

# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Thursday, July 15, 2004

## Fields of green

### Leo Goertz takes pride in keeping Texas A&M athletic fields perfect

By Jordan Meserole  
THE BATTALION

As Leo Goertz stood on the lower deck of Kyle Field, he slowly scanned from end zone to end zone. To the common eye, it just looks like a plain grass field with a few divots and dry spots. To Goertz, it looks like a blank canvas, waiting to be painted into a picture that will be seen by thousands. He stood quietly for a moment as the hot sun reflected off his sunglasses, as if the inspiration for his next piece of work was already being formulated in his mind.

As he strolled on the field, his eyes were often on the ground, looking for more imperfections.

"This grass didn't quite come in like I wanted it to," said Goertz as he kicked at a small bare spot near the 50-yard line.

For the past 25 years, this has been Goertz's job — finding the smallest imperfections on the athletic fields and maintaining them so as to keep players, coaches and fans happy.

Goertz came to Texas A&M in 1978. He had no serious aspirations then, he just knew he wanted to go to the school that was close to his

home of New Braunfels and where his brothers had attended college.

Goertz was given a chance to work as a student manager his freshman year for the baseball team under then Head Coach Tom Chandler and happily took the position. Little did he know it would be the start of his career.

"When I started, Olsen had just opened and there was no real field crew. The student managers and turf students did most of the work," Goertz said. "I wouldn't have ever believed coming out of high school that I'd end up doing this 25 years later."

Goertz graduated in 1985 from A&M and was named supervisor of Olsen Field. He instantly caught attention for his hard work, receiving the first ever Diamond Dry Collegiate Baseball Groundskeeper Award in 1985. Two years later, he received another award for his on-field work from the Beam Clay Company.

Goertz stuck around A&M despite calls from other schools interested in his services. He impressed enough that in 1996, he was named the maintenance manager for Texas A&M athletics. The title came bearing a heavy workload, as the manager is responsible for the appearance of football, baseball, softball, track and soccer fields.

"When I started back in 1985, there wasn't a whole lot of grass to take care of," Goertz said. "We had about four acres back then and now we're up close to 15."

Goertz isn't quick to take all responsibility for the game day looks of the fields. He proudly spoke of the work his crew does, as a father might brag about his children. And that's exactly how Leo feels, shying away from that term boss.

"I'm not the boss as much as I'm the back-slapper and hand-shaker," Goertz said. "My guys will learn a lot more from their experiences if they help make the decisions rather than me telling them every single thing to do."

Goertz manages a crew of nine, which consists of four full-time workers and five part-time

students.

Matt Raiborn, a mechanic on the crew, has been working under Goertz since February and said he has enjoyed every minute of his job, mainly because of Leo Goertz.

"I've had jobs where bosses scream, holler and throw stuff when they're mad," said Raiborn. "Not Leo. Leo has no stress and pressure. And if he does, he doesn't show you. He keeps a relaxed environment that makes it easy to get everything done right."

Raiborn's observation is more than accurate; when Goertz was asked about the hard aspects of the job, he referred to them simply as challenges. Goertz said the biggest challenge comes off the field.

"Fans expect to see the same things every time they come to a stadium," Goertz said. "People notice if they come back and the field looks different from last time-if there's divots or brown spots or such. It's a challenge trying to maintain the field and keep it pleasing to the fans."

A&M Athletic Director Bill Byrne has worked at many schools and traveled to many stadiums, and is quick to praise Goertz.

"Leo Goertz and our grounds-keeping crew are the best in the country, hands down," Byrne said. "Other coaches that come in here and compete tell me all the time it's the best surface they've played on."

Many people don't know Leo Goertz. They wouldn't know about his extensive baseball hat collection, his long list of awards or the multitudes of stories he has about games and meeting future superstar athletes. But if that person has been to an A&M athletic event in the last 20 years, they've most certainly seen his work.

"Mowing and painting is our artwork," Goertz said. "I want to improve on yesterday today. You go out everyday with the intention of painting something better than before."

As the stands of Kyle Field sit silent, save the flapping wings of a few pigeons, an artist and his apprentices are hard at work, preparing to put the final touches on yet another masterpiece.



BRIAN WILLS • THE BATTALION

A&M manager of athletic facilities **Leo Goertz** stands with some of members of his crew on Kyle Field. Goertz has been working on A&M athletic fields since he began A&M in 1978 and has received many awards.

#### SPORTS IN BRIEF

##### Dikta won't run for Illinois senator

CHICAGO (AP) — Former Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka said Wednesday he would not run for the U.S. Senate, leaving Illinois Republicans still without a replacement candidate.

Ditka, who first told Illinois Republican leaders of his decision, made his announcement outside his Chicago restaurant.

Republicans had hoped Ditka would step in to replace Jack Ryan, who dropped out nearly three weeks ago over embarrassing allegations in his divorce papers that he took his wife, "Boston Public"

actress Jeri Ryan, to sex clubs before they split up. The party's top choices have refused to run.

There had been a growing sentiment that Ditka was perhaps the best shot for the Illinois GOP to keep a seat that will be vacated in January when Sen. Fitzgerald retires.

##### Lakers send Shaq to Miami Heat

MIAMI (AP) — The Heat and Lakers finalized one of the most landscape-altering trades in NBA history Wednesday, O'Neal going to Miami in exchange for Caron Butler, Lamar Odom, Brian Grant

and a first-round draft pick.

"It's certainly a disappointing day in a lot of ways in Los Angeles. I can't deny that," general manager Mitch Kupchak said.

In stark contrast to the downcast mood in Los Angeles, which was fueled in part by lingering uncertainty over whether Kobe Bryant will also leave the Lakers,

the sensation in Miami was diametrically different.

"We feel that we have traded for the best player in the NBA," Heat president Pat Riley said.

The deal had been on the verge of completion since Saturday, after O'Neal had spoken with Riley.

## ATTN: ENGINEERING MAJORS!!

**Tradition** New at The Tradition for 2004... **Tradition**

### \*\*ENGINEERING HOUSING PROGRAM!\*\*

As an Aggie engineering student, YOU are among the best and the brightest at Texas A&M. The Tradition at Northgate believes you deserve the BEST and most SUPPORTIVE living and study environment. THAT'S WHY WE ARE SETTING ASIDE A BLOCK OF ROOMS EXCLUSIVELY FOR YOU AND OTHER AGGIE ENGINEERS! By living on the Engineering block, you qualify for all-inclusive **discounted** group rates as low as \$525 per monthly installment payment, which includes 5 meals per week in our very own Edge Café!



#### Why join The Tradition at Northgate's Engineering Housing Program?

\*\* EASY walking distance to Zachry, the new Brown Chemical Engineering Building, and all of ENGINEERING ROW!

\*\* A built-in support network of other Aggie engineers as well as RAs and tutors with engineering backgrounds. Studies show students housed by academic major are more successful!

\*\* Access to individual and group study areas, including an engineering-focused study room with:  
- Large white boards  
- Computer with common engineering software  
- Student-maintained quiz files



\*\* TOUR HOURS EVERYDAY 8am-7pm! \*\*

979-268-9000

Tour online at [www.traditionaggieland.net](http://www.traditionaggieland.net) and sign up today!  
301 Church Avenue  
College Station, Texas 77840

## Comfort, Convenience, and Value

All in one Place

### One Month FREE - Ask Us How!

Open till 7pm Monday-Friday • Saturday till 6pm & Sunday till 5pm

- On-Site Management
- 2 Sparkling Pools with Sand Volleyball Court
- All New Fitness Center
- 3 Well Maintained Laundry Facilities
- All Units Cable-Ready
- Shuttle Bus Route (Elephant Walk)
- Plenty of Well-Lighted Parking
- Huge Closets & Pantries
- Only a Few Blocks from Shopping Centers
- 1 Mile from Campus

**WILLOWICK**  
apartments

(979) 693-1325

Check us out at: [www.willowickapartments.com](http://www.willowickapartments.com) or E-Mail us: [WWLeasing@shortmgmt.com](mailto:WWLeasing@shortmgmt.com)

502 Southwest Parkway • College Station, TX 77840

\*Limited Offer - Limited Availability

FREE  
BRAKE  
INSPECTION

## We are America's #1 Brake Service Company

For Ags

**MIDAS**

979-764-1844

BRYAN COLLEGE STATION

#### Carkeeper Brakes

1 Year/12,000 Mile Warranty

**\$9.99**  
Most Cars Installation Extra

#### Lifetime VSD Brakes

**\$39.99**  
Most Cars Plus Installation Lifetime Warranty  
45 pt. Brake Inspection Included

With coupon. Not valid with any other offer. Coupon must be presented at time of service. Expires 08.31.04

2715 S. Texas Ave. - Across from Wal-Mart

corner of S. Texas Ave & Harvey Mitchell Pkwy

Open Monday - Saturday  
7:00am - 6:00pm

Engine Light On?  
We can help

FREE  
Car Maintenance Inspection  
For Ag's

#### Lube, Oil & Filter

**\$19.99**

The People Who Know Use Valvoline

Up to 5 Qts. 10W/30

Most cars & light trucks diesel vehicles excluded. Synthetic oil extra.

With coupon. Not valid with any other offer. Coupon must be presented at time of service. Expires 08.31.04

Total Car Care - From Wiper Blades to Engine Repair