

8TH ANNUAL FIELD DAY

Christopher Mark, President, STA

On July 21 the Sports Turf Association held its annual field day in partnership with McCracken Golf Supplies at Globe Sports Park, Hamilton, Ontario. Athletic field managers and staff from across southern Ontario gathered under brilliant sunny skies and warm temperatures to hear seminars and view equipment demonstrations related to Ball Diamond Maintenance. The organizing committee, consisting of David Smith, Jane Rivers, Everett Nieukoop, and Roy Forfar, worked very hard putting together a program which treated delegates to practical, hands-on information related to ball diamond maintenance, a barbecue, and a baseball tournament for those who wished to play ball.

The first speaker on the day was Mr. Robert Kennedy, Superintendent Parks and Cemeteries from the City of St. Catharines. We were privileged to have him address our field day as he is well known for having a premier sports maintenance program in St. Catharines and as a speaker to many audiences across Canada on various issues, particularly athletic field management.

Mr. Kennedy delivered a truly uplifting and motivational seminar. While the majority of his comments focused on athletic field maintenance, his theme can be extrapolated to any area of maintenance. First and foremost, sports field managers must have a PLAN and those responsible for carrying out the PLAN must have PRIDE. Without a PLAN your PROGRAM will not have any direction, and that will come across very quickly to front-line staff, as well as elected officials or senior managers responsible for apportioning funding and making operational decisions. Without PRIDE in the work, the maintenance PROGRAM will suffer.

The result is someone else will be given the work. In these tough economic times for Municipalities, Universities, Colleges and Board's of Education, etc., there are two options for maintenance, public, or private through contracting out. He suggested the main difference between the public and private employee is often PRIDE in the work.



To instill PRIDE in employees he recommended giving them clear direction and training so they have a firm understanding of what they are doing. For example, explain why aeration benefits turf and why it is important to do it in several directions and multiple times during the season. Explain why slow release fertilizers are the best type for use on your athletic fields.

Mr. Kennedy indicated that based on his experience, most municipal employees want to contribute in a positive way to the organization and desire the tools to do the work in the best manner possible. That means having a PLAN, communicating that PLAN to them, ensuring they have the proper equipment and products to achieve the best results for the PROGRAM.

Talk, listen and communicate with elected officials and residents so they have a firm understanding of what you are trying to achieve in building a lasting community for years into the future.

If your goal is to have the best sports fields to attract top calibre tournaments and teams to your area, then develop a PLAN, ensure your PROGRAM and its contents will meet the expectations of the PLAN, and the people challenged with achieving the PLAN have PRIDE in their work. Make sure everyone, from the student who picks up litter, to the tractor operator, right up to the elected officials who vote on your requests for funding, have an excellent understanding of what the PLAN is and how you intend to make it work for the betterment of the commu-

nity and all citizens.

The second speaker on the day was Mr. Mark Altman, of Altman & Altman Consulting; a renowned athletic field expert who has consulted on fields from high school, University and College, to professional sports fields and golf courses. Mr. Altman's casual style and presentation made for a very educational experience for all delegates. Mr. Altman is known for his hands-on and practical tips and opinions on ball diamond and athletic field maintenance. His presentation covered topics such as aeration, fertility, infield materials, overseeding and topdressing. His three goals for athletic fields is Quality, Safety, and Durability.

One maintenance suggestion entailed how to repair ball diamond "lips" which develop at the edge of the infield and outfield grass. These lips, which develop over a season, are usually caused by gilling/dragging the infield in predominantly the same direction. Besides the usual labour intensive technique of removing the sod with a sod cutter, raking out the material and resodding; he suggested three other possible options. Cut a 3 - 4 inch wide by a 4 - 6 inch deep trench in front of the lip. Then drive a tractor wheel along the lip which will cause the material to cave in the trench, thereby reducing the lip. Secondly, try using a power broom to remove the lip, or lastly, try a high pressure water hose to blast the material back onto the infield.

In terms of dragging infields, Mark suggested that one of the most common mistakes is travelling too fast. Instruct operators to slow down and if possible apply water onto the infield immediately after dragging to firm up the infield. If economics dictates you cannot afford a diamond groomer, rig up an old fashioned nail drag using six inch spikes. It may be crude, but it still gets the job done.

Mark indicated his philosophy on ball diamond and athletic field maintenance in general. Tailor the maintenance of your fields to the type and amount of play. If you cannot afford to maintain the entire playing surface, prioritize maintenance on those areas receiving the most wear and tear. In baseball this would be the infield (particularly grassed infields). For soccer it would be the goalmouth creases, centre,

and penalty kick areas. In the case of football the area would be from the centre of the field extending across to where the yard marker numbers are placed on the field. Mark suggested that high wear areas on athletic fields should receive three times the maintenance of other areas on the field.

He feels that aeration is the most important maintenance practice and suggests it should be performed a minimum of five times per year. He stated aeration is the key to plant growth, wearability of your turf, and reduction of injuries to athletes.

Two further maintenance tips he suggested were 1) pre-germinating seed to speed up rehabilitation of worn areas if timing of the repairs is critical and 2) if hardball pitchers (particularly in senior league play) are forever digging holes in the mound, bury an old clay brick where they constantly drag their foot. This will at the very least assist in not having to rebuild and retamp the mound after

every game.

It was most enjoyable having Mr. Altman address our field day and his ability to communicate and capture an audience was best represented in holding the attention of numerous students who primarily came for a baseball game, as well as the full time athletic field managers and staff who attended for training and education. All seemed genuinely interested and entertained by Mark's enthusiasm, sense of humour, and philosophies on everything from athletic field maintenance to safety issues on sports fields, to just knowing and being able to relate to the routine problems sports turf managers face on an everyday basis.

All in all it was a most enjoyable day in Hamilton. Thanks again to the organizing committee and the host venue, the City of Hamilton, for putting on an educational and entertaining day. If you missed it this year, we hope to see you next year.

**1995 Guelph Turfgrass
Institute/Ontario Turfgrass
Research Foundation**

Research Field Day

*Pam Charbonneau,
OMAFRA Turfgrass Advisor*

A part from a sudden cloud burst during registration the Guelph Turfgrass Institute/Ontario Turfgrass Research Field Day held on Mon., Aug. 14, 1995 proceeded without a hitch. There were over 250 people in attendance. The day began with a welcome from Dr. Dennis Murr who introduced the new Guelph Turfgrass Institute Director, Rob Witherspoon. Thom Charters, President of Ontario Turfgrass Research Foundation, promptly presented Rob with a cheque for \$30,500 for turfgrass research for the current research season. Randy Fielder, President of the Georgian Bay Golf Superintendents Association also gave Rob Witherspoon a cheque for \$1000 which is their final payment of their pledge of \$5000 for the G.M. Frost Research and Information Centre Building Fund.

For the first time ever the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association held a golf tournament for their members in conjunction with the research field day, a format which was well received by their membership.

The purpose of the turf research field day was to give all members of the turfgrass industry a chance to view first hand the turf research results. It was also an excellent opportunity to meet the GTI turf researchers and ask them any burning turf questions which have been on your mind lately. Twelve of the GTI faculty and graduate students were on hand to present their research results.

For any of you who did not attend this is a must for next years calendar.

1996

Ontario

Turfgrass
Symposium

Ontario's Premier Education and Trade Show

Ontario's Premier Turfgrass Education and Trade Show will be better than ever in 1996. A new venue was sought due to space conflicts with classroom scheduling at the Univ. of Guelph. The Regal Constellation Hotel and Convention Centre near the Toronto International Airport has been selected by the OTS Executive Committee.

Thus all the program will be under one roof - check you coat and gloves and move from event to event in your shirt sleeves. Parking is unlimited and free if you register for a room in the Constellation. Room rates range from \$60.00 to \$80.00.

The time of the year remains the same - January 3 - 5, 1996.

The Educational Program will be kicked off by the Keynote Address by Dr. Tom Watson of Toro International. Dr. Watson is a library of knowledge of practical turfgrass management, gained through many years of trouble-shooting turfgrass problems in the U.S., Canada, and world-wide.

The Sports Turf Association has a full program of speakers which includes an afternoon panel on "Costing Sports Field Construction." Since all events are close together the opportunity to move to another speaker program such as that of the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association will be simpler than previous years.

The Annual Meeting of the Sports Turf Association will be held as a complimentary breakfast on Thursday morning, commencing at 7:00 a.m. Please endeavour to attend and participate in the business of operating your Association.

Last but not least please indicate your membership in the Sports Turf Association when you register. If you register early you may include other employees in your organization who are not members of the STA at the STA membership rate. Remember this event is the major source of revenue for the operation of your organization.