Did You Know?

Summer sports are underway—soccer, baseball, football, and golf—and sports fans are probably having discussions about their team's chances of winning. One point of contention may be the impact field condition has on a team's chances. Well, ARS scientists are just as interested in field conditions, but even more interested in which bugs are eating the field!

Mole crickets—tunneling pests that damage golf courses, recreational fields and lawns—are a top insect pest of lawns and turfs, and cost millions of dollars annually in damage and control. Scientists at the ARS Crop Genetics and Breeding Research Unit in Tifton, GA, in collaboration with their colleagues at the University of Georgia, developed and released TifEagle, a bermudagrass that resists these hungry pests.

This high-quality grass has short, narrow leaves, and a dense, fast-spreading root system, making it ideal for putting greens. The ideal putting green must be able to withstand the daily stress of close mowing, which gives the North's cool-season bentgrass varieties their prized putting speed.

TifEagle's lush, carpet-like canopy not only helps the ball roll faster and more smoothly, but it also "outhustles" algae and weeds—making it environmentally friendly, since less chemicals are needed to control them.

ARS scientists also developed and released TifSport, another bermudagrass that is cold-tolerant, has increased pest tolerance, turns green earlier in the spring and withstands frequent mowing. TifSport can also "take a pounding," standing up to the stress and demands of major league sports—football, soccer, and baseball. Universities, high schools, local recreation departments and others across the South have installed TifSport on their athletic fields.

Game on!

Kenan Stadium's Football Field at the University of North Carolina.

Sea Island Golf Club in St. Simons Island, GA.

Fairway at Eagle Point Golf Club, Wilmington, NC.

Georgia Tech's Bobby Dodd Stadium in Atlanta, GA.

Photos courtesy of Sam Williams, Georgia Seed Development Commission.

Please submit story ideas and national award items to Tara T. Weaver-Missick, tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov or call 301-504-1663.