

SPORTS TURF MANAGER

... for safe, natural sports turf

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16th Annual STA Field Day

RECORD BREAKING NUMBER OF DELEGATES FOR 2003!

The day dawned sunny and warm, the unknown threat of Hurricane Isobel still a few days away. The venue was awesome, Highland Creek Valley at the University of Toronto @ Scarborough a picturesque background. The registration, record breaking for this event, was buoyed by the always generous support of turfgrass industry sponsors and exhibitors. The speakers were both enthusiastic and informative. What a day! We survived both the snarl of Toronto traffic and some minor audio-visual technical difficulties!

Hosting Soccer Championships

Rob McMulkin, Robbie International Soccer Tournament *(by Gord van Dyk)*

What started out 38 years ago as a soccer fund raiser for Robbie Wims who had cystic fibrosis has turned into a mega tournament involving some 240 teams from around the world. This international tournament showcasing players from ages 9-18 is held the Canada Day weekend throughout the GTA area.

Teams have travelled from as far away as South Africa, Ireland, Scotland and the United States to participate in 380 games

over three days. Co-operation between the City of Toronto, its staff, volunteers and soccer clubs throughout the region is paramount to the successful staging of this event.

The organization committee, complete with volunteer personnel in all front line and back-up positions, commences directly after the tournament ends each year. They run the 12 month operation necessary to partner with sponsors to ensure adequate coverage and advertising.

The 55 playing and practice fields are booked a year in advance. They are supervised by city staff for... → **page 7**



ONTARIO TURFGRASS SYMPOSIUM, JANUARY 19-21

Mark your calendar now! Early bird registration date is December 5th. This year's conference is being held at the Sheraton on the Falls – Niagara's foremost four diamond resort hotel. Get ready for an information-packed program covering the latest in scientific research and practical turf management. See page 4 inside for further information...



Cover Story Continued... 16th Annual STA Field Day

CONTRIBUTORS: GORD VAN DYK, ROY FORFAR, JANE ARNETT-RIVERS AND STEPHEN TOLLEY

playability and games are refereed by Ontario Soccer Association volunteers. A charity game involving former and current NHL players also raises funds.

The fields are rested for three days prior to the tournament since most multi-use facilities will see 8-10 games per day. Media representation and support is key for recognition of sponsors and promoting the tournament. During the games, a website is maintained for parents and friends to follow the teams' progress. The Robbie Tournament will surpass the \$1 million donation mark to cystic fibrosis in 2004, a remarkable achievement.

Partnering with Municipalities

Dave Motley, Oakville Soccer Club
(Roy Forfar)

Dave Motley was born in the land of the free and exported to the land of the brave, Jane Arnett-Rivers said jokingly as she introduced him – turf managers are a brave lot in southern Ontario!

Dave is past president of the Oakville Soccer Group. His day job is a Director with GWL Realty Advisors Inc. Dave has enjoyed a lot of soccer history. At the age of four, he was a ball boy for Sheffield United and he is also a past member of the Recreational Advisory Committee for the Town of Ajax.

The Oakville Soccer Group recently partnered with the Town of Oakville to build the Pineland Soccer Fields complex.

This cost-sharing experience brought with it expectations from both the soccer groups and the town, particularly with respect to the importance of permitting abilities on an irrigated sand field, which ultimately come down to maintenance and construction issues.

Club Background

The not-for-profit Oakville Club is the largest in North America with 9,700 players – a logistical nightmare to deal with. The club started in 1972 with 1,200 members and by 1990 had grown to 3,785 members. From 1990 to 2001, membership went through the roof reaching close to 10,000 members, which means major field use and the need to build, build, build and renovate.

Sponsorship is a crucial component to the club's success. When the kids reach 18 years of age, many dream of landing a scholarship to play in the US. To date, 40 have been given scholarships. When they return, most work as coaches for the younger kids (8, 9 and 10-year olds) and they love it. This is accomplished through a Mentor Coach Program created by the Soccer Association.

There are 520 house league teams and 260 games per week. Also, there can be 30 rep teams in town at any one time. This

brings in a fair bit of revenue to local businesses with respect to fuel, food and lodging.

Parking is a problem, but the town and association are working together to renovate old baseball diamonds which have become weed-infested dust bowls. This helps to lesson 3:00 a.m. calls regarding parking tickets!

Building Partnerships

Soccer clubs need the fields and the town needs their support. Soccer brings in cash and money talks! This is the way



to get things done from the municipality and get the job done properly. If there is no co-operation, it leads to confrontations, animosity and stalemates. First and foremost, a common ground and personal

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contacts need to be established. Then issues such as assessing how to better utilize the fields and deal with vandalism are discussed. Other things done through partnering include widening and lengthening fields, installation of irrigation and lighting, and the creation of six new mini fields and expanded parking through the removal old ball diamonds which had become obsolete.

There have also been cases of bad partnerships. Dave mentioned spending two years working with a principal, the school board and the town to renovate a small field (one that 10-12 year olds play on). The Parent Association in this affluent area partnered with the Soccer Association and \$7,500 was kicked in for irrigation. The town participated and the field was rebuilt with an agreement to permit usage 4-5 nights a week. This never happened. The irrigation system was not used most of the time, the field fell into a state of disrepair, and the partnership was absolved with the school board.

On the flip side of the coin, here is a recent example of a very successful partnership. A major problem in building new fields is lighting. It is best to put it in before any homes or other buildings are constructed. There is a new complex to be built by 2012. The Association managed to raise funds and have the lights put in as of 2002, thus avoiding interference from the Residents' Association in the future. The Soccer Association lent the Town money to proceed and this money was to be repaid over the next two years by the Town recouping funds through development charges like

building permits, etc. The loan has been repaid. The project was done in 2002, not 2012, and illustrates a great example of partnership.

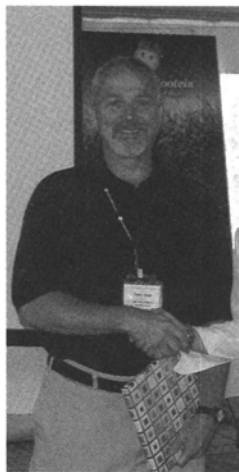
Looking Ahead

Between now and 2005, there are five fields proposed. Keys to the future include open dialogue, mutual involvement and respect for each others requirements and the process. For example, if there is one hour of rain four hours before a game is to be played, then the game is off. This is the only way to preserve good fields. It certainly does not always get followed, but we all try.

We, as a club, only want to play. Municipalities only want to maintain what they have. We strive to work together – even if this means keeping off the fields on rainy days!

Central Irrigation Control – the Future is Now!

Gary Supp, Irrigation Sales Manager,
Turf Care Products Canada
(Jane Arnett-Rivers)



Imagine starting your day by sitting at your desk, turning on your system and seeing that everything regarding your irrigation and lighting system is good.

Now imagine noticing a spike in water use at a field on the other end of town. Hey, at least you know about the situation before you hear about the washout from

a user group tonight! Get out there early, identify the problem, and repair it. With a Central Irrigation System, this situation will be detected, flagged, and you will be notified – long before there is expensive turf damage, or worse, an injury occurs.

Now put yourself in early August. It has been dry for weeks and you get a call hearing those nasty words, WATER BAN IN EFFECT, aaahhhh. This is tantamount to cancelling today's plans to visit each site and shut down systems. Until now, the time spent to shut down systems and start them up again was frustrating. But with a Central Irrigation System, all can be done in minutes from one location.

Whether time needs to be pumped up or ratcheted back, adjustments have never been so painless (from a time management standpoint).

Central irrigation will handle all of the above and help record and manage water use as well as flag hydro demands that occur beyond normal usage. Weather stations monitor environmental conditions and then convert them into daily evapotranspiration figures. Soil moisture sensors complete the data-monitoring package, so there is no need to guess if the east end of town got the same rain fall as the west end.

All together this spells effective watering for optimum plant health, responsible watering through environmental stewardship, and a control of the systems by the turf manager unprecedented until now. The jewel for most of us? Time, it frees up time.

For a thorough discussion of central irrigation systems, see Supp's article on page 17.



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Sports Turf Maintenance Practices
An afternoon with Dr. Jack Eggens
(Stephen Tolley)

A retired professor from the University of Guelph, Dr. Jack Eggens is very well known for his expertise in turf

management. He spoke to a group of eager turf enthusiasts about sports turf cultural practices. He enlightened us through his wit and humour and above all, his knowledge of the subject.

After a very nice lunch break, we took a walk down to the sports fields where we began the second half of our day. We were broken up into several small groups and asked to do a field assessment. After we critiqued the field (to death), we gathered around Jack where he questioned us on our findings.

After an intense discussion about the field and its current condition, Jack led us in the direction of what we should be looking for and in the proper order. This discussion moved onto the many facets of cultural practices, schedules, maintenance programs and other main components associated with turf management.

One main point that should be noted is that when overseeding, Jack recommends 20 pounds per thousand of perennial rye grass (ha, ha, ha). There goes this year's budget!

Another notable quote of his: "If it's already working for you, stick with it!"

Overall, a very worthwhile afternoon for everyone. Thanks, Jack!

And thanks to all participants, speakers, exhibitors and sponsors. See you next year! ♦



Field Day Photo Gallery

Turn the page for a glimpse of the action-packed day and visit www.sportsturfassociation.com for more photos.

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