

SPORTS TURF MANAGER

... for better, safer Sports Turf

SEPTEMBER 1999

12th Annual Field Day

The Field Day began with chair Paul Turner introducing STA President Chris Mark. Chris thanked the organizers of the event and made special reference to Dave Dick of The Scotts Company for sponsoring part of the day. Unfortunately, Dave was unable to attend. Chris then thanked all other suppliers and distributors for their generous support. Lastly, he announced the two STA scholarship winners, Gordon Bruce and Howie Kumagai (see June 1999 STM). Chris stated that each scholarship consists of \$200 plus a one year membership in the STA, which includes four issues of the *Sports Turf Manager*.

Rob Witherspoon then spoke as the newly confirmed Director of the Turfgrass Institute. He thanked delegates for coming and the Association for choosing the Institute for their Field Day as continuing education was one of the main reasons for the building being established. He also encouraged delegates to attend the Research Field Day to be held at the GTI on August 31, 1999.

Our keynote speaker was then presented. Dan Ferrone is a former captain of the Toronto Argonauts. He is currently president of the CFL Players' Association



A Harley rock picker in action at the Compact Sod Farm.

(CFLPA) and chair and CEO for a union-sponsored venture capital fund called "Sportfund." He and his wife also own a fitness centre in Oakville, Ontario. Dan related many anecdotes about his career and fans.

As president of the CFLPA, his main responsibility is negotiating with team owners; however, his primary concern is for the safety and welfare of all players in the league. A major issue he faces currently is the war between artificial turf and natural grass. It is mostly the owners who want artificial turf. There is only one natural grass field in the CFL, Commonwealth Stadium. The rationale is that artificial fields are playable in almost any weather, have no potholes, and keep uniforms clean for TV. The players, however, prefer natu-

ral turf as it is more forgiving (please see the editorial on page 2).

Although improvements have been made over the years, there is a much higher incidence of injury on artificial turf. There are more concussions due to the sudden jolt that occurs from falling on the back or shoulders. Burns are common and usually severe. Mike Pringle of the Montreal Alouettes lost his helmet during a game last year and burned off the tip of

his nose. Injuries are costing \$700,000 a year and the CFL is not allowed Workmen's Compensation (whereas the NFL is). There have been two cases of paralysis, the most recent one just four years ago.

Due in part to the wear and tear, many players will last only three years in the league. It is believed that because of the turf field in Edmonton and the fact the Eskimos practice on grass, their injuries are far less by the end of the season than any other team in the CFL. Dan further stated that there are no standards for fields—the only standards are the distances between hash marks and lines, the colour of the paint, and the width of the lines. Dan closed by saying that both he and the players strongly advocate natural grass playing fields. *continued on page 8*

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