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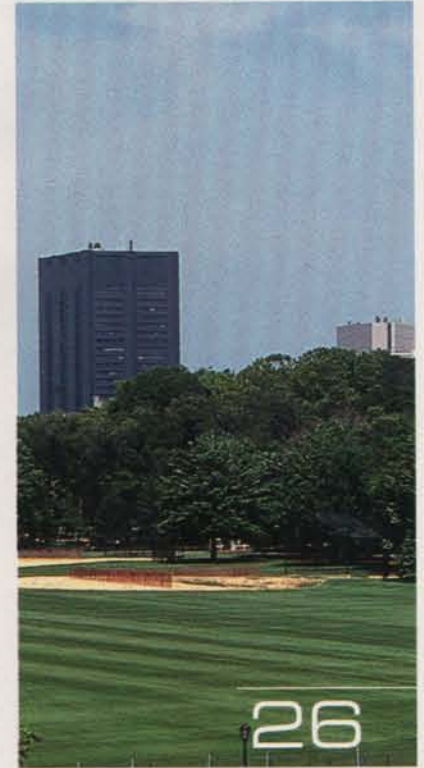


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AFP Soft Touch/800-965-4690
For information, circle 156



COVER STORY

08 STMA 2001 High School/Parks & Rec Soccer Field of the Year

The City of Muscatine, IA's soccer complex wins a 2nd time, for its overall excellence and a recovery from winter damage led by Kevin Vos, CSFM.

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ON THE COVER STMA Field of the Year, Muscatine, IA

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The eyes of a (baseball) nation

Gary VandenBerg didn't like the pay much but he couldn't pass up the opportunity to work in major league baseball (MLB) when the late STMA founder Harry "Pops" Gill offered him a job. Gary's love of baseball overwhelmed everything, including the paycheck.

By the time you read this, 22 years later, VandenBerg's groundskeeping experience will have been displayed for the entire baseball world during the All-Star Game at Milwaukee's Miller Park. I spoke with him just about a month before the Big Event, which is much more than simply an exhibition game between the two major leagues' elite players. In fact, MLB personnel were already at Miller Park working when we talked.

"There's the Futures Game, a Celebrity Softball Game, and the Home Run Derby before the big game," Gary said. "The most pressure during the entire week though will be to build a 300-foot long fence in 6 minutes for the Celebrity Softball game. This is a new fence made specifically for this event so we'll make some practice runs at putting it together. My crew plus about 30 volunteers will get it done."

The challenge is not to be ready for just a Tuesday night game, but to care for and protect the turf for a week before the game, too. The on-field rehearsals for the pre-game show begin every day a week before the first event and include the same production crew that worked the last Super Bowl halftime (let's hope Bono stays in Africa this time).

"Of course I want to protect the field and have it looking good for the 15-20 cameras and overhead blimp that cover every angle," said Gary. "All our preparation and watering must be done from 4 to 8 a.m. because every day and night some practice is going on. With so much going on it will be difficult to keep everything 100%."

"I'm excited about all the work that's already started. I'm sure I'll sleep in the office a few nights," Gary said. I asked if he's getting an All-Star bonus similar to what's included in some players' contracts. "No, no," he replied, adding that the Brewers' organization has always treated him well.

What advice does he have for a groundskeeper facing the Big Game? "I don't know yet, we haven't gotten through it," he said. "But I know already that you must be willing to change because things are changing every day. I'm glad to get this opportunity once, but that's enough!"

Life is funny. You'd think preparing his field for the All-Star Game would be the highlight of Gary's year, but it's not. The big news this summer in the VandenBerg house was son John's being selected by the Brewers in last month's amateur draft. Let's hope John joins his father soon, working at Miller Park.



Comments always welcome.
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president's message

A lot to celebrate

Over the past couple of years I have had the privilege of working with Cal Ripken and his staff on the development of the Ripken Stadium & Youth Baseball Complex. Since retirement he has approached the business world with the same simple principles he used during his baseball career, "Work hard, play hard and have fun!"

When you do something you really enjoy and apply those simple principles, similar successes are possible. One example is Kevin Vos, CSFM, of Muscatine, IA. Under his direction, the Muscatine Soccer Complex earned the 2001 STMA Soccer Field of the Year award in the Parks and Recreation Division (see story on p. 8). His complex represents what you can achieve with hard work and the determination to tackle the challenges whatever they might be.

Soccer is a fast-growing sport in the USA. As I write this, the 2002 soccer World Cup is taking the U.S. by storm. Fans are sacrificing sleep to watch the games in "real time" as TV screens transport them across the time zones. With a stunning performance against Portugal at the time of this writing, the USA team is in good shape to head into the next round.

When I managed the municipal field in Salem, VA, for the Pirates many (many) years ago, one of my daily tasks was to raise the flag in the morning and take it down after the game. I took great joy in this privilege to honor our flag. I am sure many of you had the honor of raising and lowering the Stars and Stripes at your facility this 4th of July. The long-standing U.S. tradition of taking in a game over the Independence Day holiday is growing even stronger. And there's an added attraction when ballparks around the country stage major fireworks displays while celebrating our country's independence.

The nation's birthday deserves a second look this year being it is the first after 9/11. Our country and world suffered from a very difficult occurrence that has changed our way of life forever. But it has not changed our hearts or our commitment to freedom and justice for all. Our prayers are with those families who have lost loved ones as well as with those who have family members serving in our armed forces and cannot be home for the holiday.

This issue includes several interesting articles that may assist you with your daily work responsibilities. Dr. Jeff Krans' provides information on turf green up as it relates to

a time schedule for peak performance. Also take a look at the maintenance and safety checklist forms that you may want to adapt for use at your facility. Safety is the top field maintenance priority in our industry. It's the primary focus in providing the best sports surfaces for all levels of play.

July marks the halfway point of our year and only 6 more months until the annual conference in San Antonio (January 15-19, 2003). Be sure to keep the STMA web site a favorite on your browser and watch for conference updates. I can assure you we will work hard, play hard and have a blast in San Antonio!



Murray Cook,
STMA President
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Tackling Challenges

Muscatine Soccer Complex earns top honors again

BY STEVE AND SUZ TRUSTY

A triple package of excellence brings a second STMA Field of the Year Award in the Parks and Recreation Division to the Muscatine Soccer Complex in Muscatine, IA. The Complex earned the honor in 1995 as well. The combination of foresight in planning, a proactive maintenance program, and a can-do approach in tackling challenges keeps this facility at the top of its game. Good enough is not acceptable.

Athletic facilities supervisor Kevin Vos, CSFM, says, "We try to maintain a high quality, safe playing surface for all user groups through the entire season. Our crew takes great pride in meeting the challenges every day for every player."

The 41-acre complex first opened for play in August 1993. The first phase of construction consisted of four native soil fields and two amended soil fields. Two additional native soil fields were added during the second phase of development in 1994.

Vos says, "The two amended-soil fields are 80 percent sand and 20 percent soil/peat. Each measures 300 by 390 feet. They have a 1 percent crown. The six native soil fields are silty-loam with a 1.5 percent crown. These field dimensions are 240 by 360 feet.

"The six original fields have underground drainage to ensure rapid recovery after rains. Buried, 4-inch tiles spaced 35 feet apart run the length of each field. These connect to a 6-inch collector drain that runs perpendicular to them at the middle of the field. Water is channeled through the 6-inch collector to the city's storm drain system and eventually to the sanitation department."

All of the fields are irrigated, the original six with a hydraulic system and the remaining two with an electric system. The irrigation systems can be programmed to irrigate each field's entire playing surface or to irrigate only critical zones such as the goal and mid-field areas. The complex's non-field turf areas without in-ground irrigation are watered by roller base sprinklers or a water reel.

The amended soils fields (numbers 3 and 4) are lighted and have bleacher seating for approximately 1,200 people. The complex also features paved parking, shade shelters

MSC maintenance program

Mowing: March through November

- Fields: 3 times per week with rotary mower at 1-3/4-inch height. Reel mowers used for tournaments with mowing height 1-5/8-inch.

Irrigation: April through November

- Used to augment rainfall for total water of 1 to 1-1/2-inches per week
- Soil moisture percentage in amended soil fields is monitored on a per game basis
- Non-field turf is irrigated on an as needed basis

Aerification: April to September

- Slice aerify twice per month: May, June, and August to October. Core aerify and drag cores in high wear areas
- Solid tine aerify weekly during heavy use season in high use areas
- Entire field aerified in May/August/October - Solid tine 1/2-inch and 3/4-inch twice per season; 3/4-inch core once per season

Fertilization:

- (All based on twice per year soil testing results and adjusted to match turf needs)

Amended soil fields:

- April: first application of 15-30-15 at .5 pounds of N per thousand square feet; 18-2-18 at .5 pounds of N per thousand square feet at 14-day intervals during season
- First week of July: 13-3-9 with insecticide at .5 pounds of N per thousand square feet
- 0-0-22 at 1 pound of K per thousand square feet three times per season
- 46-0-0 at 1 pound of N per thousand square feet—one dormant application
- Nutrient packet and 5% Manganese



applied at .5 ounce of N per thousand square feet at 21-day intervals

Native soil fields:

- Spring application of 15-30-15 at .5 pounds of N per thousand square feet
- May application of 23-4-12 (SCU) at .75 pounds of N per thousand square feet
- First week of July: 13-3-9 with insecticide at .5 pounds of N per thousand square feet
- September application of 18-2-18 at 1 pound of N per thousand square feet
- 46-0-0 at 1 pound of N per thousand square feet—one dormant application
- Nutrient packet applied twice per season

Rough:

- April application of 13-3-9 with at .5 pounds of N per thousand square feet
- Late May application of 42-0-0 (polymer-coated) at 1 pound of N per thousand square feet
- September application of 18-2-18 at 1 pound of N per thousand square feet

Topdressing:

- Amended soil fields: 100 percent sand with same particle size as existing soil profile twice per year at 50 tons per 3.25 acres per application
- Native soil fields: once per season with

100 percent sand following core aerification

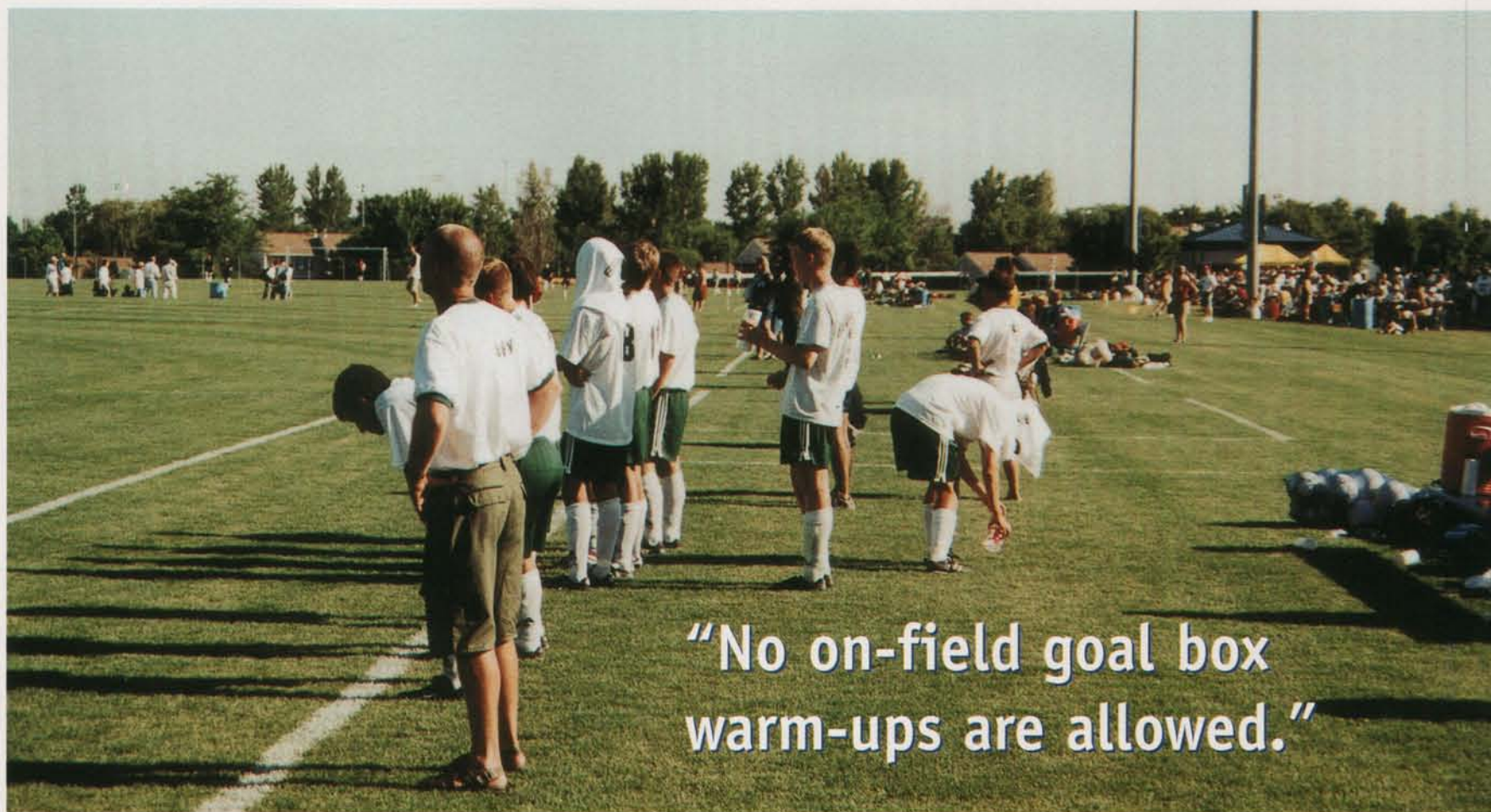
- Field drag to mix core soil with sand and into aerification holes

Overseeding:

- As needed per field before/after games/tournaments before turf wear appears
- Methods depend on situation: slit seeding, broadcast before games and after aerification, divot mix used weekly
- Kentucky Bluegrass blend of: Midnight, Blacksburg, America, Ram I, Unique
- Perennial Ryegrass blend of: Palmer III, Manhattan III, Prelude III, Affinity, Brightstar
- Seed may be pregerminated depending on time of season

Pesticides:

- All as needed following standard IPM practices
- Spot treatment for broadleaf and annual grassy weeds
- Grub control with fertilizer in July if scouting in spring/early summer warrants it
- Preventive fungicide application for Pythium control on six fields
- Preventive fungicide application for brown patch on four fields
- Preventive fungicide application for snow mold all fields



"No on-field goal box warm-ups are allowed."

and wide, paved walkways, an administration/concessions/restroom building, and a maintenance building. The park-like setting is enhanced with low-maintenance landscaping of hardy trees, shrubs, and perennials. Chain link fence surrounds the complex.

Vos says, "The Muscatine Soccer Complex is open for play from April 1 through November 1, and longer into November if tournaments require it. The fields play host to several area soccer clubs, five local Muscatine High School girls and boys soccer teams, local YMCA/YWCA leagues, adult open league, and area college teams. The Complex also hosts several tournaments ranging in size from 8 to 144 teams. These include the high school girls and boys district playoffs, Mississippi Athletic Conference high school tournament, girls and boys Iowa High School State Championships, the Muscatine Summer Classic, the 4-day, 96-team national recruiting College Search Kickoff tournament, and various 8- to 16-team college tournaments and clinics. By the end of October 2001, games already hosted or scheduled at the complex totaled 996.

"All games are reserved in advance and scheduled through the Muscatine Parks and Recreation Department. There are staff members working whenever there are games being played. The staff is directed to assist user groups with field assignments, observing complex rules and guidelines, field set up and teardown, and complex cleanliness. The concession stand is operated under a contract between a local business and the City of Muscatine."

Keeping the focus on top conditions

The complex was designed to allow flexibility in field layout. Four of the native soil fields are located on a 2 1/2-acre section. For the girls and boys state tournaments, the fields are centered within this section. For other weekend play, the entire fields may be laid out to run horizontally across the area (north and south) or vertically across the area (east and west). Because of referee wear along the sideline areas, the sidelines may be moved out 3 feet or in 3 feet, while staying within the official size field for each age group. The team areas are moved at the same time, either positioning them along the 'new' sidelines, or moving both team areas to the other side of the field.

Vos says, "The fields are laid out according to precisely measured string lines in the spring and restrung every few weeks to keep the lines straight and accurate. The fields

are painted as needed. Depending on the season, games, and tournaments, plant growth regulator generally will be added to the paint. When field rotation times are tight, we'll use green paint to block out the old white lines to alleviate confusion. We match the paint shade to turf color as closely as possible. Smaller fields are laid out perpendicular to the main large fields for use by younger age groups and clinics. These fields are painted in contrasting colors.

"The first three years the complex was opened we allowed practices on the fields but maintenance costs rose each year. So starting in 1997, we eliminated full-blown practices. We do allow game-type scrimmages and non-wear intensive drills at various times throughout the year. No on-field goal box warm-ups are allowed. The coaches and teams are directed to the numerous practice goals that we frequently reposition throughout the complex. This does require extra goals and nets and all of our 'extended field' methods do increase the overall turf area that receives premium care, but these practices do help control excessive wear."

The maintenance program is equally aggressive and proactive. Divots are filled weekly with pre-germinated divot mix before and after games. Seeding is done weekly in season. Heavily used areas are core or solid tine aerified, seeded, and topdressed at various times throughout the season, before wear damage is evident. Full field aerification, either core or solid tine, is done twice per season on the amended soil fields and three times per season on the native soil fields. Sand, matching that of the soil profile, is topdressed before deep tine solid aerification on the two sand-amended fields to improve infiltration rates.

The challenge of 2001

The amended soil fields were heavily used into the second week of November in 2000. During the first weekend, the Iowa High School Fall Soccer State Championships for private schools put 10 games on the fields within 48 hours. The next weekend, the NAIA region #7 playoffs put six more games on those fields. This was followed by continually cloudy skies and temperatures too low for recuperative turf growth. Both fields were highly stressed going into the winter season.

Vos says, "We followed our standard pre-winter practices, applying a preventive snow mold treatment and topdressing with sand to protect the turf crowns. Field 3 was

