

# Tifton 57: Durability, insect resistance praised

**Although athletic fields will benefit mostly from this grass, other turfgrass areas suffering from intensive use might be wise to try it.**

by Tom Mascaro

■ Tifton 57 bermudagrass has proven to be unsurpassed for football fields, baseball fields, playgrounds and other sports fields in the southern U.S., where maximum wear resistance is required.

Since its development in 1947 by Dr. Glenn Burton, it has almost faded into oblivion. Since bermudagrass development became focused on better grasses for greens and fairways, Dr. Burton eventually introduced Tifton 419, Tifton 328 and Tifdwarf. As these grasses became popular, Tifton 57 faded into the background.

However, some athletic field managers today are re-discovering Tifton 57.

"We have 7.5 acres of Tifton 57 and it is my favorite to work with," says Lanny Dixon, CPCO with the Broward County



**Lanny Dixon, left, and Ed Birch, supervisor of turf for the Broward school.**

schools in Florida. "I have found it hardier than the 419, Tifway 2 and common bermuda. Our sports fields continually recover quicker under traffic stress, drought stress and any herbicide injury that we may cause it."

Dr. Burton himself, to this day, has a good-sized plot that has had no care—other than spring fertilization and thatch removal—yet still holds excellent turf after 40 years.

Tifton 57 has many qualities that make

it superior to common bermuda, among them:

- Ability to produce a denser, more weed-free turf.
- More resistance to insects and diseases.
- Longer-lasting green color.
- Less tendency to be injured from overseeding, and faster spring recovery.
- Less fertilizer requirement.
- More drought- and shade-tolerance.

"I wish that all of our fields were planted with this very durable turfgrass," Dixon continues. "I can totally understand why golf courses would be more interested in Tifton 419; but for sports facilities, I vote for Tifton 57—hands down.

"Although this turfgrass has thicker stolons and larger leaf blades and seems to experience leaf spot more frequently, I find it totally acceptable for our circumstances."

Another small inconvenience of using Tifton 57 is that of prolific seed-head production at certain times of the year. Dixon notes, "this is a little unsightly, but does not inhibit the field's playability."

Tifton 57 is, admittedly, too aggressive for golf greens and fairways. It has found a place on tees, since it can take the beating that these areas are subjected to. Many of the older courses probably still have Tifton 57 tees without realizing it.

Although athletic fields will benefit mostly from this grass, other turfgrass areas suffering from intensive use might be wise to try it.

For those who are interested, Dr. Burton has available two bulletins: "Tiflawn (Tifton 57) Bermudagrass" and "Football Field Construction and Maintenance for the South." His address is: Principle Geneticist, Dept. of Agriculture, Georgia Coastal Plains Experiment Station, Tifton, GA 31793.



**The Cooper City high school field is seeded with Tifton 57 bermudagrass. Benefits include a dense turf with long-lasting color.**



*—The author is a former golf course superintendent who is credited with inventing the first turf aerator. He lives in Oakland Park, Fla.*