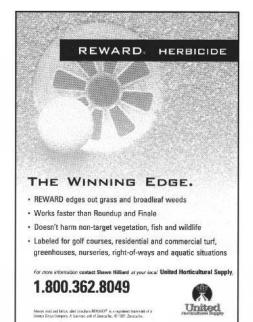
The first game is July 26. Many eager eyes will be on the field that day, most to watch the defending world champions, but at least a few to view the turf, too.

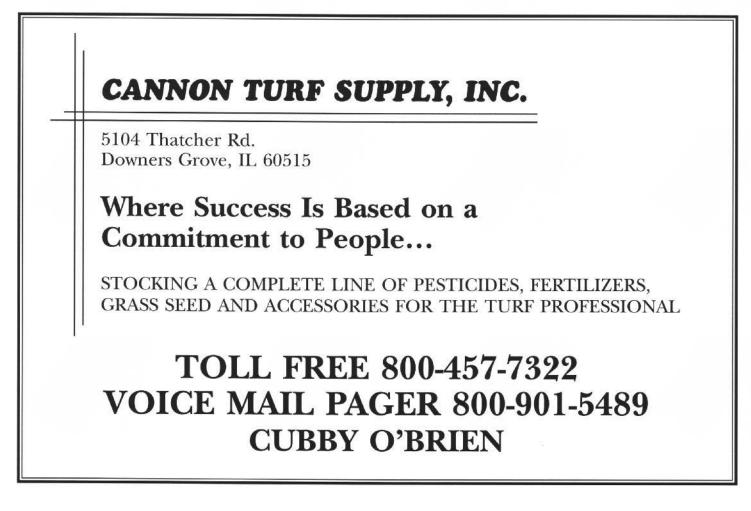
The other exciting event in the turf world this week was the installation of a portable turfgrass system at the New Jersey Meadowlands for professional soccer. The system consisted of over 6,000 plastic trays filled with a soil or sand mix (I didn't see it so I don't know which) and (allegedly) thick-cut 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, 50ft<sup>2</sup> versus 16 ft<sup>2</sup>. 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.







For someone who grew up in the shadow of Green Bay's Lambeau Field, he certainly was thrust into the spotlight this past January when the Green Bay Packers earned homefield advantage on their march to Super Bowl XXXI. Todd Edlebeck, grounds supervisor at Lambeau Field, conducted three national press conferences himself. ESPN dubbed him the "sod god".

"It made me a little nervous," Todd says of the unprecedented attention for someone who usually can be found quietly tending his turf. "The biggest thing at that point was to get the field done. But it was exciting, in some ways, to be a part of something that was so huge throughout the country."

You all remember how "huge" it was.

- The terrific Packer record that gave them home-field advantage for the playoff games.
- The January 4 rain that turned the game against the San Francisco 49ers into the "Mud Bowl" or "Souper Bowl" as it was dubbed in the press.
- Coach Mike Holmgren fielding questions about the turf, as well as his team, during the post-game press conference. Could the field be ready for the next week's NFC championship game? Holmgren had confidence in Todd and his crew.
- The decision to resod the entire field for that January 12 championship game.
- A week during which the sod at Lambeau Field made almost as many newspaper and TV headlines as the team. Headlines like "Sod Story" and "Turf's Up" were the norm.
- Green Bay police forming the "sod squad" to keep exuberant fans away from the pile of old sod that was torn up.



Todd Edlebeck

 Eventually that old sod is packaged in "Frozen Tundra" boxes and sells out at \$10 a box.

In the middle of this exciting sod saga was Todd. The friendly, unassuming, boyish supervisor moved from the shadow of Lambeau Field onto its center stage. The shadow? "I grew up just three houses from the stadium," Todd explains. "They always say that I grew up in the shadow of Lambeau Field."

When he was 15, he began working summers for the city of Green Bay which managed the stadium at that time. After graduating from high school in 1982, he worked for the city full-time for a year with plans to attend a technical school. But in 1983 the Packer organization assumed management of the stadium, and they asked Todd to become a fulltime grounds crew member. And he's been there ever since.

"In 1988 or 1989 we divided maintenance into two departments," Todd recalls. "I became the grounds supervisor, and Ted Eisenreich became the maintenance supervisor. Prior to that we worked as one department. We still help each other out, but our responsibilities are divided."

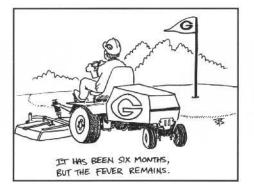
As grounds supervisor, Todd is in charge of the playing field and the

practice facility. Together, the two departments employ five full-time people (including Todd and Ted) and about 50 part-time or seasonal people.

The week between January 4 and January 12 probably will be Todd's most memorable as a Packer employee. With the Packers putting in a new field this summer, the circumstances that led up to the January resodding of the entire field most likely will never be repeated.

Coming into the playoff game against the San Francisco 49ers on January 4, the field was in great shape thanks to the underground heating system that makes it possible to grow grass in January. Due to excessive wear, the middle section of the field had been resodded on December 9. "It held up really well during the Minnesota game," Todd reports, adding that he was confident it would hold up for the 49er game, too.

But then the unexpected happened. Rain in January. And to make matters worse, the 30-year-old field doesn't have a good drainage system, according to Todd. On game day, it was pouring rain in the morning. "We have to uncover the field for warmups two hours before the game starts," Todd explains. "It rained throughout that whole period, and it rained throughout the whole game. Because the field itself was thawed out, and everything around it (where there's no heating system) was



frozen, the rain just filled up the whole field. The field was a total mess, like a swamp."

A Packer victory that day meant that they'd be hosting the NFC Championship game in just eight days on January 12. What was going through Todd's mind as he watched the field literally turn into a mud bowl? "I was real, real upset," he admits. "You don't plan for that kind of rain in January. Most of the time it would be snow, and the field would have held up well with snow.

"We thought to ourselves, 'What are we going to do now?' The league office was here at the game. They called and said they wanted to meet us at the 50 yard line after the game," Todd continues. "I knew at that time that, if we won the game, we'd have to replace the field. How much? The whole thing."

So in the beginning of the fourth quarter he called the Maryland sod farm that had provided the sod back in December. They said they'd be able to cut and deliver the needed sod. He also called the weather bureau to see what kind of weather to expect in the next week. "I wanted to have my facts straight before I met with the NFL," Todd points out. "Once we knew that we were going to win, we knew that we'd have to work fast. I told the NFL that my suggestion was to resod the whole thing. Once I did that, I committed myself to getting it done."

The NFL agreed. They didn't even wait for Chip Toma, their field advisor, to arrive on Monday. "He watched the game on TV and said over the phone that he agreed with the decision," Todd says. "He was a little reluctant to do that over the phone. But we had to make the decision and get the sod people ready to go."

The NFL, and not Green Bay, had the final say. "When you have a championship game, it's no longer in the hands of the team but the NFL," Todd explains. "They're in charge of the whole game. They get the game revenue. They also pay all the bills."

They agreed that no more than one-third of the field should be left uncovered at any time, so they couldn't start ripping up the old sod until the new started to arrive. That was on Wednesday. Because of the heating system on the field, the turf came up quite easily with sod cutters. "If the frost had been in the ground, it would have been as hard as concrete and we never would have been able to get the old grass off," Todd says.

When they began laying the sod on Wednesday, daytime temperatures were back to a more seasonal 15 to 20 degrees. "The sod came to Wisconsin in heated trucks, and it sat in the trucks until we needed it," Todd says. "If the temperature had gotten any colder, we may have had problems with the sod freezing together."

With the cold weather, the sod lost some color. "It will brown real quick," Todd points out. "When we unrolled the sod, it was green. But as it lay there, it got a little browner. Having blades of grass in that cold takes a lot away from the color."

Things went quite well on Wednesday. They worked until they ran out of sod at 2 o'clock Thursday morning. "So we covered the field because they were predicting one to three inches of snow," Todd remembers. "At that time about a third of the field was still old sod. We had almost half of the new sod down."

Sure enough, the snow came on Thursday and it snowed all day. The first sod truck arrived by 6 a.m., and they uncovered only a small corner of the field. "As we rolled out the new sod on the soil that was wet from the snow, it stuck there," Todd recalls. "So we had to have a few extra people pushing it into place. That added more work, but it was also a plus in that the sod stuck to the ground."

As the sod trucks kept arriving, the process continued. Tear up old sod;

lay down new sod; work it into place; roll it; cover it with the tarp as soon as possible to keep the snow off. "The snow kept falling and building up on the tarps," Todd says. "By the time we finished at about 6 p.m. on Thursday, the tarp was actually all covered with snow. The field itself was completed, but we didn't have any of the sides down. We had to come back on Friday morning to finish that job."

The sod was not pinned down. Because of its heavy clay soil and the fact that it was cut two inches thick, each roll weighed about a ton. "If you cut off a piece about a foot long and 42 inches wide, you couldn't pick it up off the ground. It was that heavy," Todd explains.

What did it take to get the job done?

- 28 semi loads, with about 16 sod rolls per semi
- about 448 rolls of sod at 42 inches wide by 42-45 feet long, and 2 inches thick
- 30 to 50 people, many of whom were volunteers, working on the field at all times
- about \$150,000 of NFL money

After all of this work, how did the field hold up on game day? "It was excellent," Todd reports. "Something like this had never been done before. Even Chip's dad, George Toma, who was at Kansas City for many years and is considered the master of turf, a guru, said that what we did in one week's time was an amazing feat."

(Continued on page 15)

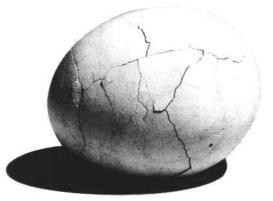


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#### (Continued from page 13)

What pleased Todd most about the process—besides actually completing the seemingly impossible task—was the amount of help that he received. "I had voice mail, probably 50 messages a day, from people who wanted to supply something or help," he points out. "The golf course people. Local businesses. The tractor and fork lift companies. It just goes to show how much pride we have in Wisconsin. We don't just follow our team, but we support it when it needs help."

And the team was able to support the community in a way that probably could only happen in Green Bay. Some of the calls Todd received during this eventful week were from charities that were interested in selling the old sod that was being torn up. The Packer organization decided it was a good plan, so the work crews piled the sod in the parking lot until it could be hauled away. "People were just going wild, jumping in front of our equipment, trying to get some sod," Todd remembers. "For safety reasons, we hired a police officer to stand by it."

The sod was packaged in specially made "Frozen Tundra" boxes and sold for \$10 a box. All 25,000 boxes were sold, with \$250,000 raised for local charities.

After the NFC Championship game on January 12, the "new" sod was torn up, too. "We already had problems with drainage, and the new sod had a really heavy clay base," Todd explains. "It would have created a layering effect, with two inches of the clay base, and then our black soil underneath, and then back down to a clay base."

More charities wanted the second crop of sod, but this time the Packer organization decided to sell it itself with proceeds going toward a new field. "We're going to build a hightech field, a sand-based field with a drainage system, new heating system and new irrigation," Todd reveals. "And we're looking at sports turf, which is a synthetic field under the natural turf."

During the January resodding, some of the help came from local golf course crews — Oneida Golf and Riding Club, Green Bay Country Club, Thornberry Creek, and Crystal Springs in nearby Seymour. Todd talks turf throughout the year with Randy Witt at Oneida.

With no formal turf schooling, Todd has attended lots of seminars to learn more about the art and science of maintaining turf. "My philosophy is that you can always learn from somebody," he says. "Talking with other grounds people throughout the league and from golf courses, you can always learn from somebody. Their ideas may save you some time, and your ideas may save them some time."

Do the football players pay much attention to the turf? "Sterling Sharpe was always one to give us a hard time in a joking way," Todd reports. "Sterling was always a good guy. He kidded around a lot, like telling us we didn't water the field enough.

"And Chris Jacke (kicker) and Craig Hentrich (punter) are always concerned about the field," he continues. "We talk real closely. They'll come out and talk to me when I'm cutting grass. And they always look me up to see how the field is before a game."

Joining the Packer organization in 1983, Todd worked during some lean years when there were more losses than wins. Working for a winning team is quite a bit different. "Everybody is happier," he says. "The support from the fans is totally different when everybody is so excited and you see everybody with something green and gold. People recognize you.

"Wisconsin always supported the Packers, even through the lean years," Todd continues. "But the support is more widespread now. You go into the Detroit airport, or down in Florida, and you see people with Packer things. I think the whole country was excited for us and wanted to see us do well."

When not working for the Packers, Todd likes to spend time with his family — wife, Julie, who works as an administrative assistant, and their two sons, Matt (7) and Zachary (6). "I coach soccer and T-ball with my sons," Todd points out. "I like to be involved with their sports." He also likes to hunt. And he's a volunteer for the fire department in his home of Ashwaubenon.

How do his kids feel about having a dad who works with the world champion Green Bay Packers? "I think they're getting more excited," Todd answers. "When they were younger they didn't realize that it was special when they walked into the locker room with me and saw all of the players. But as they get older, they get more excited about shaking hands with Brett or Reggie. And when they go to school, the other kids will ask, 'You've really been in the locker room with Brett and Reggie?"

Yes, he has. But, more importantly, he committed himself to the seemingly impossible task of making sure that Brett and Reggie, and all of the other Packers, had an excellent playing field for that historic NFC championship game that catapulted the Packers into the Super Bowl for the first time in 29 years.



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## **HIGHER GROUND**

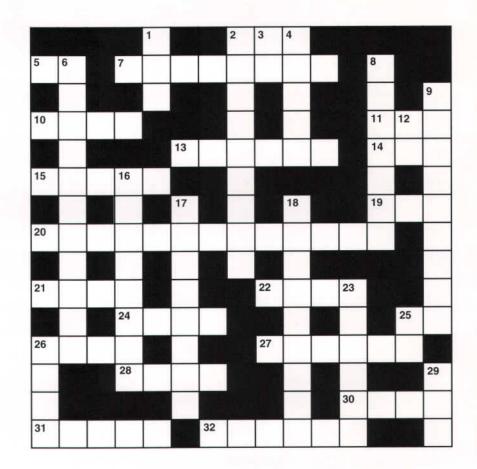
By Steve Millett Department of Plant Pathology University of Wisconsin-Madison

Wow! Wisconsin has more turfgrass crossword puzzlers than either I or the editor would have guessed. So due to popular demand, the turfgrass cruciverbalist is back for another issue. Have at it!

(Answers on page 51)

#### ACROSS

- 2 A small drink
- 5 Upper Peninsula
- 7 Mike Jaeger's 'Red Pine in a green' is located here
- 10 U.S. Senator (Herb)
- 11 Australian bird
- 13 "The hell hole of the range", a Great Lakes city in Edna Ferber's book 'Come and Get It'
- 14 The Gulf \_\_\_\_\_
- 15 Miller Genuine \_\_\_\_\_
- 19 Spanish for river
- 20 Speckled snow mold fungus: T.\_\_\_\_\_
- 21 Necrotic \_\_\_\_\_ Spot
- 22 Vomit
- 24 Leave out
- 25 Bob Dole's home
- 26 Authentic
- 27 WI State soil, \_\_\_\_\_ silt loam
- 28 Type of pickle
- 30 Tiger plays this
- 31 WI's Attorney General
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_ fungicides to prevent resistance



#### DOWN

- 1 Family
- 2 Survival structure of Typhula sp.
- 3 Intelligent quotient
- 4 To purify irrigation systems
- 6 Moving forward
- 8 Phil Garner's team
- 9 Horman's article
- 12 Mother

- 16 U.S. Senator (Russ)
- 17 Location of WI's northernmost golf course
- 18 Gray snow mold fungus: Typhula \_\_\_\_\_
- 23 Near the edge
- 25 Knock out
- 26 Skin of sclerotia (watermelon)
- 29 At the stern

#### Notes From The Noer Facility



### **JOY OF COOKING**

By Tom Schwab, Superintendent O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility

Things have really been cooking around the Noer Facility this spring. So many plots are being redone that you wouldn't recognize the place. Nineteen of our seventy-seven irrigated plots are in one stage or another of being changed into new studies. Many other investigations have been installed away from the irrigated plots both on and off the Noer grounds. The UW-Madison turf group is really going to town.

It's been a fun and educational season thus far for me. Everyone is really pitching in to help the others out on different projects. Whether it's Wayne helping me analyze a study with statistics, Jeff bringing new ideas from Penn State, John sharing procedures from Michigan State, Amy sharing stories from her outreach activities, Gary showing us how to attract wildlife and beautify the facility with his work on the Audubon program, Randy Smith building a new putting green and sharing his life experiences, Doug overseeing the disease lab, my crew pitching in with labor on everyone's projects, or Audra giving input on WTA activities, the season has been a full one.

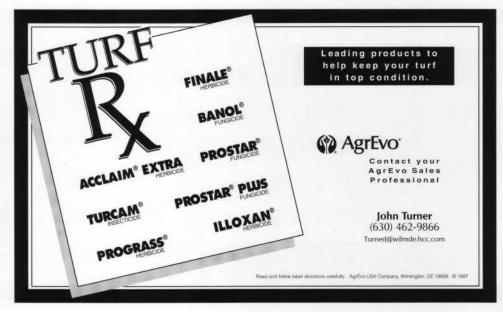
One different study I'm doing is analyzing a new product that claims to fix dog urine spots in lawns. The different part is I had to find some dog urine to set up a controlled study. With a couple phone calls, I found a laboratory supply outlet right here in Madison that sells the stuff; \$220 per gallon. And you thought you had to pay a ton for some of your products! Why should we test this product? The manufacturer claims it works and there is a need for it. Wisconsin is only one of three states in the country that may require a manufacturer to submit replicable university testing of a soil and plant additive (which is what this dog spot fixer is classified as) before the product can be sold. Most states only require that the product is safe to use and then lets the buyer beware of whether or not it works. You would be amazed at the number of homeowner phone calls that we get each spring asking if there is a product that repairs dog urine damage in lawns. There seems to be a need for the product but it won't get this university's stamp of approval until the testing shows that it works.

Another product we're testing this spring is a lawn repair kit for bare spots. It's a mulch, seed and fertilizer combination. The kit makes many claims on the label. But once again the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection wants to see university research of those claims before it approves the product for sale. I can see us becoming quite busy with testing many other products like these in the future.

The biggest addition this spring is the new one-half acre plant pathology putting green. Randy Smith of Admire Greenscapes just finished the construction of the green before Memorial Day and Jeff Greggs seeded it down over that weekend. Threequarters of the surface is seeded with *Penncross* seed and one quarter is sprigged with *Poa annua*. Jeff will do fungicide trials on it and hopes to have information for you by field day. It should be interesting to see what he does after he grows it in. I imagine he will apply a variety of different plant protectants and then infect the turfgrass that he had just grown in a month earlier.

Dr. Kussow seeded down a new green this spring also. Its size is dwarfed by the other new green but the information that will be derived from the study will be just as grand. This green will investigate root zone organic supplement effects on putting green quality and biological properties.

Watch for some good information from our new assistant professor of horticulture, Dr. John Stier. He has me preparing two plots for *Poa* (Continued on page 19)



# At 5/64", you could be so close and yet so far away.

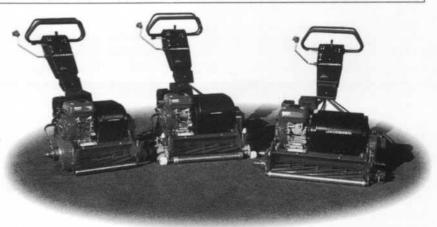
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#### (Continued from page 17)

supina investigations and another two plots for athletic field research. I'm not sure what those studies are going to be yet, but I know his credentials on both *supina* and athletic field turf from Michigan State University are impressive. It will be interesting to derive some Wisconsin information on those two subjects and John will be sure to do that.

Each member of the turf team has been conducting off-site studies this spring also. Wayne has fertilizer trials, Amy has salt tolerant turf studies, Jeff, Doug and Steve have fungicide trials and I've set up a couple turf species/mixtures demonstrations. I'm sure that there are other studies, but I can't keep track of them all. I just know that everyone is quite busy. You obviously won't be able to visit these off-site studies when you come to field day, but the 1997 Turf Research book that gets handed out at the winter EXPO should be packed with information from all this work.

Another turf project that I've been helping with is seeding the new Madison Area Youth Soccer Association field complex. They hope to have 20 fields growing in by this fall. The fields will be made up of a few different mixtures to see which perform the best. The fields are very close to the Noer Facility so I hope we can get some research on them in the future. They probably will seed one field with a mixture to include Poa supina this fall so Dr. Stier will be able to add to his knowledge base on this variety. I'm learning some real-life experiences from this project. They are installing the fields with a limited budget and no irrigation system which is probably how most athletic field installations get done. The positive conditions are we slit seeded most of the fields in two directions. bought quality seed, and were able to add starter fertilizer. I hope they can continue to add proper nutrition and that mother nature provides them good moisture.

The sod industry got a new study installed at Noer this spring also. Jeff prepared a large area to compare sod blends from Wisconsin sod producers that wanted to participate. He will look at these blends as they are laid on compacted soil and tilled soil.

Speaking of sod, I've been using much of the old stuff that we cut off these new plots to fix up areas where the new and improved summer field day trade show area will be this year (read Audra's article for more on field day 1997). We've got quite a few other areas to repair after all the activity that's been going on this spring but I've got a great crew that will be up to the task. The job of establishing new turf areas and studies will continue for a while and it's always fun and rewarding to successfully do that. Things are really cooking at Noer. W



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