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FIELD SCIENCE

100% Kentucky bluegrass following each season and it would always need to be re-sodded the following season three or four times. So our experiment remained: How would ryegrass around the mound perform compared to bluegrass in the following season?

After about 30 games into the season and the mound showing literally no wear, we knew we were on to something. As the warm summer weather began to set in, our methods of management had to change with the onset of different environmental stresses. It was common for us to add about an 8-ounce cup of seed to the area in front of mound after each game. In the grand scheme of things seed is extremely inexpensive and we knew the players would work the seed in to get the seed/soil contact.

We all know that it is not an ideal environment for ryegrass seedlings with mid-summer daytime temperatures in the mid-

90's and nighttime temperatures not dipping below 70, not to mention pulling the tarp 45 times. So how did we get around this? We purchase our seed from CISCO Companies in Indianapolis, which is coated with the fungicide Apron. This allows for the ryegrass to germinate and not be susceptible to damping-off, a common ryegrass seedling disease.

During homestands we would try several methods of pre-germinating seed. Following each homestand, we will solid tine aerify all our wear areas. These included down the foul lines, coach's boxes, around home plate, and around the mound. Subsequent to the aerification our pre-germ seed would be rotary spread to all the wear areas. This series of events would be carried out after each homestand. With typically 5-8 days in between homestands, the ryegrass would be germinated and filled in. In my

opinion seedlings provide a safer playing surface than loose sod and sod staples.

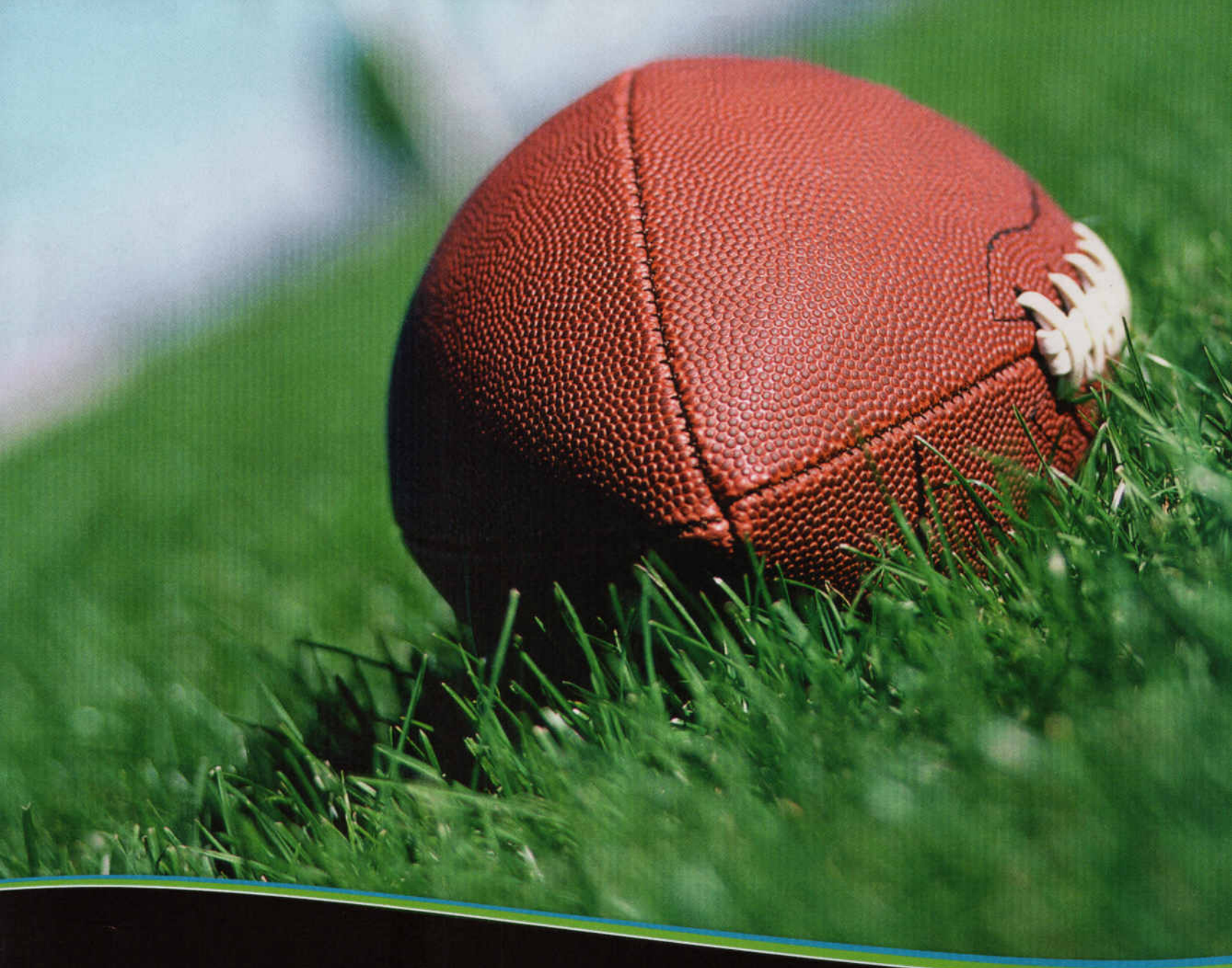
At a conference with our manager after the season, he said being around the league and playing on re-sodded surfaces was awful and if you could find a method to get around re-sodding you would be a step ahead.

As we all know methods and practices that worked one year will not always work the next. It is our goal at Victory Field to try and stay ahead of the weather and environmental curves and continue to provide a safe playable surface. It is important for us to use what we have learned in classroom and our previous experience, but it is more important for us to continue to try new ideas and become more efficient overall. ■

Joey Stevenson is the head groundskeeper for the Triple A Indianapolis Indians.



Last homestand of the year.



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GROWING PAINS

eased by erosion control game plan

By Tom Wedegaertner

When Christ the King Cathedral School and Catholic Church, Lubbock, TX expanded its student body to include high school grades 9-12, it also needed to address expansions of everything from buildings and bus routes to staff members and sports fields. Construction had begun, but after adding a high school football team, the school realized it was short on practice space.

School staff, church members and the Trojan Booster Club agreed to build a practice field from scratch on a site near the school that had previously been open pasture. Having an onsite practice field would decrease the liability involved in bussing players to and from an off-site facility. And with two-a-day practices ahead, the new sports field would be a convenient addition.

The site was an open field featuring native grasses and uneven surfaces. Construction crews used a road grader to rip the soil in

three directions, pulling up eight inches of top soil, along with rocks, roots and tree stumps. The field was then scanned by crews who manually removed unwanted debris, applied herbicides to kill remaining vegetation, and installed an irrigation system.

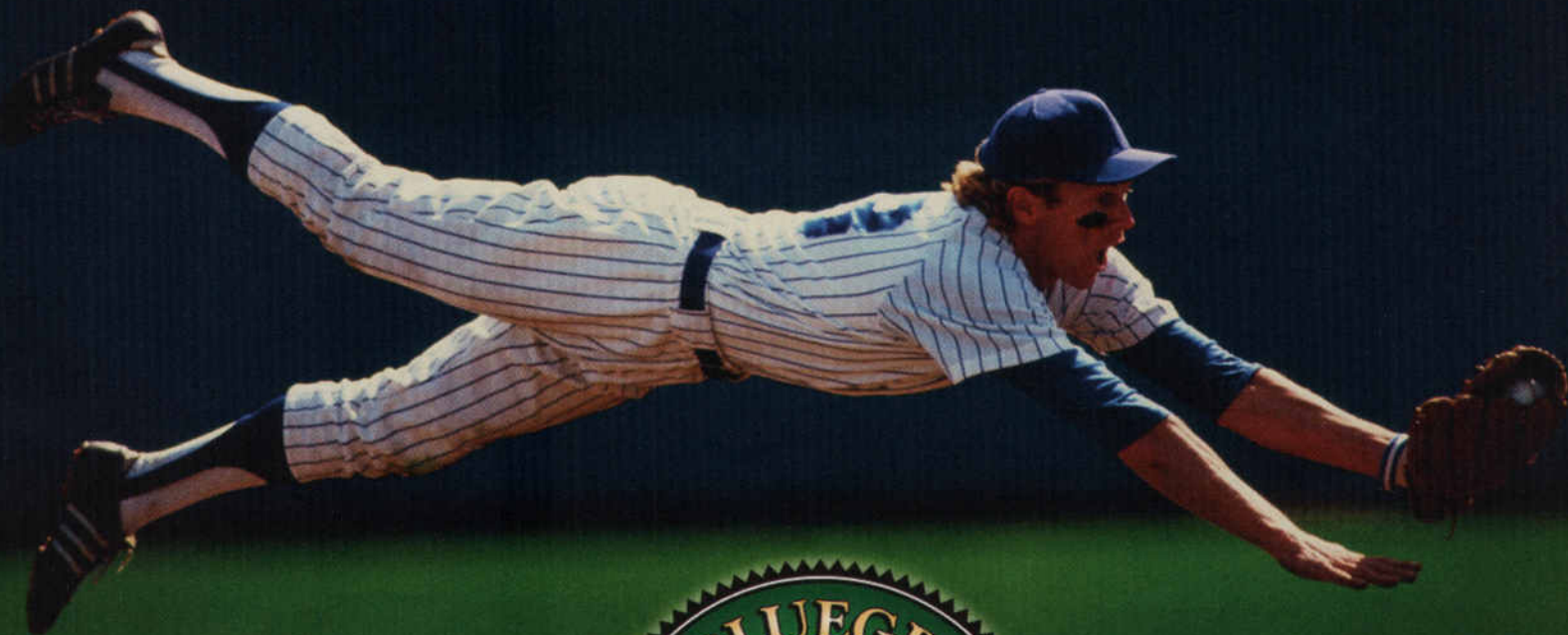
Church member and former CTK student John Wanjura volunteered his services and expertise as a researcher for the USDA-ARS Cotton Production and Processing Research Unit by leading the field design efforts and erosion control initiatives. "I was glad to help steer a part of the school's response to growth," said Wanjura.

With limited time before the practice season began, crews faced the final step in building a sturdy practice field that looked good and performed under extreme conditions. "We needed to plant a ground cover that was tough enough to withstand the wear and tear of a high school football team," said Wanjura, "and with anticipated seasonal rains ahead, we needed to establish dense, strong vegetation



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quickly.” After consulting with a fellow colleague at the USDA and determining that hydraulically applied mulch was needed to prevent soil erosion and aid in grass establishment, Wanjura selected North American Green’s HydraCM Steep Slope Matrix.

“Though the field surface was flat, we were concerned about impending rain events and wanted to be sure the hydromulch took to the soil,” said Wanjura. “We wanted a mid-grade hydromulch to ensure success.” Developed by Mulch and Seed Innovations LLC, Centre, AL along with Cotton Incorporated and the USDA, HydraCM is a high-performance hydraulic erosion control product made with mechanically processed straw fibers, reclaimed cotton plant material, and proprietary performance-enhancing tackifiers.

Installation

On Memorial Day 2008, Lubbock landscaper Ashton Walden first mixed the HydraCM with Bermuda grass seed, commonly known for its resilience in extreme rain and heat, and then applied the blend directly for a convenient one-step application.

A noticeable glitch during the application process led to initial concerns about how well the mulch would perform—the mulch was mistakenly applied at a rate of 2,500 lbs/acre instead of the recommended 3,000 lbs/acre. But crews decided to wait it out and to be prepared to distribute a second application, if necessary.

“We had never used HydraCM before and weren’t sure how it would cover due to being under sprayed,” said Wanjura. The area experienced heavy rainfall two days later, and steadily continued for another week resulting in more than five inches of rain. “Following the rainfall, there was no seed floating on top of the soil, and no evidence existed that residue had seeped toward the storm drains around the perimeter of the field,” confirmed Wanjura. “Despite the rainfall, we were surprised to find that the HydraCM had stood its ground.”

HydraCM is made from a combination of straw, reclaimed cotton plant material and a blend of performance enhancing tackifiers and additives that form a protective web that holds soil in place. “HydraCM contains beneficial nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium nutrients that, when made

available to the soil, are important for plant growth,” added Wae Ellis, vice president of sales and marketing for Mulch and Seed Innovations. “HydraCM is also highly absorbent and has an excellent water holding capacity, which assists with germination and encourages the establishment of vegetation. Meanwhile, its crosshatching matrix provides air space and porosity for seedlings to push through with little resistance.”

Much to Wanjura’s surprise, the vegetation began growing within days, and at two weeks the field was lush enough to require mowing. “I thought it would be a month or two before the stand was established enough to be mowed. In the past we have worked with seed alone and it took five to six months before mature vegetation grew,” said Wanjura. “I really believe that HydraCM’s hydraulic application should be given credit for the fast soil-seed contact and quick germination,” said Wanjura.

In addition to quick vegetation establishment, the use of HydraCM and seed was at least five to ten times less expensive than placing sod, according to Wanjura.

In keeping with the close-knit spirit of the Christ the King community, Wanjura and his brother Eric volunteer their time to maintaining the practice field through regular mowing and supervision. This past fall, the Trojan football team completed another football season, this time with a true home field advantage. ■

Tom Wedegaertner is director of cottonseed research and marketing for Cotton Incorporated, twedegaertner@cottoninc.com.



John Mascaro's Photo Quiz

Can you identify this sports turf problem?

Problem: Garnet paint on turf
Turfgrass area: Stadium End zone
Location: Tallahassee, FL
Grass Variety: 419 Bermudagrass



**Answer to
John Mascaro's Photo Quiz
on Page 43**

*John Mascaro is President
of Turf-Tec International*

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Be certain all bidding is the same. Will the contractor raise the clay level? Will they remove the sod and lower the surrounding lip to solve the problem? They won't know unless you tell them. (L to R): Ken Gregory from Sports Turf One and Marshall Jennings from Jupiter Stadium.

Value bidding:

assembling, receiving and analyzing competitive bids for field construction

By Dell Haverland

I have often wondered why so many public and private sports field projects have failed to produce good work and value for the end user. Over the years I began to realize that many projects produce unsatisfactory results because of poor preparation of the pre-bid documents, plans and specifications. This is especially true on public work because so much emphasis is put on the legalese. The hundreds of pages of boilerplate language may keep purchasing people and their lawyers happy, but it only serves to dwarf the scope of the work. It is almost as though the project itself can become secondary and inconsequential.

I recently received plans for a new park with ball fields. The three spec books *each* weighed more than 60 pounds, along with three sets

of plans weighing even more. And yet the documents pertaining to the actual scope of construction were merely a few standard pages of State Department of Transportation specifications for the grassing of roadways.

Another special section made several references about sports field construction with very vague stipulations about soil and turf. This situation forces the bidder to make assumptions and requires him/her to bid from those assumptions.

Similarly the civil plans for this project were contradictory, with bits of information on the landscaping pages, the paving and drainage section, and a little more in the "SP" section. This entire bid package was built from cut and paste pieces from past projects

with little or no thought given to this particular site. There was absolutely no regard at all for the end user and maintenance. It was obvious that the Parks & Recreation people had not participated in the preparation of these plans.

The engineers and their consultants are probably capable of doing a great job of building the roads, but it is clear that this park's sports fields would be a catastrophe; poor layout, poor soil specifications, poor turf planning, poor dugout design, poor drainage and the poor, poor taxpayer who has to pay for this park! Unfortunately, down the road, the taxpayer will pay again and again to fix the future troubles this park will encounter. This is not a unique project and yet my colleagues tell me the problem is quite common not only here in Florida, but across the nation.

Smaller renovation projects have similar problems as well. For instance, if you were the park manager of an existing ball field, it should be simple to get a price on laser grading the skinned areas, right? Not so. When contractors are left to their own devices, even something this simple can become a disaster. The less experienced contractors don't understand how much work is needed, so they plan for less work and bid the work at a cheaper price. If you don't say you need it, they probably won't include it. And the majority of decision makers who examine these bids have no field experience, so they jump on the cheaper price. It is extremely important

for any project big or small to be bid with the proper scope, including concise specifications on appropriate forms, determining the *best value* not the best price is achieved. How is this accomplished?

Let's start with a basic outline for achieving a good and competitive bid:

THE GOAL—Outline the goal of the project, e.g., "The goal of this project is for the complete renovation of four football fields to improve drainage, playability and safety."

To achieve this, the contractor is to remove the existing turf, install a completely new irrigation system, provide soil amendments, laser grading and install new Celestial Green turfgrass.

Where did "the goal" come from? How was it decided? Typically the athletes, coaches or players' families will complain about conditions. Those complaints travel to the right ears and a call is made to the park manager. "We need to get some prices on renovation the fields." The people in the Parks Dept. already know about most of the problems and understand people's expectations. Meetings are held and out of these meetings develop "the goal."

The project goal is important for two reasons. Number one of course is so that people authorizing money for the project as well as the bidders are aware of what is expected. Secondly, and not as obvious, it is a means to get all parties on the same page.

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FACILITY & OPERATIONS



From the complete renovation at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter FL, spring home of the Marlins and the Cardinals. This shot shows the new Celebration bermuda turf just after installation during the first topdressing. If you look closely you can see the guy in motion putting out the 90/10 USGA mix. Picture taken by Sports Turf One VP Bill Gillan; pilot was Dell Haverland.

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It is not uncommon for projects to go off track and turn into something else. For instance, our company once bid a golf course project several times to a private country club. The original intent was to improve the playability of the golf course to attract new members. After several of the key committee members moved on, the focus of the remaining committee turned the job into a landscaping project with no improvement of the golf course whatsoever and no new membership.

THE SCOPE—Determine the scope of the project and specifications. The goal above was an overview. Now it's time to be more specific. Hire an engineer who specializes in sports field construction to develop plans and specifications. The engineer must be interviewed, visit the site, and be included in all meetings so that he or she is on the same page as everyone else. "If we don't have funds for an engineer or consultant, how do we accomplish this?"

On smaller projects where an engineer may not be needed, the turf manager can ask sports field contractors in the area to come down to the site for a "walk & talk." Try to get contractors with local knowledge that specialize in the type of work for this

particular project. Walk the site and ask for their opinions and recommendations for the renovation. If the contractor can provide a budgetary bid proposal from the visit, so much the better. Let each contractor do the measuring and provide his scope and quantities. You will both learn from this experience and it will give you an idea of each contractor's experience and integrity. Additionally, the contractor will gain first hand knowledge from you as well as familiarity with the site, thereby improving the accuracy of the bid.

Once you have had three or four contractors out to the site, you can prepare a summary of the scope, including types of materials to be used, quantities, time needed for construction and some idea of the cost. This information can now be passed on to the decision makers along with your own recommendations. Now also is the time to decide whether there was more to this project than previously thought. It may be necessary to have other professionals get involved.

HOW TO PROCEED—Determine if you can handle the preparation of the work documents or if it is necessary hire a professional. After discussing the infor-