

Sports Turf Management Through The Eyes Of A Player, Manager and Broadcaster

Joe Torre, former player, manager and now a broadcaster with the California Angeles, reflects on turf management as the keynote speaker at STMA's First Annual Awards Banquet.

What impact do turf managers/groundskeepers have on the game of baseball? Do they help the home team? There very definitely is some advantage to the home team in baseball. "It has been said that some ball clubs have 10 men on the field the 10th person being the groundskeeper." Let's look at a few instances:



A. 1960 World Series--Pittsburgh Pirates versus New York Yankees. Bill Virdon of the Pirates hits a double play ball to Yankees shortstop Tony Kubek and the ball jumps up and hits Tony in the throat. Guess who the home team was? Right, the Pirates went on and won the World Series 4 games to 3, thanks in part to Bill Mazeroski's home run. However, without the diligent work of the Pittsburgh groundskeeper who placed that stone in the infield, Mazeroski may never have had the opportunity to hit that home run.

B. Rivalry--San Francisco Giants versus Los Angeles Dodgers. This rivalry was and still is a great one and especially during the days of the great base stealer, Maury Wills. The ground crew at Dodger Stadium kept the infield soil hard which was conducive to the speed on the base paths for Wills. However, when the Dodgers played the Giants in San Francisco, the grounds crew at Candlestick Park would soak the infield to neutralize the running ability of Maury Wills, and it worked.

C. Philadelphia Phillies--Veterans Stadium. When the Phillies used to play baseball in old Connie Mack Stadium there were numerous rainouts. Veteran's Stadium was built with synthetic turf to replace the old field and, in 1971, our St. Louis Cardinals played the Phillies in an extra inning game on a rainy Sunday. At the top of the 15th inning we scored 5 runs to take the lead and then it started to rain. It was ironic because when the rain stopped, we learned that the grounds crew member who operated the Zambonie machine to remove the water from the field had gone home with the key. The game was suspended erasing all of our runs. It's no wonder that the Phillies Richie Allen once said, "If a horse can't eat it, I don't want to play on it, or if you can't smoke it, I don't want it."

D. Wrigley Field--Chicago. When I managed, I recall one day at Wrigley Field how finely manicured the grounds crew had prepared the infield. Apparently my pitchers didn't want to mess up the playing surface, so they got the Cub players to hit the ball up in the air with the wind blowing out--home run weather.

Many managers cooperate very closely with the groundskeeper at their respective ball parks. Billy Martin and Earl Weaver used to help rearrange their infields to coincide with their teams.

continue page 6

Baseball Diamond Of The Year Awards

Two baseball Diamond of the Year Awards were presented at the STMA Annual Awards Banquet. The awards, sponsored by Beam Clay and supported by Sports Turf Magazine and the Sports Turf Manager's Association, were awarded to the College of the Holy Cross for the school and educational field division (Fitton Field) and to the Albany-Colonie Yankees (Heritage Park) for the private and public stadium division. For more information on the fields, see the April 1987 issue of *Sports Turf Magazine*. Congratulations to John Liburdi (Heritage Park) and James Long and crew (Holy Cross.)



John Liburdi, center, accepting baseball Diamond of the Year Award, with James Kelsey, Beam Clay, and Joe Torre.



Holy Cross grounds members accepting Baseball Diamond of the Year award. John Brosnihan, left, and Guy Durocher.

Honorary Memberships--To be considered for an honorary membership in STMA requires nominations and unanimous board approval. The individual must be exceptional and have made extraordinary contributions to STMA, sports turf society and/or highly distinguished themselves by giving of themselves, made significant sacrifices, and unselfishly provided mankind with their special talents and time.

We had the rare privilege in Phoenix to have all three previously honorary members present to participate in the award presentations, namely, Dr. Fred Grau (chair, National Sports Turf Council, and well-known turf expert), Tom Mascaro (inventor, innovator, consultant, legend), and John Souter (consultant, contractor, sports turf specialist extraordinaire from Scotland).

This year's selections were:

Dr. William R. Kneebone, professor emeritus, turfgrass scientist, researcher and educator who recently retired from the University of Arizona in Tucson. Bob has contributed so much to turfgrass science in the southwestern United States, but due to his quiet nature, humble disposition and easy going manner, Bob never received the credit he deserved. But he has helped many turf managers and developed students into successful leaders in the turfgrass industry. STMA is proud to have Dr. Bob Kneebone as an honorary member, friend and colleague.

Jeff Wishard, a city councilman and park board chair in Davis, Illinois, was rendered a quadriplegic in a high school football accident 12 years ago. Jeff's zest for life, enthusiasm and optimism keep him busy when others would have given up years ago. Jeff works with young Cub Scouts and through his courage and positive disposition, Jeff received the honorary membership in STMA. Jeff will serve STMA as a goodwill ambassador to promote safe sports turf for schools and playgrounds.



Three previous honorary members of STMA, looking on as Jeff Wishard and Dr. Bob Kneebone accept their honorary memberships.



New STMA honorary members, Dr. Bob Kneebone, left and Jeff Wishard.

Torre, continued,

Baseball Field Maintenance.

Maintenance of baseball fields is extremely important and this begins with Little League Baseball. The field standards should be like a player, consistent. Teaching baseball to youngsters at a very early age is so much easier if the field they play on is maintained properly. With good field maintenance kids learn to trust the hop of the ball and this develops good fundamentals and work habits.

It only takes one bad experience from a ball that bounces up and hits a youngster in the face or mouth from a poorly maintained field to permanently scar a young player. That youngster will remember that incident and be afraid of ground balls, sometimes forever!

Most players and managers take great pride in their work. The same ethics and work habits should be expected of a grounds crew because in baseball, teamwork is the necessary ingredient.

Groundskeeper's jobs are not easy. Most people think that ball players and managers put in nine innings a day, but it is normally an eight-hour day. On the other hand, the grounds crew is there when the ball players arrive, and they are still there when the ball players leave to go home.

Recognition for those who maintain and care for baseball fields is long overdue. However, recently recognition for those individuals who have done an exceptional job, who have been concerned for the safety of the players, and who are dedicated to their profession has begun to emerge. Several individuals here tonight such as Roger Bossard (Chicago White Sox), David Frey (Cleveland Indians), Harry Gill (Milwaukee Brewers), Ed Miller (New York Yankees--Ft. Lauderdale), Dale Sandin (Baltimore Orioles--Miami), John Liburdi (Albany--Yankees) and Sam Newpher (Atlanta Braves) are dedicated men and interested in making their profession better for others who may follow them.

continue page 12

Trivia Question! (answer below)

STMA and AYSO share the same common humble beginnings. Do you know how?



Soccer Is Here To Stay

AYSO and other soccer groups are sweeping the country and soccer is now very popular in elementary and high schools and colleges throughout the U.S. Both men and women's soccer teams are competing at the high school and college level primarily because it isn't expensive to field a team. A ball and a uniform are the only essential requirements.

The founding fathers of AYSO (American Youth Soccer Organization) were dedicated to youth soccer and the development of youngsters into caring, contributing

adults. These men were committed to the concept that no youngster should sit on the bench and that player talent should be spread evenly among teams. Therefore, AYSO's philosophy--"Everyone Plays" and "Balanced Teams".

In 1964 AYSO had nine teams. Today, over 300,000 youngsters in 35 states play coast to coast.

Answer: Five men started both organizations and their first offices were in garages in southern California--AYSO in Torrence, CA., and STMA in Ontario, CA.

Torre, continued,

The Sports Turf Manager's Association is going to be the driving force behind the improvement and maintenance of the field surfaces throughout the country. STMA's purpose of educating its members is to be commended.

Finally, as a player, manager and broadcaster, one's job requires that he be prepared and thorough--willing to invest quality time.

I would like to leave this one thought with you this evening. "People forget how fast you did a job, but they remember how well you did the job, so take pride in whatever you do!

SPORTS TURF MANAGER'S ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

STEVE WIGHTMAN
Denver Mile High Stadium

First Vice President

SAM MONSON
Minnesota Vikings

Second Vice President

WILLIAM WROBEL
Dir. Communications, AIMCOR

Secretary

CONSTANCE BORG
The Rose Bowl

Treasurer

MARK HODNICK
Landscape Services
Cal Poly Pomona

Director

SAM NEWPHER, JR.
Atlanta Braves

Director

JAMES LONG
College of the Holy Cross

Director

HARRY GILL
Milwaukee County Stadium

Director

DALE SANDIN
The Orange Bowl

Director

ROWLAND LEHMAN
V.P. Ransomes, Inc.

Past President

DAVID FREY
Cleveland Stadium

Exec. Secretary

DR. KENT KURTZ
Cal Poly Pomona

This newsletter was designed and produced for STMA by Newsletters, Etc., 245 E. Foothill Blvd., Ste. 213, Upland, CA. 91786. (714) 981-0470. Text was written by Dr. Kent Kurtz, executive secretary of STMA.

STMA
400 N. Mountain Ave.
Suite 301
Upland, CA. 91786