

Disney Constructs a Wide World of Sports

Imagine a year-round sports complex encompassing nine venues filled with state-of-the-art facilities where athletes young and old, amateur and professional, compete and train for more than 30 sports. The Walt Disney Company did and, in August 1995, began constructing Disney's Wide World of Sports, a 200-acre complex that opened this past spring in Orlando, Florida.

"It's all top-of-the-line," says STMA member Murray Cook, manager of the complex's baseball stadium. Everything at Disney's Wide World of Sports testifies to that statement:

- the Tifway 419 bermuda throughout all turfgrass venues, offering 7 to 10 inches of drainage per hour;
- the picturesque Mediterranean architecture by David M. Schwarz, who created The Ballpark in Arlington

for the Texas Rangers; and

- the agreements Disney reached with Toro to provide its finest turf equipment and with Musco to supply its best lighting. Toro will assume a maintenance role for 80 acres of turf throughout the complex and will put its name on the 4 1/2-acre Town Green, where award ceremonies and other public events will be held.

Thirty-two sports can be held in tournaments and festivals 365 days a year: aerobics, archery, badminton, baseball, basketball, beach volleyball, body building, boxing, fencing, field hockey, football, gymnastics, in-line skating, judo, karate, lacrosse, martial arts, power lifting, roller hockey, rugby, running, soccer, softball, table tennis, tae kwon do, team handball, tennis, track and field, tumbling, volleyball,

weight lifting, and wrestling. The complex hopes soon to add a 10th venue for a 33rd sport, cycling. Disney bought the velodrome built at Stone Mountain Park near Atlanta for the 1996 Summer Olympics and plans to have it installed by the end of this year.

Recently, Disney's Wide World of Sports became the official training camp of the Harlem Globetrotters and the new home of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), hosting over 25 of its national championships this year and 50 by the year 2000. Disney also signed an agreement of cooperation with South Africa that is bound to bring to the complex many of the country's soccer, cricket, rugby and other events.

That's for starters. As the following listing illustrates, much more is planned.



A multi-colored walkway leads visitors from the complex's main entrance between the baseball stadium and fieldhouse to the Town Green, where paths branch out to other ball fields. Photos courtesy: Disney's Wide World of Sports.

The Baseball Stadium

Home of the Atlanta Braves spring training beginning in 1998, the double-decker baseball stadium is the tallest of all spring-training sites and was designed to replicate the best professional stadiums. It encompasses a deep seating bowl with over 7,500 extra-wide, permanent seats, 80 percent of them between first and third base, as well as 1,300 additional spaces on the lawn, four luxury sky boxes and two open-air suites.

Equipped with four batting tunnels, spacious locker and training rooms, suite-level executive offices, and a conference room that overlooks the field, the baseball stadium is, as Braves General Manager John Schuerholz put it, "the finest baseball spring-training facility in the world — bar none." A 20-year agreement with Disney's Wide World of Sports guarantees the Braves will celebrate 50 years of spring training in Florida.

The stadium will be managed and maintained under the leadership of turf



The double-decker baseball stadium was designed to replicate the best any professional stadium has to offer.

specialist Murray Cook, former baseball manager for the Braves and Montreal Expos West Palm spring-training site. Murray brings his internationally recognized expertise in 21 years of sports turf maintenance to the baseball stadium.

Dimensions: left field, 330 ft.; right field, 330 ft.; right/left field alleys, 380 ft.; center field, 400 ft.; home plate to backstop, 60 ft.; baseline to dugout step, 41 ft. **Program Manager:** Sharon Swainson.

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Baseball Quadraplex

Located in the shadow of the baseball stadium, the baseball quadraplex features four professional fields and one half field — each constructed on native soil and eight inches of rootzone mix, with infields of 80 percent sand and 20 percent clay and 20-foot warning tracks embellished with crushed brick. Field C is equipped for night play with six light poles and 174 1,500-watt metal halide fixtures.

The area between Field C and Field D is equipped with 10,000 square feet of batting tunnels, pitching mounds, four hitting tunnels and four masters pitching machines. A pitching area sporting 10 bullpens lies between Field A and Field B.

The Atlanta Braves organization will use the baseball quadraplex during extended spring training and the Gulf Coast League season in 1997. The Braves' Major League players will use

the facility full-time beginning with the 1998 spring-training season. In addition a number of top-level baseball tournaments, training sessions, clinics and fantasy camps will use the facility year-round.

Dimensions: Fields A & C — left, 335 ft.; right, 330 ft.; center, 400 ft. Field B — left and right, 325 ft.; center, 390 ft. Field D - left and right, 325 ft.; center, 380 ft. **Sports Operations Manager:** Sharon Swainson.

The Beach

The playing area, large enough to accommodate five volleyball courts, contains 4,000 tons of white asphaltic mix sand with a 24-inch depth. An underground drainage system removes six inches of rainfall per hour. Landscaping offers a variety of foliage, including split leaf philodendron, smooth congress, dwarf yaupon holly, wax myrtles and live oaks. **Program Manager:** Flo Bryan.

The Fieldhouse

With over 30,000 square feet of competition space on the bottom floor alone, the fieldhouse is a model multi-purpose arena with great flexibility, new-age playing surfaces and custom athlete training areas, including a 3,000-square-foot strength and conditioning room. Of the 5,000 seats, the highest row in the fieldhouse is only 35 feet off the ground of the 80-foot-high space.

The built-in wood Connor playing

surface holds up to four regulation basketball courts and has a minimum tested resistance of 270 pounds per square inch. An auxiliary area, with an additional 17,000-plus square feet, holds two more courts. A Porter curtaining system with 18 feet of mesh, topping the 10-foot temporary vinyl wall and acoustic wall throughout the arena, allows tournaments to run efficiently. **Program Manager:** Jeff Sturgeon.

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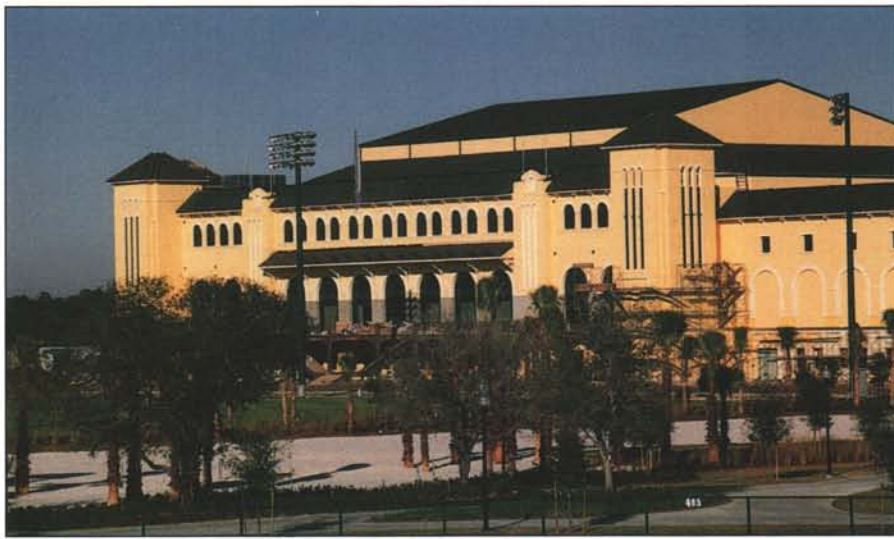
Softball Quadraplex

The softball quadraplex encompasses four softball diamonds in a giant circular pattern. Outfield fences measure 305 feet in a perfectly symmetrical configuration, although temporary fences are available for games when shorter distances are required. Each field accommodates fast and slow pitch softball and features bullpens for both teams as well as spacious dugouts and 16 helmet/equipment boxes per dugout.

The facility is scheduled to host 27 events this year featuring 10 different softball organizations. One centrally located tower overlooking all four diamonds offers press facilities, concession stands and an area for scorekeepers and officials. **Sports Operations Manager:** Ken Hackmeister.



The outfields of the softball quadraplex measure 305 feet in a perfectly symmetrical configuration, but can be shortened when required.



The fieldhouse displays the complex's Mediterranean style architecture, which principal architect David Schwarz dubs "Florida Picturesque."

Track & Field Complex

Designed under the specifications of the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF), the world governing body for track and field, Disney's complex is a modern Olympic-quality facility. The track has nine 48-inch lanes and consists of a double-layer Martin Surfacing ISS-1000 Encapsulated Finish Polyurethane Surface.

Tennis Complex

The 11 clay-court venue, including a centre court stadium, is designed to attract world-class tennis, beginning with the 1997 U.S. Men's Clay Court Championships. Built to drain water rapidly, the courts' playing surfaces

The Tifway 419 is protected by Toro's DR2 5000 irrigation system. Other equipment throughout the complex includes countdown timers, performance measurement indicators, and state-of-the-art wind gauges. Grandstands offer a base seating capacity of close to 2,000 with the ability to expand. **Sports Operations Manager:** Brooks Johnson.

incorporate a CAL CAP sub-surface irrigation system consisting of Fast Dry ISP materials. The centre court stadium contains more than 1,000 permanent seats and can be expanded up to 10,000 for larger events. **Program Manager:** Flo Bryan.

Youth Baseball Fields

Many of the features built into the professional baseball facilities are also found at the two youth baseball fields: Tifway 419 bermudagrass, Major League infield mixes of 80 percent sand and 20 percent clay, and eight-foot-wide warning tracks made of crushed red brick. Other features include two dugouts per field, enclosed bullpens, six-foot outfield fences and bleacher seating for 250 spectators per field. Fields are wired for power pitching machines, and portable batting cages are available. The youth baseball fields will host Disney-created youth tournaments, AAU championship events and local tournaments.

Dimensions: 200 ft. to all fields. **Sports Operations Manager:** Sharon Swainson.

Sports Fields

Located near the fieldhouse, the four sports fields provide a setting for football, soccer, lacrosse, archery, field hockey, cricket, ultimate frisbee and other sports. Four separate events can be contested on each of the fields simultaneously, or all four may be combined for the same tournament. The Tifway 419 bermudagrass is crowned with a one percent slope to enhance drainage.

The field adjacent to the fieldhouse is equipped with six light poles and 144 Musco fixtures for night play. Each field can seat 10,000, while all four fields combined allow a maximum capacity of 30,000 spectators.

Dimensions: each field is 105 by 68 meters (international soccer dimensions). **Sports Operations Manager:** Charles Davis. □