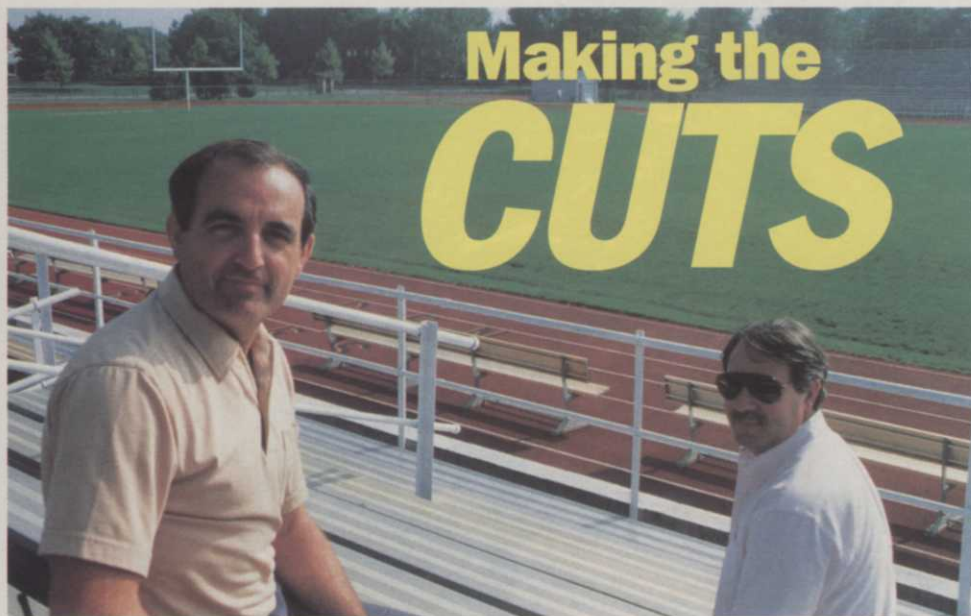


Making the CUTS



Why are Bob Meyer (left) and Joe Herchko smiling? Because, despite cuts, the Upper Arlington football field is often host to an Ohio high school playoff game in November.

In this upscale central Ohio school system, public support and versatile crews help stretch shrinking dollars.

■ Bob Meyer no sooner took over the grounds department for Upper Arlington City Schools than the Board of Education ordered cuts. His newness (six months on the job, after transferring from the plant ops department) didn't help at all.

The grounds department was ordered to drastically reduce its workforce and budget last year, Meyer notes. "And it's something we struggled with, especially with a new person. Obviously, some things are going to suffer."

The most obvious result of the budget cuts is Meyer's schedule. He has been known to be "on the phone, on the radio and in a meeting" all at once, according to his secretary.

Another key to keeping seven athletic fields (four football, two soccer, one baseball) attractive and safe is parent and student involvement, Meyer notes. "It would be near impossible to sustain our maintenance program with half the people and 60 percent of the money that we used to have," he says. "We have parent-teacher groups and boosters who are very concerned. For instance, we didn't have enough money for all the weed treatments on the baseball field, so the parents purchased some material to kill the clover for us. There's a lot of pride in athletics here."

Field maintenance—The person Meyer succeeded, Joe Herchko, developed

an intensive maintenance program over eight years. Thankfully, Herchko remains in school management.

Usually, when the community sees field maintenance falling off a little, "its reaction will be overwhelming," Her-

check believes. "They will take action on their own. That's not a good situation, but it happens. They'll let us know we're not getting the job done."

Another way Meyer has addressed the cutbacks is through crew scheduling. "We've gone to fully mobilized crews," he says. "Nobody is stationary, and they do everything. The difficult thing is scheduling where they'll be, especially accommodating the athletic events and special events like the Fourth of July celebration."

While he was in charge, Herchko defined three levels of field maintenance:

- 1) High—fully irrigated and year-round fertilization and weed control
- 2) Secondary—"do as much as we can"
- 3) Safety only

"The levels change according to the season and according to the bigger picture: school priorities and manpower," Herchko notes. "At the minimum, we mowed each site once a week. We did that for four years, when we also set time apart for working on the fields' other priorities."

At one time, the highest level fields received annual overseeding, topdressing and sub-soil conditioning; aerification four times a year; a full year-round fertilization program; and full irrigation with a Rainbird Maxi-Com system. The lowest level fields were mowed and lined prior to gametime, free of obstructions and pot-

holes, and smooth. "We've tried to irrigate even at the lowest level," Herchko says. "We irrigated 80 percent of everything the kids play on."

Landscape maintenance—The school grounds are another story. All areas are mowed, bushes and shrubs trimmed, and sidewalks blown clear each week. "We may not be able to mow it all once a week like we used to," Meyer observes, "but we'll do the areas people see."

The entire grounds is also given a weekly visual inspection by Meyer and head groundskeeper Roger Geers. "Ornamentals are done by a parent-teachers grounds committee at each school. And a lot of the elementary schools have student maintenance programs," Meyer relates.

Geers himself has also accepted added responsibility. "Lately, I've had to also handle the playground equipment, basketball hoop repair and replacement, picnic table and trash can maintenance."

This is all new to Meyer. "I've worked in maintenance and management for many years, but this grounds thing at times is very intense and very busy," he says. "Everybody has an opinion because it's so visible."

—Jerry Roche

Fertilization schedule Upper Arlington City Schools

H.S. baseball field

H.S. softball field, if available

Mid-May	22-0-22
Early July	32-4-3 with Dicot III
Early Fall	32-3-10

H.S. stadium

Mid-May	32-3-10
Early July	32-3-10
Mid-August	22-0-22
Early Fall	Starter 22-0-22
Late Fall	Starter Sports Turf

Middle school football field

Mid-May	32-3-10
Early July	32-4-3 with Dicot III
Mid-August	22-0-22
Early Fall	22-0-22
Late Fall	Starter Sports Turf

Jr. high football field

Mid-May	32-4-3 with Dicot III
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Tremont soccer field

Mid-May	32-4-3 with Dicot III
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High-view areas

Mid-May	32-4-3 with Dicot III
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