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# Toma visit highlights renovation project



**T**he “Marquis de Sod” shared his knowledge and experience with the maintenance staff at Ralston Valley High School in Denver during a renovation project at the football field. George Toma, Sports Turf Managers Association founder and father to many Super Bowl fields, was visiting the Jefferson County public school system to dispense his wisdom. Lots of winterkill, followed by an early summer with consistent 90 degree temperatures, had damaged the field.

Toma was working with Hall-Irwin, the construction and development company, on the field’s renovation. Toma was there on behalf of Western Pozzolan, the soil amendment company that Hall-Irwin put together, with other vendors, to provide the expertise and products for the renovation as part of its “STACK” program. Toma helped decide what the soil profile’s issues were and then assisted with finding the right prescription. Other companies donating time and materials included GreenOne Industries, A-1 Organic, Extreme Weed Control, and Estes Chemical. Hall-Irwin did contract with the district for some services.

Eric Pollock, Hall-Irwin’s athletic field specialist, developed the STACK program that, after soil analysis and lab reports are complete, results in a custom-blended product that can successfully alleviate specific conditions found in the soil of any field. “We take different turf science products and put them together so that in one application we can begin to heal athletic fields,” Pollock said.

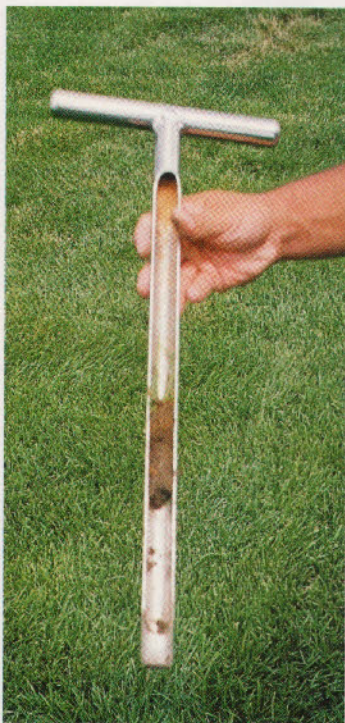
“For example if a Kentucky bluegrass field has a high sodium level, we might blend gypsum with some organic products to developing a leaching factor,” Pollock said.

Steve Beck, president of Western Pozzolan, said Hall-Irwin assists in “missionary work” when it approaches schools with serious field issues and shows them how they can go down a path of proper cultural practices versus building a costly new field. “So many schools spend a lot of money initially on their new fields but don’t provide enough, or any, maintenance budget,” Beck said. “With more athletes than ever, the wear and tear on these school fields is astronomical. By season’s end, some are hardly playable.

“It was impressive seeing George Toma talking with the turf manager at Ralston Valley about cultural practices that will provide a safe and long-lasting turf,” Beck said.

Hall-Irwin provides one-stop shopping with its STACK program, Beck said, so that turf managers don’t have to make a lot of calls trying to get vendors together. The STACK program brings in the company’s vendors for soil amendments, compost/peat, sand, etc., to improve a field’s soil profile.

Top photo: George Toma added his expertise to the renovation, courtesy of Western Pozzolan. Far left: Rootzone before “STACK” treatment. Near left: Rootzone after renovation. ■





## Can you identify this sports turf problem?



**Problem:** Goalpost on field  
**Turfgrass Area:** Stadium Field  
**Location:** Blacksburg, Virginia  
**Grass Variety:** Bermudagrass overseeded with perennial rye

### Answer to John Mascaro's Photo Quiz on Page 36

*John Mascaro is President  
of Turf-Tec International*

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## TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: power blowers

By Robin Pendergrast

The power blower (or leaf blower as it is commonly called today) was initially introduced as a modified dusting and misting mechanism in the mid-1970s. It wasn't long after that the use was enhanced to use a zephyr of air as an ingenious new maintenance tool that could be used to clean in a variety of applications.

Commercial landscapers and municipalities have evolved into universally using power blowers/leaf blowers for clean-up activities. The general adaptation and the multiplicity of applications took off in the mid-1980s; this included cleaning tennis courts, gutters and roofs to larger applications like cleaning athletic facilities.

The technology of dedicated power blowers took place in a time when both backpack and hand-held configurations seemed to be a much more economical and ergonomically practical way to get jobs in the field finished quicker and easier. Along the way, while athletic facilities throughout the world have capitalized on this air-moving technology, there have been challenges based on the oftentimes erroneous information that was provided relative to the process of moving debris with a power blower and periodic noise implications.

But in most cases, the true problems that were initially associated with leaf blowers were primarily the result of inappropriate use, selfishness, and the lack of general common sense of their applications by users.

For example, in the early 1990s there was a challenge to the continued use of leaf blowers in the Rose Bowl by the local municipality (Pasadena, CA). Fortunately after a presentation of the dramatic cost savings that resulted from the use of leaf blowers to clean out this 92,500-seat arena, the arrival of new technology and some common sense prevailed.

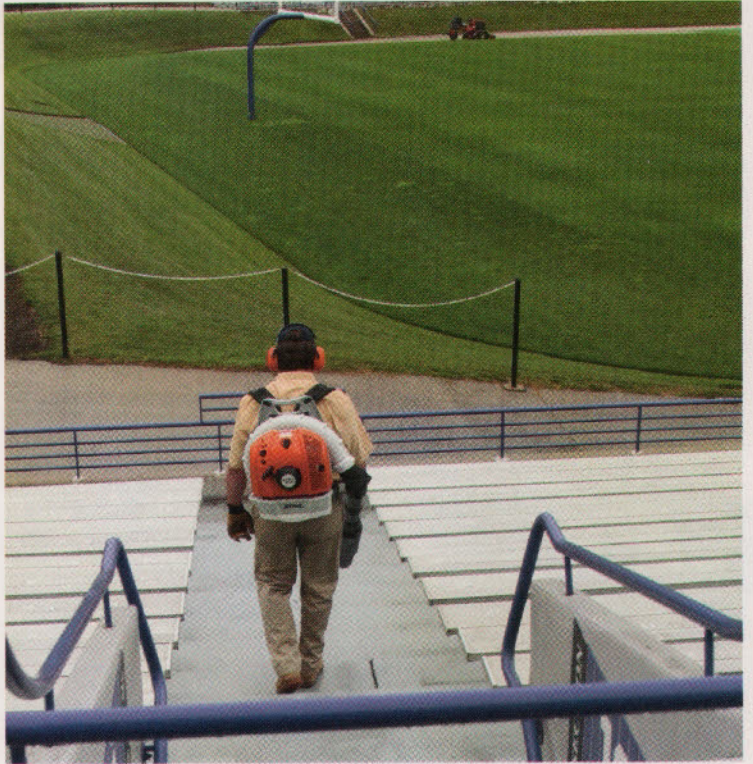
Similar challenging situations have been repeated again and again in cities throughout the country and in parts of the world. Fortunately



the evolution of new technology for dramatically quieter leaf blowers provides substantially cleaner engine emissions. This has paved the way for a few manufacturers to create an active benchmark of optimum performance. The industry added new technology that caters to and supports sports and athletic arena applications.

Today, almost 20 years later, the power blower has found a practical and active home particularly in larger sports complexes and athletic arenas. The productivity associated with the product, as opposed to attempting to use rakes and brooms, in athletic arenas just doesn't meet high standards anymore. When there are four or five people that can accomplish the same task of 50-60 people there is no reasonable explanation as to why the product shouldn't be used.

The new engine technology that has been introduced in recent years provides a substantially quieter power blower/leaf blower overall and a two-cycle engine specifically that supports a clean-emissions



environment. The result has been an even stronger acceptance across the board of the product in football and soccer stadiums and anyplace where debris, leaves or mounds of paper need to be moved quickly, efficiently and safely.


The new, clean and quieter technology cannot stand alone; safety should be emphasized as well. Ear protection, eye protection and safety apparel are essential when individuals use leaf blowers, whether it is for short or long duration. Common sense should be applied and become a benchmark for all facility managers and users.


It is just too practical and too simple not to use the leaf blower given the multiplicity of clean-up activities there are in the athletic arena environment.

*Robin Pendergrast is a writer, photographer and video producer. See <http://www.rfpphoto.com>. ■*

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# BMX track built on former landfill

By Mike Trigg, CSFM, and Mike Pavelich

The National Bicycle League (NBL) approached the Waukegan (IL) Park District (WPD) in the fall of 2002 looking for a home for a group of local BMXers who were tired of trekking across the border to Wisconsin to find a suitable track. NBL has been dedicated to providing exciting recreational opportunity for nearly 30 years. The WPD felt that a BMX track would fit in perfectly with its “benefits-based” philosophy. Today, the track sits on the site of a former municipal landfill. Individuals and organizations came together to use the brownfield and create a premiere BMX facility for the community at Henry Pfau Callahan Park.

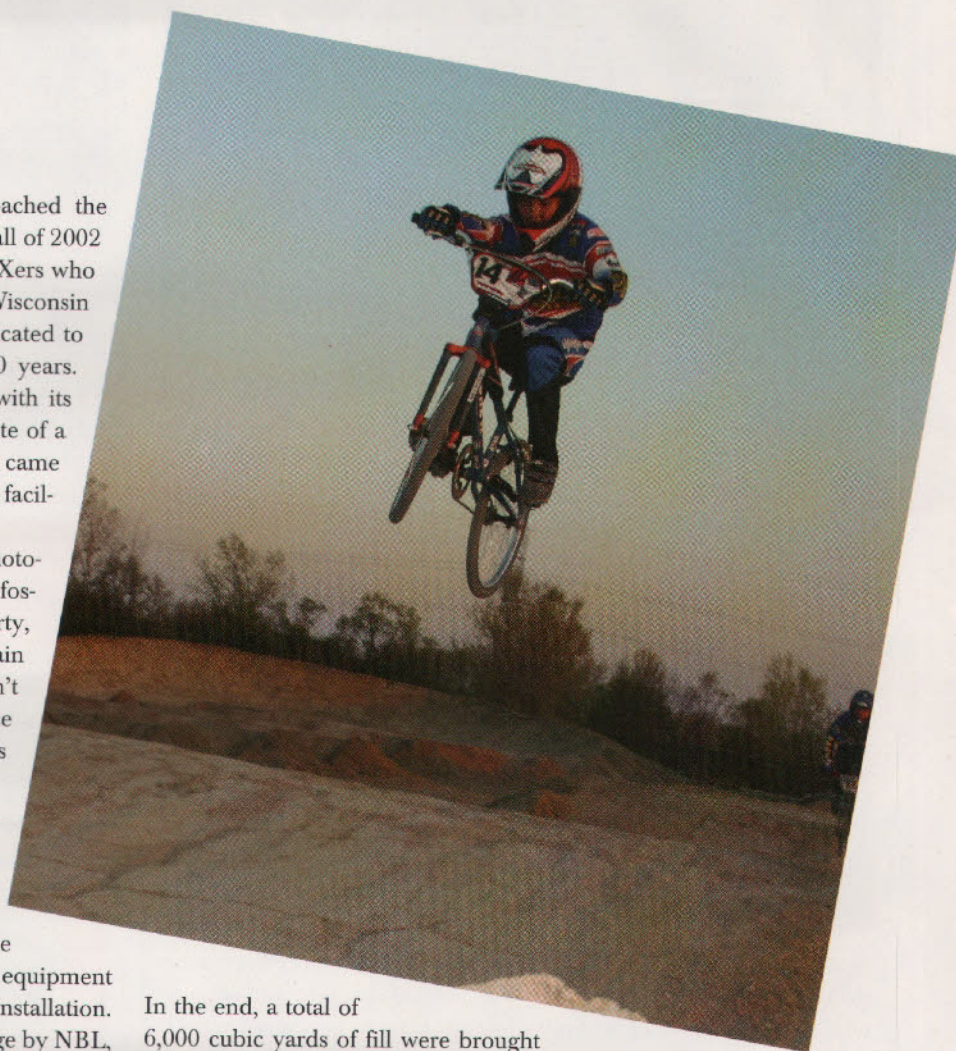
For the uninitiated, BMX is the short form of “bicycle motocross,” a sport that involves the whole family, teaches and fosters individual responsibility, respect for others and property, good sportsmanship and courage. Riders perform on terrain that features a multitude of hills and/or obstacles. But don’t confuse BMX with motocross because the sole power source is the rider. Races last under a minute, with bike speeds sometimes reaching 15-35 miles per hour.

The track was designed by Mark Hildebrand, a nationally known builder of BMX tracks who has created tracks for the X-Games and Gravity Games, and is building tracks for the 2008 Olympic Games. The budget was set at \$99,000, which would include construction of an 80-space gravel parking lot, installation of 1,100 feet of track fencing, equipment rental for track construction, and water and electric utility installation.

Hildebrand’s design services were provided free-of-charge by NBL, and he also got his hands dirty by completing the majority of the earth moving on the 1,200 feet-long course as well as field testing each individual track obstacle as they were being constructed.

Construction of the three major, 180-degree banked turns (known as “berms”) started in early fall of 2004. Local contractors looking to dispose of spoils provided clean fill material. A local excavator was occasionally contracted to assist designer Hildebrand with track obstacles, sidelines, and site restoration.

The track was positioned on the site with ample surrounding green space in order to incorporate larger events, vendors, tents and additional spectators. The positioning also created a buffer zone for the surrounding neighborhood.



In the end, a total of 6,000 cubic yards of fill were brought in. At times the material needed to be stockpiled to coincide with Hildebrand’s availability. Obstacles encountered included pockets of concrete debris in the landfill, lack of fill materials, and material that was substandard and unsuitable for track construction.

Construction of the track was overseen by the WPD’s landscape architect, Steve Wikner, and complies with NBL track standards. Rough grading was finally completed in November 2004, with the track fencing added the following month. The fencing is a necessary element as it allows spectators to view the event at a safe distance. In the spring of 2005, park staff also completed site restoration and dormant turf seeding. An electronic starting gate was installed, as well as a scorekeeper/announcer’s booth.

With great anticipation the track was open to the public on June 12, 2005 with a grand opening celebration. This festive event included more than 100 racers, free giveaways, demonstrations, food vendors, and refreshments.

"I think it's important for the staff that maintains the facility to be involved in the planning stages," says Scott MacLean, manager of park maintenance who oversees the weekly upkeep of the park. Great care and thought was put into ease-of-maintenance of the track, including water access at both ends of the facility, and accessibility of mowers and trucks to service the track.

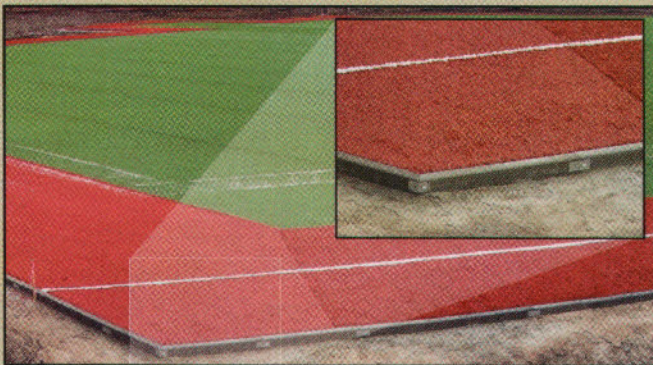
The Park District provides all turf maintenance and trimming for the track while the Waukegan BMX Club members provide supervised programs including gate practices, leagues, and BMX racing clinics. An NBL-sanctioned track offers a comprehensive program that recognizes the importance of neighborhood racing as well as state and national competition.

Weather permitting, the track is open to the public every day. Rules signs are posted with track hours, safety requirements, and a code of conduct. WMBX Club offers gate practices on Thursday nights with organized races on Sundays.

*Mike Trigg, CSFM, superintendent of parks for the Waukegan Park District, is President of the Sports Turf Managers Association. Mike Pavelich is a member of Trigg's staff. ■*



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## Endicott College **blasts** new field out of **granite ledge**

By John Dailey

Endicott College, a small liberal arts school on the beautiful North Shore 20 miles above Boston, recently completed work on its new softball facility, which is next to the multi-purpose stadium that was built for football, lacrosse, and soccer, along with intramural and club activities. More than 40 square feet of granite was blasted away to

make room for the field, in turn creating one of the most dramatic stadium backdrops in all of New England.

The new softball stadium is a tribute to a team that has made itself a strong regional and national contender over the past 12 years. Coach Mark Veilleux leads a softball team that has won three consecutive Commonwealth Coast Titles. In 2005, the team earned their first



national ranking, finishing the season at #23 in Division III and #1 in New England.

Director of Athletic Facilities Brian Wylie and Dennis Monaco spearheaded the stadium and field construction.

Wylie says of the 40-foot area of granite rock, "This type of ledge is very common in the area, and is now something the facility can hang its hat on. With the nature of the New England area, especially the North Shore with granite ledge being such a prominent part of the landscape, we had to cut and fill. This left us with a 40-foot backdrop of ledge surrounding left field."

Wylie says the college exported the granite off campus via truck and was paid for it. "We have to blast some of the granite ledge for every construction project we do," says Wylie, who oversees all such projects.

"After this blast, we compacted the area as much as we could so it wouldn't move," he says. "Then we put 6 to 8 feet of stone, followed by 12 inches of sand and soil and put the irrigation system in that."

The field was originally laid with Kentucky bluegrass sod in the outfield, and is complete with a 2-zone irrigation system and new drainage system for both the infield and outfield. Complementing the outfield sod, Wylie chose the Fenway mix for the infield skin layer, which "allowed for the look we really wanted," he says. The stadium also features a Daktronics scoreboard, two bullpens, two custom-made dugouts, and a press box complete with Internet access and a full sound system.

Endicott College was founded in 1939 and began as an all women's, 2-year junior college. It has evolved into one of the finest co-ed Division III institutions in the New England area with 1,700 students, and its campus features 201 acres of land, including private beaches owned by the school.

Recently the Gulls celebrated their 13th anniversary as an NCAA Division III member. In that time, they have captured 26 league or tournament titles and have made 34 post-season appearances.

*John Dailey is a Graduate Assistant in the Post Sports Science and Fitness Center at Endicott College. ■*



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## Brooks, Hillcrest are STMA's best in Schools/Parks baseball

Hillcrest Booster Field, Simpsonville, SC won the Sports Turf Managers Association's 2005 Field of the Year in the School/Parks category for baseball. Hillcrest FFA advisor and sports turf manager is David C. Brooks, who has a Masters in Ag Ed with many turf manage-

ment courses at Clemson University under his belt. Here Brooks answers some questions from *SportsTurf*:

**ST:** What tips do you have for school turf managers for getting the most out of limited budgets?

**Brooks:** The first one is take time to evaluate your NEEDS, and not just your WANTS. Take the time to do an in-depth needs assessment and stick to it.

I prioritized two main things my first year: getting our fertility program back up to par, and relieving soil compaction. My pH was about 4.4, and my P and K were drastically low. I spent the large part of my budget the first year correcting these issues, and doing weekly aerification.

There was nothing glamorous about spreading lime and fertilizer, and aerifying every week, but this would turn out to be the foundation for our success in the end. My students had much rather be sitting atop some fancy mower, or riding a nice shiny tractor that first year, but we had to stick to our needs not our wants.

Another tip is to spend some time getting to know the people in your community. The saying that "friends are better than money" is very true in my case. It is not enough to just know what your needs are, sometimes there is no way that you are going to meet them on a very limited budget without some help, and that is just what I got.

Our local rec departments loaned us spreaders and slicers, and Greenville Turf and Tractor put our kids and safety ahead of profit by loaning us a tractor and core aerifier that made all the difference. And the great folks at Fox Run Country Club loaned us a topdresser to spread some much-needed sand. Much of this support was forged by walking into businesses (hat in hand) and just asking for whatever support they could give, and spending time educating the community by talking to the local Rotary clubs about what we were trying to accomplish in our school.