

In the Spotlight

George Toma was inducted into the Kansas City Sports Walk of Stars on October 26, 1996. This Walk of Stars includes such well-known sports greats as: Hank Stram, Whitey Herzog, Satchel Paige, Tom Watson, Len Dawson and George Brett.

The Kansas City Sports Walk of Stars was developed in 1991 to honor Kansas City's sports legends with a civic structure and to use this celebration of sports history to benefit a philanthropic purpose.

Each year, three sports greats are selected via city-wide balloting by the fans for induction into the Walk of Stars. Each inductee is honored with a star on the Hollywood-style walkway.

Inducted with George were baseball legend Buck O'Neil, who has devoted eight decades to playing, coaching, scouting and promoting baseball, and runner Jim Ryun, who broke the four minute mile as a high school student and went on to shatter World Records in three running events and become a three-time Olympian.

Here is what the Walk of Stars "Class of 1996" poster says about George. "How do groundskeepers become as famous as George Toma? They don't. He's one of a kind. His meticulous preparation of fields for the world's biggest sporting events has made him a world-renowned figure. From Super Bowls to Olympics, George has laid the groundwork for some of the greatest moments in sports history."

By honoring George, the Kansas City Sports Walk of Stars and Kansas City sports fans recognize the sports turf manager as a "key player" in the world of sports.

Congratulations, George!!! And a big thank you from STMA for your continued support and your vital role in helping bring positive public recognition to the importance of sports turf management.

Our profession gained more positive press during the 1996 World Series. David Mellor, Assistant Director of Grounds for the Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Club, was featured in the official World Series Program. An article, "A Day in the Life," focused on six vital contributors to the game of baseball. David showcased the groundskeeper's role in field preparations. Other featured roles included a pitcher, utility infielder, sports writer, PA announcer and bat boy.

The article followed David through a typical game day, from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M., giving an overview of the complexities involved. Photos in the two-page spread showed him and crew members reviewing the day's schedule and tackling the hands-on tasks of skinned area and turf care. It even showed David in the process of adding the "pattern master's" finishing touch to the turf.

A family touch was added as the article noted that David's wife frequently brings their two daughters, six-year-old Catherine "Cacky" and Victoria, almost three, to the field to "help" Dad. These short intervals help keep that family connection strong during the 80 to 100 hour weeks a "home stretch" usually brings.

Lots of fans have a better understanding of the complex role of field care because of this behind-the-scenes peek. Congratulations, David!!! And thanks!!

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