



MOVING AHEAD

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As the new turf faculty member at University of Wisconsin, Monroe Miller quickly tapped me for an article for the upcoming issue of *The Grass Roots*. Instead of giving a hard, fact-based research report for my first article (plenty of time for those in the future!), I thought I would write an article about some of the new turf developments I've come across in the last week.

I expect that Lori Bocher will be writing a personality profile for this or an upcoming issue so my article won't focus on myself. One of the first things I did to prepare for writing the article was to review a recent edition of *The Grass Roots*. Of course I was familiar with the publication, occasionally reading science-based articles from it while I was at Michigan State University. When I actually read through the entire May/June edition, though, the one word that came to mind to describe the publication was "eclectic"—it contained a wide variety of topics and writing styles. Quite refreshing, it seemed something was there for everyone. Being new to Wisconsin, I especially enjoyed the articles discussing the top golf courses in the state and movements of the superintendents from one course to another.

I expect things will be quite interesting for me in Wisconsin. Already this week I have had two noteworthy things happen. The first was a "weed" sample I was asked to identify, sent from a county extension agent with no description of where it came from or any other remarks (these are always helpful, you know!). The sample was obviously a grass species, apparently dead (my first thought, of course, was it's always hard to identify something when it's dead compared to when it's alive!). It turned out it was the best possible sample he could have sent to me as it was zoysiagrass! After I looked at it, I did manage to contact him and find out it was from a home

lawn with a southern exposure which was somewhat protected from the elements. I also spoke with the folks at the Turfgrass Disease and Diagnostic Clinic to ask if they had ever seen a sample of zoysiagrass at the clinic, but they hadn't. Did I mention I like new and unique things?

The other noteworthy event was my trip to Lambeau Field to see The Renovation. The day was cold (few days haven't been across the Midwest this month!) and rainy but, as the Norwegians say, "There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing." Fortunately I was able to make a day of it since I was well bundled. As you know if you read Wayne Horman's article in the last issue, the former turf is being replaced with a product called SportGrass. When I arrived, they had finished installing the drainage, 4" lines at 10-ft. centers, and were finishing adding a 4" gravel layer over the tiles. Apparently the existing soil was so compacted the contractor had to spend \$1500 to fix his trencher after digging the trenches! An eight-row irrigation system, running widthwise across the field, had already been installed. This marks the first time Lambeau field will have automatic irrigation. I did get to watch the plastic piping (1" diameter) being installed for the heating system. This was installed by three groups of two people each, and they were moving fast (they had to in order to keep warm!). A water-glycol mix will be heated and pumped through the piping with the goal of maintaining a root zone temperature of 65°F and a surface temperature of 45°F. Several manifolds alongside the field will be used to supply each section with the water-glycol mix. Each pipe, and there were hundreds, had to be tied down at frequent intervals to re-rods which were installed in the soil beneath the gravel. The root zone mix, a 90:10 sand:peat mixture

according to the company that mixed it, will be placed on it for a depth of 10 inches. I saw the mix in the parking lot as I was leaving and took a small sample home to look at (don't tell anyone!). It is expected the SportGrass will be placed on the field sometime between June 1-June 15.

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The first game is July 26. Many eager eyes will be on the field that day, most to watch the defending world champions, but at least a few to view the turf, too.

The other exciting event in the turf world this week was the installation of a portable turfgrass system at the New Jersey Meadowlands for professional soccer. The system consisted of over 6,000 plastic trays filled with a soil or sand mix (I didn't see it so I don't know which) and (allegedly) thick-cut sod. It will be interesting to see how this system holds up during the season. Hopefully it will do well as we the turf industry need successes in these arenas to extinguish the use of artificial turf. The closest comparable situation was the portable field developed by Michigan State University for the Pontiac Silverdome for the U.S. Cup '93 and World Cup 1994 soccer tournaments. The MSU system used just under 2,000 hexagonal steel modules filled with sand and sodded with a Kentucky bluegrass/perennial ryegrass mixture. Fewer modules were used at the Pontiac Silverdome because they

were larger than those used at the Meadowlands, 50ft² versus 16 ft². One of the many nice things about portable turf systems is the flexibility to rapidly replace and provide a fresh new turf surface should an area become worn out from play or disease. This concept could also be applied for moveable tees for golf course tees and driving ranges. I have even spoken with Eddie Seaward at Wimbledon about the use of a portable turf system for the grass tennis courts.

That's all for now, folks. I look forward to meeting all of you (hopefully not all at once!) associated with the turf industry in Wisconsin. Already Monroe and many others have made me feel welcome. It is also a nice feeling to run into former students and friends I made while in Michigan and Ohio who are now at courses like Trappers Turn, Lake Geneva, and athletic fields like County Stadium and Pohlman Field in Beloit. If you find you are ever having a hard time getting a hold of me through the phone, you can reach me by e-mail (jstier@facstaff.wisc.edu).

As the new turf extension/research/teaching person at UW-Madison, I will always appreciate your input on the types of research and education you feel our industry needs. 🌱



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