



FLOOD REPAIR

challenge for Brewers crew

"The grounds crew did the best job I've ever seen, maybe the best in the history of baseball" —KC Royals Manager Bob Boone after the flood.

By DAVID MELLOR

▼ Dave Mellor, left and Gary Vandenberg guide helicopter pilot to wet areas of the field. The copter was brought in for a four-hour dry down.



Milwaukee County Stadium is built on a 100 year flood plane. After the Brewers' game of June 20, we suffered our second "100 year flood"--in 11 years.

We manicured the field, then put on the rain tarp because grounds director Gary Vandenberg expected rain.

Early the next morning our DTN office radar showed the training effect of thunderstorms lining up one behind the other coming right over the top of us. Eight inches of rain fell in nine hours, flooding

many homes in the city and our playing field too. When the rain stopped about mid-morning, water stood in the first four rows of the box seats and most of the field was submerged by 3½ feet of muddy water.

We had two things going for us. Miller Park, which will open in 2000, was paying off already. The enormous construction

▲ Fourteen members of the grounds crew lined up to pump air under the tarp to cool the turf surface.

hole for the new stadium is between County Stadium and the river that overflowed, and took in 10 feet of water, leaving us to deal with *only* 3½ feet of water!

Secondly, County Stadium was constructed in the early 1950's on native soil. Unlike many of the newer flat sand or modified sand fields, ours has a crown through the middle axis resulting in the infield grass under the tarp and part of the infield "skin" not being submerged.

Tarp keeps in harmful heat

Even with all the water, we were confident that the field could be repaired once the water receded. We mobilized the crew to get the field ready where we could.

Around 3:00 p.m. the water was only receding one to two inches per hour, so that night's game was canceled. To make matters worse for us, the weather warmed up considerably. What about the turf under the infield tarp? The infield was like an island, and we could not remove the 16-ounce tarp, only fold in the sides. The heat built beneath the tarp, and to lift the edge of the tarp was like opening an oven door.

Fourteen members of the grounds crew lined up side by side and pumped air under the tarp for 10 to 15 minutes at a time to cool it down. They did this for 4½ hours, working around all four sides of the tarp.

The grass survived, with no scorching or pathogen damage.

Waiting on drainage

By 8:30 p.m. we had done all we could until the remaining two feet of water was gone. It took all night for it to drain, and by daybreak the only remaining water was in the dugouts and camera pits.

Still we had to get the field ready to play. Everybody on the crew went to work.

► The top one inch of the entire warning track was contaminated with scum and sediment so it was removed and replaced with all new material.

► The 90,000 square feet of the field had to be hand raked.

► A helicopter was brought in for 4 hours to help dry the surface.



The Miller Park construction site filled up with 10 feet of water. It helped save the Brewers field from further flooding.

► We were mowing the field by 8 a.m.

► We were watering the infield "skin" or dirt by 9 a.m.

► The teams took infield practice by 11:30 a.m. and the game against the Kansas City Royals started as scheduled at 1:07 p.m. The players, coaches and team

owner Bud Selig were truly amazed with how wonderful the field played. The pride and hard work by the crew provided a safe and playable field under tough conditions.

—The author is assistant director of grounds, Milwaukee Brewers baseball club.

PHOTO BY JOE VOPAL



Aerate a football field in 35 minutes.

Affordable Front or Rear Mount Aerator.

Tractor Mounted 42 inch Aerator is designed to install out-front on rotary mowers, or on any small tractor with a three point hitch: category 0, 1, 2 or 3.

Like all Turfco Turf equipment, the TM-42 is Advantage Engineered to provide long dependable service with a minimum of downtime for maintenance.

Turf friendly independently mounted Aeration wheel sets allow turning and provide a 5.5" x 8" pattern of aeration up to 4" depths. Heavy 12 ga. steel cover and rugged steel tube frame surround and protect for years of service.



Aerators from Turfco: Tough, Simple, Smart!

Turfco Mfg. Inc. • 1655 101st Ave. NE • Minneapolis, MN 55449-4420 • Ph. (612) 785-1000 • FAX (612) 785-0556

Circle 128