

# Noer Facility to Host International Turf Field Day



By Tom Schwab, O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Noer Facility is in for an exciting event during the summer of 2007. The Turf Producer International (TPI) Summer Convention and Field Day will convene in Madison on July 23 - 27, 2007, including a field day at O.J. Noer. The field day segment of their convention will be held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association and the Midwest Sod Council field days resulting in a potential 1,000 or more attendees from all around the globe visiting our turf research facility.

Two years ago, George Brandt of American Sod Corporation proposed hosting this international and combined field day at O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility. George is a lifetime member of WTA and will be the president of the TPI organization in 2007. When George brought the idea to our UW-Madison turf-

group, we agreed this would be a wonderful opportunity to bring together many organizations with the common interest of growing the best turfgrass.

TPI has membership in over 40 countries, and they are very much like other turf organizations in the green industry. Their mission statement declares dedication to represent and advance the turfgrass sod industry worldwide through the promotion of improved practices and the profes-

sional development of members and the enhancement of the environment.

The third host of this combined field day is the Midwest Sod Council (MSC). Sod producers from seven Midwest states are served by MSC, and they traditionally hold a field day every other year, alternating between Illinois and Wisconsin. Rusty Stachlewitz is their executive director and he is very involved in organizing this combined field day. He coordi-



The TPI Summer Field Day was held at Biograss Sod Farm in Sandy, Utah in 2005.



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nated many of the supplies of seed, fertilizer, chemicals, rock pickers, seeders, mowers, tractors, and irrigation equipment that we need to prepare for the event.

Preparations started last summer with establishing twenty new acres of turfgrass from three agricultural fields adjacent to the Noer Facility. The twenty acres consist of a twelve acre field to accommodate sod harvesting and mowing demonstrations and two other fields for parking.

The hot and dry weather last summer was good for cultivating the agricultural acreage into sod fields. We were worried when the dry conditions continued into the fall after we seeded in mid-September. Roberts Irrigation donated a Kifco water wheel to germinate the seed, but with our limited pump capacity, we barely got the turf established before winter. Much of the turf looked pretty spindly going into



This 36 foot wide Progressive rotary mower was demonstrated at TPI 2005. A smaller version will be used to maintain the fields for our 2007 show.

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winter but it was protected under the December snow cover. Then it kept growing when the ground thawed during our record warm January, and the turf actually appeared mature by early February. It looks especially good now, in mid-February, with nine inches of snow cover over it.

We still have a long way to go to prepare for this large event. The new fields are rough and need to be rolled this spring, turf health and weeds need to be managed, the facility needs infrastructure changes for bus/truck parking and turn-around, and aesthetics need to be enhanced.

I attended the 2005 TPI Field Day in Salt Lake City last summer and the host site, Biograss Sod Farm, provided a very high standard for us to meet. The Noer Facility is poised to match those standards with all the support we have received thus far from Rusty, George, and many generous industry representatives.

We are honored to host this international and combined event at the UW-Madison. The field day will bring together turf experts from around the world and many ideas will be shared that cross all turf professions. Even if you are not in the market for a \$400,000 sod harvester or 36-foot wide rotary mower, this event will provide fresh innovative ideas and education for everyone. And we don't even have to travel to attend it. This international event will be held in our backyard. I hope you will take advantage of the opportunity. 🌱



This Kongskilde rock picker was also demonstrated at Biograss, and is the same model we used to prepare the new fields at O.J. Noer.



New TPI seeding to left with Noer Facility on right.



Brillion donated the seeder that was used to plant the new fields at O.J. Noer.