

## A spirit of compromise

For over a week the radio waves in Cleveland crackled with the promotion of an event which promised to turn the floor of Municipal Stadium "into a mud pit" with fire-breathing monsters and a vehicle called "Big Foot" that crunches cars with the same fervor you stomp out cockroaches on a kitchen floor.

This is the kind of action we Americans love. Lots of hoopla, good old, dirt-flying, down-home fun.

That it also attracted a gaggle of concerned local media came as no surprise. The concern over the anticipated abuse to the baseball playing field was healthy.

Promoters of the event, anxious to demonstrate they were taking precautions to protect the turf, invited the media to Municipal Stadium to watch the track being built. What became most obvious—along with the hundreds of sheets of plywood and approximately 4,500 tons of dirt—was a spirit of compromise.

No, the floor of the Stadium was not being turned into a "mud pit." In fact, the two, 30-by-250 dirt tracks were confined to the foul areas, barely touching the playing field, and then only in the right and left field corners.

Stadium Maintenance Director David Frey used the opportunity to test a geo-textile ground cover which, covered with layers of plywood and tons of dirt, would lessen the pressure on the grass and allow it to breathe.

After the dust had settled and the tons of track hastily removed, Frey was not at all displeased with the conversion of the Stadium floor from baseball field to motor event back to playing field again. A single 4-ft-by-18-in. roll of sod was needed to repair assorted nicks and dings in the turf. The field would be ready when the baseball team returned the following week.

It's a simple matter to point the finger of blame without all the facts, to begin heating the tar and shaking the pillows into a fluffy pile of feathers.

Often such drastic action is unwarranted.

The bottom line in the operation of a stadium, as it is in any successful business, is the dollar. To remain profitable a stadium has to attract sizeable crowds even though it might involve stretching the capabilities of an athletic field. The turf manager shares in this reality and, as Frey emphasized during Cleveland's recent experience, it's an excellent opportunity to learn by aggressive planning and action.

It demonstrated again that when proper concern is shown and proper care taken, facilities, even those with something as seemingly fragile as turfgrass, can bring entertainment to those of us with many tastes, even if it involves trucks that eat other trucks.



by Ron Hall, assistant editor

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