

Bengals' turf manager tests SILICON FERTILIZER

Darian Daily, head turf manager at Paul Brown Stadium in Cincinnati (and a member of the STMA Board of Directors), became interested in turf after he was cut from his high school baseball team. The coach told him, "There were other ways of making it to the big leagues and field maintenance is one of them."

Daily graduated from Middle Tennessee State University with a Plant and Soil Science Degree in 1992. After college, he got his first Head Sports Field Manager position with Class A Winston-Salem Spirits (now Warhogs). He then returned to his alma mater to care for their fields, and later joined a municipal parks department.

"I wanted to get back into professional sports. In 1999, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came along and I was hired as Sports Field Manager for the nation's first professional 'soccer specific Stadium,' the Columbus Crew Stadium. I still count that as my biggest professional highlight," says Daily.

In 2003 he moved down I-71 to become Head Sports Field Manager for Paul Brown Stadium. Daily recently answered some questions about his testing and use of a specialty turf fertilizer product in Cincinnati.

"I was reading articles about silicon and calcium and how they increase the rigidity of the grass plant, as well as helping the plant during times of stress. I liked the fact that the Excellerator product has 24% calcium and micronutrients," Daily says. "Using it allowed us to apply a combination of benefits in one application and at a lower cost than the products we were using.

"Since it was a new product to us, we set up an experiment with different rates in an area where we practice the offensive linemen. Our thought was that space is the toughest spot on our practice fields



because of the huge men that work there, and if the grass showed improvement, then it would work on the less trafficked areas," Daily says. "In about one month, we noticed the grass blades were more erect and stiffer.

"When we walked on the grass, you could feel how stiff the grass was under your feet and with the help of a PGR, the grass cut much more evenly. Once the players started to practice on it, the area held up great and recovered more quickly."

Daily says, "We have a significant soil layer on top of our sand-based rootzone, a result of the sod that was laid during the construction of the practice fields in 1999 and subsequent lack of aeration. The layering problem creates a shear plane and the grass will divot up when a player makes a hard lateral move.

"The layering issue is being attacked through hollow tine aeration, removing the cores, verti-cutting, and topdressing with both sand and Profile. We have been aerating the fields 6-8 times a year to try and remove that layer," he says. "It has been a slow process. We have also been using a PGR over the past 2 years to assist with root mass and to promote lateral growth in the bluegrass.

"The traffic issue is tackled by continually overseeding with bluegrass before the season and ryegrass during the season. We also use a PGR to promote lateral growth and promote a much denser root mass, and work diligently with our equipment managers to move drills around."

Daily says, "Our goal is to manage the soil layer to a point where there is more porosity in the top layer, giving the roots more space to grab on and give support to the whole system. We just applied our second Excellerator application March 30. We are noticing the plant starting to stiffen ever so slightly. This is the first year we have used

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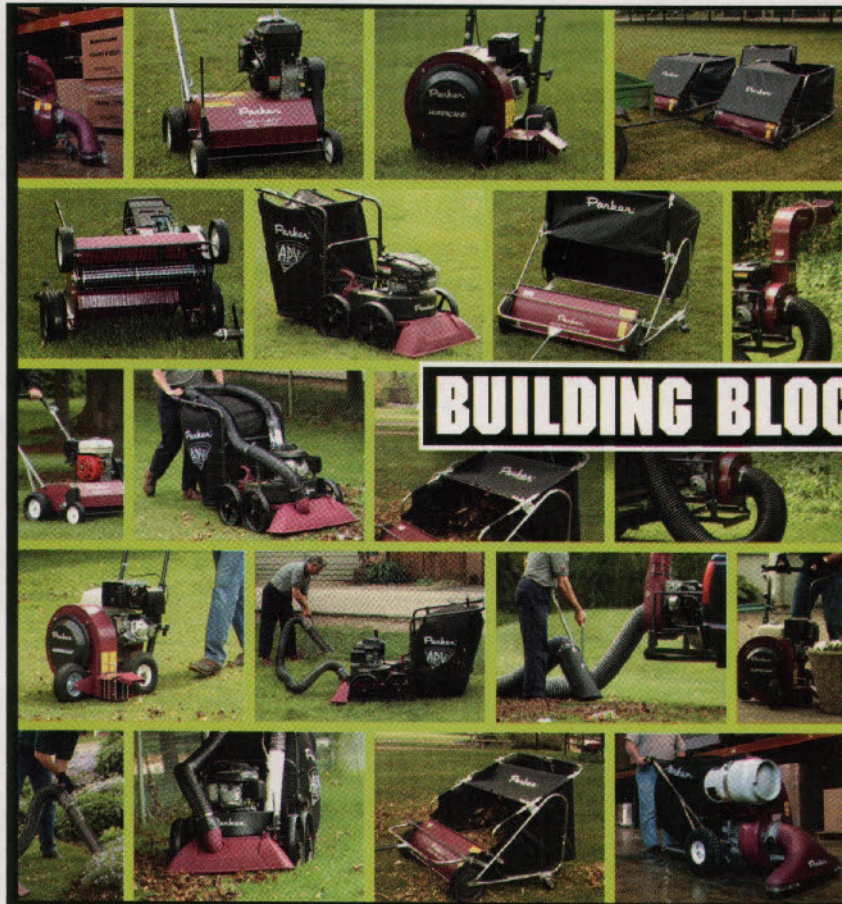
the product on the entire field. We are targeting the fields to be fully up to standards by our Rookie Mini-Camp in early May.

"We are applying the product every 4 weeks at a rate of 10 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. Last year during our test set-up, we applied 25 lbs./1,000 on one 40x40-foot plot and 50 lbs./1,000 on another 40x40-foot plot at one time in March 2005," says Daily. "We noticed no difference in the rigidity of the plant and the plant performed exactly the same. We applied one application @ 10 lbs./1,000 again on our entire 160x40-foot area in June 2005. We noticed a small amount of change in untreated area, but showed a continued strength in the early test plots throughout the football season."

Daily says, "I have not seen any change in pH. And, coupled with the price of this product and fewer man hours used to apply only once rather than twice has been a benefit.

"I will know better how it works this time next year after a full year of using the product over the 2 1/2 practice football fields. I am not sold on any product because of what it did on small test plots. I want to see how it performs in a real life situation like the one we are putting it through now."

This interview was conducted by Sheree Scarbrough from Excell Minerals, 866-401-5700. ■



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