

BACON BRINGS HOME FIELD OF DREAMS

When young children discover baseball, a likely parental response is a new glove and a day of Little League tryouts. However, Ed Bacon of Salem, OR, head of Salem Hospital's audiovisual department, had a different idea. He built his own field.

Unlike the central character in the popular 1989 motion picture, "Field of Dreams," his motivation was more paternal than supernatural. "My two boys were showing an interest in baseball and I had some property," he explains.

Bacon started constructing his field on a corner of his property in 1986. Located six miles from downtown Salem, it is surrounded by rural countryside and is adjacent to a seed grower with more than 300 acres of fine fescue seed. Sightings of deer, coyote, beaver, quail, bear, and even an occasional cougar are common.

"During the summer, we have played games until dark and could hear coyotes howling up on the hill above the outfield," says Bacon.

The infield was seeded in the fall of 1986. The outfield was seeded in two stages. Its construction began as an effort

to restore the infield, which had been damaged by a flash flood in June 1988. Both areas were seeded with a custom blend of three proven turf-type ryegrasses called Jock Elite. Because the field is constructed on a gentle slope, drainage is not a problem.

Bacon's maintenance team consists of his wife, Marilyn, their sons, ages ten and 12, and himself. They spend approximately 12 hours each week mowing, watering, and grooming the field. "I have a striping machine for games," Bacon adds.

Improvements to the field this year have included landscaping along left field, which is also the western border of Bacon's property. A home run fence, which will have advertising space available for local Salem businesses, a drinking fountain, and lighting are planned for the future.

UNIVERSITY RECEIVES FIRST BERMUDAGRASS ROYALTIES

New Mexico State University President James Halligan recently accepted the first royalty check for NuMex Sahara bermudagrass from Farmer's Marketing Corporation of Arizona. The improved,

seed-propagated bermudagrass was developed by NMSU's Agricultural Experiment Station turfgrass breeding program under the direction of Professor Emeritus Dr. Arden Baltensperger.

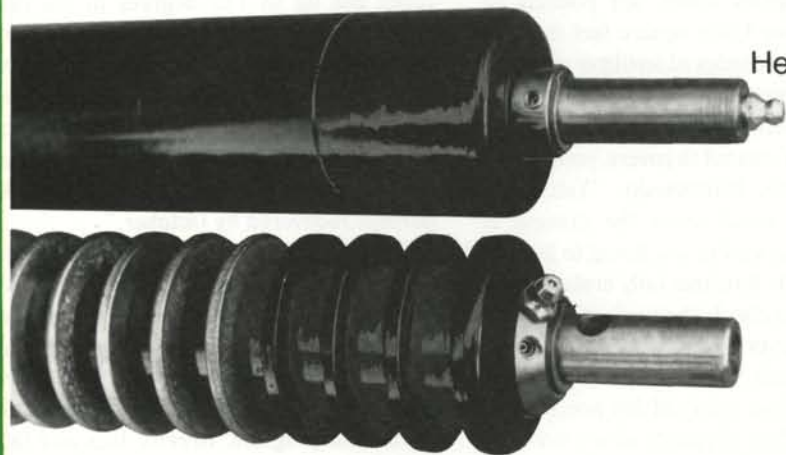
The University will share the royalties with the United States Golf Association, which supported the breeding research for five years beginning in 1984. Within four years, Baltensperger and his staff selected the new variety for its denser and lower growth habit and better drought tolerance compared to common bermudagrass.

"NuMex Sahara is the first turfgrass released by a USGA-sponsored research program intended to produce minimal maintenance turfgrasses for golf," said Michael Kenna, director of green section research for the USGA. It is also the first bermudagrass to generate royalties for the university. "Taxpayers should be pleased to see money being returned to the university so it can be channeled back into the research program," Baltensperger stated.

The seed-propagated bermudagrass has been planted on golf course fairways in the Southwest, Hawaii, and Japan. "Growing turf from seed is less expensive than sprigging or laying sod," Baltensperger pointed out.

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