



ing, and when tested, there was only one break, which they replaced. Tubing was filled with propylene/glycol and water to prevent freezing when the system was shut down. (After use in January, the temperature is lowered gradually.) Next, the medium was bridged out over the tubing to prevent damage and laser leveled. Ken then fine graded using a sand rake. He used a piece of Smithco equipment to dimple in the seed. Ken chose all Kentucky Bluegrass blends sown at 6 lbs per 1,000 square feet. The tubing was 8" down in the growing medium, so no problems arose with maintenance such as aeration.

Ken employs several ideas to reduce or change wear. He uses movable goal posts for kickers and puts in grid lines off the field for the linemen. Team practices are three hours, so he marks the fields enabling play to run in two different directions. Further, he talks to the coach to reduce potential communication problems. At Soldier Field, he pre-germinates seed in drums three days before a game, drains the drums on asphalt to let dry, and then spreads on the field prior to the game. Players' cleats then work the seed into the soil for good contact. After the game, he irrigates.

They also have an indoor practice field, erected at a cost of \$7 million, that has only been used four times. Cost of the entire facility to date is \$33 million. Finally, Ken mentioned that Soldier Field will be gutted and a new facility built. Everything will go except for the historical columns. The field itself will also be redone, with completion scheduled for September 2000. The new field will use big rolls of sod already ordered from the sod farm and will be grown on the growing medium mentioned earlier. Play, they hope, will be at either Notre Dame or Northwestern until completion.

Ken then fielded questions from the floor and also on the bus trip to the sod farm, so many more tips and ideas surfaced for the participants. It certainly was worthwhile to bring Ken to Canada again to share his considerable knowledge!

Trip to Compact Sod Farm

Prior to lunch, all suppliers were given a chance to introduce themselves and say something about the products they distribute. Following lunch, all delegates boarded

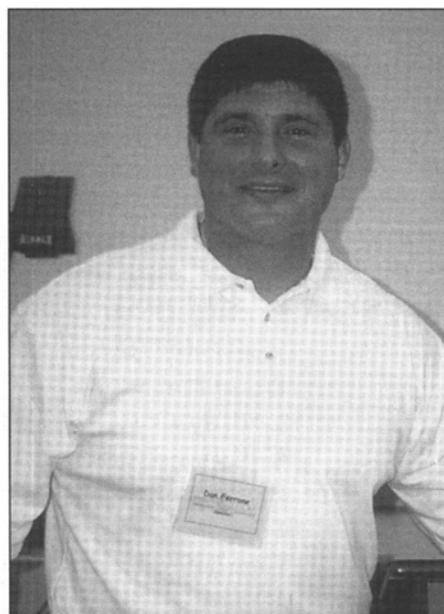


Top: George Bannerman (centre) explaining a new slicer/aerator his company has available.

Above: Ed Robertson of Toro (left) and Gord Dol, Dol Turf Restoration Services (right), displaying turf products:

Left: Keynote speaker Dan Ferrone, former captain of the Toronto Argonauts and current President of the CFL Players' Association.

Opposite page: Ron Schiedel, President of the Green Horizon's Group, welcomes participants to the Compact Sod Farm.



buses and cars to the Green Horizons Group of Farms Ltd., Compact Sod. Ron Schiedel, President, accompanied us and answered questions. At the farm, Ron explained the company business. They grow sod on 3,000 acres between Hamilton and Cambridge. The Green Horizons Group own 500 acres and the rest is leased under various agreements ranging from one to five or more years.

Green Horizons is a family business with a winter staff of 15-20 and approximately 50 seasonal employees. While their market is mostly to homeowners, they also grow corn and soybeans, sell grass seed, and blend their own fertilizers. Some of their sod is exported to New York and Michigan.

The basic operation employed by Green Horizons after a crop has been taken off is to spray with Roundup, plough, disc, rough and fine pick stones, and finally seed. They allow 24 months from seed to harvest and sell 1,000 acres a year which translates into 1 million rolls.

Mowing also is critical. Grass is cut three times a week by 10 staff members



who cut 100 acres per day. Grass is kept at a height of 2-1/2" except in summer when the cutting height is raised to 3". (Bentgrass is mowed at 3/8".) Last year they drilled a well down 450' in order to counteract previous droughts and used large travelling sprinklers which can water an acre at a time.

The company has 120 mowing reels,

15 large trucks, 5-6 smaller trucks for hauling sod, and all the allied farm equipment necessary. In winter, all equipment is refurbished. Bearings are replaced, reels sharpened, and MTC certification is performed on the trucks. The sod harvesters are overhauled.

To end, Ron shared one of the largest jobs he was involved with—removing top-

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The Schmeiser tiller and bedder used at Compact sod farms to cultivate and firm the land area prior to seeding.

soil that was in the way of a subdivision for the City of Cambridge. They used 300 triaxle trucks for two months to haul 5,000 metres of soil onto a 70 acre area and spread it one foot deep. He wanted to mix the clay soil with an existing sandy loam. Quite a project!

Sponsor and Exhibitor Demonstrations

After touring several farms to see various aspects of the sod operation, we listened to and viewed demonstrations by George Bannerman, Vanden Bussche Irrigation, Turf Care Products Canada, Dol Turf Restoration Ltd., and G.C. Duke Equipment. George Bannerman demonstrated a new piece of equipment called a Uni-drill, a slicer-aerator which looks very promising. Andrew Gaydon and his staff had an excellent working irrigation demonstration so delegates could see a complete system. He showed what can be expected from different nozzle sizes and the ease in which they can be interchanged depending on your requirements and water pressure. He also explained pop-ups and how they retract so they are safe on sports fields. He had a pressure gauge on the system and a small controller. It was an excellent hands-on display.

Ed Robertson of Turf Care gave us a run down on three different sized Toro mowing units, as well as introduced himself as one of their newer staff members. Gord Dol had a sample on the back of his truck of his newly acquired "Sportgrass"

(article in June 1999 STM). He has about 60,000 yards of it in stock and mentioned it is excellent for soccer goal mouths and bare centre field areas. Maintenance is the same as for most sports fields. Paul Turner demonstrated a weedkiller unit which uses boiling water. It is manufactured in New Zealand. He sprayed and indicated that the area would be dead in 24 hours. Finally he showed the two latest mowers on the market from Jacobsen with many safety attributes and helpful diagnostic features to aid the mechanic. The day ended with transportation back to the Guelph Turfgrass Institute.

Field Day Evaluation

Overall impression from all evaluations was positive. Topics participants would like to see addressed at future field days include: naturalization, problems and concerns of sports field maintenance at the municipal level, and more information on various seed plants. A number of participants suggested a tour of the University of Guelph campus including gardens, sports fields, and the arboretum. ♦



Mark your calendar now for OTS 2000, January 4-6 at the Regal Constellation Hotel, Toronto. Early bird registration details are on the following page.

Thank-You!

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Speaker Sponsorship

Ken Mrock, head groundskeeper for the Chicago Bears, was presented by PROFILE Products, LLC, Manufacturers of Turface, and PROFILE Soil Amendments & Plant Products Co. Ltd., Distributors.

The Sports Turf Association extends a sincere thank-you to all sponsors and exhibitors who assist in our mission of providing better, safer sports turf.