

Off The Fringe

The Thrill of the Grass

THE FIELD OF DREAMS IS JUST WHAT ITS NAME IMPLIES

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

I want to share a recent experience. It's a religious experience if you believe in the church of baseball. And, yes, it has much to do about turf — very sacred turf.

A few months ago I traveled to a place where the sea-green turf is so thick and tough that it's brawny. The turf I'm talking about rivals the rigid rough that Oakmont Country Club displayed for this year's U.S. Open.

The turf I'm talking about makes up the famous baseball field located amid a sprawling ocean of corn in picturesque-in-its-own-right Dyersville, Iowa. That would be the baseball field

that starred in the 1989 movie of its namesake, "Field of Dreams."

Not to sound corny, but visiting the field of dreams was a dream come true for me. I've been a fan of the film for years and have longed to migrate there. There's a line in the film when Kevin Costner's character Ray Kinsella asks Shoeless Joe Jackson (played by Ray Liotta) what he likes about playing baseball. Shoeless Joe responds, "The thrill of the grass." Having seen and played on the field, I can relate.

I bet you didn't know that the field's original sod, which was planted in haste during filming, didn't take and died. Alas, the production crew

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had to paint the grass green. However, the field's current grass appeared flawless on the sun-splashed Saturday afternoon I was there.

The field's cornstalks, where the ghost players disappeared after playing, garnered much attention in the movie. But I was more taken with the lush turf, a bluegrass/ryegrass blend that lacked weeds and any sign of disease. The turf was vigorous enough to slow hissing ground balls to a near stop before they reached the red-dirt infield.

During my magical hours spent there, the notion struck me that farmers can tend turfgrass as fine as they can grow corn. The Field of Dreams is proof. ■

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