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NFL and MLB Groundskeepers Create a Field of Dreams at an Inner-City Phoenix High School

Jan 22, 2005 Athletic Turf News

Phoenix, AZ — The day before the kick off of the 16th Sports Turf Managers Association Annual Conference, more than 50 professional athletic field managers from the NFL and MLB participated in a joint community service project to renovate the baseball field at North High School (NHS) in central Phoenix.

"This is probably the most exciting thing that's happened here in 15 years," said NHS Principal Zack Munoz. Munoz was previously the school's athletic director. NHS is an inner-city school of approximately 2,500 students.

The school has only one baseball field and due to the high traffic and low maintenance budget, and despite the efforts of both coaches and players, the field conditions had seriously deteriorated.

Using equipment and materials provided by Toro, Turface Athletics and Covermaster,

the highly skilled volunteers dragged and raked the infield, leveled the playing surface, rebuilt the batter's box and pitchers mound, and mowed, edged and striped the turf.

"This really gives us the opportunity to work together, and we don't usually get to do that," said Bob Christofferson, head groundskeeper for the Seattle Mariners and one of the organizers of the event. "Since we have NFL and MLB guys here, we'll definitely learn a lot from each other."

At the end of the day, the field's lines were all perfectly straight, the turf expertly groomed and the base paths were absolutely immaculate.

"The biggest thing was to give back to the community," said Christofferson. "We have a team of talented professional working together here to make this field better than it was before."

On Saturday, January 22, STMA Conference attendees visited the newly renovated field to attend a series of hands-on seminars and workshops on pitcher's mound maintenance and repairs, infield preparation,

field logo painting and stenciling, line painting and field layout, game day cosmetics and other topics. The North High School staff also attended so they could learn how to maintain the high-quality playing conditions.

"The groundskeepers who helped rebuild North High School's field are the elite of the elite," said Charlie Vestal, Turface Sports Field Manager at Profile Products. "By getting 'in the dirt,' these industry leaders are showing their commitment to the industry by giving back to a deserving community."

"Toro is extremely proud to be a part of this great event," said Dale Getz, national sports fields and grounds sales manager for Toro. "Grounds managers take immense pride in their work and often have to face the reality of fields weary from over use. By pitching in to renovate this field, we will not only improve the field, but the community pride of the athletes and spectators that use the facility. The field managers and sponsors really teamed up in a big way to make this school's dream a reality." ♦