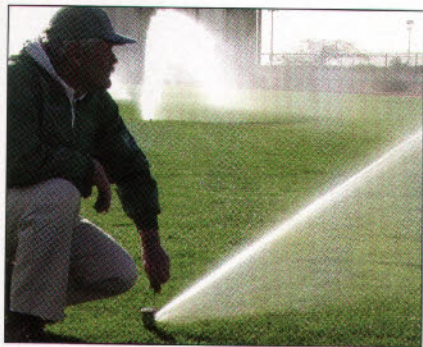


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**ON THE COVER:** Horton Plaza in San Diego, host city for STMA Conference. Photo courtesy of San Diego CVB.

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from the sidelines

# RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY (DUH!)

**Last November** I drove through a dense fog to visit the Philadelphia Eagles' new home, lavish Lincoln Financial Field, south of famous Broad Street, and across Pattison Avenue from the Phillies' new home opening this spring (Citizens Bank Park). The ghost that is Veterans Stadium was nearby, awaiting implosion.

I was the guest of Stull Equipment, which sponsored a Field Day for area turf managers and has a 6-year agreement to supply field care equipment to the Eagles. I was lucky enough to spend some one-on-one time with Tony Leonard, the Eagles' sports and landscape manager, who took me on a tour of the facility, including a look at the SubAir System as well as his "command center" and equipment and supply areas. And naturally we spent some time on the field, which is 97 percent natural grass and features the same DD GrassMaster system as Denver's Invesco Field. Leonard says two machines stitched the GrassMaster material into the turf for two and a half weeks, 6 days a week, 24 hours a day. (For more from Tony Leonard, see page 29.)

Since I was there courtesy of his equipment dealer, I asked Leonard about his experiences and relationships with suppliers. "Number one is the product; if what's being sold doesn't cut it, that's obviously a problem," he said. "And service is a high priority. I can get a part I need the next day from Stull.

"I need to have a trust level with my suppliers, which is built over time. As the relationship becomes stronger, you get better service, no doubt," Leonard added.

What about entertaining sales pitches from your current suppliers' competitors?

"I'll listen to what others have to say though my philosophy is, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,'" he said. "For example we get our field paint from a local supplier who can deliver within 2 hours of my calling him, and that works out great for us."

Leonard still prefers face-to-face dealings with local suppliers or using the phone. He said he isn't yet comfortable with buying via the internet.

Rod Smith, president of Stull Equipment, a Jacobsen dealer, follows a simple formula to meet customers' needs and expectations: Reliability + Availability = Investment.

"Reliability comes from providing consistent quality in all areas and responding quickly to every input. Availability is a function of having and delivering the right product when and where the customer wants it. And to have these traits requires a considerable investment in people, vehicles, inventory, and systems," said Smith.

"We strive to do what's right for the customer as well as our company. Many times these principles are in direct conflict; what the customer wants may be very costly for us to deliver," said Smith. "Our relationship with the Eagles has played on the need for a balance, a win-win philosophy that should sustain a successful business relationship."



ERIC SCHRODER, EDITOR

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## president's message

# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

**It's January**, the start of a new year. It's time to look forward to 2004 and reflect upon the year just passed. This is also the time for our New Year's resolutions. Here goes:

One of the things I want to do a better job of this year is staying in touch with my professional colleagues within STMA. All of us need the advice and support from our friends in this business.

Staying in touch is not only good for us professionally, but it's good for all of us personally as well. There is no telling how many times my spirits have been lifted by a timely phone call from one of you. It's not only good for the person you called, but doing so will lift your spirits as well. So it's a win-win situation for all of us.

One of the amazing things about the people in this profession is their willingness to take the time to help a colleague with a problem. The turfgrass industry is second to none for colleagues helping one another in times of trouble. No matter what your problem is, someone in the profession has already faced it and has a potential solution.

No one has all the answers, of course, but, within this group, there are a lot of folks who have already made all your mistakes for you. They're a great source of information and helpful suggestions. When you think about it, there are really no problems, there are just wonderful opportunities ahead of us.

I hope that each of you will take the time to call one or more of your colleagues sometime each month, just to check in and see how things are going. That's a big challenge, but one that's easily fulfilled. All it requires is a telephone, your membership directory, and a few minutes of your time. That's all.

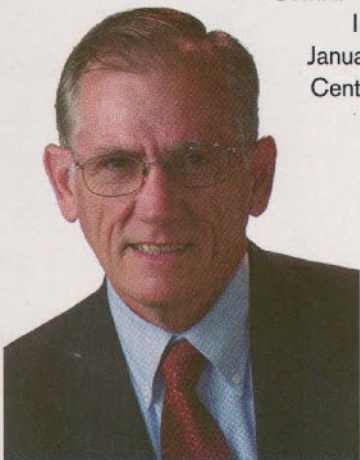
This is a wonderful organization, filled to the brim with fine people who do their jobs well and are valued members of their community. Each of us makes our own unique imprint where we work and live. We can all learn from each other and make our own job and life better as well as improving the image of our profession.

The New Year of 2004 offers us a great opportunity to make a difference in our jobs, our community and our profession. Let's take that as our challenge and, when the bell is tolled December 31, 2004, we can say things are better in all facets of our lives than they were January 1, 2004.

Let's work to support each other in the year to come and we'll see the results in the years to come.

I hope the New Year is a good one for you. The Board and I will do everything we can to make it so. I welcome your active support and participation in the workings of STMA.

I look forward to seeing each of you at our Annual Conference January 21-25 in San Diego at the Town and Country Resort & Convention Center.

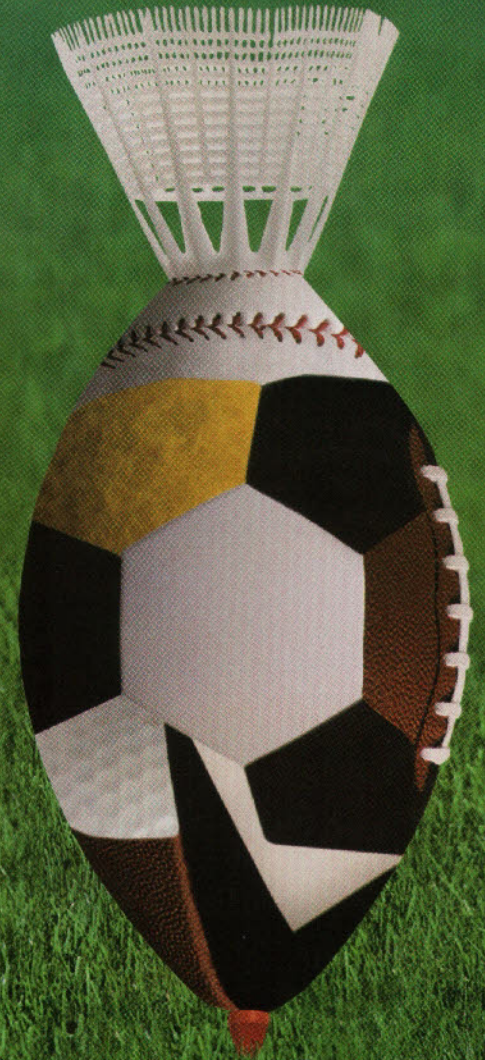


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BY STEVE WIGHTMAN

# PREPARING FOR SUPER BOWL XXXVII

**E**ach year on the final Sunday in January one of sports greatest spectacles manifests itself on nearly every television set in America as well as on radios, in bars and at street corners in every town from San Diego to Bangor, ME. It is also watched and listened to in nearly every country on the globe. Nearly half of the preceding 6 months the NFL has scheduled one-on-one competition that began with preseason games, regular season standoffs, and playoffs that have finally left only two teams with the best records in football squaring off against each other in the Super Bowl.

For most, the culmination of the NFL season begins the week before the Big Game when the League champions have been decided. The media frenzy and the ensuing game analysis creates predictions based on yards-per-carry, percentage-of-completions, strength against the rush, yards passing, and the like. The two teams that have earned the right to represent their respective leagues in pursuit of the golden ring have but a few days to prepare for one another. However, there have been other preparations taking place for the Big Game long before the first round of playoffs even began.

As the focal point of the entire game (with hundreds of millions of viewers and countless photographs to follow) the playing field must be perfect in every aspect—from aesthetics to safety

to league specifications.

Under the direction of George Toma and Ed Mangan with the NFL, field preparations for Super Bowl XXXVII in San Diego began at 6:00 PM on December 29, 2002, just 65 minutes following the Charger/Seahawks regular season game. Although 28 days before Super Bowl kickoff, there was much to be done. Under the stadium field lights, the entire field floor at Qualcomm Stadium was sod-cut with all irrigation components marked and capped by 10:30 PM that night.

At morning's first light the following day, fifteen 18-wheel end dumps and a 3 1/2-yard loader began scooping up the cut sod and hauling it away to be recycled into organic mulch. At 2:15 PM the entire field floor was clear of all remaining grass from the disappointing Charger season. Before the last trucks left the stadium, the field was already being laser graded to establish the perfect grade in preparation for new sod.

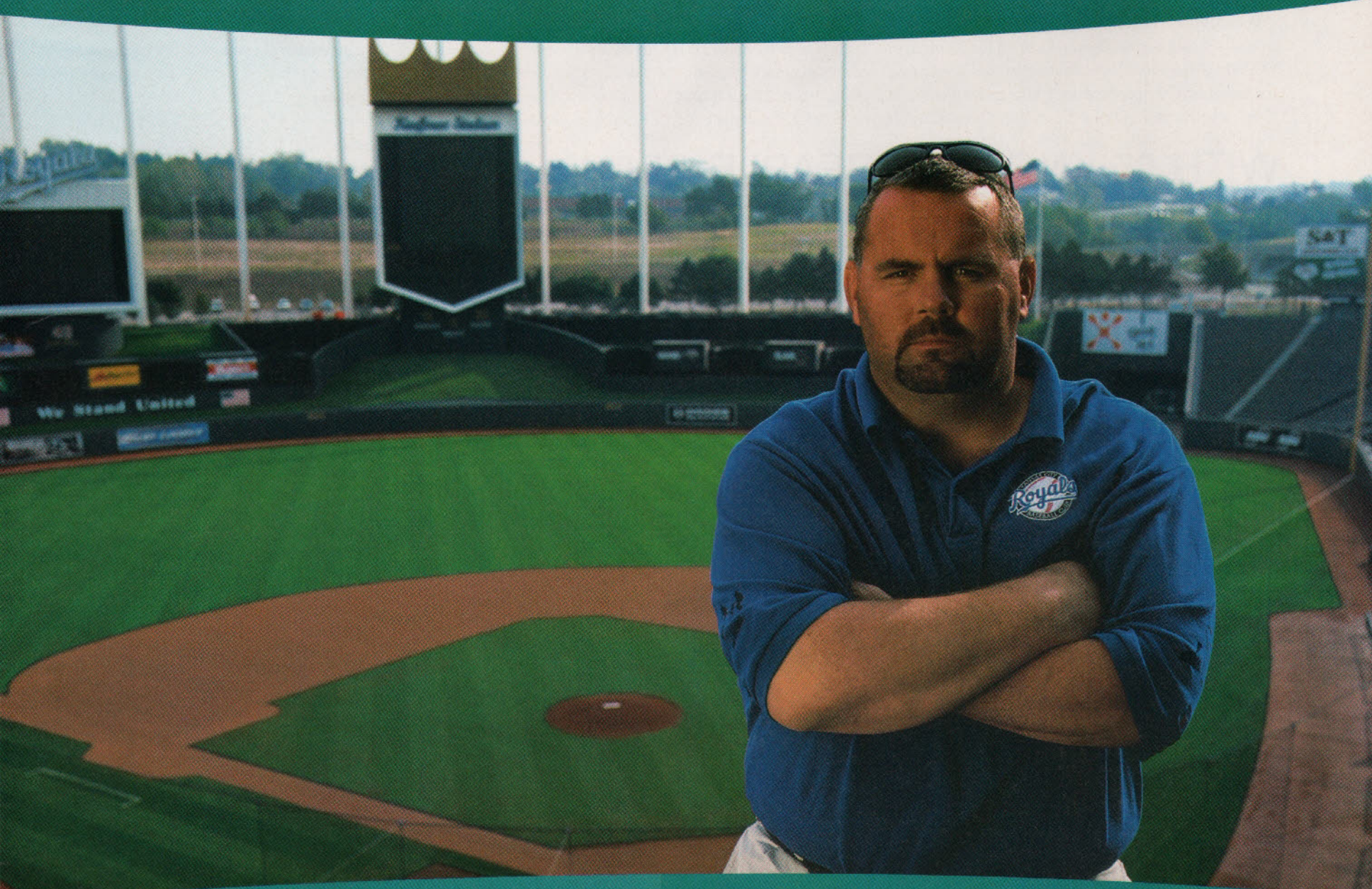
At 3:00 PM on Tuesday, December 31, the entire field floor had been laser graded to within +/- 1/2 inch in any direction for 100 feet. By 6:00 PM on Wednesday, January 1, all of the irrigation heads had been reinstalled to grade and adjusted for proper operation.

The field was then irrigated to establish adequate soil moisture and to settle and firm any remaining loose soil areas.





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The following day, on January 1, the sand-based field was rolled with a 3-ton drum roller to establish uniform soil firmness. The field then was laser graded one final time to reestablish that perfect grade in preparation for sod.

The next 2 days were spent fertilizing the soil, staging and positioning the rain tarps, and receiving all of the grounds and painting equipment that would be necessary to maintain the field over the next 3 1/2 weeks. These 2 days were also taken up with visits and evaluations of the two practice sites that would be used by the two Super Bowl teams when they arrived in San Diego.

On Saturday, January 4, the first 35,000 square feet of sod arrived and the crew of 25 immediately began carefully placing it on the prepared soil. The sod used for Super Bowl XXXVII was improved bermudagrass that had been overseeded with perennial ryegrass and grown to NFL specifications for the past 8 months. Harvesting began at the sod farm 12 hours before placement at the stadium. The sod was harvested in 1 1/2-inch thick cut

rolls 42 inches wide and 30 feet long with each roll weighing 2,000 pounds.

At 4:00 PM on the third day all 100,000 square feet of sod had been securely placed and the long task of priming and manicuring began and continuing right up until kick-off. With the thickness and weight of each roll deep rooting became secondary to a tight dense canopy both ensuring stable and firm footing for the quick and agile 300-pounders now so common in the NFL.

In addition to the stadium field, the two practice sites for the competing teams were also included in the daily routine of cultural practices.

Ten days before the Big Game the initial painting of the practice fields began. Since it was unknown at this time which of the four teams still in the playoffs would advance to the Super Bowl crews painted the typical lines and hash marks. The stadium field's initial painting was done at this time also. Following the final playoff weekend when the two teams were decided the crews added each team's predetermined specifications at the

practice sites. Many teams have special field markings on their practice fields depicting various offense and defensive alignments. The endzones on the stadium field were also painted after that final playoff weekend when it became certain that they would read, "Raiders" and "Buccaneers."

The 7 days leading up to the Big Game were filled with logistical nightmares between the morning dew from the cool humid southern California air, the pregame, halftime, and postgame rehearsals as well as Media Day and team practices. To help protect the stadium playing surface during the 3 days and numerous hours of rehearsals, the field was covered with a protective tarp upon which the crew had painted an entire football field to assist the participants with their alignments and positions.

The day before the game was the final painting of the field that had to be orchestrated around each team's practice. With 25 knowledgeable crewmembers and five spray machines the task of brightening the colors and sharpening the lines and edges took but 7 hours. At the end of the day the entire crew donated their multi-colored shoes to the rafters located high above the main tunnel entrance to the field at Qualcomm Stadium, a longtime tradition at the Q. The shoes remain even today as a fond reminder of an exciting and satisfying experience for us all.

History was made at Super Bowl XXXVII. For the first time there were female groundcrew members that helped prepare the field for this great event. Abby McNeal, CSFM, of the Denver Broncos, and Raechal Volkening of the Milwaukee Brewers, contributed their hard work and expertise as members of the Super Bowl crew. Crew members handpicked for their work ethic from numerous ballclubs across the country as well as Japan worked side by side 7 days a week for 11-14 hours each day to accomplish a truly remarkable feat. Under the guidance and direction of George Toma and Ed Mangan there was not a single detail that was left undone. Toma has prepared every single Super Bowl field and at 75 was hard to keep up with, even for most of the younger crewmembers. Mangan, field director for the Atlanta Braves and the NFL director of fields, provided us all with the professional leadership and detailed planning necessary to accomplish a task of this magnitude. When it was all said and done, Super Bowl XXXVII had the perfect field on a day that reciprocated with perfect weather.

ST

Steve Wightman is turf manager for Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego.

## WITH 25 KNOWLEDGEABLE CREW MEMBERS AND FIVE SPRAY MACHINES THE TASK OF BRIGHTENING THE COLORS AND SHARPENING THE LINES AND EDGES TOOK BUT 7 HOURS.

