

Management, and Sports Turf Management and Operations. A new course offering is for Certified Park Technicians. Algonquin College is currently providing a Trainers and Adults Certificate for anyone who is interested in teaching the above courses. Jay invited the Sports Turf Association to be both a partner of the OFRA and to supply some instructors.

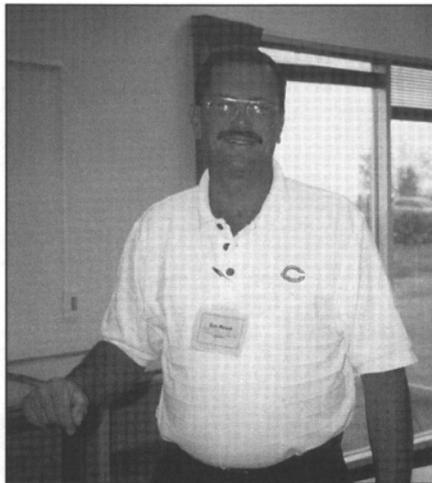
The Bear Facts

Ken Mrock, head groundskeeper for the Chicago Bears, gave both a humorous and informative talk on the difficulties of maintaining fields for football players. He has to contend with all kinds of weather while keeping in mind that many players weigh 300+ pounds and are worth US \$60,000,000 together as a team. Players today are bigger, faster, and stronger. Training camp begins with 90 players and is finally cut to 52. Ken looks forward to this because it means 38 less pairs of cleats chewing up his turf! His first slide showed the NFL logo which he said stands for "not for long" if you don't get the job done! In this business, a top job is expected, but appreciation is hard to come by.

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Ken then talked about a farm the Bear ownership bought to make a practice facility and to house their headquarters and training facilities. Five acres were zoned for a practice facility. The first step was to remove the topsoil. Then 4" drainage tile was laid 15' apart and filled with



pea gravel to keep out the clay. Next, a well 450-500' deep was drilled into the lake aquifer to make sure they always had water. They used a greens mix of 80% sand, 10% PROFILE, and 10% peat moss (this was mixed off site). He had used this same mix when involved with golf course work and it withstood a terrific amount of wear—they would play 60,000 rounds a year! He also found this type of mix had less disease, greater water holding capacity, and fostered a dense turf. Then, they blended 14,000 yards of the mix and spread it on 6" of pea gravel. Ken felt afterwards that they could have used less growing medium. They also installed a polypropylene pipe to check on O₂ emissions. Results of the tests indicated zero. Following this, on two of the five acres, they installed tubing to heat the soil. Initially, he had set up a small test area suggested by the manufacturer from which he learned a great deal. Ken used this information to avoid what could have been costly mistakes.

They used 14 miles of rubber tubing which was laid on 1' reinforcing rods tied every 15" for stabilization. There were six

Advantages

Perennial Rye

- Rapid germination
- High density
- Drought tolerant
- No thatch
- Excellent fertilizer response
- Excellent wear tolerance.
- No necrotic ring spot

Kentucky Blue

- Has rhizomes
- Competitive after establishment
- Disease resistant
- Winter hardy
- Low seeding rates

Disadvantages

Perennial Rye

- Variable winter hardiness
- Needs good drainage
- Requires higher seeding rates
- No stolons or rhizomes
- Difficult to mow.
- Susceptible to snow mould and dollar spot

Kentucky Blue

- Poor drought tolerance
- Thatch



stations where the heat was monitored. Starting in October, temperatures were kept at 55°F. Two boilers supplied heat from October to January 2nd. The supplier gave a 30 year guarantee on the tub-



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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.

