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## Category Blast Service

Use this new Category Blast Service to get FREE information on the products or service categories listed below which you are planning to purchase within the coming nine months. You will receive information, and possibly other follow up contact, from appropriate companies advertised not just in this issue, but throughout the year in *sportsTURF*. Just circle the number(s) on the reader service card (opposite) corresponding to the product or service categories below and drop the card in the mail!

- 9001 Aeration equipment
- 9002 Baseball Field grooming equipment
- 9003 Drainage
- 9004 Fertilizer / soil amendments
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- 9008 Irrigation supplies
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- 9012 Sod
- 9013 Turf equipment

One or two days prior to the first game we'll have everything ready to play except for the chalking. The lines will be painted in the outfield, the turf edged and mowed, the mound, plate, infield clay and warning track in top condition. In case of bad weather, we'll tarp the field so it will be ready for play when the tarp is removed. All that's left for that first game day is the basic mowing, and watering the infield if needed. If weather conditions have been okay, we just repeat game day preparations.

### The Post Game Routine

Every night, after every game, we fix the field so, if it had to be tarped, we could just remove the tarp the next day and be ready to play. The only thing we don't do post game is the mowing. We repair the batters box, adding new clay and tamping. We repair the mound, both bullpens, the infield and the basepaths. We broom out the grass line edges to remove any clay from the turf. We



A member of the Pirates' ground crew rolls the sod along the firstbase line.

drag the warning track.

If needed, we would hand water only the foul territory and infield turf and run the irrigation system in the outfield. We would water the infield skin if no rain threatened. When we get to July and August, we would irrigate the turf nearly every night and hand water the infield skin.

We get the mounds, plates and bullpens game ready, then tarp them. We'll also monitor the weather and, if there's a 30 percent chance of rain or more, we'll put on the infield tarp. We use a combination of sandbags and 8-inch spikes to batten it down securely. If there's only a 20 percent chance of rain and less

than 1/8 inch of rainfall is predicted, we don't tarp.

Weather is so critical that we use multiple resources to monitor it: The national weather service and Weather Channel, Sky Watch Weather Center, and, when we're fluctuating in the 20 to 30 percent range, one-on-one contact with our weather service.

If the field is tarped, we won't set the irrigation for the outfield. If the field isn't tarped, we usually set a cycle of irrigation. We leave the ballpark around 11 p.m.

### Daily Maintenance

If the field is tarped, we arrive at the ballpark between 6:30 and 7 a.m. to remove the tarp before sunrise. We remove the small tarps to check all the mounds and regulate the moisture levels. Even though the mound and plate are set, we go over them again to make sure they're in ideal condition.

We check the infield dirt. If it's firmed up too much, we'll go over it with a nail drag. Next we'll use a 3-foot-by-3-foot float board to move clay from high to low spots. We follow this by walk dragging all the infield clay with a one-mesh drag. Then we'll water it down, matching the amount of application to weather conditions—more if it's sunny, less if it's cloudy.



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We'll need to go inside to check the indoor mounds in the tunnels and, if repair is needed, do it in the morning. That's a task we don't do at night. If conditions are dry, as they are most of July and August, we'd also hand water the warning track to keep the moisture levels in balance. All the maintenance listed above usually takes up the morning.

Around noon or in the early afternoon, my assistants will walk mow the infield and mow the outfield with a triplex mower. Mowing takes about 1-1/2 hours. I'm still working the infield, watching the infield moisture and watering it as necessary, and may need to water the warning track again.

Around 1:30 p.m., we start set up for batting practice. We'll do one more drag on the infield to take out the mower wheel marks and will water it again.

During the 10-minute gap between batting practices, we may hand water the infield dirt again.

Our game crew arrives around 5 p.m. Between 6:15 and 6:20 they'll remove all the batting practice equipment from the field.

#### Pregame Field Preparations

We'll start the pregame field routine by dragging the basepaths, the home plate area and the infield skin. I'll start watering the infield skin. My staff will start chalking. To chalk a crisper line, we've constructed a 16-foot-by-4-inch stencil chalker that drops the chalk through a section of aluminum window screening when it's tapped.

We repair the bullpens, repacking them and checking the moisture levels. I'll check the home plate batters box and the game mound and water them as necessary.

By then it's time for the game to begin.

#### Working in Maintenance Procedures

At the end of a homestand (typically a four to eight day gap) or in the middle of a homestand, we'll concentrate on renovation and repair.

We try to fit in some infield work every four days to insure near perfect

conditions and avoid the need for major repairs. This may be reworking the first base area or one of the position spots, such as where the infielder stands, or the area where the players round second base. We sweep off the topdressing material and treat the area like a big low spot in the mound. We take the infield mix from a high

spot to a low spot, then use a float board to level it out by hand. We'll next use a one-mesh screen to bring that spot to finish grade, take a roller over it and water well so the material will bond.

We have no set irrigation cycle, constantly adjusting our system to fit



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*A solid foundation is important to quality turf. Here, workers prepare the soil mixture on which the sod will be laid.*

turf needs based on the amount of rainfall, temperature patterns and the amount of sun and clouds.

We'll use a 1-inch hose to blow out the lips with water. We may use the mound slope tool to check all our slopes and make any adjustments needed. We'll check the mound for cupped out areas and may dig out the landing area, or in front of the pitching rubber and put in fresh bricks. We'll clean up the clay in any areas where it appears to be getting contaminated.

We'll adjust our mowing, altering the mowing direction and maybe changing the pattern. We may overseed in the position areas, using perennial ryegrass during the season, and using Kentucky bluegrass in the post-season.

Approximately once a month, while the team is away, we'll core aerate using a 2-inch spacing and a depth of about 4 inches. We'll remove the cores and then topdress with straight sand to match our root zone sand. Our soil profile is about 80 per-

cent sand, 20 percent peat. With the sloughing off of all the roots, we'll

**"We try to fit in some infield work every four days to ensure near perfect conditions and avoid the need for major repairs."**

have enough organic matter in the profile. I feel using the mixed material will slow the percolation rate over time, so we topdress with straight

sand. Should there be any loss of organic matter, we could add the peat to the mix. We always use hollow tines to avoid creating any type of hard pan. In hot summer conditions, if we didn't want to open up core holes and aeration is necessary, we'll use the needle tines.

In mid April, we'll generally use a pre-emergent weed control over all the turf areas except those we may need to seed later, such as where the outfielders stand and other player position areas.

Our fertilization program is matched to turfgrass needs and adjusted based on turf reactions, soil tests and tissue tests. We monitor the general look and color of the turf, rooting levels and the amount of clippings. This will be our first season in Pittsburgh, so we're not yet sure on the timing. I may alternate between slow release granular applications and soluble fertilizer foliar fed. I plan to put down between 1 1/4 to 1/2 lbs. of Nitrogen per month. We'll cut back on N in July and August, applying just 1/2 pound of N each month. We'll

do most of the fertilization in the fall.

We'll apply fungicides as a preventative measure, looking for 15 to 30 days control in critical periods. We'll apply insecticide in July to keep the grubs away. Any other control products would be applied according to IPM practices.

We'll resod in front of the pitchers mound as needed, probably every one or two months. We'd also sod any other areas that may need it, such as around the plate and the outfielder spots. We can harvest limited sod from the bullpen area and have back-up sod availability from our original supplier.

#### End of Season Maintenance

Once play wraps up in the fall, we'll resod any areas that are questionable. This includes all areas we've reseeded with perennial ryegrass. We're careful to keep the perennial ryegrass contained in specific areas so we can bring the field back to total bluegrasses through resodding. We'll check for lip buildup and worn edges and will resod them at the same time we correct the lips.

In October, we'll vertidrain the entire turf area of the field, pulling 3/4- to 1-inch cores, 8 or 9 inches deep. We'll follow that by overseeding with a blend of different bluegrass varieties. Then we'll topdress with sand and drag it all in.

We'll apply at least a pound of nitrogen in September and October and 1-1/2 pounds of N the first of December. The last application is a dormant feeding that will be in place to start working as temperatures warm in the spring. We'll mow every other day until turf growth stops in November.

We'll remove the top 1 to 2 inches of the basepath and infield material and bring in fresh infield mix. We'll use a laser or string level on all the infield skin, and will float it out, screen it and roll it. We'll wait until spring to add any amendments. We'll also rework the warning track.

Then we'll rebuild the bullpens, pitchers mounds and batters boxes. We'll dig out the old bricks and put in fresh bricks, turn over or replace the rubbers on the mounds and replace home plate.



A view of the field, only halfway covered with sod

We'll also make any adjustments needed in our irrigation system. We may move heads, put in different size heads, move a quick coupler or take one out. In December, we'll blow out and winterize the irrigation system. Our goal is to have the field ready and playable by Thanksgiving.

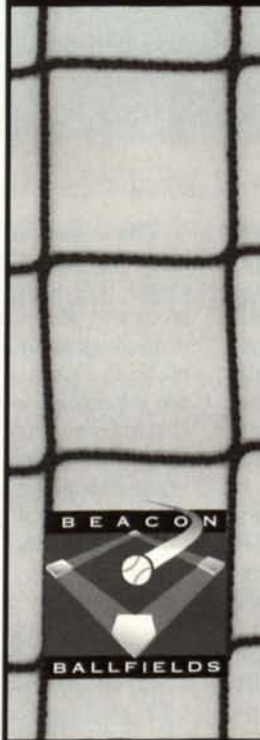
We plan to put on the Evergreen tarp again in mid December since the field is still so young and I want to insure early March green up to start the cycle over again.

*Luke Yoder is manager of field maintenance for the Pittsburgh Pirates. He previously served as head groundskeeper for the Iowa Cubs for four years, earning The American Association of*

*Baseball Triple A Groundskeeper of the Year honors in 1996. He completed his BS degree in Turfgrass Management at Clemson University in 1994.*

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# Construction of a Triple Play Facility

by Dan Bergstrom



A triple play facility is under construction in Lincoln, Nebraska. The 32-acre complex is a joint effort of, and will serve, three entities: NEBCO, the owner of the professional baseball Northern League team (the Saltdogs); the University of Nebraska at Lincoln; and the City of Lincoln. The complex will include a 6,000-seat baseball stadium that will serve as the home field for the Saltdogs and the UNL Husker baseball team. The complex also will include a stadium to be used as the home field for the UNL Husker women's softball team. The softball stadium will seat 750, and both stadiums have been designed with future expansion in mind.

The overall design is a "park within a park." The site (Haymarket Park) will incorporate nearly 4,000 trees and perennial shrubs along with numerous annual flowering plants to make the park a place to visit even if no scheduled event is taking place. Haymarket Park will also tie into the City of Lincoln's bike and recreation trails. Ample parking for automobiles and bicycles will accommodate fans and park users.

The facility is off of interstate I-180, across from Memorial Stadium, the home field of the UNL Cornhusker football team. The baseball stadium will have a beautiful view of both downtown Lincoln and Memorial Stadium.

Discussion of the project started in February of 1999. It took nearly two years to work out the details of the agreement which are contained in a document 3-inches thick. The three entities have established seasonal field use priority rankings. For example, UNL has priority at the baseball stadium in the spring and fall. Pro baseball has priority in the summer. Both have priority time blocks for camp and for special events. The City of Lincoln has 15 days to use the facility as they want. Obviously, the baseball field will be used early and often throughout the year and, with the entities involved, expectations for the field and park are high.

*continued on page 22*

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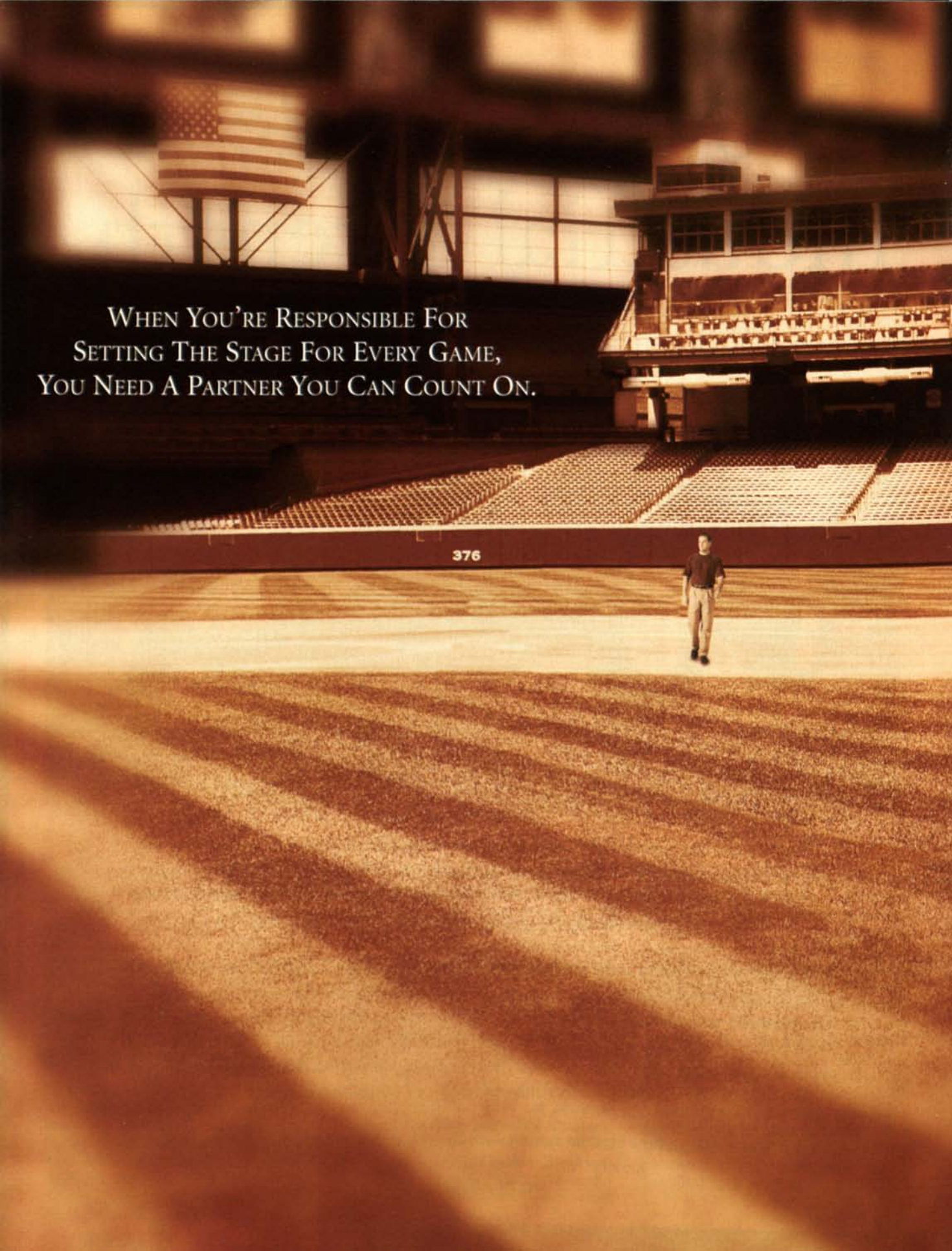
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Actual work on the project began in the summer of 2000. I joined the team as Athletic Turf Manager for Lincoln Professional Baseball in November of 2000. They understand the importance of getting the turf manager involved in the construction project early. Successful fields need a good design with good specs but also must consider the short and long-term impact both will have on field playability and maintenance factors. A good working relationship between the architect and turf manager provides the ability to make adjustments that will improve results and ultimately save time and money.

We're fortunate to have Dan Almond with Millennium Sports Technology from Littleton, Colo., as the architect on this project. He's open to discussion on maintenance factors and has worked with us to make some adjustments in these initial stages.

The baseball stadium is a beautiful design with an upper deck and suite level. This will cast shade on sections of the field while other sections are in full sunlight. Because the shading

will impact maintenance, Almond worked with us to redesign the irrigation system to isolate the first base line of the infield and the right side of the outfield. We'll now be able to control these zones independently so we can match irrigation with evapotranspiration within the various sections of the field.

The original plan of the softball field called for the warning track around the infield. The infield is all skinned material, with turf only in the outfield. This would have put the warning track in direct contact with the infield material around the backstop and opened the door for contamination of the infield material. Almond adjusted the design to extend the infield sand, silt and clay mix to the wall all the way around the infield.

We've collaborated in other areas as well, adjusting the composition of the infield mix for the softball field and discussing water pressure needs for the facility.

I'm overseeing all aspects of grounds on this project, not only the fields, but also the landscaping and plant installation and maintenance and the parking lots and snow removal. I've tapped into my network of peers as a resource to make sure

I'm covering all the aspects and details within this complex operation. They've been a tremendous source of information and confirmation.

I've found much of my early role has been as administrator and communicator. I've hired personnel, purchased equipment, designed annual flowerbeds and found annual flower sources, and developed the interior layout for my office, my assistants' offices, the crew areas and equipment areas for our maintenance building. I've worked with the design and construction companies, with the UNL, NEBCO, and City of Lincoln administrations and with the coaches of the user group teams. The opportunity to develop relationships with all the different players will make coordination easier for all of us down the road.

The softball stadium is slotted for play in the fall of 2001. The baseball stadium is scheduled to open on June 1 of 2001. We hope to get the Husker team in during May to finish their season. Sampson Construction of Lincoln, Neb., is the general contractor and Nemaha Nurseries, also from Lincoln, is the field contractor. I've been impressed with the work of Jeff Emanuel and his crew, their dedication to this project and the pride they take in their work.



An artist's rendition of the completed facility