



## AN EVOLVING FIELD...

**1960s:** Under Coach Dan Devine, the Tigers chalk up a sparkling 93-37-7 record and earn six bowl game invitations between 1958 and 1970, a period often referred to as the "glory years" of MU football.



**Oct. 6, 1990:** Colorado defeats MU 33-31 on a "fifth-down" play. To add insult to injury, Colorado Coach Bill McCartney, BS Ed '63, complains about the slippery Omniturf. "That field is unplayable," says McCartney, refusing to acknowledge that faulty officiating allowed the Buffaloes to win. "Something should be done about that turf."



MEADGRIAN FILE PHOTO

FIRST NATURAL GRASS. THEN OMNITURF. NOW BACK TO GRASS.  
'GLORY YEARS' COACH DON FAUROT IS GLAD TO SEE THE GRASS BACK.

# FULL CIRCLE

STORY BY TERRY JORDAN  
PHOTOS BY ROB HILL

IT SEEMS ONLY FITTING THAT DON FAUROT, BS Ag '25, MA '27, was on hand earlier this summer when new, natural grass was installed on the field that bears his name.

As a graduate student at MU in 1926, Faurot helped lay the original grass sod inside the then-new Memorial Stadium. He coached great players and great teams in the 1930s and 1940s, and was athletic director during the "glory years" of Missouri football in the 1960s. Although retired, he's been around for the lean years, too — such as the past decade, when the Tigers were 19-33-3 in home games on the dreaded Omniturf.

"It's great to see grass growing on the field again," says Faurot, now 94. "It reminds you of the good times in MU football."

Indeed. After all, it was on Memorial Stadium's natural grass that quarterback Paul Christman led the 1939 Tigers to wins over Colorado, Kansas State, Nebraska and Oklahoma — a dazzling

feat repeated by the 1941 team.

It was on that natural grass that Ron Taylor, Norris Stevenson and Mel West guided the Missouri "student-body left, student-body right" sweep offense to the school's first (and still only) No. 1 national ranking in 1960. It was on that natural grass that Johnny Roland, Joe Moore and Mel Gray sparked some of Dan Devine's finest teams to winning seasons and bowl invitations in the 1960s. It was on that natural grass that quarterback Phil Bradley passed and rushed for most of his school-high 6,459 yards in four spectacular seasons in the late 1970s. And it was on that natural grass that Coach Warren Powers' teams amassed victories that led to five bowl games in seven seasons — an accomplishment often forgotten in Mizzou football annals.

But alas, the south end of the stadium was enclosed in the late 1970s, a move that resulted in poor air circulation at field level. That fact, combined with a

hard clay subsurface and a slowly growing fungus, was just too much for the old grass to take. When Woody Widenhofer, BS Ed '65, came back to coach at his alma mater in fall 1985, he was greeted with an artificial playing surface called Omniturf.

The Tigers lost the first game on their slippery new carpet to Northwestern, 27-23, and proceeded to lose every other home contest that year. In four seasons, Widenhofer's teams were 7-18-1 on the Omniturf. Bob Stull, who succeeded Widenhofer, had a record of 13-14-2 on the artificial grass.

Clearly, the Omniturf can not solely be blamed for the football program's woes in the past decade. But new Coach Larry Smith is delighted with the return to natural grass.

"It has already changed the environment on the team," he says. "Our players have better attitudes. We can't wait to get out there and play on it."



**DECEMBER 1994:** The Richardson and Bass Construction Co. of Columbia uses backhoes to tear out the 10-year-old Omniturf, with its 2-inch rubber mat, 4 inches of popcorn asphalt, and 6 inches of rock drainage. Columbians nab the scrap turf for welcome mats, and a student carpets his room wall-to-wall with the remnants.

**MAY 1995:** After building a new drainage system for the field, workers put down 4 inches of pea gravel, 8 inches of root zone sand and organic matter, and 4 inches of Turf Grids. This subsurface allows water to drain quickly, and is the main difference between the new and old grass fields.



**JUNE 1995:** Two workers try to budge a 3,000-pound roll of customized Kentucky sod in a photo illustration. Gene Sandner, BS Ag '83, and Darrell Seltam, BS BA '36, MA '37, owners of S&S Seed Farms of Rocheport, Mo., grew the sod for the two-day installation job.