

# SPORTS TURF MANAGER

... for safe, natural Sports Turf

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## Good Turf Can Make Money!

TOM CLANCY REVIEWS THE 2002 ISC SCHNEIDERS WORLD FASTBALL TOURNAMENT

*If you build it they will come.* Tournaments are a pleasurable way to do a lot of work, provide great entertainment and if done properly, reap economic benefits for your community. To host successful tournaments, you need top notch facilities, good supporting organizations, numerous sponsors and many excellent volunteers.

One of the Kitchener Parks and Recreation staff suggested that we go after the International Softball Congress (ISC) World Fast Pitch Championship. We didn't have a suitable facility so we started researching and gathering facts. Eight years later we landed the tournament and had constructed a three diamond multi-purpose facility with 300 foot outfields.

### Planning and Organization

We bid twice, once in 1995 and subsequently in 2000 for the 2002 tournament. You have to develop a strategy for bidding and work with local groups that know vital inside details and have an intimate knowledge of how the sport operates.



Tom Clancy, Tournament Chairman (right), and E.D. of the International Softball Congress Ken Hackmeister shaking hands on 'opening pitch' after two years of planning and contracts.

After considerable discussion, we bid \$48,000 (US) and signed a 10 page contract. The contract included 250 free room nights and 10 free vans for the 40 ISC Commissioners and umpires to travel around the area. It was a nine-day tournament. We also offered 20% of all profits over \$80,000 to go to the individual teams travel fund.

We attended the tournament the previous year in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and learned a lot about behind-the-scene de-

tails. It was helpful that the organizer was also head of Parks and Recreation and shared everything with us. We learned what to do and some things not to do – like sell food at event-style high prices. A hamburger at Eau Claire cost \$4 US and it wasn't even a good hamburger. They received many food-related complaints.

Once we were awarded the bid, we sat down and developed a Strategic Business Plan. This included listing the factors required to have a successful tournament, what could go wrong, budget items, etc. This was done in Febru-

ary, 18 months in advance of the tournament. We then developed an Event Plan with all the duties, tasks, who was responsible and the times for completion. That was a key step as it provided a "game plan" so everyone knew who was doing what and when.

At each bi-weekly Host Committee Meeting (of which there were 56), we looked ahead to the next three weeks and the tasks involved. The tournament required over 500... **continued on page 6**

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*Bringing you the latest from the Sports Turf Industry ...*



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# Cover Story Continued... The Positive Spin-offs of Good Turf

TOM CLANCY DISCUSSES PREPARATION FOR THE 2002 ISC SCHNEIDERS WORLD FASTBALL TOURNAMENT

... volunteers who helped with the myriad of tasks and duties. We sometimes didn't have enough and asked volunteers who were not on duty to help out several times.

## Facility Basics

The facility has to be of a high standard. Between the fences, the players liked our clay infields and the quality of the turf. Our facility, the Peter Hallman Ball Yard, was once a low wet area with organic muck soils. That was all removed over a mild winter and replaced with 24 inches of gravel base and then 10 inches of sandy loam topsoil on top. This provided excellent drainage, the number one priority for tournaments and quality sports turf. With a good irrigation system, you can apply the correct amount of water needed according to the variable weather conditions.



A good facility also requires good seating and good lighting. We brought in six excellent 60-foot long trailers with seating for 300 fans each. Seating standards are easily available for most tournaments,

and will vary from one to another. Good food concessions are also a priority. Trained staff and volunteers are necessary to provide quality food quickly, safely, and efficiently.

We have an excellent two counter concession and brought in two additional trailers to serve grilled food. Draught beer was also available. Other requirements included an ISC tournament office, umpire change rooms, money counting facilities, and food and merchandise tents or booths. Medical services are necessary for all games to attend to injuries, massage therapy, taping sprains, etc. with access to medical clinics for more serious injuries.

## Tournament Time

We played 115 games over nine days starting at 8:00 am and going to 12:00 am with games every two hours on two diamonds. Staffing was a huge task. Diamonds need to be raked, pitchers and batters boxes lined, raked, watered and tamped, and new foul lines put down prior to every game – all in 11 minutes. Three staff and volunteers were used each shift with two diamond groomers and a couple of extra workers so you could go to the other diamond if both games finished about the same time, which often happened.

The diamonds were groomed and soaked overnight by a crew who worked 11:00 pm to 7:00 am. In this way the diamonds could withstand the heat and heavy play demands. Heavy cleaning of the washrooms and stands was also conducted during the overnight hours.

Two staffing and volunteer priorities are garbage pickup and washroom cleaning and checking every two hours. This is one area we could hardly keep up with because of the volume of food sold and amount of

litter produced. We used the Walmart philosophy for our food sales, combining good quality and variety at a reasonable cost resulting in good value. We sold 800 pizzas, 4,000 slices of Mennonite pie with ice cream (for \$2.50 CDN), 700 sandwiches, fresh fruit, and of course hamburgers, hotdogs, french fries and *a lot* of beer.

## In Retrospect

If you are considering a tournament, be sure to set up a web site. It provides good information regarding hotels, locations, prices, schedules, etc. and will save you time answering routine, repeated questions. We advertised our web site on every press release and in our numerous promotions. Many people now look for computerized access to information.

One of the major advantages of hosting tournaments is the resulting positive impact on your community. We estimated the benefits at over \$3 million dollars in primary spending for rooms, restaurants, gas, entertainment, etc. Area hotels came on board as sponsors and also provided us revenue for each room rented. They were pleased with the business and want to help again.

Our host committee was made up of nine "not for profit" community groups and the two cities. The profit realized is split among the groups and will support community sports initiatives which is a win/win/win scenario.

Our 2002 tournament was a huge success. We hosted over 42,000 people in nine days and made a profit of \$115,000. The players, fans and ISC personnel want to return which was our benchmark for a "well run" tournament. If they want to come back, we did our job. And they do.

It was hot! It was hard work! It was fun! It was rewarding! Try it. But ensure your turf and facilities are up to standard first and foremost. ♦

— Tom Clancy, Chairman, 2002 ISC Schneiders World Fastball Tournament