

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.