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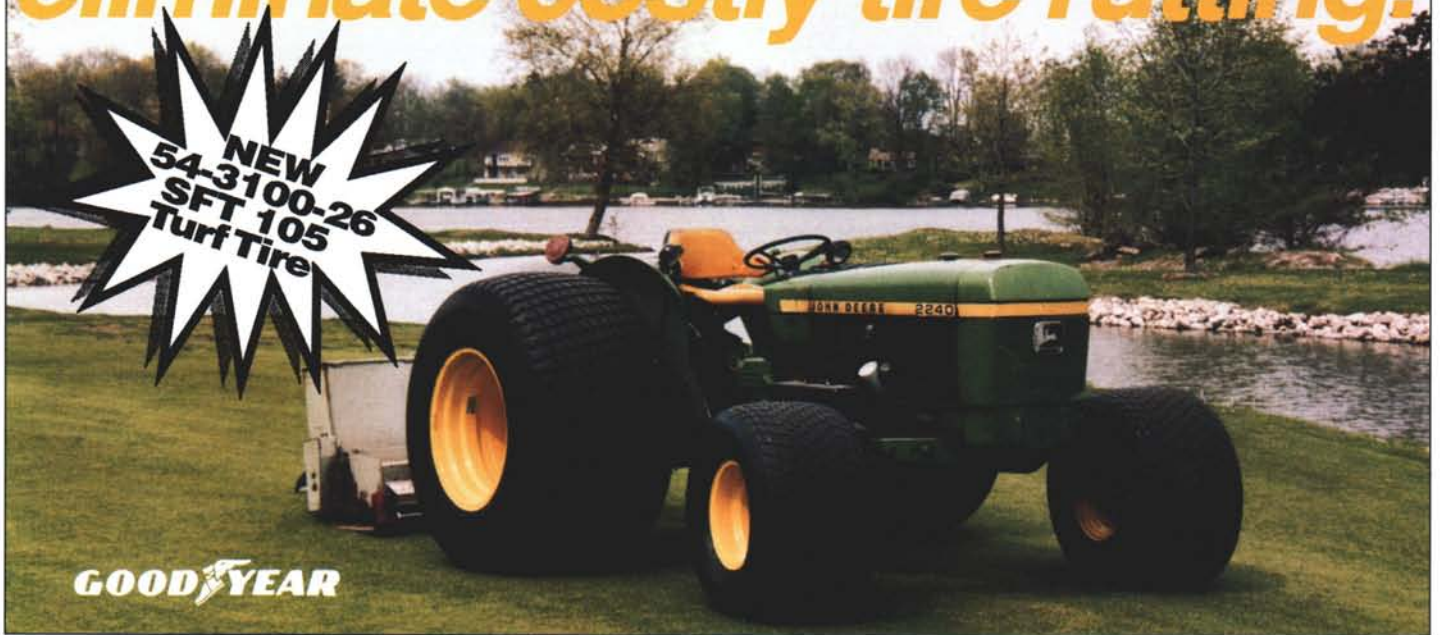
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VOLUME ELEVEN, NUMBER ONE

JANUARY 1995

MAIN EVENTS

8 1994 Man of the Year: The Sultan of Safety, Ed Birch

After a successful career in property management, Ed Birch retired to Florida. He could not have guessed that his second career would contribute so much to the safety of children and the advancement of sports turf management in the Southeast. A founder of the first chapter of the STMA and the builder of a model field safety program for Broward County School District.

14 Details Make the Difference: A Professional's Guide to Striping and Lining Soccer Fields

Kevin Vos, athletic director of a busy soccer complex in Muscatine, IA, gives valuable tips on marking fields correctly on a tight weekly schedule. A primer on handling paint, sprayers, stencils and schedules that you will want to keep for future reference.

22 Haines Guards Soccer Legacy at Portland

A major reason for the University of Portland's soccer legacy is its sand-based field that can handle a five-inch rain in one hour. Construction and maintenance of the state-of-the-art field involved nearly all the big turf names in the Northwest.

26 Ryegrass Remains a Game Saver

The playing surface for this year's Super Bowl at Joe Robbie Stadium was perennial ryegrass overseeded on a hybrid bermudagrass base. Much has changed about ryegrass since the first Super Bowl. Find out why the NFL Turf Squad thought it was worth shipping the special sod from California to Miami for one game.

32 Signage: The First Line of Defense

Sports turf consultant Floyd Perry explains to facility managers how they must take steps to impress upon coaches the liabilities involved in operating a sports facility.

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On The Cover:

Kevin Vos concentrates as he paints the penalty box of one of
the fields at Muscatine Soccer Complex in Muscatine, IA.

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THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE



Calculating Risk

We have all heard the *other* definition of **assume** at one time or another in our lives. Assuming something doesn't get anybody off the hook when a disaster occurs. When athletes assume risk and suffer injuries, a court's verdict won't necessarily favor the owner

of the facility where the accident occurred. Judges are finally getting this message, as reported by a professor of sports law at Iowa State University in *Athletic Business* this month.

The amount of risk assumed by athletes when playing a sport at a facility has been narrowed. John Wolohan alerted readers that Florida might have set a precedent when the Florida 3rd District Court of Appeal awarded damages to a player because of negligence in supervision. Wolohan says this opens the door for judgments favoring athletes because of poor facility maintenance, poor facility design or similar duty of a sports facility to provide reasonably safe playing conditions.

Any athletic director or facility manager who places too much trust in assumption of risk by athletes is making a bad assumption. How many players use your facilities? Do any of your facilities have flaws in design or maintenance, especially practice fields? When was the last time you turned down a request by the turf manager for equipment, supplies, more help, registration fee for a sports turf seminar or a raise? When was the last time your field's drainage system, irrigation system and soil profile were overhauled? Have your liability and hospitalization insurance rates been climbing steadily?

Interpreting the law always creates more questions. Do you dare to assume how assumption of risk is interpreted in your state right now?

Just as there are experts in law, insurance and risk management, there are experts in sports turf design and management. Too many public facilities fail to hire or consult qualified sports turf specialists.

A big item on the to-do list of the sports turf industry should be some type of certification that identifies qualified experts in our field. Every city in the country has a number of skilled groundskeepers who would qualify immediately. There are also national consultants who will travel to your facility.

We should all seek the achievement of this year's *sportsTURF* Man of the Year, Ed Birch — No field-related injuries on his school district's fields in 12 years. He sought expert advice and assumed nothing.

Bruce F. Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JANUARY

24 Turfgrass, Landscape and Sports Turf Institute Sequoia Athletic Club, Buena Park, CA. Contact: Southern California Turfgrass Council, P.O. Box 2950, Corona, CA 91718-2950.

25-27 Annual Utah Green Industry Conference and Trade Show at the Utah State Fairpark Grand Building, Salt Lake City. Sponsors include Utah Nursery and Landscape Association, Utah Chapter ASLA and the Irrigation Association. Contact: Stephen A. Linde, (801) 565-8880 or Larry Rupp (801) 797-2255.

26 Inland Northwest Turf and Landscape Trade Show. Spokane Interstate Fairgrounds, Spokane, WA. Contact: Julie Boyce, (509) 535-8305.

30-31 Turfgrass Conference, sponsored by the Louisiana Turfgrass Association and LSU Agricultural Center. Baton Rouge, LA. Contact: (504) 388-2158. Fax: (504) 388-1068.

FEBRUARY

31-2 Mid-America Green Industry Convention, "Magic '95." Hosted by the Professional Lawn Care Association of Mid-America. The Plaza Inn, Kansas City, MO. Contact: (816) 561-5323.

1-2 Turf and Grounds Exposition II, Suffern, NY. Up to 21.5 NYS DEC pesticide recertification credits available. Contact: NYSTA, (800) 873-TURF or (518) 783-1229.

2 Fifteenth Annual Nor Cal Spring Trade Show. San Mateo Expo Center, San Mateo, CA, sponsored by the California Association of Nurserymen. Contact: Margo Jonsson, (916) 961-6814.

4-8 STMA Sixth Annual National Conference and Exhibition, Pirate City, Bradenton, FL. Contact: Carey Haines, (312) 644-6610.

7-8 Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School and Trade Show. Gateway Convention Center, Collinsville, IL. Contact: Ron Cornwell, (618) 692-9434. Fax: (618) 692-9808.

7-10 Third Annual Louisiana State University Turf School. Baton Rouge, LA. Contact: (504) 388-2158. Fax: (504) 388-1068.

8-9 New Jersey Trade Show (formerly the Garden State Landscape, Nursery Conference and Trade Show). Garden State Exhibit Center/Radisson Hotel Somerset, Somerset, NJ. Contact: (609) 291-7070. Fax: (609) 291-1121.

8-10 Turfgrass Producers International (TPI) 27th Annual Midwinter Conference and Exposition. The Hilton Hotel at Walt Disney World Village, Orlando, FL. Contact: Tom Ford or Lisa Kallal, (800) 405-TURF or (708) 705-9898.

9 Northeastern Pennsylvania Turfgrass and Grounds Maintenance School, White Haven, PA. Contact: Andrew McNitt, (814) 863-1364 or P.T.C., (814) 863-3475.

15-17 Athletic Field Construction and Maintenance, Cook College, Rutgers University. Contact: (908) 932-9271.

20-27 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Conference and Trade Show. Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA. Contact: GCSAA, (913) 841-2240.

MARCH

7-9 Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference and Trade Show. Pittsburgh Expo Mart/Radisson Hotel, Monroeville, PA. Contact: Eric Oesterling, (610) 837-1402 or P.T.C., (814) 863-3475.

11-14 Forty-sixth Canadian Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show. (General Meeting, March 13). Ottawa Congress Centre, Ottawa, ON Canada. Contact: (800) 387-1056.

APRIL

25-26 Sports Turf Management for Professionals, University Club, UC Davis Campus. Contact: UC Davis, (800) 752-0881.

Send announcements of your events two months in advance to: Editor, **sportsTURF magazine**, 68-860 Perez Road, Suite J, Cathedral City, CA 92234. Fax (619) 770-8019.

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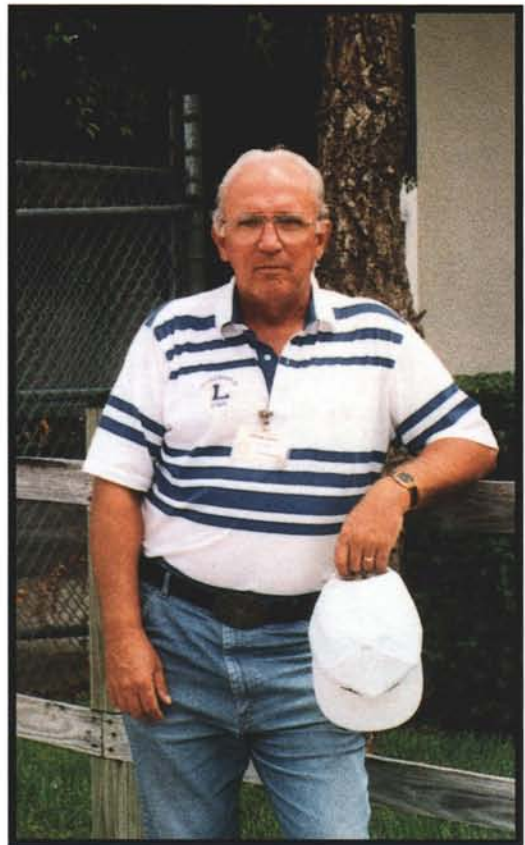
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1994 sportsTURF Man of the Year

The Sultan of Safety, Ed Birch



By Bruce F. Shank

Preventive maintenance: That's what they call sports turf management in Fort Lauderdale, FL. There hasn't been a single field-related injury on Broward County School District's fields in more than a decade. We're talking about 190,000 students playing on more than 80 fields. Lockhart Stadium alone has more than 190 events every year, including professional soccer from April through September. But, as we all know, most injuries take place on the practice fields, so that's where Ed Birch, the 1994 *sportsTURF* Man of the Year, started in 1983.

Birch packed up his desk this month to join the ranks of the retired in Florida. He and wife, Hazel, are on a three-month trek across the country in their motorhome. As Birch steers his 35-footer along the nation's highways, he can look back at his second career with a deep sense of accomplishment. Not just because he and his crew did a great job, but because he helped chart the path for future sports turf managers in South Florida. He was among the founders of the first chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association, Florida Chapter #1, which now boasts more than 60 members.

Starting from scratch (not even a single mower) Birch built the school district's program into a model for all large public school systems. Today, 37 people take care of 500 acres of athletic turf, including an average of two new schools each year. He teaches new coaches and league officials about sports turf care and brings in local experts to speak to his crew members. "They learn just like I did," says Birch, "by asking questions."

"I had absolutely no experience with sports turf management before moving to Florida," he admits. "As a kid in Pittsburgh, I played football on a sandlot. They used to dump ashes from coal furnaces on one end of the field. We'd come home with scraped-up knees and elbows from the rocks in the field. Dan Marino grew up in my old neighborhood. But, that was the sum of my sports turf experience before this job."

No Task Too Large

The part of Birch's personality that stands out is his willingness to take on responsibility with great confidence. That includes things he is not completely knowledgeable about. His first career was in property management for a Columbus, OH, builder with projects across the eastern half of the

Ed Birch built a new department to take care of Broward County School District's 500 acres of athletic fields.

country. "I was the on-site manager responsible for completion of apartment and condominium projects," recalls Birch. "When one job was completed, we'd pack up and move to the next. My youngest daughter attended seven different schools. I had to be a jack-of-all-trades, including lawn maintenance."

In 1969, Birch was hired as director of marketing for Columbia Maintenance, a building maintenance contractor in Columbia, MD. "One of our condo customers asked me if we could handle his lawn maintenance along with everything else," he reflects. "We started with his two complexes. The second year we were maintaining 86 different condo projects in the Maryland/Virginia area." The company created a lawn maintenance division and named Birch vice president of operations. "By 1979, my division was doing \$1.5 million in business. We had 15 trucks and 110 people. It was a hectic pace."

After 20 years in the property management business, Birch wanted to slow down. He explained his desire to Skip