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## Connie Rudolph, CSFM, named George Toma Golden Rake Award Recipient



George Toma, one of STMA's Founders, has proven that starting from the ground up, it's possible to achieve your highest goals—if you love what you do and give it your all, “and then some.”

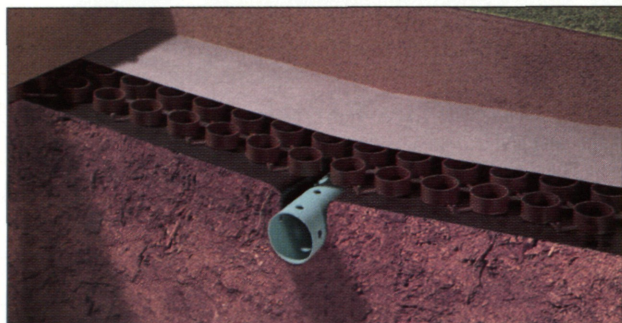
The George Toma Golden Rake Award is issued annually to someone who is on the quest to reach their highest goals and is demonstrating that “and then some” spirit along the way.

The year 2000 recipient, Connie Rudolph, CSFM, entered college seeking a degree in home economics with a business minor. Because she also loved being outside and taking care of the grass, she found her summer jobs working on golf courses, changing cups and doing the trimming. Following graduation, she started working for the City of St. Paul, on the golf courses as an assistant to the greenskeeper.

When the groundskeeper position opened up at Midway Stadium in 1991, she applied, was selected and immediately started what has become her long term commitment keeping the field in the best possible conditions for all types and levels of play. While continually upgrading her knowledge and expertise in the field of sports turf management, she's also been instrumental in the formation and development of the Minnesota Sports Turf Managers Association, serving as a board member and as president. She's on the newsletter editorial committee for the national STMA. She's spoken at several regional turfgrass conferences. She's taken the time to prepare for and successfully achieve Certified Sports Field Manager status. And, during this interval, she and her husband, Randy, are raising four delightful children: Mitchell, 10, Molly, 8, Henry, 5, and Joey, who was born July 1, 1999.

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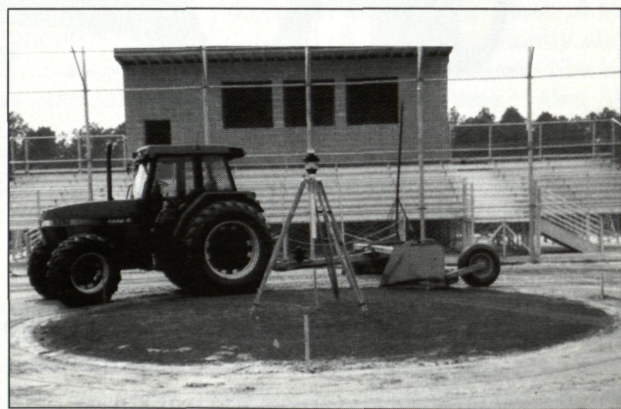
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Crew members resod a section of the outfield

filled with softball games, dog shows, car shows, boxing matches, fantasy camps, company parties and even the filming of commercials. Two national

commercials were filmed at Midway Stadium: one for Norelco shavers, and one, featuring Ken Griffey Jr., for Wheaties. The Stadium and Saints

team also have been the subject of such national television programming as 60 Minutes, ESPN, the Today Show and a series on the FX channel.

"It takes nearly constant overseeding, aerating and topdressing to keep the outfield in repair," notes Rudolph. "We also paint the field once a week for football and chalk over the infield and the two corners that are on the agralime area. We've adopted a program of spot patching when the field needs it and we can fit it in. We take 1-square-foot-chunks of sod about 8-inches deep from the outer edges of the field or from our 20-by-40 foot-sod nursery behind the outfield fence. We overseed the sections where the sod was removed with our standard seed blend and they usually fill in quickly. To protect the field from damage during concerts and other special events we use large tarps for center stage and enforce strict rules for any traffic or equipment use on the turf.

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"Our agraime is from a local source. It's a crushed limestone rather than a true dirt, so we don't have to tarp it to retain playability. We water it a couple times a day for Saints games and monitor it closely to match the conditions they prefer. Another unique feature of the field is the lack of a need for an infield tarp. The field and skinned areas drain well enough after a heavy rain that games usually can be played within an hour after the rain has stopped. The Saints have had only eight rain outs in eight seasons of play."

Rudolph is supplied with a timing list for promotional events affecting the field so she'll have the opportunity to make appropriate preparations and plan for whatever follow up is needed to retain the excellent field conditions players, team management, the city and the fans have come to expect. Some things take a lot more planning than others.



*Besides stressing the turf, events can be stressful to those responsible for cleaning up.*

She puts the Bill Murray movie marathon nights in the fairly easy class. Once the game is wrapped for the night, fans move to the field with their blankets, popcorn and drinks. The movies are projected against the center field fence and could run until 5 or 6 a.m.

The dog day afternoon events are tougher, even though they've been moved from the heat of summer to September. Rudolph says, "People

bring their dogs for all sorts of events on the field, from hide the shoe, to races, to the doggy beauty salon. Though the owners bring their own 'doggy clean up tools' and there are lots of volunteer helpers, we always end up dealing with some dead spots and rapidly growing green spots we must make disappear before the next event."

Whatever the new promotions slotted for Midway Stadium in 2001, Rudolph will be ready for the challenge and those Field of the Year conditions will once again provide the great setting that has won the heart of the City of St. Paul.

*Bob Tracinski is the business communications manager for the John Deere Worldwide Commercial & Consumer Equipment Division headquartered in Raleigh, N.C. He serves as public relations co-chair for the national Sports Turf Managers Association.*

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## corrections/additions

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# Groundskeeper in Paradise (Part II)

Getting a New Bermudagrass Field Established and Football-Ready in 3 Months. . .with Grass So Tough It Has the New Mower Grunting!

by George P. Toma

*In last month's sportsTURF, George Toma explained that following the Super Bowl last year, he flew to Honolulu as he has done countless times to prepare the fields for the Pro Bowl. Last year, however, Toma stayed in Hawaii until November.*

*Signing on as a groundskeeping pro with the University of Hawaii, he agreed to supervise the grassing and grow-in of a new football practice field and a new women's soccer field, both sprigged on a 40/60 compost/existing soil (clay silt). His assignment also included upgrading the bermudagrass field at the Women's Softball Stadium, training the maintenance personnel and getting their equipment up to speed, among other things.*

I had hoped to start the sprigging by mid-February. Because of delays, mostly due to wet weather, March 10 became our 'grassing' date. After the surface was scarified to a depth of 2 or 3 inches, five days of sprigging got underway.

For starters, we had put down Lesco's 10-20-20 starter fertilizer at 225 lbs. per acre. Whether seeding, sodding, or sprigging, I also like Scott's STEP micro package applied at about 100 lbs. per acre. These fertilizers were worked into the soil and watered for a couple of days, along with 260 lbs. per acre of 21-0-8 spiked with Ronstar. This provided about 2.5 lbs. active per acre, which is lighter than the label rate.

The sprigging and hydromulching were sub-contracted to The King's Landscape Co. of Honolulu. They purchased the Tif 419 stolens from Maui Sod at a cost of slightly more than \$30,000. We got terrific, high-quality stolens, great service and then some. The sprigs we needed were harvested



*An ideal backdrop for a worksite. Photos courtesy Hal Dickey*

on Maui each evening and flown over the next morning on Aloha Airlines' first flight.

The sprigs were distributed over the football field by hand. Then they were pressed into the soil by a locally built tow-behind disk. As soon as each section was sprigged and disked, it was "hydrocapped." The tank on the hydromulch truck contained not only newsprint and tackifier but also half of the 10-20-20 starter. The other half, 2 1/2 lbs. per 1,000 square feet, had been spread a couple of days earlier. Also, we used Gordon's Launch, a new biostimulant mixture with a liquid manure base, added to the mulch solution at the rate of one quart per 1,000 square feet. My son Chip and I have used Bov-A-Mura, Gordon's sprayable manure product for years. I really didn't expect to see much difference from the cytokinins and the humic and fulvic acids in the biostimulant.

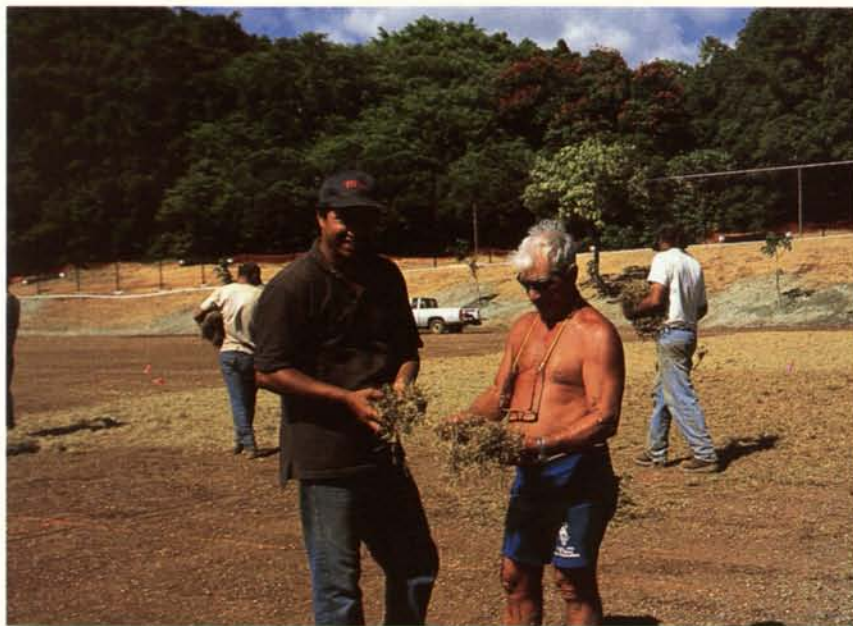
## Biostimulant Check Plots

We made four grow-in applications

of Launch on the football field, starting at sprigging on March 10, then on April 5, April 27 and May 19. In order to compare turf coverage and root depths, I included an untreated plot at each end of the football field (also at the soccer field, starting a couple of weeks later). I measured off 4-by-8-foot plots and drove a wooden stake in each corner flush with the ground. With a tin can lid nailed to the top of each stake, the plots were easy to find and cover with a sheet of plywood each time the biostimulant was being sprayed. This included the first time, in the mulch at sprigging.

Within a week, the sprigs sprayed with the Launch had runners twice as long as those we didn't spray. After two weeks, the runners averaged 3 inches long versus less than 1 inch for the untreated sprigs. By March 31, the three-week-old runners were averaging 6 inches! Three to 4 inches were about the most we had expected to see, so we were really impressed.





*Toma inspects the developing turf*

I estimated the turf coverage of the two untreated plots at about 35 percent versus an incredible 80 per-

cent for the rest of the field. My judgment was seconded by the architect's consultant, Logan Homacon, well

acquainted with Tif 419, particularly in golf course situations. Looking at the three week old field he said, "Almost anyone would guess that this grass is seven or eight weeks old."

#### **Game-Ready at 6 Weeks?**

By the end of the sixth week, the football field could have handled a game.

Checking the root growth of the untreated plots made me really respect the biostimulant. After 6 weeks, the grass had 6-inch roots, except in the check plots where the roots averaged only 1 1/2 inches. Without the Launch, this field could have been a disappointment or at least a lot more of a challenge. The baby grass had been pushed with fertilizer about as much as could be safely done. It got two or three granular feedings monthly supplying a total of around three pounds of actual N per month.

When the field was 8 weeks old, the athletic directors and coaches



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found on grass plants growing over the sand drains [4 in. x 12 in. sand-filled drainage grooves spaced 10 ft. apart running lengthwise down the football field].

By the eleventh week, the football field looked its best so far. But it was time to aerate. We used the Vertidrain one-inch tines, punching to a depth of 12 inches on four-inch centers. In my opinion, the worst thing you can do to grass is mow it with a dull mower, and the next worse is aeration. After aerating, we sprayed Gordon's Focus, a straight biostimulant (no liquid manure like there is in Launch). We made the first application on May 30th, and applied it again in mid-June. The upper field had to be playable by June 19th for a football camp.

came out for a close-up look. Head football coach June Jones said it looked as smooth as a pool table and commented that he had never seen

grass in better condition. We dug several samples for them and came up with 6 or 7 inches of roots each time. Earlier, roots over 8 inches long were

#### Attractive Grass, and Tough!

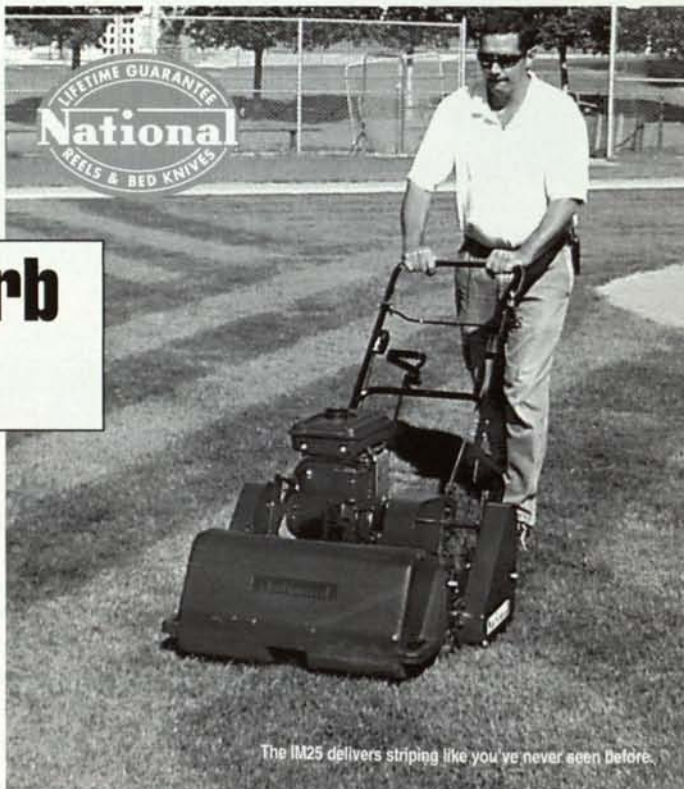
Within four or five days everyone who saw it was commenting on the terrific response of the 419. The grass came back so dark green and thick it



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