

## With Baseball On Strike, What Will Happen to Spring Training?

*information compiled from various Sports Turf Professionals*

**W**ith the baseball strike still on in mid-January, and spring training camps due to open in mid-February, will that heady call, "Play Ball," still ring out?

Yes, according to sports turf professionals. Supplies are still being bought; fields are still being maintained; all preparations are moving forward for "business as usual." The question is - not will they play, but who will play? And - how will the events that unfold affect baseball and all the people and things related to it?

The baseball strike has had an affect on everyone - players, team owners, stadium facility owners, fans - and the sports turf professionals. Sports turf pros are the ones who have spent all these months preparing their fields for the things to come.

Because many major league teams lease their spring camp facilities, cities in warm weather sites vied for the opportunity to serve as camp headquarters for major league teams - and their minor league affiliates. Game and practice fields, stadiums and all the peripheral facilities have been developed or expanded to fulfill the needs of the teams.

Why? Teams draw crowds and crowds spend money that boosts the community economy. Early season Fantasy Camps bring hundreds of middle-aged dreamers on site to play real games with their heroes. As the full contingent of players move into camp to get in shape, hone their skills, and vie for positions on the team, dedicated fans gather to watch their progress. Sportscasters from across North America - and the world - converge to observe, interview, photograph and tape the action. When minor league players come into the camp, the outreach to fans and sportscasters

extends to all those cities where these teams play throughout the year. The result - more fans and sportscasters converge on the camp sites.

This economic impact extends to those connected with the teams and the facility itself - the sports turf manager and crews, those who prepare the stadium, sell tickets, sell goodies, launder the towels and uniforms, keep the rooms clean, prepare the meals - and beyond into the community. Think of the use of hotel rooms, restaurants, and airport facilities, the rental cars, the extra activity at area shopping and sightseeing facilities.

Budgets must be planned well in advance. How do you compensate when a big chunk of your money comes from spring training camps or related spending? Sports turf managers have scheduled crews and maintenance procedures throughout the "off season" in preparation for camp opening. Everything and everyone must be in place to keep the fields safe, playable and aesthetically pleasing.

Facility managers and municipalities are counting on the revenue generated from season ticket sales, promotions, special nights, and all those things that go

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