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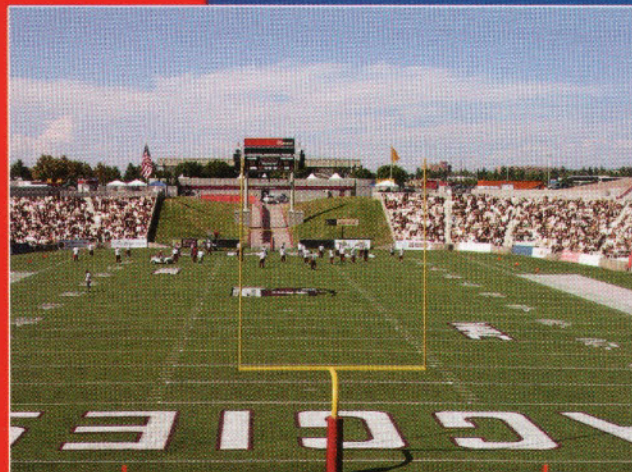


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The Sports Turf Managers Association meets this month in San Antonio, TX. Photo by Jim Sigmon/UT Athletics.

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From the Sidelines

## Big Ten bermuda field is a winner



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**B**y the time you read this the college football season should be over. While I'd like to expound at length about how ludicrous it is that the NCAA relies on regionally biased pollsters, coaches' proxies, computers, and television honchos to determine its "champion," let's instead re-visit a new field put in last summer to see how it fared.

After the decision was made in late 2005 to rebuild the field at Purdue University's Ross-Ade Stadium, Patriot bermudagrass was chosen over Kentucky bluegrass (not enough establishment time given when the decision was made) and synthetic infill systems (natural grass strongly preferred by coaches and athletes). The bermuda recommendation was supported by 3 years of research in West Lafayette, and Patriot was chosen because it thrived both in northern Indiana and another northern climate, Blacksburg, VA.

Al Capitos, the Boilermakers' athletic turf superintendent, said, "So far, so good. Everyone is happy with the bermuda. It stabilized the straight sand rootzone. We were very successful with growing it but not as successful with the overseeding process. We overseeded with ryegrass at 18 lbs. per 1,000, and that was not enough to establish before the Wisconsin game.

"The bermuda mat is so tight, and the leaf blades so fine, that it was tough to get the overseeding down into the growing medium. I didn't want to power overseed, instead we used a drop spreader, watered it, topdressed, and rolled it, but it was not enough to tolerate football traffic, and didn't look as good," Capitos said.

I asked him about the appearance of the turf when Purdue hosted Penn State the next week. From my couch, it didn't look good. "Though it was not aesthetically pleasing that game, the traction was there," Capitos said. "No grass was lost and the team was happy with it."

Purdue has a graduate student researching at what rate to overseed next year. "I'd rather have the good performance than good aesthetics," Capitos said. "Next spring we may use Roundup to kill the ryegrass because our growing window up north for bermuda is so short. I don't want any competition from rye for that bermuda. Over time we'll hone in on a better overseeding process but my concern with spring bermuda growing season, which doesn't start until late April or early May here, makes me be careful with the amount of ryegrass we put down. We don't want a long transition period.

"I can afford to do that because we only have one event in the spring, the Black and Gold game," said Capitos. "I don't care for that game if the grass is gold and the lines are black!"

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**MIKE TRIGG**  
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**B**ack in February of 2005, I received a terrific email from Texas STMA member Pat Searight. Pat wrote to congratulate me on becoming the new STMA President. He went on to say, "I am confident that you will lead STMA into becoming a more recognized and professional organization."

Well Pat, I have strived very hard to meet that goal. I certainly know that I have been a recipient of true inspiration from many STMA members like you whom I have had the privilege of meeting and working with over the past 2 years.

I want to start my "thank you's" with the Board of Directors and STMA staff. And special thanks to all those members who served on the Board with me for their assistance and support. I would also like to thank our Headquarters staff for their hard work and commitment to the association. STMA continues to grow and prosper because of the dedicated services staff provides to our membership and the sports turf industry.

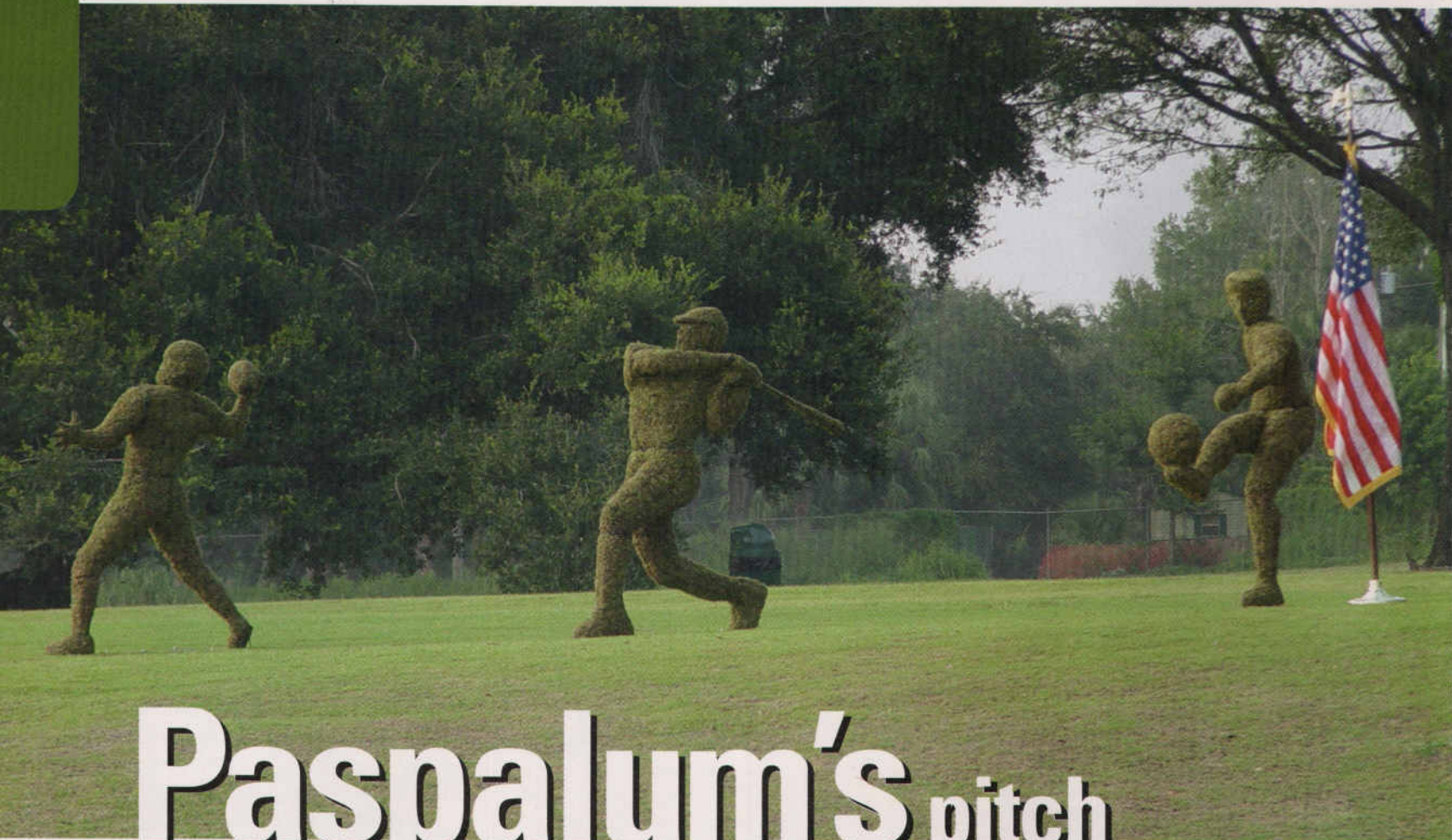
There has been much work accomplished these past 2 years. Our Conference & Exhibition in Orlando last January was a huge success. This was also the kick-off of our yearlong 25th Anniversary. I hope you enjoyed the anniversary features in *SportsTurf*. I look forward to the 2007 Conference in San Antonio that will once again provide wonderful learning and networking experiences.

I have truly enjoyed working with the STMA committees and witnessing their accomplishments. Unlike other associations, STMA committee members actually spearhead projects, do research, and help staff be more effective by providing additional manpower. We have reengineered our committee process to offer even more opportunities for volunteerism. I am privileged to work with so many dedicated volunteers, and I thank all of you for your continued support of STMA.

Serving on any board can be a demanding and time consuming avocation, but it can also be one of the most rewarding experiences as well. The greatest support comes from those closest to you, and that support has come from my family, the Waukegan Park District Parks Department and Executive Director Greg Petry. In addition, I cannot say enough about our STMA CEO Kim Heck and the support she has provided for me as President. It has truly been rewarding to learn and work with her on association management. In a short period of time she has made a great impact on the organization. I am humbled by all of these people and the support they have provided during the past 2 years.

I am confident that the capable leadership of incoming President Mike Andresen, CSFM will continue to embrace our strategic planning process for the continued advancement and growth of the association. I look forward to my continued service as past president to assist him in anyway possible. Finally, I wish to thank you—the membership of STMA. It has been an honor to be President of this great association. Thank you for a wonderful experience.

Mike Trigg



# Paspalum's pitch to bypass bermuda

**Commercial cultivars use less fertilizer, drink brackish water**

By Chris Harrison

**S**eashore Paspalum is making its bid to bypass bermudagrass as the favorite turfgrass in the Coastal South and other arid, salty areas.

“Our biggest weed problem is keeping out wild bermudagrass,” says Chuck Pula, park and recreation director for the City of Winter Springs in Central Florida. He has about a dozen paspalum ball fields (including soccer, football, baseball, and lacrosse) in two different Paspalum cultivars: SeaDwarf and SeaIsle-1.

“It’s not perfect, but it is one tough grass that takes off fast and does well,” he adds. “It definitely needs to be aerated through the season or you get ‘witches broom’ – round clumps where it tightens up.”

He learned that lesson the hard way in 2006 when a labor situation forced cutbacks in the usual maintenance program.

University researchers agree that, despite some challenges to be addressed by anyone growing seashore paspalum, it is a variety to be reckoned with in any hot area where saltwater intrusion or brackish irrigation water is a problem.

Pula draws fresh water for their fields from nearby Lake Jessup, but does not necessarily see that as good news. “I wish the water had some salt in it, it would help us keep weeds down.”

He finds salt, whether granular, rock or heated and applied as a liquid, is the best herbicide against bermudagrass intrusion. “It gives us a quick hit, but the bermuda does come back,” he says. The rock salt

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gave him problems for the first time this past year when it was applied late to football fields and it did not get watered in fast enough. “The kids were eating it, tossing it at each other, and complained that it hurt when they fell on it,” he says.

The book on paspalum is that the grass performs well in salty conditions, requires much less N fertilizer than bermudagrass. Golf course superintendents find it plays nicely once the players overcome their shock at seeing an upright grass. In fact, some golfers like the mini-tee effect that paspalum’s upright stance gives.

Georgia Plant Breeder Paul Raymer called paspalum “Bermudagrass on steroids.” Indeed, it shows great grow-in speed and recovery when stressed. “It is the last warm-season grass

to go dormant. It can be overseeded. It produces few viable seedheads,” Raymer says.

### Planting technique

Seashore paspalum can be planted as sod, sprigs, plugs, or sod-to-sprigs. Plugs are the least desirable as plugs have been trained to grow in a confined space and are less aggressive at grow-in. The preferred methods of installation are sod and sprigs. Like other grasses, paspalum sod comes in rolls or as flat slabs delivered on pallets. Sprigs are cut at the sod farm into pieces with live roots attached and are spread out on the soil at the project site.

Pula, who had SeaIsle-1 on football and soccer fields for over three years and

SeaDwarf on a huge complex that includes football and lacrosse fields, says the grass has held up well. He has a field in the new Aloha variety and feels it and SeaIsle-1 do better than the SeaDwarf, which seems to require more water.

They sodded their water retention basins. Elsewhere they sprigged the fields.

“Grow-in was fantastic,” Pula says. “It was amazing how quickly the sprigs ran.” The playing fields, sprigged in late March, were ready to play by August 1.

A new method of installation called sod-to-sprigs is gaining popularity. This method takes live sod and cuts it into sprigs on the project site. The idea is that the sod-to-sprigs method delivers more live material at the site. Once

**“PASPALUM IS BERMUDAGRASS ON STEROIDS.”**

**– RAYMER**



Photos courtesy of City of Winter Springs (FL) Parks and Recreation