

SPORTS TURF

by Ron Hall, associate editor

Time to strike

God—the lover of all that is natural—will not likely rain lightning bolts onto the heads of the makers or users of artificial grass. As miracles go, that would rank somewhere below (way below) the parting of the Red Sea.



Anyway, we're supposed to do some things for ourselves.

In this spirit of doing something, a small cast of respected turfmen gathered at the Midwest Regional Turf Conference last March. Loosening their ties after an afternoon of swapping tales, they mulled the question: "Who decides synthetic turf at the sports fields at our schools? Who are the decision makers?"

Dr. Bill Daniel, Purdue University's imminent turfgrass expert, directed. Galling to those in attendance,

particularly Daniel, was the announcement just weeks before that Illinois was going carpet. Purdue stands alone as the only Big Ten school still playing football Saturday afternoons on grass, real grass.

The decision makers? After an hour's discussion, they remained nameless and faceless. Some, however—those who have decided fake over real—are suddenly drawing fire from the popular press. Opinions are being molded by magazines and newspapers at the breakfast table.

Sports Illustrated blistered sports carpets with a 21-page spread in its August 12 edition. *Nightline* fueled the controversy on national television. Syndicated columnist Jody Powell scalded synthetic turf in some of the nation's most respected newspapers.

But, proponents of synthetic surfaces aren't taking the critical press lightly.

Francis Reining, a Monsanto general manager (Monsanto's Astroturf is the most popular synthetic on the market), responded to *Sports Illustrated*. In part he wrote: "Opinion is one thing. But when you attempt to unilaterally denigrate an industry, you have a responsibility to present conflicting opinions of acknowledged experts and facts on both sides of the argument."

The controversy heats.

That's good news for us in the turf industry. We've shown we're not good crusaders. We've build a case—injury data and costs—but we can't seem to find, never mind convince, those with the final say.

Now we find ourselves with allies. That small group, as indecisive as it seemed last March, guides us.

Let's find these decision makers while public opinion simmers. Let's present our side of the story again. Soon.

tough. Then being certified will mean something," he says. "The pendulum of regulation shouldn't be so stringent so as to strangle applicators but I think some of these industries could avoid additional regulations in the long run with them."

PARKS

Beverly Hills serious about park facelift

A \$2.5 million turf renovation and re-landscaping project is underway in 10-acre Roxbury Park in Beverly Hills, Cal.

American Landscape, Inc., Canoga Park, is regrading and replanting three bowling greens (Tifgreen hybrid bermuda stolons), the sports field (Santa Ana hybrid stolons), and the baseball infield (Tifgreen stolons). The balance of the park is being hydroseeded with a mixture of fescue and bluegrass.

The park is also receiving new ornamental plantings. Ten large trees at Roxbury were excavated, boxed, and relocated in the park along with 50 new trees. New plantings include crape myrtles, liquidambers, redwoods, and honey locusts.

Along with the plantings, the park's irrigation and drainage systems are being upgraded. Landscape architect for the project is Ericksson, Peters, Thoms & Associates of Pasadena.

New lighting, bleachers, walkways, and a 7,000-sq-ft clubhouse round out the improvements which should be completed by mid-December.

MUNICIPAL

Dying tree alerts town to gas leaks

A dying 25-year-old shade tree alerted officials in the small town of Cinnaminson, N.J., to potentially dangerous natural gas leaks late this summer.

"We couldn't find anything organic wrong with the tree," says Fran Leusner, a 32-year veteran of the township public works department. "It didn't have an insect problem, so we had the gas lines checked out and found eight leaks in a small area."

Leusner tells WT&T he suspected natural gas after learning that the owners of the tree also reported losing two holly bushes and a neighbor complained of the death of part of a front lawn.

Leusner says dying grass and plants don't usually mean a gas leak, "but it's not the first time we've found something like this."