

# Turf Report

## Bank One Ballpark, Phoenix, Arizona

**Architect**

Ellerbe Becket  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Managing Contractor**

Huber, Hunt & Nichols  
Phoenix, Arizona

**Head Groundskeeper**

Grant Trenbeath  
Phoenix, Arizona

**Turf Supplier and  
Installation Contractor**

West Coast Turf  
Scottsdale, Arizona



## Natural Grass in Retractable-Dome Stadium A Reality With Bull's-Eye

The Arizona Diamondbacks prided themselves on being the first major-league baseball team with good old-fashioned natural grass in a retractable-dome stadium. But Bank One Ballpark's extreme conditions, including prolonged shade, wide-ranging temperatures and heavy use, were rough on grass. That's why West Coast Turf recommended and installed Bull's-Eye, an improved cultivar of bermudagrass hailed for its extreme toughness and beauty. The outcome? Through 14-game home stands, pop concerts and searing desert heat, Bull's-Eye bermuda has performed like a champ. No wonder the "D-backs" list Bull's-Eye among their stadium's state-of-the-art amenities.

**Extreme Conditions Push Ordinary Grasses to Their Limit**

When Bank One Ballpark launched its regular season in 1998, no other stadium had dared subject natural grass to the shady conditions of a roof. However, the Diamondbacks were committed to offering fans all the traditions of America's favorite pastime—including a real grass field—in an ultra-modern retractable-dome facility. Most games would be played with the retractable roof closed, creating comfort for the fans and lots of shade for the field.

"During a home stand, the outfield corners receive only two hours of sun a day," says Grant Trenbeath, the stadium's head groundskeeper. "Even on a fully open day, the outfield corners receive only four hours. In winter, two-fifths of the field is in constant shade."

Accompanying the long periods of shade are the extreme temperatures of desert heat and air conditioning.

"In one day, our grass can experience 100-degree heat and 78-degree air conditioning," says Trenbeath. "With the roof closed, the grass gets lulled to sleep and grows slower."



Photo by Russ Hayworth

*For quicker installation and better anchorage, West Coast Turf installed big rolls of Bull's-Eye bermuda with a thick-cut, two-inch soil base. The 3-1/2' x 30' rolls allowed for one-day installation and the weight of thick-cut meant the field would be playable almost immediately.*

# Bull's-Eye Bermuda at a Glance

**Scientific Name**

*Cynodon dactylon* MSB-30

**Trade Name**

Bull's-Eye Bermuda

**Uses**

Sports fields, commercial and residential lawns, golf course fairways and roughs, parks and housing developments.

**Color**

Dark blue-green

**Mowing Height**

1/2" — 2"

**Growth Habit**

Compact, dense

**Seedheads**

Few to none

**Leaves**

Medium width, slightly coarse

**Nitrogen Fertilizer Requirement**

Low

**Shade Tolerance**

Improved

**Cushion**

Excellent

**Resistance to Scalping**

Excellent

**Durability**

Excellent

**Disease Resistance**

Very good to excellent

**USDA Zones**

7 to 11



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Photo by Russ Hayworth

*Bull's-Eye takes the field with toughness, improved shade tolerance and quick spring green-up.*

Finally, there's the wear and tear of a pro ball team. This summer the Diamondbacks had a 13-game home stand in two weeks which followed a major pop-music concert.

The first two seasons, it looked like healthy natural grass at "the BOB" was just a field of dreams. Different grasses were tried but none thrived under the demanding conditions.

**Bull's-Eye Meets Groundskeeper's Tough Standards**

Prior to the '99 season, West Coast Turf Sales Representative Russ Hayworth invited Trenbeath to visit the company's sod farms in Palm Desert and check out their new and improved bermuda.

"I wanted a grass with great playability, one that's firm yet soft for safe footing and a predictable bounce," said Trenbeath. "We also wanted durability and recuperative ability."

The groundskeeper also needed a warm-season grass that would overseed well and come back quickly in early spring for the pre-season games that begin March 30.

Introduced by West Coast Turf in 1999, Bull's-Eye is ideally suited for sports fields. Its dense upright growth and tightly packed leaves near the soil surface lead to excellent durability and quick recovery from injury, and provide excellent footing for ballplayers. Plus, Bull's-Eye greens up quicker in the spring than other bermudas, resists scalping, has improved shade tolerance and has an unusually deep blue-green color.

"What I saw during my visit was very appealing," said Trenbeath. "Compared to other bermudas, Bull's-Eye is darker and more bluish, definitely something different. I knew I wanted a bermudagrass for toughness and Bull's-Eye's improved shade tolerance certainly sounded great. So we went for it on the entire field."

During the All-Star break in July of '99, West Coast Turf's expert crews installed more than 100,000 square feet of freshly harvested Bull's-Eye sod. Among the many sod options available, Trenbeath ordered thick-cut sod with a two-inch soil base for better anchorage and immediate playability while the sod's roots knit to the existing surface. He also specified "big rolls" which are 3-1/2 ft. wide by 30 ft. long (105 sq. ft.). These large rolls cut installation time and create an immediate finished look with fewer seams.

**Bull's-Eye Delivers A Clutch Performance**

"Bull's-Eye has performed better than other grasses," Trenbeath said. "Even with prolonged shade and extreme heat, it has remained durable and recovers quickly. Its dark green color has held up even with our roof closed and the players love how the ball bounces off it."

Every February, the BOB is resodded with Bull's-Eye overseeded with West Coast Turf's Chaparral perennial ryegrass. During the first month of the season, Bull's-Eye begins to overtake the ryegrass, according to Trenbeath.

"Our transition from ryegrass to Bull's-Eye has been excellent, which means our grass looks and plays great early in the season when we need it," he says.

"Bull's-Eye has surpassed our expectations."