Turf diseases keep Browns’ chief busy

Vince R. Patterozzi’s grandest dream is to help the Cleveland Browns professional football team get to the Super Bowl. They’ve never done it.

His immediate goal—and the task for which he was hired almost four years ago—is to make sure they perform on the best and safest playing surfaces possible.

Vince, the Browns’ grounds manager, said that this summer presented him with a new set of grounds management challenges. Each season does. Probably the most vexing problem in 1995 has been the proliferation of turf diseases, particularly in the practice fields. Pythium, summer patch and fusarium blight—they all reared their ugly heads, he said.

Temperatures averaging 10 degrees above normal and unrelenting humidity through August didn’t help matters, said Vince. Nor did a %-inch layer of thatch in the turfgrass. Actually, he hadn’t been displeased with the thatch prior to the disease problem. It had kept the cleats of the huge players from churning up bare earth.

“I watch people’s feet, if they slip or if they don’t slip,” said Vince. Patterozzi’s center, told Cleveland-area PGMS members that he battled turf diseases all summer at the Browns’ training camp.

Even with the daily pounding of 80 huge football players the practice fields (80 percent sand/20 percent soil) provided reliable footing.