

# Editorial

## ARTIFICIAL VS. NATURAL TURF

Isn't it interesting that yet another CFL team has opted to renew their artificial surface rather than listen to athletes and sports field managers. We are told that athletes as a whole would prefer to play on natural grass. They practice on natural grass! There are some excellent turfgrass managers out there who would be very pleased to have the opportunity to maintain a professional football/baseball field in Canada. Only recently, Darren Flutie of the Hamilton Tiger Cats, on arrival at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, said how nice it is to be able to play on real turf. Meanwhile, just down the road, the Calgary Stampeders redid McMahon Stadium with artificial turf at a cost of \$1.7 million.

In the U.S.A., more and more artificial fields are being removed and replaced with natural turf. For approximately one-third the cost of McMahon Stadium, owners could build a state-of-the-art natural grass field. Are owners afraid the field will not be playable at game time? While it may be true that more games can be scheduled on artificial fields, false economy will prevail as overuse will only shorten the field life and result in early replacement of the material!

Synthetic surfaces have drawn increasing criticism from players and coaches. A recent survey of NFL players listed the 10 best and the five worst playing surfaces in the NFL. All of the ten best were natural turf—all of the five worst were synthetic, says Jim Pulhalla, president of Sportscape International, Inc.

How do we get the message of better, safer sports turf across to owners? Whether it is for a university, college, school, or professional facility, when will we start using more of the expertise of the many professionals who are available across this country? I'm talking about those who have graduated from turf-related courses and/or those who have many years of turf-related experience. As individuals or as groups, we can make things happen. Look at what the Rotary, Optimists, Lions, and Kinsmen have done in small communities to promote, build, and maintain ballfields where otherwise there might not be any. This is only one of the

many good works that these volunteer clubs do to improve our communities. Gamaliel Bailey said "Amid life's quests there seems but one worthy one, to do men good." That could well be our focus as we go about our sports turf business. To conclude, I leave you with another quote from Jim Puhalla and Associates from their new book *Sports Fields - a Manual for Design, Construction, and Maintenance*. "Predicting the future is a chancy thing—one that makes me as nervous as anyone. But tomorrow's developments grow out of today's trends. A wise manager makes plans for the future based on a hard look at what's happening each day." ♦

— Michael Bladon

## Gavel Presentation



Jane Arnett-Rivers, STA Vice President, presents the President's gavel to Chris Mark at the May 18 board meeting.

"I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of  
★ ★ the stars." ★  
Walt Whitman (1819-1892)



"Whoever could make ... two blades of grass where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together."  
Johnathan Swift (1667-1745)

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