

FIELD OF THE YEAR

McGill Field of Lebanon Valley College Earns College Baseball Field of the Year Honors



Steve and Suz Trusty

The vision of Lebanon Valley College President, G. David Pollick, was the driving force in the expansion of the college's athletic complex from approximately 20 acres to nearly 100 acres. The commitment to excellence of all those involved in the development of the complex and the ongoing maintenance of the new facilities earned McGill Field the STMA 2000 Baseball Field of the Year honors in the College/University division.

Kevin Yeiser, director of grounds and athletic facilities, for the Annville, Pa., college, says, "McGill Field was unveiled in the spring of 1999 as the cornerstone of our sports complex. Located about 10 miles east of Hershey in Pennsylvania Dutch country, the stadium stands on what was a cultivated farm field. Derck & Edson Associates of Litiz, Pa., worked with the college to design a baseball field that fits into its site with several natural features that make it unique.

"Both left and right field lines are bordered by tall hedgerows of trees which limit outside visual distractions. By terracing the playing field into the existing hillside, a bank of earth was left to form the edge of the stadium. This bank was faced with a two-tiered system of retaining walls built of dry-laid, interlocking, split-faced Versi-Lok concrete block. The retaining wall not only holds back the hillside, but also provides a striking visual backdrop for the game using a pattern created with custom-colored blocks. Down the right field line, one of the two bullpens is located on top of the retaining wall. The patterns and colors of the retaining walls were continued into the dugouts and bleachers and even into the crushed stone found



Kevin Yeiser accepts the Field of the Year Award at the National Convention in St. Louis

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The field is located on what used to be a farm field. The native top soil was removed during construction, then backfilled with topsoil augmented with compost.

at a local quarry for the warning track.

"Adding to the unique feel of the stadium is a dramatic pedestrian bridge that spans a major highway connecting McGill Field to one of the

parking lots on the complex. Rising more than 30 feet over the highway, cables attached from the bridge deck to two large towers provide the look and feel of a suspension bridge. Our coaches use this to great advantage, as visiting prospective student ath-

letes get their first view of McGill Field and the adjacent soccer stadium while looking down from the bridge deck. Extensive landscaping and a concrete walk that connects all 100 acres give a park-like atmosphere to the sports complex that enhances the entire community."

Lebanon Valley College invites community use of the athletic fields as well. McGill Field played host to spring and fall college games and practices, then added local high school, American Legion and teener games for a combined total of 131 events in 2000.

Design and construction

That's a heavy schedule for the modified native soil field. During construction the native loamy clay topsoil was removed, the sub base prepared, and then backfilled with topsoil augmented with compost and worked to a depth of 8 inches. The field is designed with turtleback surface drainage. The outfield wall is 9 feet high at center field and 10 feet



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high at the corners, with slanting surface drainage to the sides. The infield slopes in the same direction, but off the foul lines into the warning track from the bases. A series of in-ground slit drainage cuts across the outfield corners and is strategically placed in the infield to channel away excess water. A small drainage line runs immediately to the outfield off the infield edge.

McGill Field is the college's only field with an inground irrigation system. An automatic Rain Master controller regulates a series of Toro pop-up heads. Three quick connectors were installed, one behind the mound on the game field, and the others on either side of the foul lines. Water is supplied by two wells drilled during the construction process. A one-inch hose attached to the quick connectors can deliver 70 to 80 gallons of water per minute for hand watering the skinned area.

The McGill Field skinned area is a 5-inch depth of Home Run Mix with



The field was sodded with big roll bluegrass sod grown on soil similar to the amended soil profile

calcined clay worked into the top 2 to 3 inches and a quarter inch topping of vitrified clay. The red warning track material is a 5-inch layer of quarry stone dust fines placed over a

limestone sub-base. The pitchers mound, batters boxes and bullpens are constructed with clay.

Yeiser says, "We sodded the field

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The bullpen in rightfield is located on top of the custom-colored retaining wall.

with big roll bluegrass sod grown on soil similar to our amended soil profile by Hummer Turf Farms in Lancaster County. Hummer delivered the sod and supplied the instal-

lation machines and operators. Our grounds crew staff did the laying. We also supplied the labor for the sod installation on the softball and soccer fields.

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"From 1997 to 2000, we installed first the Soccer Stadium, then McGill Field, then the Softball Stadium. Intramural fields, 2-1/2 football practice fields, as well as soccer practice fields were seeded. We also added a physical therapy center and field house with locker room facilities. We developed a lake and a smaller pond with water features and fountain and our field hockey stadium is going up now.

"Since the soccer team lost their varsity field to all the construction, that was the first new field to be

completed. It was sodded in July of 1998 and ready for play that fall. McGill Field was sodded in August of 1998. The team used it for workouts that fall, with the first game in March of 1999. The grandstand was still under construction and our maintenance crew had completed placing the backstop netting just 5 hours prior to the first pitch."

Getting it done

Much of the labor was supplied in-house. Yeiser notes, "Besides all the work of our grounds crew, our other facilities service department personnel worked on the grandstand, scoreboard and dugouts. Our carpentry staff and some of our local contractors worked on the dugout roofs, and bat and helmet boxes. Obviously, we saved on costs, but we also gained an incredible commitment to quality workmanship and a sense of pride and ownership throughout the college and community."

Yeiser grew up in the green industry helping in his Dad's landscape and nursery center. After establishing and running his own landscape nursery and garden center, he sold the business in 1982 to accept the Director of Grounds position. He classifies himself as "notorious" for picking up ideas from others and is quick to credit his networking resources. He also credits the cooperation of the coaching staff in preserving field quality.

The maintenance program as developed by Yeiser, and carried out by Keith Evans, Athletic Field Forman, focuses on safety and playability for all field users. A staff of two full-time personnel, two part-time personnel, and two summer college students are responsible for maintaining the entire sports complex, including the landscaping.

During the regular season the infield is dragged daily and clay is added to mounds and batters boxes as need. The infield is edged once a week and swept daily during the season. The warning track is edged weekly. Athletic field turf throughout the complex is maintained at a 1-1/4-inch height year-round. Fertilization is



in late August and team field use runs from then into October.

Because of the packed schedule, major field renovation is relegated to October and November. This leaves the field in top condition to start the use cycle the following spring.

Yeiser challenges all the campus crews to think of one thing at the end of the each year that can be done to improve things. He's constantly reviewing the maintenance program in search of efficiencies. He says, "This could well be the best field many of the athletes that use our facilities will ever play on. We're committed to continually raising the bar on the standards of excellence to provide them with optimum playing conditions."

Steve and Suz Trusty are partners in Trusty & Associates of Council Bluffs, Iowa. Steve is Executive Director of the Sports Turf Managers Association.

By supplying most of the construction labor from in-house sources, the college gained a high level of pride for its new field.

based on soil test results, with a total of 4 pounds of Nitrogen per year, applied to fit the turfgrass growth cycles.

The college team begins training as soon as weather permits, with the spring season running from mid-March to May. McGill Field will be

hosting the League Championships in 2001, in early to mid-May. Then the high school teams move in until late June, ending their season with the championship games. From June into August, the Legion, Junior Legion, teener and adult leagues take the field. The student body returns



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