s a sportswriter, I have learned an unwritten rule: Don’t mention the turf unless it’s really, really bad.

Last season National Football League beat writers and columnists from coast to coast criticized the playing surfaces in Pittsburgh, New Jersey, and Tennessee, among others. If I were writing about it, I probably would not have mentioned either that these fields are overseeded or have other factors that contributed to declined turf quality.

Of course, that would have been before I became a turf assistant at Invesco Field at Mile High in Denver.

It never hurts to know people. I was looking for writing work last August in my hometown, Denver, when my friend Andrew Hoiberg asked if I’d like to be a seasonal turf assistant for the Broncos. He recently had been hired as a full-time employee after taking care of Denver’s training camp fields in Greeley. I told him that the only thing I knew about grass was that it grew and turned brown without enough water. He assured me that it would be OK.

My first day we painted the field for a preseason game. There were lots of strings and many, many buckets of paint. It’s fascinating how easily an area of turf more than 7,000 square yards can be transformed into a beautiful playing surface. Don’t get me wrong, it’s not easy. It can take up to three full days, with a crew of eight or so painting, to get the media lines, sidelines, yard lines and hashes, endzones and any logos done. And it’s amazingly simple, using just some string and metal stencils, or sliders.

Painting, however, was not all that I had to get my hands dirty. Over the next few months I learned about topdressing, seed germination, grow tarp, mowing patterns, soil temps, diseases, and the differences between grasses.

As an assistant, there’s a lot of grunt work. The seasonal assistants empty the grass clippings from the Versa-Vac (which smelled like month-old compost), take down or put up the goal posts (boy, those crossbars are heavy), load up the Workman’s with sand from outside the stadium or hand-take the field and hand-fill the divots (which were relatively minor, thanks to the DD Grassmaster system) the day after a game. There’s lots of sweeping and scrubbing.

Of course, those tasks paled in comparison to the tarps. In a late-August preseason game against Seattle, a monster thunderstorm decided to knock down over the Denver metro area hours before kickoff. We scrambled sloppily to get the rain tarp out in time, and even then we had to call in reinforcements. We had cleaning crews, engineers and even cheerleaders helping us out. To keep the tarp from being blown all over by the swirling winds, we ended up putting the metal sideline benches on every conceivable corner and parking about a dozen vehicles in various spots. After the torrential downpour, we removed the weights, pushed the excess water off the tarp and rolled them up.

For a second, though, standing in the heart of a giant, round metal conductor, right smack dab in the middle of the two metal benches, in the midst of a potential tornado-causing thunderstorm didn’t sound like the greatest way to spend an afternoon. In the end, however, the field looked and played fantastic.

Against the Colts in late November, another weather fiasco loomed overhead; only this time our crew had to deploy the snow tarps, which had actually only been rolled out in an August mock run. The snow tarps were considerably larger than the rain tarps and had seamless zipper ends, which made them extremely more difficult to fasten together, especially in near-freezing temps.

After a tremendous show of teamwork, the playing surface, and the larger pieces of the bench tarps that we had nailed down earlier, was covered. We arrived the next morning at 7 AM for that night’s 6:30 PM kickoff, and at about 10 AM we began to plow the tarps. By 2 PM the tarps were rolled up and the field was ready to go.

But the rough stuff was miniscule compared to the good times. For every time I had to crawl under the stands to make sure the heating plugs around the irrigation pumps were plugged in, there were ten times I got to hop on the Sidewinder mower or the John Deere tractor, or just throw the football around out on the field.

No matter how many paint buckets I had to scrub, it was all more than worth it to work the field goal nets in the north endzone and watch the games from the greatest seat in the house: the field.

Maybe I was spoiled, being such a novice and getting to work with Turf Manager Ross Kurecki, his assistant Abby McNeal, Hoiberg and their remarkable crew. I was just lucky.

Adam Sivits is currently trying to grow a writing career in New York City. He can be reached at adamsivits@yahoo.com.
SNOW BLOWERS
As a work tool for skid steer loaders, Caterpillar Snow Blowers operate on standard flow hydraulics and are designed for removing snow from streets, parking lots, and sidewalks. The impeller is engineered to balance power and torque to maximize capacity and throwing distance while minimizing plugging.

Caterpillar Inc. 309-675-8995
For information, circle 055 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-055

POWER BROOM
With Shindaiwa’s PB270 PowerBroom, one person can quickly complete what takes crews hours to do with push brooms. The PB270 is ideal for moving gravel, sand, dirt, bark dust and much more. It is also effective for removing fresh, fallen snow from driveways and sidewalks. The PB270 features a high-torque 270 engine, a 22-inch sweeping swath, and belts and flexible fins made of Alcryn rubber.

Shindaiwa Inc. 800-521-7733
For information, circle 061 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-061

Toro’s recent introduction of the Power Max snowthrowers represents the industry’s first major 2-stage snowthrower redesign in more than a decade. The most innovative feature on all Power Max snowthrowers is the Quick Stick Chute Control, which allows the operator to easily adjust the chute rotation and deflection angle with one simple control.

At the heart of the new line is the Power Max Auger System, which incorporates an expanded impeller housing, an expanded chute base and a non-stick surface designed to minimize snow build-up.

The Toro Inc. 800-595-6841
For information, circle 065 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-065

SNOW THROWER
The Ariens’ ST1332DLE Sno-Throw is now available with taller chute that discharges snow up to 20 percent higher and further depending upon snow conditions. Additional features include a 120-volt automotive-style electric start, differential lock-out wheels for positive dual-wheel drive, and a heavy-duty cast-iron gear case.

Ariens Co. 800-678-5443
For information, circle 054 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-054

SPORTSTURF • http://www.greenmediaonline.com
DEERE SNOW BLOWER ATTACHMENT
John Deere's 47-in. heavy-duty snow blower attachment has a 2-stage design that handles wet, heavy snow removal jobs efficiently. The attachment moves 85-100 lbs. of snow per minute up to 38 ft. The discharge chute rotates hydraulically up to 180 degrees on the go. The snow blower attachment can be quickly and easily attached or removed without any tools.
John Deere/800-537-8233
For information, circle 060 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-060

SALT/SAND SPREADER
The Magnum Salt/Sand Spreader is powered by a 6.5-in. diameter, direct-drive motor that delivers more torque and horsepower than any light- to medium-duty spreader on the market. Eight different mounting methods accommodate various types of vehicles.
Imperial Electric/888-281-2456
For information, circle 059 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-059

SNOW BLOWER
The 1130STE is the largest snow blower offered by Husqvarna. With an 11-hp OHV engine, a 30-in. width and a 23-in. intake height, the unit features an infinite speed drive, wheel lockout and single motion-slide chute control, as well as heavy-duty industrial assembly to meet the demands of long-term use. Its electric start makes starting easier and faster.
Husqvarna Forest & Garden Co./800-438-7297
For information, circle 058 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-058

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As with many park districts and recreation departments, summer baseball and softball programs are very popular with the public. For this reason, it is important that your playing facilities are in proper condition. At the Waukegan Park District, we believe that proper playing conditions and maintenance of fields are extremely important. But before the first player takes the field, getting the field into a safe, playable condition may require extensive work, and the unpredictability of spring weather might not allow sufficient time.

We all have nightmare problems from the spring and summer seasons. Perhaps it's that one infield that we constantly have to cancel after a rain because of inability to remove excess water; maybe worn turf areas, or perhaps soil build-up between skinned area and turf. Plan and prepare to correct these problems in the fall.

Our goal is to prepare the ball diamond for next year's use. Just as fall is prime time for turf cultural practices, so should be field renovations. Fall renovations are scheduled at season's end to repair worn turf areas, such as the front of the pitcher's mound. Our renovation procedure includes removing the worn area to re-sod, and also reduce the skin area back to its proper dimension. We use the same procedure for removing the “lip” build-up along an arc.

Some of our fall renovation projects have been extensive using an outside contractor to improve the surface drainage of the skinned area and reduce the skinned area back to proper field dimensions. The perimeter ball mix material is pushed to the center of the field to be reused. Topsoil is brought in, leveled and graded; then the skinned infield is graded with a center crown for proper surface drainage. The renovation is completed with big roll sod. Using in-house equipment and labor to assist the contractor, we saved several hundred dollars on the cost of the renovation. Also, reducing the skin area down to proper dimension reduces daily prep time. In addition, it is great hands-on experience for staff members, who now appreciate what it takes to reno-
Fall field renovations can simply be field edging, which gives you that crisp, clean, finished look. Edging also gives you a professional look, and, more importantly, provides good ball roll and playability. Late in the fall, as turf growth is slowed, we use a sidewalk edger to trim 2-3 inches along a base line or arc edge. After removal of the turf debris, we push back and compact the ball mix to the newly established edge. We complete edging by adding additional mix to provide a level surface between the grass and skinned area.

We are also diligent with herbicide applications for weed control on skinned areas. Backpack applications of Roundup herbicide, with a color dye indicator, control miscellaneous weeds that appear on skinned areas, fence lines, and warning tracks. This is particularly beneficial to ball diamonds that go out of play in August, with no scheduled use until the following spring.

Don’t wait to communicate your field renovation project ideas. Prepare months in advance and communicate your intentions and expectations to coaches, athletic directors, and park and recreation staff. Develop a checklist of items with projected start and completion dates of field renovations or improvements you want to undertake. Communicate what the results will be when given the chance to do these fall field renovation projects.

In Waukegan, we conduct regular sports field inspections in order to prevent accidents. The inspections identify hazards that can be corrected before causing injuries to patrons or employees. No matter what level of sports turf maintenance, the aim is to identify and correct hazardous conditions that may exist on your facilities. The goal is to reduce frequency and possible severity of player injury and unnecessary accidents through proper field inspection and maintenance.

On a playing field there are many hazardous conditions that can be easily identified because they are visible and obvious. However, there can be problem areas that are not so obvious, and often only detected through an inspection process.

The following are items in our sports field inspection checklist that we conduct annually:

- Maintenance of Skinned Area
  - Inspection of infield composition.
  - Leveling of worn area near bases/rubbers.
  - Correct build-up between turf and skinned area.

- Selection and Anchoring of Bases
  - Base anchors correctly installed.
  - Inspecting pitcher rubbers and home plate.

- Maintenance of Fencing and Backstops
  - Exposed concrete footings.
  - Chain link fence properly secured.

- Additional Safety Considerations
  - Bleacher/player benches inspection and maintenance.
  - Athletic field lighting inspection and maintenance.

Take the time to review those items on your sports field inspection checklist that can possibly be addressed this fall. Most importantly, document any repairs or work completed relating to safety hazards. Specifically, document all work done, when, and by whom, the problem identified, and actions taken to rectify or repair.

Take advantage of the fall months to prepare your fields for spring use. Coaches and players will want to begin practices as soon as spring weather permits. Next spring your efforts will be appreciated by many who will have fun, and will play safely because of the prior planning and prudent preparation you undertook in the fall.

Mike Trigg, CSFM, from the Waukegan Park District, Waukegan, IL, is President-Elect of the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA).
LASER-GUIDED CONSTRUCTION

Carolina Green Corp. is a full service athletic field builder offering design, build, and renovation services for fields throughout the Southeast. Automatic laser guided systems are used in all aspects of their construction including subgrade preparation, installing drainage components, rootzone placement, and finish grading. Their state of the art laser systems coupled with high floatation equipment provide a uniform finished grade and a tolerance within 1/4 in. over 50 ft.

Carolina Green/704-753-1707
For information, circle 077 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-077

SITE CLEAN UP

Glenmac has its model “B” hi-lift/picker available to remove stones, roots, trash, etc., in tight turning spaces. Also can be used to clean beach areas and as a track screener. Runs on PTO drive from 35-75 hp tractor; 11 gpm at 1500 psi hydraulic required.

Glenmac Inc/800-437-9779
For information, circle 082 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-082

LASER LEVELING EQUIPMENT, SERVICES

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October 2003
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Lastec/800-555-0798
For information, circle 079 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-079

TORO AERATORS
Toro ProCore 660 and 880 aerators relieve compaction, control thatch, and enable positive gas exchange leading to healthier turf. The 660 covers a 60-in. swath and produces quality holes due to the RotaLink centering mechanism, which requires no maintenance and ensures tines remain vertical as they enter and exit the ground, producing a consistently circular hole while the tractor moves forward.
The Toro Co./800-803-8676
For information, circle 075 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-075

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Laserturf/836-847-9773
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TORO SPRAYER
Toro’s Multi Pro 5600 sprayers deliver accurate spray coverage for better control of turf disease, pests, and your budget. The spray system has a dual diaphragm pump that can be run dry without damage to the seals or pump.

“By replacing the centrifugal pump with this positive-displacement diaphragm pump on all Multi Pro sprayers, we’ve effectively eliminated the biggest headache associated with sprayers and turned it into a significant positive advantage.”

The Toro Co./800-803-8676
For information, circle 076 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-076

COMPACT SKID-STEER
Vermeer Manufacturing’s S600 compact skid-steer loader is a gas or diesel ride-on machine that can be mounted on rubber tires or rubber tracks over tires, and has eight separate attachments. Machine is made to save labor on jobs such as small-scale dirt handling, utility installation, and lifting projects. Units have oil coolers and easy access to battery.

Vermeer Manufacturing/888-837-4337
For information, circle 081 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-081

SNOW PUSHERS
FFC Attachments designed its 12- and 14-ft. Snow Push models to remove more snow, more efficiently. Each model is made of heavy-duty, fully welded steel with 3/8-in. thick end plates to capture and remove even the heaviest snow without leaving windrows or spillover. Using the patent-pending pull back kit, the operator can roll the blade forward to finish the job.

FFC Attachments, a Sweepster Co./800-747-2132
For information, circle 056 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-056

SNOWPLOWS
Hiniker Company designed its HDX line of snowplows specifically for 4-wheel-drive, pick-up trucks to effectively handle the demands of wet, heavy snowfalls. The HDX snowplows use a split trip edge with a 9-in. high pivot point to provide protection from higher obstacles such as curbs and parking barriers.

Hiniker Co./507-625-6621
For information, circle 057 or see www.oners.ims.ca/2084-057

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