

# Going for the Green: The XXIII Olympic Fields

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Winning a medal at the Olympic games may depend on the condition of a turf surface. At the same time, field managers must fit the Olympics into their existing schedule of events. The result is a grueling struggle between man and nature.



The Rose Bowl turf crew faced this the day after a motocross and just weeks before the Olympics began.



Specialist spectators Youngner, Kurtz, and Davis ponder the most critical field, the Coliseum following rebuilding.

Despite the impending boycott by the Russians and other Eastern European countries, the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee has continued to push for the best possible playing surfaces available for the competitors of the XXIII Olympiad.

Throughout southern Califor-



**Olympic turf** is spread throughout the Los Angeles area. Numerous turfgrasses and field construction designs are being used. Soccer, baseball, equestrian and track and field events must fit into the turf manager's regular schedule.

nia, managers and landscape personnel have spent countless extra hours feeding, grooming and putting the final touches to their fields. Several Olympic events will take place on natural grass surfaces and these areas must meet the strict and rigid standards of world competition.

These managers have had to fit the Olympics into their regularly scheduled events. Consultants have been called in to make sure the turf satisfies regular tenants as well as the Olympic Committee. This endeavor makes a unique story.

## LA Memorial Coliseum

The opening and closing ceremonies and all track and field events will be held at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, which had been constructed originally for the 1932 Olympic games.

The turf area of the Coliseum will be used mainly for shot put, discus, javelin, and hammer throw and ceremonial events. More television time will be spent on the Coliseum than other Los Angeles area fields used for Olympic competition. It is the showcase field.

To satisfy the athletes and discerning world eyes, the Coliseum management asked many turfgrass professionals to contribute their time, energy and expertise. They include the late Dr. Victor Youngner, who developed Santa Ana hybrid bermudagrass; William Davis, a sand field expert from the University of California, Davis; Dr. Henry Indyk, extension specialist from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ; Dr. James Watson of the Toro Company; Dr. Victor Gibeault, University of California, Riverside; John Van Dam, University of California turf advisor; Steven Cockerham of the University of California, Riverside; and the author, a professor who has taught many of the area's superintendents and turf managers.

The Coliseum completed a major stadium renovation during the summer of 1982. This included replacing the common bermudagrass on a soil-based field with Santa Ana on a new sand-based field. The field architect was Richard Jenks, a member of the Jenks seed clan (Jenks-White Seed Co., now part of Jacklin) in Aurora, OR. Jenks' design, called the Hi-Play System, was also used for the Los Angeles Raiders practice field in nearby El Segundo. Indyk assisted Jenks with the planning and installation of the field.

Cockerham is the primary consultant for field maintenance, under the direction of the Coliseum's Larry Nielson.

## Dodger Stadium

Baseball has appeared in the Olympic games seven times as a demonstration sport, the first in 1912 in Stockholm, Sweden. More than 40 countries will field teams this month, with the U.S. and Cuba as co-favorites.

Dodger Stadium, just North of downtown Los Angeles, features a Tifgreen hybrid bermudagrass field on a heavy adobe clay soil. The field is overseeded with Adelphi Kentucky bluegrass for the winter. Field superintendent Chris Duca moved with the Dodgers in 1959 from Brooklyn to Los Angeles.

The infield turf is mowed daily with a reel mower at one-half-inch. The outfield is cut at three-quarters-inch with all clippings removed. The primary nitrogen source is urea which is applied regularly every four to five weeks.

The automatic irrigation system in the outfield is set to water after all home games. Supplemental irrigation is used daily depending upon soil moisture and weather conditions. Duca tries to maintain root depths in excess of eight inches.

The infield is watered manually, as is the new "Dodger Dirt" which is now being used in the skinned infield areas.

## The Rose Bowl

Soccer (football to the rest of the world) is the most popular sport on earth. The Rose Bowl in Pasadena will host the soccer finals. Sixteen out of the original 100 nations in the soccer competition will play off in the Rose Bowl. The U.S. automatically qualifies for the finals as the host country, but it has never won an Olympic medal for soccer, a sport dominated by eastern European countries.

Last year, the Rose Bowl's turf was replaced with a relatively new turfgrass from Australia, known as Excalibre or seashore paspalum. To help the paspalum survive a heavy schedule of events, including UCLA football,

the Rose Bowl game, concerts, graduations and even motocross, the field has been overseeded with Olympic tall fescue.

Frequent fertilization, aerification and sand topdressing in addition to careful irrigation were attempted to help the field recover from the stress of intense use. Olympic soccer requires a tabletop smooth surface so the ball will roll consistently, thus the sand topdressing.

In late-June, based upon a recommendation from George Toma of the Kansas City Chiefs and National Football League field consultant, the decision was made to replace 75 percent of the field with Santa Ana sod from Pacific Sod. Pacific was also the supplier of the paspalum and stood behind the Rose Bowl in preparation for the Olympics.

### Santa Anita

The equestrian jumping and dressage events will be held at Santa Anita Park race track in Arcadia. The competition will take

place not on turf, but on specially prepared soil. The cross country equestrian events will be held at the Fairbanks Country Club in San Diego.

The Santa Anita soil areas (slides) are tiled for maximum drainage and worked into con-

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dition by dragging and watering. Soil needs to be stable for the 1,200-pound beasts and their riders to make sharp turns and to allow rapid acceleration for the timed events.

### USC field

Besides these major fields are practice fields such as Cromwell Field at the University of Southern California. Drs. O. R. Lunt and George Schmitz of Donald Eberhardt & Associates designed and built the field, replacing a silty clay soil with a medium particle sand and organic matter. It was then sodded with "Sports Blend", a combination of Tifgreen and Tifway.

### Just in time

Preparing for the Olympics has demanded everything turf managers and turf science has to offer. Image is critical and playing quality even more important. With regular events to contend with, final preparations have been done almost at the last minute with daring atypical to the turf and landscape industries.

By mid-August, the Olympics will be just a memory and turf managers will refocus on their day-to-day challenges, helping other athletes perform at their best and safely on turf. **WT&T**



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