

son begins as soon as the weather breaks in March and runs to June. The fall soccer season begins in August and runs into November. Camps and clinics take over most of June and early July, leaving only a short break with minimal field use from mid-July to mid-August to accomplish essential cultural practices. All of the Park District teams have used the fields and continue to do so, though the program is now being organized through the Chicago Wind, which coordinates much of the Chicago-area travel soccer club activity. The AYSO teams use the fields, as well as do the High School freshmen teams (both Boys and Girls), the Junior Varsity team and the Junior High Schools teams. The High School Varsity team will occasionally play a night game on one of the lighted fields. They also host summer sports camps, referee clinics, coaches' clinics, and the Danny Cuniff Labor Day Tournament, which brings in around 60 teams of 9-13-year olds. The combined use of these various groups adds up to approximately 250 events annually. All this takes place while the rest of the Park's facilities are undergoing similarly heavy use.

"There are two basic challenges to maintenance of the facility," says Baker. "The first is meeting expectations. Staff, coaches and players expect to have the fields in ideal condition at all times. This makes it difficult to schedule cultural practices, such as aeration, that normally cause some disruption to the appearance of the field for a short period. We strive to maintain game-ready appearance, without sacrificing field quality or performance.

"The second challenge, limiting use, is needed due to the fact that the fields are unfenced and open to the public and have become an attraction for pick-up games of all kinds. This restricts the ability to control use of the fields, which is so essential when conditions are not favorable. Wear from pick-up games during drought or very wet

The Danny Cuniff Legacy

As noted in the Park District's 1999 Spring/Summer Brochure, "The Park District recently received the largest private donation ever from the family of Danny Cuniff. During Danny's brief but valiant battle with acute myeloid leukemia, which he ultimately succumbed to 37 days after his diagnosis, Tim and Jill Cuniff (his parents) were deeply touched by the outpouring of love and support they received from the community of Highland Park. Danny's home away from home was the Park District of Highland Park. From mom and tot classes when he was an infant, to travel sports teams, Danny embodied what the Park District is all about. He loved Jammers basketball and all of the soccer and hockey programs as well as Mad Science and Big Pioneers. His enthusiasm for Park District activities was contagious. He recruited many of his buddies to participate on the U8 travel and developmental soccer league.

The Cuniffs felt that, in light of the tax cap and Danny's involvement with the Park District, this donation was an excellent and logical choice for the gift to perpetuate Danny's legacy. With the new improvements, children in the District's ever growing travel soccer programs will now have the chance to play on fields that are second to none."

weather can be considerable. We don't want to seem so regulation-heavy that we detract from the user-friendly atmosphere of the Park, so we try to limit our signs to only what is actually needed. We've found education and communication are the best tools for avoiding excessive use and abuse of the fields. We concentrate on building good relationships with the teams and the public and working with our athletic recreation staff in communicating management essentials to the program staff and leaders. We feel this user-friendly policy is the best way to maintain the Danny Cuniff legacy and, observing the enjoyment of those using the fields, confirms that it's working." **ST**

Suz Trusty is communications director for the Sports Turf Managers Association. She can be reached at 800-323-3875.

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TEMPORARY, REUSABLE DRAINAGE LAYER INSTALLED IN 2 DAYS



Reliant Stadium was site of a series of international soccer matches before this NFL season began. These matches, as US turf managers are finding out, can be played only on natural grass. For one game the crew only had 6 days to put in a suitable replacement. Installation included an 86,000-square foot ring and grid drainage layer, called Draincore2, which was installed in 2 days.

"We had to move extremely quickly and this was the only option," says Mike Courter of Airfield Systems, LLC, designers of the temporary grass field at Reliant Stadium. "They [Reliant Stadium] needed something that would live up to FIFA (Federal Internationale de Football Association) standards, but could be installed in a flash."

Colorado State has tested this product to carry 58 gallons per minute of water per foot width.

In comparison, a pipe and gravel drainage system, or french drain, can carry 18-24 gpm per foot width," says Kevin Wright, president of Invisible Structures, Inc., manufacturers of the product.

Draincore2 is made from recycled polyethylene and injection molded into a system of 1-inch hollow rings connected by a grid. At Reliant, the existing concrete floor with drainage lines was covered with the Draincore2, then covered with a permeable geotextile fabric layer, and topped of with professional sod. The sod seams were filled with sand, the sod was washed, and the field was ready for its first match.

Turf provider Turfgrass America leased the Draincore2 system for the project.

A day after the games the entire system was taken down and removed and Reliant Stadium's concrete floor was cleared. Airfield Systems, LLC is seeking a permanent home for the Draincore2.

This article was supplied by Invisible Structures Inc., 800-233-1510.



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BY KURT STAAL

CAMBRIDGE DRAINAGE OPTION EXPLAINED

Over the past 20 years or so many sports fields have been planned without giving proper consideration to how well they will drain. In most cases with the exception of sand base construction not enough thought or money had been invested, and too much faith put in a simple crown.

As a result, our company and many others now provide a way to protect playability during the wettest of conditions using the Cambridge Drainage System. Special equipment means we install an entire drainage system on an existing natural turf field with minimum disturbance and recovery in as little as 2 weeks.

On a typical soccer or football field this system begins with manifold installed along each sideline then discharged into the storm water system or retention basins. Solid PVC pipe is used for the manifold so that you can attach a suction pump or an air pump to either draw water from the system or introduce air into the growing medium.

Step two is to install the Mini Sports field drains. These are typically placed on 5-foot centers crossing the field and connected to the main collector or manifold. These drains are excavated with specialized



equipment that elevates the spoils into a dump trailer traveling alongside the trencher. Special corrugated perforated plastic pipe is installed at the bottom of the trench, then filled with pea gravel and then USGA sand, to the surface.

This back-filling phase compacts the sand fill three times to prevent any future settling. Step 3 is to install the Sand Injection 24 inches on center 9 inches deep x 1 inch wide from goal to goal over the entire field. Step 4 we install the Hydraulically Linked Surface and then sprig, sod or seed.

Mike Bunting from UNC Chapel Hill said, "Our football program has two grass practice fields. Over the last few years the amount of water needed to render the fields unplayable has steadily decreased. During one football season we were required to move 44 percent of our scheduled practices to an Astroturf field because our grass fields were too wet."

"After installing this system, the next season we were required to practice on our Astroturf field for less than 5 percent of our practices."

ST

Kurt Staal is with Sportsturf Services, Inc., 828-687-2350.

Players name favorite turf

Results of a poll in Sports Illustrated showed that 23.2 percent of the players who responded chose Dodger Stadium as having the best-quality playing field. Edison Field, home to the Anaheim Angels, received the second-highest number of votes with 11.2 percent. (Can't beat that SoCal climate!)

The fields at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City and Bank One Ballpark in Phoenix (pictured) together received 10.1 percent of the votes and were ranked fifth and sixth, respectively, in the SI poll. All feature West Coast Turf products.

Eric Hansen, turf manager of Dodger Stadium, cites his sod as one of several features that helped Dodger Stadium earn top field honors. Hansen says, "Quite often an event is scheduled shortly after installation, so the service and quality of sod we receive is critical."

A tight-knit turf, along with grass that Dodger Stadium's grounds crew keeps cut at between

9/16 to 3/4 of an inch, are keys to providing a player-pleasing surface, Hansen says.

At Bank One Ballpark, the Diamondbacks' organization re-sods the field at the start of every baseball season with Bull's-Eye Bermuda sod, which is overseeded with Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass.

"Players seem to like its density and playability," says Grant Trenbeath, Bank One Ballpark's head groundskeeper. "Batted balls don't zigzag or follow mowing patterns, which would obviously make fielding more of a challenge."

Challenges, however, do exist for Trenbeath and his crew in managing the turf throughout the year. With its retractable roof, BOB's field is often




Photo by AP Worldwide Photos

exposed to rash temperature changes in a matter of a few moments. And on top of the Diamondbacks' 81 home games, numerous concerts, sporting events and shows are held on the field every year.

But a 3 1/2-acre sod farm with sod specifically for the field nearby helps ensure that healthy, tight-knit sod will be installed each year, Trenbeath says.

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BY MARK LESLIE

HURRICANE ISABEL CAN'T SHUT DOWN HOKIES

Shortly after host Virginia Tech and Texas A&M played football despite one-inch-an-hour rains from nearby Hurricane Isabel, turfgrass professor Dr. Eric Ervin declared the new tray-drainage playing surface at Lane Stadium could have withstood a torrential 10 inches an hour without impacting play. With a root-zone mix of 90-percent sand and 10-percent peat, "It was lab-tested to move 15 inches an hour infiltration rate," he said.

"The system costs more," he added, "but the ability to have a high-performance, dry, firm playing surface under hurricane conditions in that one game paid for itself."

"I was shocked, almost, that the footing stayed so good with so much rain coming in so short a time," said head football coach Frank Beamer. "There was no bad footing. [Hokie running back] Kevin Jones gained 170 yards and you can't do that on a bad field."

Beamer and assistant AD Tom Gabbard agreed the field has literally paid for itself. They speak from experi-

ence. Virginia Tech's season-opening game against Georgia Tech in 2000, due to be nationally televised on ESPN, was canceled by a rainstorm that made the old field unplayable. The stands were full with more than 60,000 would-be spectators, the ESPN cameras were turned off and Virginia Tech lost \$750,000 in revenue.

Vowing to never cancel a game again, school officials choose a GreenTech field, which was first pioneered by Dr. John "Trey" Rogers at Michigan State for the World Cup games at the Pontiac Silverdome in Detroit.

Today, GreenTech, a Richmond, VA, firm, has modified and improved the technology, replacing heavy hexagonal steel modules, or trays, with lighter, polyethylene modules that are smaller at 4-by-4 feet square. The steel hexagons weighed 3,300 pounds when loaded with rootzone, while the new trays weigh 800 to 1,110 pounds.

Gabbard explained how the tray-drainage system

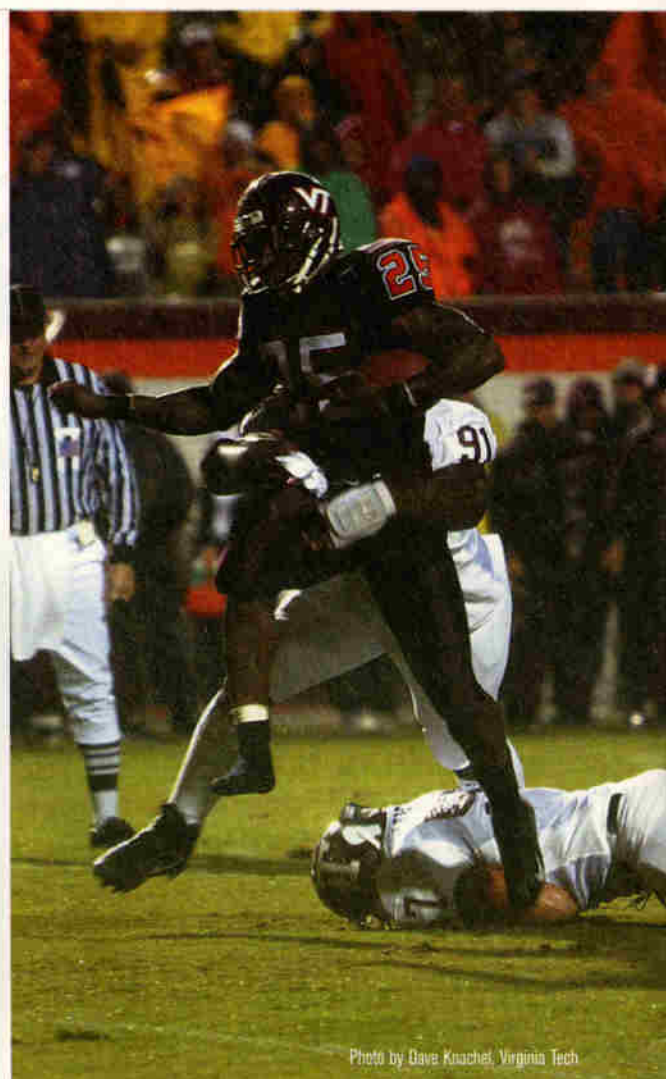


Photo by Dave Knachel, Virginia Tech

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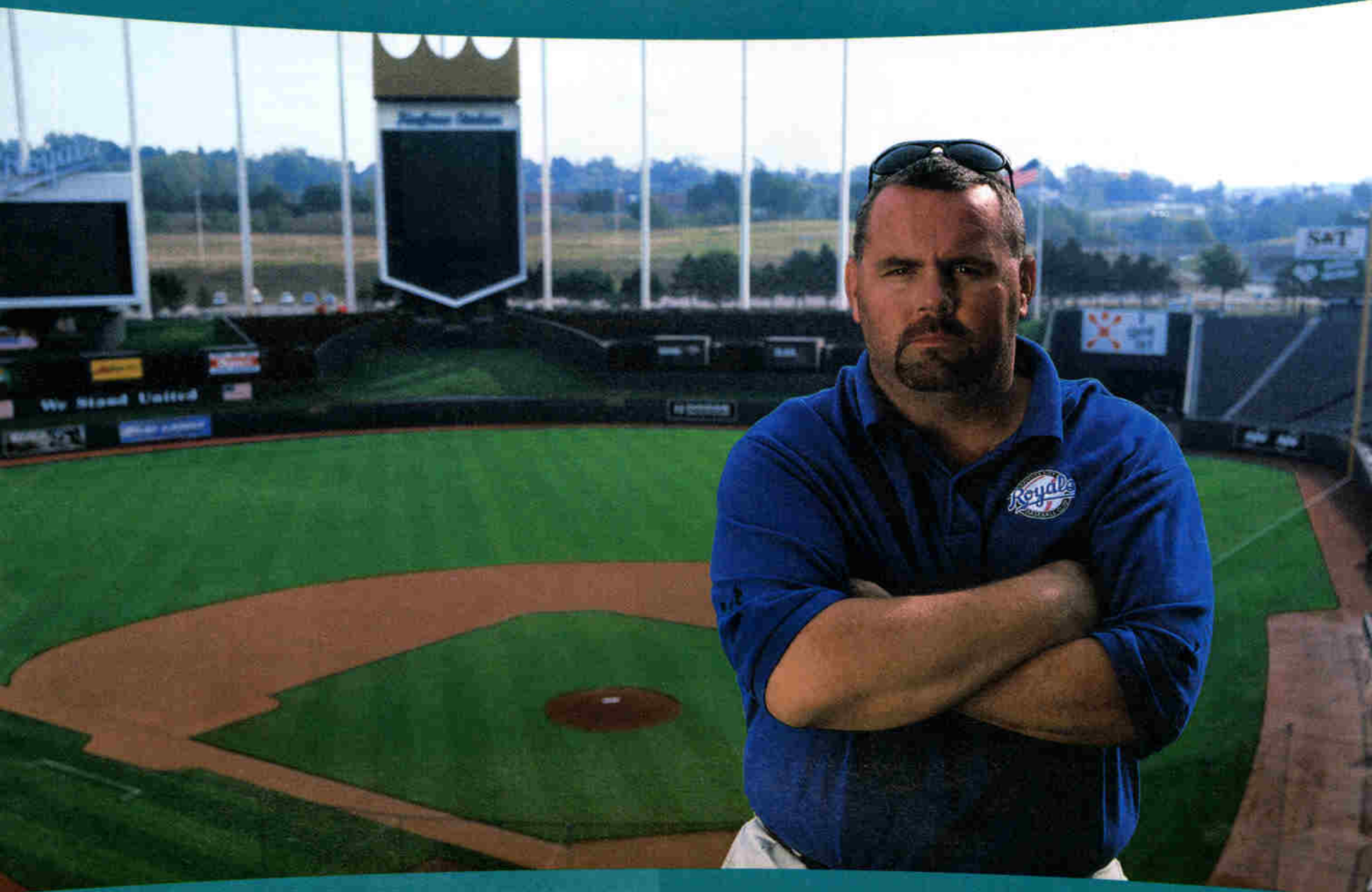
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canceled out the effects of Hurricane Isabel.

The old field was stripped of grass and covered with an asphalt pad, with 22 air inlets and a trench drain along each sideline. The trays, filled with rootzone mix and sporting mature Bermudagrass, were placed, like tiles, on top of the asphalt. The modules have legs that create a 3-inch space between the asphalt and trays.

With the 3-inch space between asphalt and trays, said Gabbard, "In essence, we could have a 3-inch lake underneath the entire surface of the field and the grass would still be dry."

Grounds manager Casey Underwood, knowing the hurricane was coming, used an Advanced Aeration Systems unit, a giant machine that can blow air into the rootzone, or suck water out of it was hooked to the vents, to prepare for the downpour ahead of time. The week of the game, Underwood's crew hooked up the vacuum system and reduced the moisture content in the soil from 28 or 29 percent to 4 percent and waited for the rain.

The rain came and the game went on. "The players didn't even get their uniforms muddy," exclaimed Virginia Tech Sports Information Director Dave Smith.

As the game wore on, ESPN commentators marveled at how dry the gridiron remained through-out play in the harsh elements.

ST

Mark Leslie is a free lance writer.

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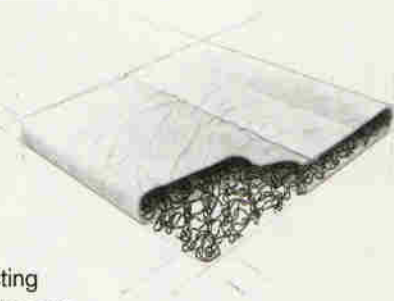
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