

## Turf diseases keep Browns' chief busy

■ Vince R. Patterozzi's grandest dream is to help the Cleveland Browns professional football team get to the Super Bowl. They've never gone.

His immediate goal—and the task for which he was hired almost four years ago—is to make sure they perform on the best and safest playing surfaces possible.

Vince, the Browns' grounds manager, said that this summer presented him with a new set of grounds management challenges. Each season does. Probably the most vexing problem in 1995 has been the proliferation of turf diseases, particularly in the practice fields. Pythium, summer patch and fusarium blight—they all reared their ugly heads, he said.

Temperatures averaging 10 degrees above normal and unremitting humidity through August didn't help matters, said Vince. Nor did a 3/4-inch layer of



Vince Patterozzi, center, told Cleveland-area PGMS members that he battled turf diseases all summer at the Browns' training camp.



**Even with the daily pounding of 80 huge football players the practice fields (80 percent sand/20 percent soil) provided reliable footing.**

thatch in the turfgrass. Actually, he hadn't been displeased with the thatch prior to the disease problem. It had kept the cleats of the huge players from churning up bare earth.

"I watch people's feet, if they slip or if they don't slip," said  
*continued on page 16G*



El Toro zoysiagrass, right side of the string, tolerated mid-summer traffic better than the Kentucky bluegrass/ryegrass blend to its left.

## Zoysia gets test at training camp

■ Zoysiagrass now covers what used to be blacktop paths along the sides of the practice fields at the Cleveland Browns training facility.

Fans congregate to watch practices here. It's also where telescoping "high-boys" hoist metal buckets containing cameras and spotters high above the action.

This past off-season, grounds manager Vince Patterozzi installed 2,200 yards of El Toro zoysiagrass there.

"We have to have a grass that's very tolerant this time of the year," he told about 40 visiting PGMS members on a blistering day in August.

At least through the heat of midsummer the experiment was working. The grass, in spite of weekly thunderstorms and brutal daily pedestrian traffic, retained fine color and cover.

"Now we have to find out when it's going to go dormant and when it will come out of dormancy," Patterozzi told the other grounds pros.

"We want to find out if it encroaches on the bluegrass (the practice fields are a Kentucky bluegrass/perennial rye combo). Or, in the fall or spring, will the bluegrass encroach on it." He said Dr. Bill Pound at Ohio State University plans to introduce about six more varieties of zoysiagrass at the facility to test their wear and cold tolerance.

"Maybe we can help out schools, particularly low-budget schools. Maybe they can introduce this zoysiagrass into their sports fields," said Patterozzi.

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Patterozzi. "I usually miss the play because I'm watching to see how the traction is."

Patterozzi battled the diseases with chemical controls. Because the practice fields are used daily by 80 highly skilled athletes, he's very careful about how and when to use them. The Browns' three-year-old practice facility has five fields and is located in the small college town of Berea about 15 miles southwest of downtown Cleveland.

This summer also generated more than its share of thunderstorms and rain. But Patterozzi's been reluctant to haul out the green tarpaulins, rolled up on the other side of the fifth practice field.

"In this disease-prone environment, you can imagine what we're doing by putting tarps on the turfgrass. We might as well put a gun to our heads," said Patterozzi. He

described tarp and disease management as his two biggest challenges so far in 1995.

Patterozzi is also responsible for the field at huge, gray Municipal Stadium that overlooks Lake Erie and is now neighbor to Cleveland's new Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

In the summer of 1994, he directed the regrading and rebuilding of that field, including the installation of underground irrigation (Hunter sprinkler heads, Buckner controllers) and the laying of 16,000 yards of big-roll, Kentucky bluegrass/perennial ryegrass sod. He uses it in 1½ inches thick in 4-foot-wide, 40-foot-long rolls.

This is sod that's been managed on the farm with the same regimen—fertilization, mowing and watering—that it will receive on the Browns' playing or practice fields, he said.

The sod was laid over a sand/soil mix enhanced with about 88,000 pounds of Axis, a diatomaceous earth. Patterozzi felt the product, disked and rotovated into the field, substantially helped the field's drainage during last fall's season.

He used a substantial amount of Axis on one of the practice fields too. On that particular field, Field Two which contains a slightly higher percentage of soil than the other practice fields, Patterozzi used a Floyd McKay aerifier equipped with hoppers to "drill" in the diatomaceous earth.

Patterozzi and the Browns hosted about 40 Cleveland-area PGMS members at the practice facility in August. That particular day, the expansion Carolina Panthers team was also practicing there.

—Ron Hall

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problem spot. But not here.

"It doesn't matter what language you speak, people are people," Sandburg philosophizes. "You treat everyone with respect. You learn to work around it. Those of us who speak English adapt to those of us who don't, because we're the ones in the minority."

Head mechanic Martin Muñoz, who's been at Lakeside for 25 years, is a great help. He's one of only four people on the staff who is bilingual, though Sandburg is working on his Spanish.

**Defining 'tournament level'**—

Lakeside is widely recognized as having one of the top three or four golf courses in the Houston area. It's no fluke.

"We attempt to maintain the course at a tournament level for as long as possible," notes Sandburg. "By 'tournament level,' I mean more of a clean, manicured look—not necessarily fast, hard greens and excruciating rough."

He oversees 44,000 rounds per year played on Ron Pritchard's redesign by a membership numbering 850.

With the approach of a farmer ("we learned to use what we had on hand"), the intelligence of a scholar (master's degree from Kansas State University) and help from home ("my wife Kelli has been the driving force in my life"), Sandburg keeps Lakeside beautiful, its employees content.

"I love to see people—my members, my employees—happy," Sandburg concludes. "And I love to come to work because we're all happy here."

## Another Audubon story...

by Mike Sandburg  
Lakeside Country Club

■ At Lakeside Country Club, the maintenance department—in conjunction with the Greens Committee—feels that we have to set precedents. There are times when we could say, "Let's just not do it and run with the pack," but the membership doesn't want that.

We plan on becoming the first fully New York State Audubon-certified course in Texas. At this writing, we have more certifications—three—than any course in Texas.

A lot of requirements must be met. The first thing you have to do is establish an advisory committee. Though some courses have gone into the community to recruit advisors, I've tried to limit it to members of our club, because they're the ones with the pride in the course.

Lakeside is certified in (1) water quality, (2) water conservation and (3) environmental planning. Our water district has established guidelines that we now follow, and I have a computerized irrigation controller that can time heads to the second.

Some of the Audubon program's requirements are easy to meet, because they encompass things we were doing anyway: things like planting wildflowers in place of grass and cutting down on using

mower fuel.

Even though we're practically in the middle of Houston, we have a new gray fox living on the course because we've provided a food source and habitat. Yellow finches appeared this spring because it's more of a friendly location. We do regular wildlife audits and if we start to see new things, we send the Audubon Society updates.

More people need to hear this story, and more of us have got to get involved with the Audubon program. If that were the case, Paul Harvey would not have a leg to stand on. Some of us are way ahead of Paul, and were doing it before Harvey started his campaign against the golf course industry.

We've got to look to the future. This kind of thinking is becoming the rule, as the new breed of superintendent becomes more educated. You can actually see the changes taking place.

The Audubon program costs more money to start, but the long-term benefits and savings far outweigh the costs. For instance, by planting wildflowers, we've saved money on fertilizer and pesticide costs, we've saved money on mower fuel and we've saved money on the labor it takes to maintain grass rather than the wildflowers.

The point is that golf courses can—and should—give back to the environment what others take away.