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AFP Indoor Bases/800-965-4690

For information, circle 155

NEW GROUNDSMASTER

The Toro Company introduced the new Groundsmaster 328-D last year. The all-purpose rotary mower offers a choice of four full floatation 72-in. cutting units: rear discharge, side discharge, Guardian recycler, and the Flexdeck. The 328-D is powered by a Kubota 28-hp diesel engine.

Toro's bi-directional overrunning clutch senses traction needs and gives on-demand 4-wheel drive in forward and reverse. Extra large tread tires plus counterbalance system further enhances traction and stability. The unit has optional attachments for more value: cab with ROPS; snowthrower; rotary broom; debris blower; V-plow; flail deck; and leaf mulcher.

The Toro Company/800-803-8676

For information, circle 157



GRUB CONTROL NOW

Merit insecticide from Bayer Corporation is a premier grub control product. It combines long-lasting residual with broad-spectrum control at low use rates, says the company, which allows you to control a wide range of grubs with just one application.

Research has shown that Merit is the most effective product for controlling grubs up to second instar. And after 7 years on the market, the complaint rate with Merit is less than one percent. The product also provides control of a wide range of ornamental pests and can be applied via soil injection, microinjection or foliar spray.

Bayer Corp./800-842-8020

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COVER STORY

08 STMA Professional Baseball Field of the Year
 The Dell Diamond of Round Rock, TX, and groundskeeper Dennis Klein are winners.

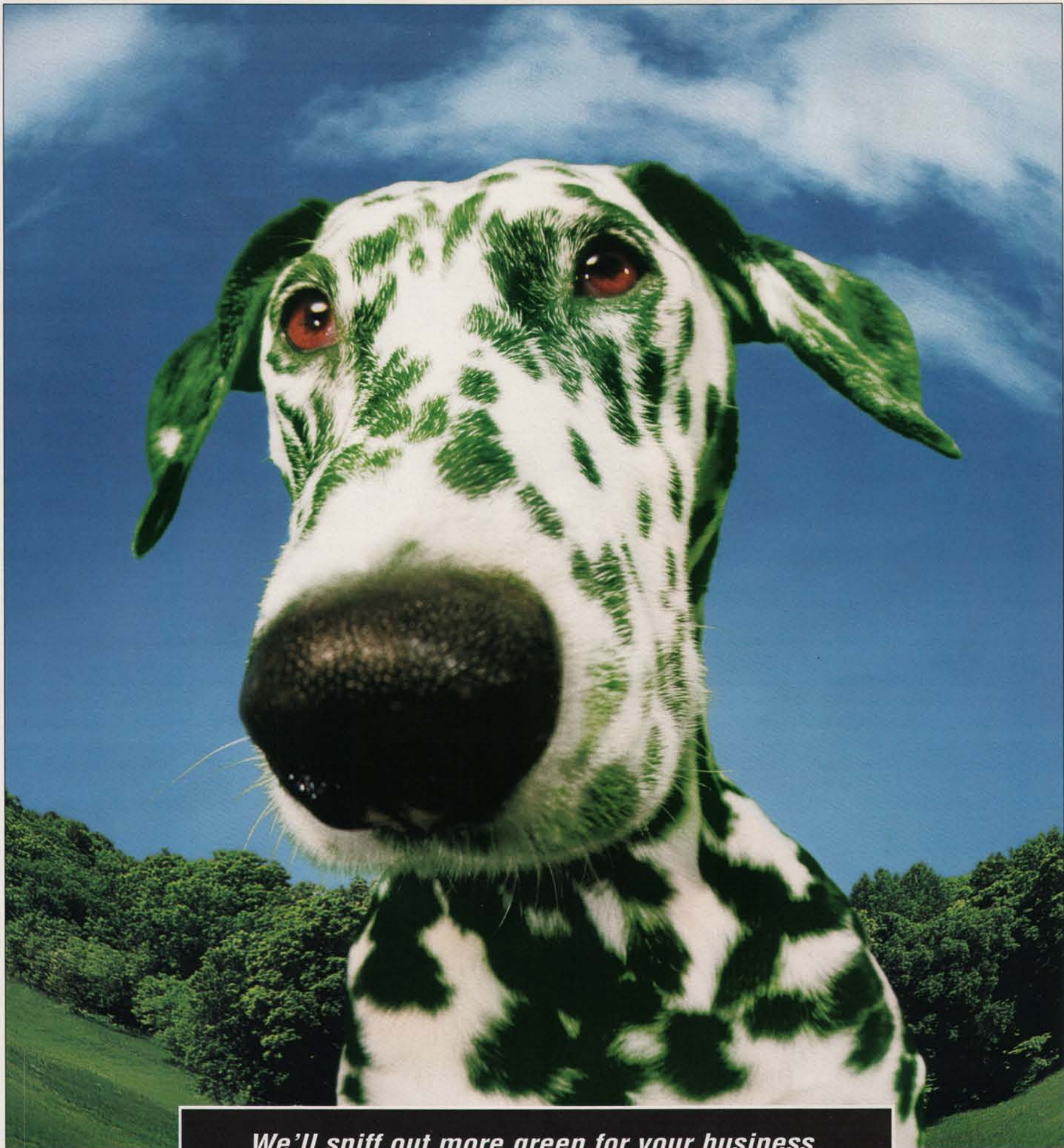
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COVER PHOTO: Photo courtesy of the Round Rock (TX) Express, Double A affiliate of the Houston Astros and owned by Nolan Ryan.



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Pitchers and catchers

By the time you read this, major league pitchers and catchers may already be at their respective Florida and Arizona winter homes, laying the foundation for their dreams of playing next October. For many readers this means the season has begun and imminent for many others.

You can throw the final logs on Hot Stove League fires when pitchers and catchers report; groundhog shadow or not, it's a promise of spring. We're all warmed by that affirmation.

While baseball's early birds begin stretching their wings on green turf between fresh white lines, recognition of the folks whose job it is to maintain that turf continues to grow. New STMA president Murray Cook (see opposite page) is certain to enhance the Association's professional reputation. He's a field consultant to Major League Baseball and last year provided field operations and management for four stadiums used in the World Cup baseball tournament held in South Korea (USA Baseball won the silver).

Murray's been in the sports turf industry for 27 years and began his career as head groundskeeper for a Class A team in Salem, VA. Today he is president of SPORTSTurf Services, which provides design and maintenance programs for sports facilities.

"Our organization is growing very quickly and yet our image in the world of sports does not represent the importance of what we provide for athletes and team owners alike. My vision is to see our organization become the recognized professional sports field association around the world," Murray says. "The certification program is key to our professional development as sports turf managers. It goes hand in hand with the image of our professionalism."

Of course no matter how many safe and attractive fields you create or who knows it from Winter Haven to Walla Walla, those ultimately in charge of pitchers and catchers, the owners and players' union, need to stop crossing up their signals. The disharmony among our National Pastime's caretakers has turned into a rhubarb that I, for one, am sick of watching.

I think there's no question the imbalance between team revenues is hurting the goodness of the game, and having an owner disguised as commissioner of the sport leaves no one to look out for the fans, even in principle. And the players' bleating about "fair market value" grows quickly tiresome to the vast American middle class. We are left to wonder what's the difference, really, between \$20 or \$60 or \$127 million?

The stormcloud hovering over baseball cannot dampen the optimism for the home team that many of us feel as spring beckons. This may be however, as Samuel Johnson said when discussing a gentleman who had been very unhappily married yet married immediately after his wife died, the triumph of hope over experience.

Your fields will be ready come spring, I'm certain. I'm not so sure about the game.



Comments always welcome.
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Managers Association



president's message

Thank you for the honor

This is my first column as President of the Sports Turf Managers Association. I hope it finds everyone well and recovering from a great Conference in Vegas. If you were unable to attend never fear because we are heading to San Antonio next January and that is shaping up to be as good or better than Vegas.

I am truly excited and honored to have the privilege of being a part of this great industry. When I became a head groundskeeper for the Salem Pirates (Class A affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates) in 1975, I had no idea I would be maintaining athletic fields for the next 27 years. I loved it then and I love it now!

Obviously, I had some help along the way. About 4 years ago I tried to tally up the amount of games I had worked as a sports turf manager. I lost count after I left the Disney Sports Complex, but then it was around 8,000. A great wife, Donna, wonderful children, Kate, Cameron, and Scott, and a cool mother-in-law (Betty) have given me the balance in life one needs to succeed. In our industry that balance is difficult to maintain but we all need to realize our priorities: it's family!

The STMA has come so far in just a few years and that would not have been possible without the great leadership from our former presidents, board members, and the headquarters staff. But the main reason for our success is you! Each one of our members has a voice and a vote in the direction our industry will take us. You make it happen and we have only just begun.

I have a challenge for each of you to enlist one person as a member of the STMA this year. One person joining each member will cause a drastic change in our industry. There is a little salesman in all of us and I know it is not asking too much. If you do this, it will come back to you tenfold.

As our organization grows our superiors, owners, coaches, etc will look us upon in a different manner. From each other we will begin to develop the positive image we deserve as a professional in a growing industry. As our image of "professionalism" elevates so will the image of the "profession." This in turn will raise our salaries and pay scales as specialized technicians in a very dynamic market.

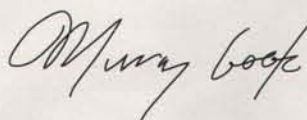
Your Board of Directors is your voice. They are great leaders and good people putting numerous hours

of personal time into this non-profit organization. The backbone in the growth of our industry is the commercial membership. Please take the time to talk with them and read their advertisements to learn what they have to offer. They are our backbone; but you are our heart and the STMA needs both to survive in this fast-paced business world.

GET INVOLVED!

We have some wonderful committees needing help at both the Chapter and National levels. Just send your name into headquarters so they can see where your skills and background could be fully used in moving our strategic plan and objectives forward. And consider working towards your Certification as a sports turf manager and raising your own professionalism.

Please feel free to contact headquarters or to email me at murrayc@brickmangroup.com.



Murray Cook,
STMA President

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The Dell Diamond of Round Rock, Texas

STMA 2001

Professional Baseball Field of the Year



The Dell Diamond of Round Rock, TX, earned the STMA 2001 Baseball Field of the Year Award in the Professional Division. The Dell Diamond is home of the Round Rock Express, a AA affiliate of the Houston Astros, which is owned by Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan.

Construction began in December 1999, and Dennis Klein came on board as head groundskeeper December 15. He was an assistant groundskeeper with the Texas Rangers before taking the Round Rock position. Klein says, "Having been a part of the initial construction of The Ballpark in Arlington and a few reconstructions thereafter really helped. On the Dell Diamond construction, I made personal notes on how everything was laid out, such as where the valves were under the warning track. It also helped that W. O. Adams Construction, Lancaster, TX, the contractor for the project, was excellent to work with."

The field has a 12-in. soil profile of 90 percent sand and 10 percent organic peat. This tops 6 in. of pea gravel and the drainage tiles and subgrade layer. Some underground electrical lines run through the center of the field and the subsurface drainage system is designed around them. Everything is laser-graded to channel away excess water. The field is turtle backed from home plate to center field with drainage channeled to hit the subgrade and run off to the ditches. These divert the water to a holding tank behind the center field wall, which is equipped with two pumps that pump water out.

The turf is Tif 419 Bermudagrass and was sodded on February 24,

2000. The skinned area infield dirt is 45 percent clay, 50 percent sand, and 5 percent silt. The mound and plate areas are an 85 percent clay mix. Calcined clay is used on all the dirt areas. The warning track is topped with crushed red brick. The first game was played April 16, 2000.

Challenges

The field is equipped with an inground irrigation system with 16 heads on the sidelines, 47 heads in the outfield and four heads in the infield. Klein says, "Working outdoors in Texas during the summer months is a challenge in itself. My two full-time assistants, Jeff Meyer and Kurt McLerran, are tops. With their input and the teamwork from our part-time seasonal crew, we've been able to meet the challenges.

"During the summer of 2001, we had 40 days of over 100 degree temperatures and had a 45-day stretch from July through mid-August with no rain. Winds are often strong and wind direction erratic. When our irrigation system was installed, we included an infield connector behind the mound, one at the infield perimeter and eight around the warning track, all around the field. We very rarely run the infield and sidelines irrigation systems, choosing to do all of our infield and sidelines turf irrigation by hand to more closely match application to needs. We use the irrigation system for the outfield in the early morning."

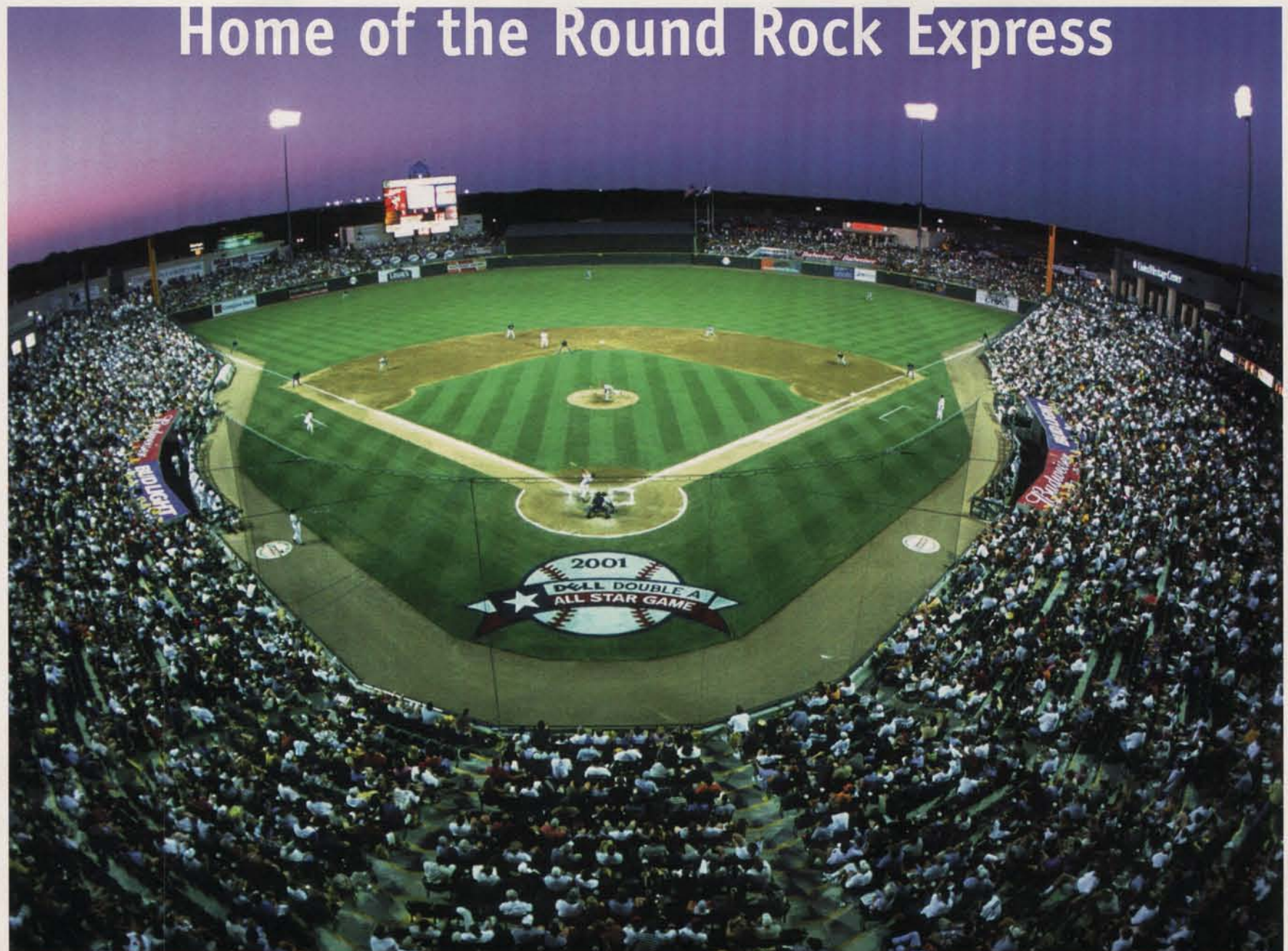
Other turf area challenges include the bullpens, where the benches are on the grass between the mounds and plate, adding to stress. There's also the inside seating berm that consists of two half-acre turf areas for general admission seating and picnicking. It's full every night.

In 2001, Klein started making a monthly application of a wetting agent for faster penetration and better infiltration and to combat hydrophobic hot spots. It proved

beneficial and will remain in the maintenance program.

Klein adds, "We have to water our skinned area 8-10 times a day to keep adequate moisture in the dirt. The use of plate and mound tarps on the field and in the bullpens is essential for holding moisture until batting practice. I feel the skinned area is the most important part of a baseball field. A cleat-in, cleat-out corkboard-type effect is what we strive for and, to accomplish this, we'll often have someone on the end of a water hose for a good portion of the day."

The crew also maintains four acres of outside landscape that includes turf, trees, shrubs, and flowerbeds. Then there's the hayfield. Klein says, "The site was originally farm ground. We still grow, cut, and harvest hay on the 42 acres behind the stadium. Some of the hay goes to local farmers. We also give



Home of the Round Rock Express

Field of the Year

bales away for lawn decoration starting around October first. We just place stacks of bales in an easy-access area near the busy main road that borders the stadium and people help themselves to it."

The facility also features a 10-ft. diameter hot tub; a 20 x 50-ft., 4-ft. deep swimming pool; a play area and basketball area; and a rock climbing wall.

Packed schedule

Besides the 72-game schedule of the Red Rock Express, The Dell Diamond hosts high school and college play. Spring of 2002 will start in February with six college games and 11 high school games, followed by 10 college and seven high school games in March. All this takes place before the pros arrive in April.

Also in April is the annual "Relay for Life." Klein says, "It's an all-night walk-a-thon benefiting breast cancer. One hundred and fifty tents are set up in the outfield as a rest and play area for the many teams participating to benefit this important cause."

High school play continues from April through June with the field hosting the UIL Texas High School Baseball Finals in all five classes. This puts 16 games on the field in 4 days. It also hosts the Austin All-Star game and two Texas State High School All-Star games.

Team owner Nolan Ryan runs a fantasy camp that draws the older crowd. Spike Owen and Cliff Gustafson run the "Legends of Baseball" camp for youth 6-18 which starts in late May and runs through June. It takes the field from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm Monday through Thursday for 3 weeks and concludes with a final week of



Last summer The Dell Diamond field weathered 45 days without rain from July to mid-August and more than 40 100+-degree days.

overnight camp. Since this overlaps the Express schedule, the pros will hit the field at 4:00 pm for batting practice before a night game.

Klein says, "This is tough, but workable. The Legends camp just uses the field for six or seven different stations and scrimmage at the end of the day. If I feel the field is getting too much wear, I can cancel the batting practice."

Other events round out the schedule. There are concerts, a local church's annual Easter sunrise service, and rental of the facility's conference center for corporate functions, which generally includes an on-field softball game.

A one-time event in 2001, hosting the filming of the Walt Disney movie production, "The Rookie," was a turf manager's nightmare. Klein notes, "It was a 3-day shoot using the entire field with people and equipment everywhere. They set up 25 feet of scaffolding to take shots down to the pitching. There were three or four full teams for action shots with the stars moving in and out of the different scenes. Dennis Quaid even brought his pitching

wedge out of the trailer with the intent of hitting a few golf balls from the field. A word to one of his people nixed that idea."

Fine-tuning for excellence

Klein and crew continually refine the program, moving ever closer to perfection. Klein says, "Networking is a wonderful resource. Everyone in this industry is willing to

