

AD INDEX

NO.	ADVERTISER	PAGE	NO.	ADVERTISER	PAGE
101	Beauty Lawn Zoysia Sod	26	120	Milwaukee Sewerage District	50
102	Burlingham, E.F. & Sons	47	121	Mobay Chemical	12, 13
103	Chevron Chemical Co.	27	122	Modern Turf Products	52
274	Ciba-Geigy Corp.	59	123	Monsanto Co.	34, 35
105	John Deere & Co.	6, 7	124	Olathe Mfg.	50
106	Dow Chemical U.S.A.	CV 2, p. 1	125	Olathe Mfg.	69
107	Estech, Inc.	62	126	Pickseed West	49
108	Du Pont — Landscape Fabric	21	127	Rain Bird Sprinkler Mfg.	33
109	Franklin Electric Co.	41	253	Scott & Sons	3
110	Glenmac Inc.	71	250	Scott & Sons	5
111	Irri-Trol Mfg.	31	130	Spraying Systems Co.	50
112	Jacklin Seed Co.	58	251	Stauffer Chemical Co.	43
113	Jacobsen/Div. of Textron	22, 23	132	Tee-2-Green	63
114	Kubota Tractor Corp.	CV 3	133	Tennant Co.	26
116	Lebanon Chemical Co.	60	134	Terracare Products Co.	52
117	Lesco	16	142	Toro Co.	51
252	Lofts Seed Co.	CV 4	135	Toro Irrigation	37
118	Lofts Seed Co.	CV 4	136	Trebor Corp.	69
141	Melroe	11	137	Turf-Seed	15
119	Midwest Garden Show	69	138	Turf-Seed	45
			144	United Agri Products	9
			139	Vermeer Mfg.	20
			145	Warren's Turf	61

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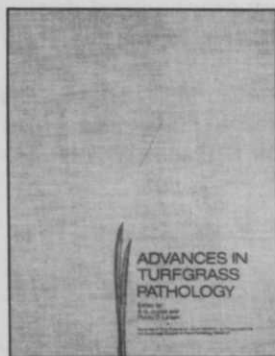
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A spirit of compromise

For over a week the radio waves in Cleveland crackled with the promotion of an event which promised to turn the floor of Municipal Stadium "into a mud pit" with fire-breathing monsters and a vehicle called "Big Foot" that crunches cars with the same fervor you stomp out cockroaches on a kitchen floor.

This is the kind of action we Americans love. Lots of hoopla, good old, dirt-flying, down-home fun.

That it also attracted a gaggle of concerned local media came as no surprise. The concern over the anticipated abuse to the baseball playing field was healthy.

Promoters of the event, anxious to demonstrate they were taking precautions to protect the turf, invited the media to Municipal Stadium to watch the track being built. What became most obvious—along with the hundreds of sheets of plywood and approximately 4,500 tons of dirt—was a spirit of compromise.

No, the floor of the Stadium was not being turned into a "mud pit." In fact, the two, 30-by-250 dirt tracks were confined to the foul areas, barely touching the playing field, and then only in the right and left field corners.

Stadium Maintenance Director David Frey used the opportunity to test a geo-textile ground cover which, covered with layers of plywood and tons of dirt, would lessen the pressure on the grass and allow it to breathe.

After the dust had settled and the tons of track hastily removed, Frey was not at all displeased with the conversion of the Stadium floor from baseball field to motor event back to playing field again. A single 4-ft-by-18-in. roll of sod was needed to repair assorted nicks and dings in the turf. The field would be ready when the baseball team returned the following week.

It's a simple matter to point the finger of blame without all the facts, to begin heating the tar and shaking the pillows into a fluffy pile of feathers.

Often such drastic action is unwarranted.

The bottom line in the operation of a stadium, as it is in any successful business, is the dollar. To remain profitable a stadium has to attract sizeable crowds even though it might involve stretching the capabilities of an athletic field. The turf manager shares in this reality and, as Frey emphasized during Cleveland's recent experience, it's an excellent opportunity to learn by aggressive planning and action.

It demonstrated again that when proper concern is shown and proper care taken, facilities, even those with something as seemingly fragile as turfgrass, can bring entertainment to those of us with many tastes, even if it involves trucks that eat other trucks.



by Ron Hall, assistant editor

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