

Cover Story Continued ... STA Annual Field Day

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Becky Kellar (left) with session Chair Jane Arnett-Rivers.

Winning the Gold

The speaker following refreshments was Becky Kellar, a member of Canada's gold medal winning Olympic hockey team. Becky received a big ovation as she stood up with her gold medal for all to see. She began her presentation on *The Olympic Experience* by playing a videotape of the last two minutes of the final game at Salt Lake against the American team (which Canada won 3-2). There was another round of loud applause at the end of the tape.

Becky talked about the extensive training leading up to the Olympics, first with a stint in Calgary and shortly after being told to report with hockey equipment and bicycles to the army base at Valcartier, Quebec. The latter were necessary because

team members had to use bikes as their sole means of transportation.

While in Quebec, they were given extensive fitness tests and some extremely challenging tasks to check their stamina. One of which entailed riding a stationary bicycle for a full minute at a level five – a feat their trainer thought no one would accomplish. They were screaming after 30 seconds, but all passed the test!

Prior to the Olympics, they played some exhibition games across Canada, in Finland, and eight games against the American team. The first games against the Americans were lost by big scores and team meetings were held to see what could be done. The Americans were bigger, faster and were scoring goals. The Canadian team had to improve their passing,

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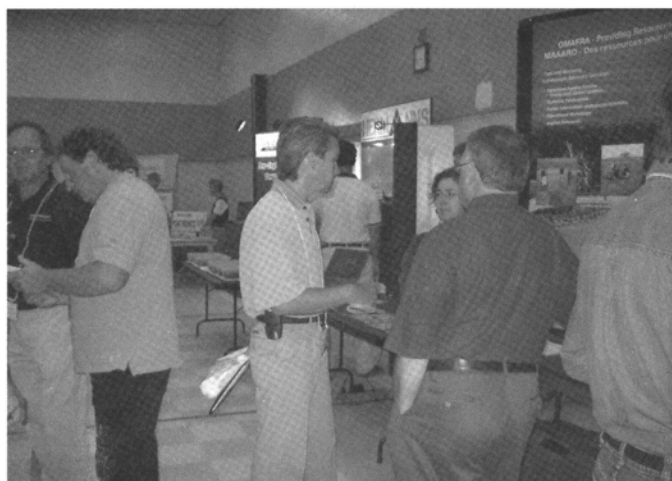
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start scoring goals, and generally work much better as a team. The next two games were one goal games so their confidence as a team was beginning to build.

Like most people, the Olympic experience for Becky was a dream come true. Marching into the stadium not as a hockey team, but united with ice skaters, skiers and toboganners as Team Canada, was an unforgettable event.

Becky has been with the Canadian team for five years. She was a member of the silver medal team at Nagano, Japan in 1998 and played in three world championships winning three gold medals in 1999, 2000 and 2001. She still gets butterflies before a big game and goes through the business of *what if as a defenseman I let in the deciding goal?* or *What if I do not score, or score the winning goal?* Luckily, once on the ice, all troubling thoughts go away.

She ended her talk discussing the semi final game against Finland where they were behind 4-3 at the end of the second

period. It was stressful with all the parents and fans in the stands who had already purchased \$300-500 tickets for the final. Luckily, they pulled off a big win. In the gold medal game, there were 13 penalties and the stars were on the bench. As penalties were killed, each person pulled their weight. It was the terrific team effort and desire to win that pulled them through. Lastly, Becky took questions from the crowd and then walked around so people could admire the gold medal.

Turf Covers Examined

Dr. Julie Dionne of the University of Guelph and the Turfgrass Institute concluded the morning sessions with a talk on turf covers. She stressed that most of the research has been done on golf greens (golf courses started using turf covers in the 1970s) so there is much to be done on sports fields.

Covers can be used in different situations. 1) for rain protection to drain the field without soaking it before a game and

2) to protect parts of the field where players stand (bench tarps) and where players come onto the field from the dressing rooms.

3) They are also used to prevent winter desiccation caused by the drying atmosphere, high winds and low humidity. Ice is a poor insulator and is in fact a conductor, and thus interferes with air exchange. Grass plants under ice for extended periods do not survive. Extreme winter temperatures and rapid decreases in temperatures can quickly cause winter injury.

4) Covers can enhance and stimulate seed growth, establishment and renovation and provide an early spring green up allowing play two to three weeks earlier than normal. (They ensure that heat in the soil is not lost from the day temperature.) Dionne also stressed that monitoring for diseases in the spring when soil temperatures rise is very important. With Kentucky bluegrass and the bentgrasses, temperature for germination is between 15-30C,

and with perennial rye and tall fescue, 20-30C is required.

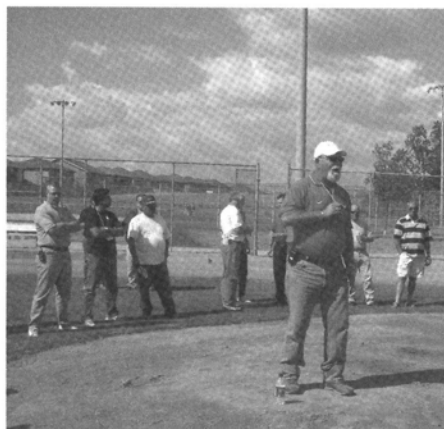
5) Covers also prevent erosion and seed movement.

She concluded her talk by saying that more research is needed on sports fields to develop a set of recommendations for Ontario. Following this presentation, session Chair Chris Mark from the Town of Oakville mentioned that tarps are very expensive but more importantly, they are labour intensive and heavy. With warm spring temperatures, tarps have to be removed for mowing and then replaced to keep the soil warm to aid in establishment.

Travellin' Man Mel Lanford

After lunch, delegates spent some time with the outdoor exhibitors prior to the last session featuring speaker Mel Lanford, a 30 year veteran of the groundskeeping industry and host and creator of the Ace of Diamonds Tour.

Mel gave an extremely informative hands-on talk on the ball diamond including reasons as to why maintenance is so important from a liability standpoint. He



also brought into play his many years of experience as to how to solve problems on the diamond.

Simply identifying the problems we all have is not good enough. Come September, every facility has "lips," and everyone knows how to remove them. The trick is preventative maintenance and not allowing them to form in the first place. This, of course, takes time.

"If I didn't have 12 diamonds to maintain, I wouldn't have lips," Mel stated. He's convinced that creativity is the way

to go. Mel has invented many types of drag mats with varying degrees of success.

"Let the person who does the work invent new alternatives – your staff know what works best. In conjunction, ask for what you need and explain why you need it. Don't just assume there are not funds for equipment, especially if it means the liability of the facility is decreased."

We then moved to the mound where he explained in great detail how to construct a pitching mound, the most important part of the diamond, from a pitcher's standpoint. When talking about the "table top" of the mound, comfort for the pitcher is optimum. The player should be focused on the throw, not falling off the mound. Don't be afraid to increase the table! Mel also showed us how, using amendments, to do a quick repair to the landing area of a mound. This is particularly important as many diamonds are used by two or three age groups during the season.



In closing, Mel stressed the importance of surface grading and of not being afraid of moisture on the infield. He was flattered to be asked to come, and thanked the STA and sponsors for making it possible. Mel also expressed a desire to stay more involved with the STA and that we partner further with our American counterparts at the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA).

All speakers received *Trans Canada Trail: the 16,000 Kilometre Dream* in recognition of their efforts to contributing to the success of our 15th Annual Field Day. We hope to see everyone again next year. ♦

— Michael Bladon

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more field day coverage ... see you next year!

