



17th SPORTS TURF ASSOCIATION Annual Field Day

Despite the tangle of traffic, the caffeine kaffuffle, and the threat of rain, a record number of delegates enjoyed the hospitality of the City of Mississauga at our 17th Annual Field Day, our 17th Annual Success. From healthy root systems to artificial turf, safety to field marking, the program was informative and varied. For those of you who were unable to attend, our speakers have provided articles which will be featured in this and the next issue of the *Sports Turf Manager*. Registrants were also provided the opportunity to meet with industry suppliers to view their displays and equipment demonstrations. And speaking of our industry suppliers, their support, as evidenced by their generosity and participation, continues to be awesome! We thank you!

Dan Ferrone was the opening key note speaker. Dan has spent a total of 23 years in the Canadian Football League (CFL) as a player, coach and President of the CFL Players Association. He was also Vice President of Operations for the Toronto Argonauts.

Dan was invited because he is not only a very warm and charismatic speaker, but he has had great experience with playing football on synthetic turf (ST) as well as natural sports turf (NST). He came to share his experiences, and that he certainly did with humour and conviction.

Dan, as with most footballers, would always prefer to play on NST over ST. Injuries are far fewer with NST. With ST, concussions are more likely, and Dan was no exception having had 11 over his career, most (not all) on ST. Damage to ligaments and burns are also more numerous on ST.

The anecdotes continued... During very hot weather, and Dan gave an example when once he played in Las Vegas, the field temperature was 147°F and the players were all given special shoes to play in these exceptional temperatures on ST.

In some stadiums where they have to make very quick changes between sporting events, the ST is often adapted so quickly that the final surface is not perfect for playing. Occasionally in the Toronto Dome, the pitchers mound was not fully removed and therefore the ST for an Argos game was not completely flat.

Sometimes the fields were mixed, as in the Memphis Stadium which has natural turf on the actual playing field, but synthetic on the end zones and sidelines.

Players like natural turf as long as it isn't too muddy or wet. Edmonton's Commonwealth Stadium is Dan's favourite.

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Dan Ferrone with STA Director Jane Arnett-Rivers.

Dan shared some interesting figures on why the organizers and media prefer synthetic turf. Maintenance by the stadium staff is lower and of course predictable with ST. When there is a game or function change, the cost is around \$25,000 to convert the field from ST to NST. Installing new grass to a stadium is around \$800,000 versus synthetic turf which is approximately \$1.2 million.

The media, especially TV, like ST for many reasons. The game is cleaner, clearer and faster for the cameras to follow and transmit. Advertisements on the turf main-

tain their "new" condition and are worth in excess of \$30,000 for the end zone and \$50,000 for the centre play area. The clarity of the colours in logos is important with that type of price tag and on ST, rain and play will not have a negative effect.

Dan ended his very humorous talk with a tribute to John Candy, the movie star comedian who, Dan said, with his charisma, warmth and gentlemanly approach to the Canadian Football League and its players, brought a new dimension to the pleasures of playing and watching football in Canada. ♦ — Andrew Gaydon