

# Three ideas for running the best operation

BY MEL LANFORD

The new millennium has uncovered a new consciousness toward athletic fields and their maintenance, with groundskeepers at the center of this evolution. Over the past decade, the "maintenance men" of athletic fields have grown into athletic field managers who ensure the quality of the athletic field and accept all responsibility for the safety and professional look of the facility.

Professional athletic field managers have taken on the responsibility of spearheading these operations and providing safe and playable athletic facilities. We have also come to understand that we are liable for all incidents and damages that occur on our fields. The issue of liability is frightening in our judicial system where anyone can sue anyone for anything anytime.

There are three main concepts that athletic field managers should incorporate in running their operations: educating decision-makers; communicating and implementing ideas; and, smart recordkeeping.

## #1 Educating decision-makers

To evolve into this new responsibility as athletic field managers, we must work efficiently to educate the people who approve the field projects and financial budgets of athletic facilities. It is vital that athletic field managers inform executives about what it takes to provide a superior and safe playing surface and also the consequences of failing to reach such standards. In too many cases, athletic facilities are not using the valued products, equipment, and efforts to create reliable fields that can withstand the "wear and tear" of numerous contests.

In the reverse role, athletic field managers need to be open-minded and allow the executives to teach them the business aspects of running an athletic facility. This two-way communication constructs a strong management where all sides of the party understand and respect each other's decisions. In many cases, athletic field managers will better understand the financial situation of the facility and work to conserve resources and increase productivity. Together, athletic field managers and executives can incorporate a communication model that will benefit the playing field, players, and fans.

## #2 Communicating and implementing ideas

Succeeding at educating the decision-makers builds great momentum in communication among all employees at your facility. Good communications will initiate the process of adding new budgets, products, and services to the facilities and make the process easier and more productive.

The next major strategy is to effectively communicate different ideas and needs concerning facility maintenance. Through this communication, we want to remember to offer our ideas as coming from an expert in the field of groundskeeping. Athletic field managers have a special passion for their work and we must display this in our strategies and ideas that we present to executives. When meeting with them, we need to express an involved and zealous attitude, which shows how much we care about our profession and our projects. This tactical communication is extremely persuasive and it allows us to promote a dedicated feeling to our leaders.



Remember that we chose this profession because we love the outdoors, the smell of freshly cut grass, and because we didn't want to sit around in an office all day. For the same reasons, the accountants chose their role in the cool setting of an office. Respect this and use this to your advantage while communicating.

## #3 Smart recordkeeping

As you use persuasive and effective communication to implement your ideas, remember that you have put your reputation as a groundskeeping expert on the line. For this reason, it is vital to keep records of all applications and projects that occur on your fields.

With the evolution of athletic fields and the growing popularity of competitive sports, athletic field managers have seen their staffs grow exponentially and this causes a new system of delegation. By delegating duties, you are responsible for the work of others and this is the prominent reason why we should be keeping records of our projects.

Recordkeeping is also a key tactic because we deal with so many chemicals in our daily duties. To be in compliance with state and federal licensing, we must keep complete records on all chemicals used and stored on the job.

I have had instances where an outside contractor was hired to complete a specific project and did not fulfill his obligation. To alleviate this problem, I always have a camera on hand to record the progress of different projects. This keeps outside contractors honest and keeps me out of trouble. The dated photographs from a camera can easily show the history of a project and provide a concrete argument for your staff and yourself.

With these three concepts in mind, you can work better to advance our industry into the realm that it deserves.



Mel Lanford, the creator and host of the Ace of Diamonds Tour, here at Frontier Field, Rochester, NY.

Mel Lanford, a 30-year veteran of the groundskeeping industry, is the creator and host of the Ace of Diamonds Tour, sponsored in part by Diamond Pro Professional Groundskeeping Products, a division of TXI. Mel travels across the United States year-round presenting hands-on seminars, demonstrating the proper infield and sports turf maintenance materials, equipment and techniques to athletic field managers. For information, see [www.diamondpro.com](http://www.diamondpro.com) or call 336-210-9722.

## MAT DRAGS

Beacon Ballfields now offers cocoa mat drags in two sizes. The 6-ft. wide by 4-ft. deep mat is available with or without the Beacon leveling bar. The company also offers a 6-ft. by 2 1/2-ft. deep hand cocoa mat drag. The 1-in. thick natural fiber cocoa mats have a vinyl backing. The lead edge is steel reinforced. Cocoa mats give your field that major league finish and are affordably priced for the budget conscious groundskeeper. Call Beacon for pricing and a catalog.

Beacon Ballfields/800-747-5985  
For more information, circle 176



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The scoreboard includes an internal gel cell battery with charger, portable stand, operator's console, 40-watt speaker, microphone, 10 computer-generated sports tunes, and an ABS sign panel.

Colorado Time Systems/970-667-1000  
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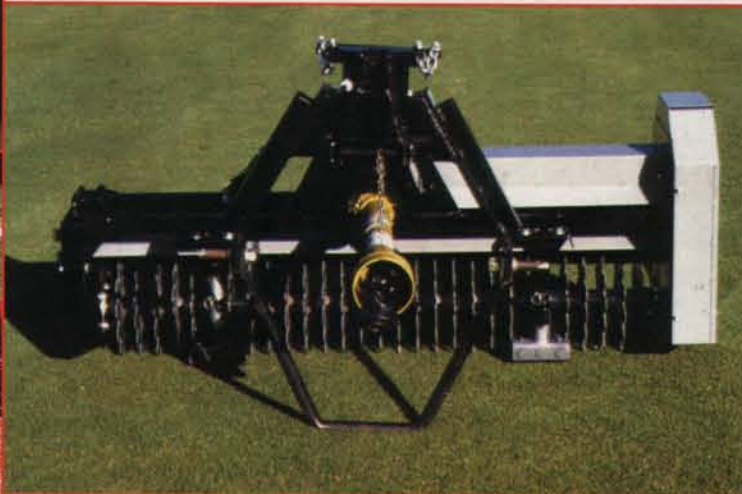
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## PORTABLE PRESSURE WASHERS

Tuff Pressure Washers has a new line of electric hot water pressure washers with vertical burner design and hand truck design. The TVT series has a cleaning range up to 4.2 gpm and 3,000 psi of pressure. There are 12 models, six with a belt-drive high-pressure pump and six with direct-drive or direct-coupled pump. All feature a Legacy high-pressure pump with 5-yr. warranty.

Tuff Pressure Washers/800-772-8833

For information, circle 184

## CARGO TRAILERS

Avenger Corp. has up-fitted its entire product line of Avenger, Avalanche, Competitor, Vindicator, VSR-7, and VNC series trailers. Changes include radius aluminum fenders on single-axle units, with new fender lights featuring two-toned orange and safety red lens; improved radius on aluminum fender flares for tandem and triple-axle units (no more exposed fasteners).

Trickle chargers on all breakaway kits is now standard on all units, and Avenger models have new automotive-styled, dead-bolt flushed-locked rear double doors and aluminum-wrapped rear ends. This system features a pin and chain release on the roadside door and flush-lock with deadbolt on the curbside door, all keyed to match other trailer doors. Rear ramp doors have been improved with two heavy-duty cab-lock handles with an internal locking latch mechanism.

Avenger Corp./616-641-7605

For information, circle 182



## INDOOR & OUTDOOR BLEACHERS

Easy Store tip-and-roll bleachers for gyms and Weatherbeater models for outside are available. Both styles come in 7 1/2- and 15-ft. lengths, in two, three, or four tiers. Indoor units have a welded steel support structure with silver powder-coated finish; outdoor units have a hot-dip galvanized structure and recycled plastic lumber ground runners rather than casters. All planks are capped.

Bison/800-247-7668

For information, circle 178



## BROOM ATTACHMENT

Ideal for cleaning up many things, including dirt, leaves, snow, material spills, standing water, steel shavings, or water, the 72-in. long Mega 720 broom attachment is adaptable to most service vehicles, says the manufacturer. Mounting kits for forklifts, bucket lips, three-point hitches (class 1 & 2), and skid steer pivots are available.

TrynEx International/800-725-8377  
For information, circle 179

## NELSON'S GONE WIRELESS

With the SoloRain family of wireless control equipment, Nelson provides battery-powered irrigation products delivering reliable control without conventional wiring. Nelson's newest additions, the 8014 and 8014SR DuraLife valve actuators, operate on a factory-installed battery for up to 10 years of normal use on a Nelson valve. In addition, the 8014 and 8014SR, like all SoloRain actuators, are completely waterproof. Ideal applications include hard-to-reach areas or other spots where it is not practical or economical to install a hard-wired controller. It is also suited to retrofitting manual systems or repairing existing wired systems.

L.R. Nelson Corp./888.NELSON.8  
For information, circle 181



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After the transmitter is activated by squeezing

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AliMed/781-829-2900

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## EARTH ANCHOR SYSTEM

A system you can install yourself anchors many parks and recreation amenities including benches, tables, playground equipment, and toilets. The AMU system consists of a Manta Ray earth anchor attached to a threaded rod; the anchor is first driven into the ground with a heavy hammer and re-usable drive steel to proper depth; then a locking socket and drill is used to pull the rod, toggling the anchor into a perpendicular position. A nut and washer complete the fastening.

Foresight Products/800-325-5360

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## PORTABLE GENERATORS

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Coleman Powermate/800-445-1805  
For information, circle 131



## LOCK IT UP

Security and bike bollards feature added depth reinforcement with a lock-down welded ring. The units can be used for special events and rerouting traffic, and they can be removed to encourage traffic flow. A surface plate is available to cover the opening while the bollard has been removed. The unit is available in stainless steel and nine powder-coated colors. Bike units feature two bike racks.

Most Dependable Fountains/800-552-6331  
For information, circle 132



## GET YOUR GAME ON

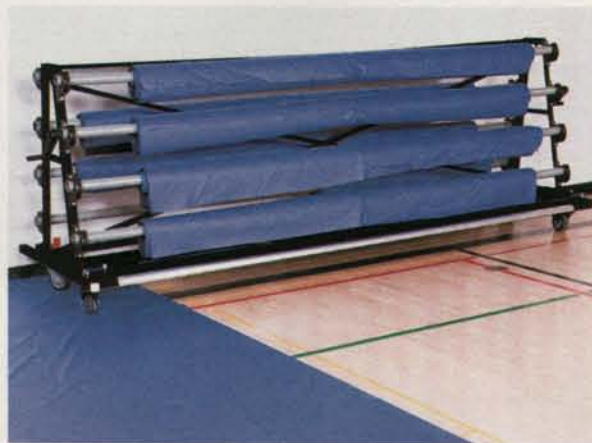
Ideal for both formal settings and the golf course, the machine-washable Sawgrass Shirt has a subtle jacquard pattern in tonal shades for a flattering casual look. Made of 100 percent combed cotton pique knit, the shirt has a rib knit collar and cuffs, a vented tail and a relaxed fit. It is available in bluegrass or steel green colors and sizes ranging from small to 3X large.

American Identity/877-244-8860  
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## TAKE COVER

The Covermate handling system efficiently installs and removes gym floor covers. To install a cover section, the operator walks it over from one end of the gym to the other. To remove, attach the cover to its roller and wind it up with the standard cranks or optional power winder.

Covermaster/416-745-1811  
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