential downpours during that first season,” notes LeGros. “Because of the sand based system we were able to play when games at other local fields were cancelled.”

In March of 1997, the surface was converted to the Hummer GrassTile System. The tiles are developed in 7-ft. by 7-ft. frames containing 2-1/2 inches of a mixture of sand and Dupont carpet fibers planted with the desired turf. For Hersheypark Stadium, this was a blend of Kentucky bluegrass cultivars. Once the tiles are mature enough to be harvested, they are lifted out of the tray and placed on top of the field’s existing soil profile with the tile joints staggered.

LeGros says, “The field was designed for the tile system with the installation date based on the maturity of the tiles. We selected the system to have the flexibility to remove and replace tiles according to field wear and to gain the added stability of the carpet fiber in the sand base. Once the system was installed, we found keeping ahead of the events with our aggressive aerification and overseeding program combined with nutrient ‘spoon-feeding’ allowed us to avoid moving tiles in-season. We doubled the 1996 event schedule in 1997 and the field held up well.

“By late November, day time temperatures here are dropping below 60 degrees and we’re getting frost at night. With football the major sport during that period, we will have heavy wear from hash mark to hash mark between the 20 yard lines. But, when we ask the players about the footing after each event, they report it’s great.

Over time the tile sections have grown in to become one field. A couple of times, we have needed to cut out the goal mouth areas and replace them. We’ve saved out the worn areas in 7-foot sections and replaced them with the tiles so we have continuity within our soil profile and turf ready for play.”

Handling those concerts

It’s not uncommon for the stadium to host soccer, football and a concert, in any sequence, back to back to back three or four times a season. For example, this year, the Wildcats played Montreal in a July 20 night game. The Big 33 Football Classic took the field the next night, and a Bon Jovi played July 22, followed by Destiny’s Child on July 24. To help facilitate this multi-event scheduling, a per-

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The portable mixing tower is rolled into place. Then we setup on top and the Porta Floor on top of it, running east to west to eliminate the tip burn. We'll place the Enkamat running north until mowing gradually removed it. We found it protected the crown but we'd have scorch on the tip of the leaf tissue. That scorch remained for 4 or 5 days. The under layer of Enkamat to give the turf a small air cushion and eliminate the tip burn. We'll place the Enkamat running north to south and the Porta Floor on top of it, running east to west. The portable mixing tower is rolled into place. Then we set up barrier around the tower. The same thing happens in reverse during teardown. The tower wagon can be pulled to the parking lot area and secured during events.

Fine-tuning the maintenance program

LeGros thrives on orchestrating things. Perhaps that comes from his college background as a music and drama major. He's orchestrated his own career, moving from an assistant golf pro to the maintenance side of the green industry spurred by his positive reaction to his 3 weeks of greenskeeping experience in the PGA golf pro apprenticeship program. He plotted his course from a crew member, to assistant golf course superintendent, to owner of a landscaping business, to turf and sports field specialist for the parks and recreation department, all in the Orlando area. Seeking a site with four season weather patterns, he came to the Hershey area and began working in the Hershey Nursery landscape maintenance department of the amusement park. Hersheypark Stadium was just the place to apply his green industry background and organizational skills.

One way that organizational ability is put to use is in the three separate logs he uses to record every detail pertinent to the field maintenance program. One log is for daily events, and one for tracking all applications made to the field. He compares the information contained in the three logs to analyze results.
and fine-tune the program. He says, “The logs document the situation when you need to respond to an inquiry from staff, management, a governmental agency or the public. But primarily, they provide a multitude of benefits in developing our maintenance plans. We can avoid mistakes and make adjustments to produce better results when the same circumstances occur.

“Since the installation of the new field, we’ve constantly adjusted the maintenance program to become proactive, rather than reactive. The logs are extremely helpful in this process. If you wait to react to field damage, you’re always focusing on the recovery and the field declines because you’re never ahead of the game. So we’re doing things today to prepare the field for what will happen 3 weeks from now. We want the field to go into every event in the best possible condition for that event.”

One example of this fine-tuning is the overseeding program. LeGros strives to keep the bluegrass content of the field near 100 percent. He begins overseeding with a bluegrass blend in early spring and continues throughout the season. As temperatures cool, in October, November, and December, he has, and will continue to, add perennial ryegrass to the overseeding mix for the center of the field. In previous years, at the end of December, he’s replaced tiles to repair worn areas. These practices have allowed him to retain a 92 to 95 percent bluegrass stand.

In 2001, he’s added Princeton 105 to his three-cultivar bluegrass blend and is overseeding with approximately 25 pounds of seed in key areas before every event. More seed may be applied immediately after a game to fall into the cleat marks prior to irrigation. The field is also aerated with an Airway aerifier or with solid tines at least once, and sometimes twice, a month. LeGros says, “This cuts the rhizomes promoting better root development and increases the oxygen exchange and moisture penetration for deeper rooting. We also irrigate deeply and less frequently to encourage deeper rooting.”

In December of 2000, rather than replacing tiles, the field was aerated in two directions with hollow tines, the cores harvested, the field overseeded heavily with Kentucky bluegrass and topdressed with the same sand mix as the soil profile. Fertilizer was applied and the field covered with a grow blanket. Monitoring began in March, with the grow blanket removed when temperatures allowed and replaced as temperatures cooled. Biostimulants and urea were applied to strengthen the turf and promote growth. By the second week in May, turf cover was approximately 80 percent and was nearly 100 percent by the start of the playing season. These practices, combined with the aggressive overseeding program and the other continually adjusted maintenance practices, have resulted in approximately 98 percent turf cover in early August, after 43 on-field events.

Putting it all together

The program all comes together with LeGros and an assistant as the total full-time maintenance staff for the Hershey Park Stadium Field. An intern joins them for 3 months, May through July, of each year. To accomplish all that needs to be done, and keep fine-tuning to a higher level, LeGros is always seeking ways to make the tasks easier, more efficient and more cost effective. LeGros says, “Hershey Park management is very supportive of our programs and John Tshudy is an excellent supervisor. It’s also motivating to see Hershey Park Stadium filled with people enjoying the results of the standards we strive to maintain. I try to use everything on my palette to paint the best possible picture for our field.”

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Tests conducted by several turf specialists found that certain colors of covers can have a positive effect on the turf. Heat buildup from the sun under turf covers can cause hardships on the turf. In the northern transition zone, field turf managers may be torn between fields while wearing cleats. In September 2001, players with small hands. The weight of the tarp is hard to persevere the baseball season during the wet spring months. Coaches typically feel that field covers are a good purchase for their teams and can prevent several rainouts. However, if you are the guy that covers his field and can play on a questionable day, others can’t. Your game is caught up and the others play the next dry day, which happens to be sunny and 70 degrees. As a result, your field got torn up playing in wet conditions, while everyone else is playing the same round on a nice day.

A full infield tarp takes a lot of manpower to put on and off, so timing and the availability of players is essential. The players also need to have other shoes available in case of a rain delay to quickly cover the field; otherwise the cleats will damage the material. Some coaches have been known to cut players for running onto covered fields while wearing cleats.

Be organized on how a field cover should be unfolded, rolled back up, and where to dump the rainwater. Sometimes a tarp might have to be taken off just the keep down the weight of the rainwater that gets trapped.

On dry days, practice with the grounds crew and players the proper methods to cover and uncover. You might even make a mark on the field where the corner of one end should be so the tarp is properly aligned on the field.

Apply an adequate amount of weights so that the tarp does not blow off the field. Weights can be as simple as used tires, sandbags or, my favorite, 4-inch PVC pipe with a rope handle filled with cement. One person can easily grab four weights and apply, or take off, the tarp.

Handles are also important, especially with girls or players with small hands. The weight of the tarp is hard on the hands if you have to grab and start pulling with you knuckles embedded into the material.

The big day

My number one rule is on the day before the championship game, cover the field no matter what the temperature is. The only time all season that I get to use a tarp is for the Little League Softball World Series. We have teams from the Far East, Europe, Canada, Latin America, and the four U.S. Regions, and they have tight travel plans, so I don’t want to get delayed a couple of hours for the championship game on ESPN 2.

It is also important to uncover the field if the tarp has been on for more than 24 hours, which allows for the carbon dioxide to escape to prevent turf damage from the lack of sunlight.

Because the purchase of the field cover is an expensive investment, one option is to paint the sponsor’s logo on the tarp. But according to Bob Curry of Covermaster, advertising dollars should be spent on the cover for the rolled up tarp than it is to place logos on the actual tarp material. Material that is used on some tarps can be difficult for paint, vinyl lettering and logos to adhere.

Mike Hebrard is founder of Athletic Field Design. He can be reached via e-mail at hebrard@athleticfield.com.
COVERTECH TURF PRODUCTS

Covertech has been protecting golf course greens for more than 12 years, and now the company reports more and more sports turf managers are using their products on their soccer, baseball, and football fields.

Now Covertech has products just for Sportsturf readers: Supreme Green growth blanket and the Green Shield rain cover/bench tarp. The Supreme Green product accelerates seed germination, encourages root development, delays dormancy in the fall, reduces ice and frost damage, says Covertech, and is available in any size.

The Green Shield provides protection from rain and snow as well as general wear and tear. It can be used to cover mounds, base and home plate areas, or as a general field cover to avoid rainouts and help protect against injuries. It's made of "rip-stop" woven-coated polyethylene material and UV-treated for long life, says Covertech. The one-piece construction simplifies installation; package includes anchor pegs and storage bag.

COVERTECH

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Most sport facilities are often faced with very short periods of time between sport seasons to get their fields "playable". Typar® Turf Blankets will enhance germination and root growth, allowing for earlier usage and greater survival through seasons.

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TYPAR® MAKES COOPERSTOWN

Everyone knows the name of Doubleday Field in Cooperstown, NY—the home of baseball is a favorite destination for amateur baseball teams and the site of the annual Hall of Fame game. During the baseball season, the historic location often hosts three or four games daily.

Maintaining the turf is difficult not only because of the activity, but also because the time off for turf recovery is during upstate New York's winter. But that's when the job of ensuring healthy turf for the baseball games begins.

"We do everything when it's cold to make the grass stronger," points out Joe Harris, head groundskeeper for the Village of Cooperstown's baseball field since 1990, "so when spring comes we have a jump start on it."

A valued weapon in Harris' arsenal is Typar Turf Blankets. For the past 5 years, he has used the blankets from November until April, installing them by himself. He found that the turf blankets retain warmth and moisture to promote germination and growth, while allowing air and water through to the soil. Turf kept in this "greenhouse" of warmth and moisture will be stronger, have longer roots and will grow faster. The area can be used earlier, resulting in safer conditions, happier customers, and greater usage.

"The first time I used the Typar, I wasn't sure how they would work," Harris says. "But when I took them off and the turf was greener than surrounding areas, I knew they would become a standard part of my regimen."

For more information, circle 161

FIELD COVERS AND ACCESSORIES

Ball Products' standard field covers are constructed of 6-oz. woven polyester in either black/silver or white/silver. Each has heat-welded seams and hemmed edges. The covers feature #3 grommets, which are spaced at 24-in. centers on the edges. Standard sizes are 18-ft. and 26-ft. diameter. However, any custom size is available. Ball Products also has a full line of vinyl covers in 14- and 18-oz. weights, which are available in a full range of colors. Each vinyl cover is constructed with the same quality as Ball Products' standard 6-oz. covers. Accessories included spikes, spike straps and sandbags.

For more information, circle 163
COVERING YOUR NEEDS

The many models of rain and field covers by COVERMASTER® include RAINECOVERPlus™, a top-of-the-line cover available in various colors with white on one side. Test results show that a white/silver combination is the best to reduce heat build-up. Other popular models are RAINECOVERLite™ and RAINECOVERSuperLite™.

COVERMASTER also offers a range of vinyl covers. TARPMATE™ is a plastic roller that stores most sizes of rain or field covers. TARPMACHIN™ is a tarp rolling accessory that attaches to a 14-hp tractor with a 540 P.T.O. and that helps you install and remove a cover by pushing a loaded TARPMATE™ across the field.

FORUM FLOOR™ is a portable floor specifically designed to be used as a natural turf cover for temporary use. Exclusive to COVERMASTER INC., it is supplied in rolls for easy installation and removal. The newest natural turf cover is ENKAMAT™. This unique cover consists of geotextile, a non-woven, needle punched cover material, bonded to Enkamat Flatback, a three dimensional geomatrix. The result is a 'breathing' turf cover of great strength and resilience that allows light and moisture to get through to the grass.

COVERAGE
For more information, circle 164

INFIELD MATS

The Baltimore Orioles needed portable infield protectors to cover their home plate area during pre-game batting and infield practice. The solution was a set of four tailored mats made from extrusion-coated polyester mesh. Each panel was made with reinforced seams. Hems and grommets were added to allow quick pinning to the ground. Beacon can make these infield-protector panels in any size or shape. These mats protect fields from damage by batted balls and steel-spike foot traffic.

Beacon also makes sideline tarps for football and soccer, track protectors, gym floor covers, and rain tarps. A new "skin tarp" system was developed for the Cincinnati Reds. It's a set of four lightweight, water-proof panels that connect and cover only the dirt portion of the baseball infield. This protects the soil from rain while holding moisture in during sunny "off" days.

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SPORTSTURF magazine 19
Your field is only as good as its foundation.

Every blade of grass depends on the soil beneath it. On the soil microbes that feed it. And nothing provides food and energy to soil microbes like Nitroform ureaform. It releases the right amount at the right time. Only when grass needs it. The controlled release of Nitroform gives you six months or more of turf-growing benefits and even longer-lasting payoffs for your soil. Nitroform fights the effects of heat, traffic and drought. It helps develop roots and reduce thatch.

Have your fertilizer supplier make Nitroform the foundation of your fertilizer program.