

CHRISTOPHER MARK  
**The President's Desk**



**H**ello to all members. I hope everyone had a wonderful and safe summer with friends and family. We sure cannot complain, it was one of the nicest on record—for vacations, but it was pretty dry on the fields if you did not have some form of irrigation.

Since my last correspondence, we have updated and revised our STA stationary, envelopes, member application, membership directory, and folder, all of which reflect our new logo. The package looks fantastic, very professional, and we hope you like it. For consistency, all future STA material will display our new colours and logo.

Over the last few months our Executive Manager, Lee Huether, has been very busy keeping the affairs of the Association on track. She has recruited and signed up new members, assisting with organizing the recent Field Day, reprinted the membership directory and the "Constructing the Sportsfield" brochure, ensured that our new publication "A Sports Field Checklist" has been distributed to everyone, and paid the bills! Lee keeps us on an even keel.

I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone who attended our Field Day on August 18, 1998, at the GTI. It was a tremendous success, and I extend special appreciation to Michael Bladon who organized the day and Paul Turner for being our chair. Thanks also to Gord Dol for sponsoring the lunch, as well as our loyal suppliers who once again did everything they could to support our Association.

Some really exciting news is that the STA has partnered with Canada Blooms on their 1st Annual Symposium on Parks, Grounds, and Open Spaces in Winnipeg from September 24-25. This is a great opportunity for us and gives our Association national exposure. We are pleased to be sending Dr. Bob Sheard to the seminar to speak on the design and construction of sports fields.

Another World Cup has come and gone, once again with record numbers of spectators watching the event. It never ceases to amaze me here in Canada that TSN, who seems to carry every match, can report overall large increases in viewership

and soccer at the minor league level continues to grow at a seemingly exponential rate, yet professional soccer in this country has never prospered. It certainly is not from a lack of enthusiasm, dedication, and effort at the level of the Canadian Soccer Association. People such as Terry Quinn, C.S.A. President, are terrific ambassadors and proponents for the game in this country. One has only to tour the fabulous facilities that the Ontario Soccer Association has built in Vaughan, Ontario, to see that soccer is a huge sport in this country.

Throughout the World Cup, the fields looked to be in great condition. If we ever hope to host a World Cup the next time it comes to North America (2006 or 2010), we need to build more *natural* grass fields. Unfortunately, institutions such as the University of Guelph are contemplating an artificial surface next to Alumni Stadium, and I heard that the University of Western Ontario was also thinking about an artificial surface for J.W. Little Stadium. When institutions of higher learning are placing increased revenues and perceived lower operating costs over the safety of their athletes and students using the facilities, I really believe that we are failing to get the message across. If such "logic" continues, we will never have a shot at hosting the World Cup, since one of its primary requirements is that all games must be played on *natural grass*. Why? Participant safety is the primary reason.

We have the ability to grow excellent quality turf for professional and varsity athletes. Heck, we can even grow turf on pallets and roll them in and out of stadiums. But many people are still madly in love with allowing their players to virtually play and be ultimately injured on synthetic playing surfaces. I wonder who allowed the word turf to be associated with artificial turf, it would be more appropriately named artificial asphalt or concrete.

I wish everyone much success with their fall renovation programs. Make plans now to join us at the Ontario Turfgrass Symposium in early January 1999.

Wishing you better, safer (and natural!) sports turf. ♦  
— Christopher Mark

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