

## Sometimes you have to fool Mother Nature

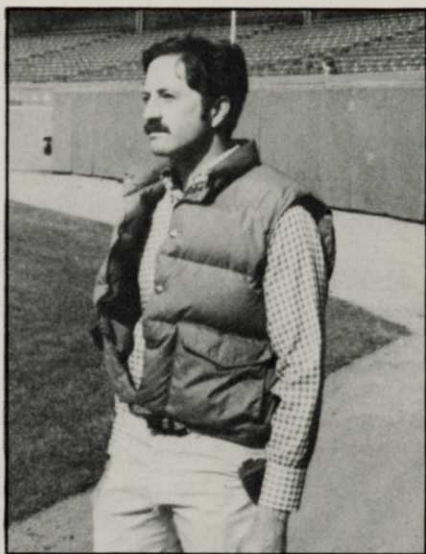


*Air-supported greenhouse in late March incubating the turf seed mix.*

As the Cleveland Browns walked off the Cleveland Stadium field last November following the final game of the season, David Frey went to work.

Frey, hired in August of the same year by Larry Staverman, director of the Stadium Corp., grew up in his father's landscape and golf course distributorship, Dryfoos Co., in Solon, OH. He had visited many golf courses and commercial sites working for his father after earning his business degree. It was a personal challenge to him and a test of his experience working with Cleveland area superintendents and landscape managers.

The most sobering thought for Frey was the Cleveland Indians were to play an exhibition on the football-worn field in early April. The mid-field area was a turfless quagmire. The solution in past years was to install sod in March. Frey believed he could forgoe loosely knitted sod by building a greenhouse over the center field area and seeding perennial ryegrass. Instead of buying 2,000 yards of sod, he wanted to buy only 600 yards and seed the rest.



**David Frey**

Quietly, he went to work, building an air-inflated greenhouse, 60 x 180 ft. After seeking help from various greenhouse companies, with bids more than \$150,000, he had the Cleveland stadium crew and a balloonist friend, help

him build the structure in early March 1983.

On March 10, with the air-supported structure overhead, Frey and his crew seeded with a mixture of Baron Kentucky bluegrass, Manhattan and Derby perennial ryegrass. By the second week of April and the Indians exhibition game, the greenhouse was gone and the football damage was unnoticeable. The outfielders were playing on grass that didn't move under their feet.

"You have to understand the emotions of sports fans when they enter a huge stadium, see and smell the green carpet of turfgrass, and with beer and hot dogs in hand, yell for their team," Frey stated. "The fact the grass is real and the players have confidence in their footing, is what's important. Indoor stadiums don't have the same sense of outdoors that older stadiums do and that's important to fans."

Northern outdoor stadia, like Cleveland and Milwaukee, need answers to correcting late fall football damage in time for baseball. David Frey strongly believes he may have one solution.

**WTT**