

IRRIGATION RENOVATION AT TIGER STADIUM ADDS TO EFFICIENCY



Padded heads are checked by Century's Ben Taliaferro (left) and director of stadium operations, Ralph Snyder.

The recent renovation of Tiger Stadium in Detroit, gave Assistant Director of Stadium Operations Frank Feneck an opportunity to improve the stadium's old irrigation system. The stadium and irrigation system were plagued with old designs and worsening repair records. The renovation also gave Century Rain Aid of Detroit a chance to evaluate the basic needs of a baseball field more precisely and come up with a modern efficient design.

Feneck indicated the old system was plagued with freezing problems despite the park's efforts to flush the system in preparation for Detroit's often harsh winter season. Designed like a diamond with heads placed randomly throughout the field, it would often interfere with the game.

"It seemed like line drives were forever hitting one of the heads,

sending the baseball flying past fielders often for a double or triple," Feneck said. "Repair costs were starting to bog us down."

The job was put out to bid and

Fewer heads, but more zones make Tiger Stadium's new system more efficient, less hazardous.

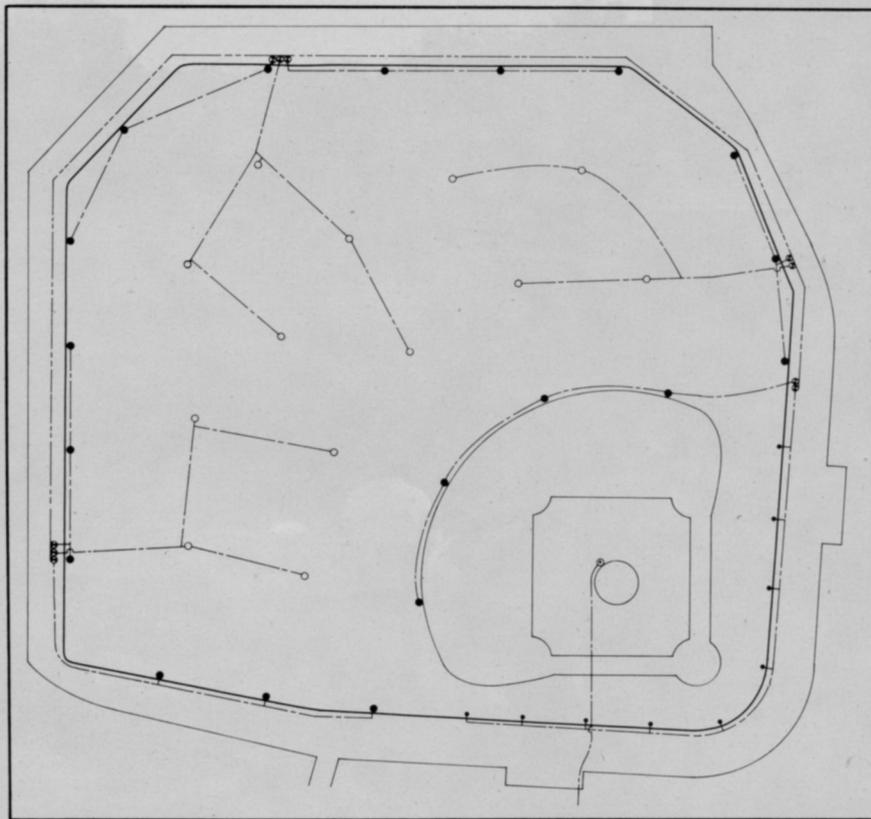
Century came in lowest with a bid of less than \$12,000 for a Rain Bird system. The plan was designed by Century's Ken Hodas and Ben Taliaferro to incorporate a scientific application to irrigation of the playing field. It contained 11 zones to provide different levels of irrigation to each area. For example, the

wings (outside the foul lines) did not need the same water as the infield or outfield. Also, to assure uniform distribution during frequent gusty winds, low trajectory heads were specified.

Century subcontracted installation to Bob Quigley, Sprinkler Services Co., a firm with 12 years experience in Detroit and in athletic fields. "We had to be extremely careful not to damage the turf when we installed the system," Quigley said. "Head heights were held down to minimums in order to avoid player injury." As an added precaution, the heads are covered with a soft, astroturf-like material which provides protection and conceals them when not in use.

Installation of the system, designed to irrigate roughly 18,000 sq. yards of turf, took ten days using a

Continues on page 66



Head layout for Tiger Stadium's new irrigation system.

crew of six men in early October. Pipe, ranging in size from one and one-half to two and one-half inches in diameter, was pulled into place. Heads were removed from the old system but the old pipe was not removed. The controller (Rain Bird RC-1260AB) was concealed behind the outfield padding.

The outfield heads were reduced from 30 to 17, and the infield has a single head directly behind the pitcher's mound. The system gets its water from the city and uses a 25 horsepower pump.

Feneck irrigates from early April through mid-October, despite the region's 32-inch annual rainfall. Only six or seven inches fall during the summer months, requiring 12 to 14 inches of compensating moisture.

"Because the system is automatic, we don't have to hold off watering until Saturday after a game because we couldn't get the field wet Friday night," said Feneck. "We set the controller and let the workman stay home." **WTT**

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