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 facility 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 reason, 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, 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 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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**PORTABLE MULTI-SPORT SCOREBOARD**

The P-1 portable scoreboard features high-visibility 9-in. digits that provide time, home/guest score, and period/inning information. The unit is perfect for baseball, basketball, field hockey, football, lacrosse, and soccer.

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Colorado Time Systems/970-667-1000
For information, circle 177

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Circle 116 on Inquiry Card
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 1VT 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 Weatherheater 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/800-247-7666
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

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**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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**CUSTOM SIGNS**

Revere has more than 700 stock sign designs or will customize signs for you. Special safety notices, personalized parking, or directional signs are examples of what they do. Custom signs are available in a wide variety of sizes and materials. Signs are made of plastic, vinyl, or aluminum. Complete line of OSHA and traffic signs available.

Revere Products/800-321-1976
For information, circle 183
YOU MAKE THE CALL
AutoDial is an immediate, wireless way to contact emergency personnel or family members when necessary. The unit can call up to six emergency numbers and record a message up to 20 seconds long.

After the transmitter is activated by squeezing the pendant or pressing a button on the wristband, the dialer continues until two positive responses are received. The message and phone numbers are permanently stored in case of power failure.

AliMed/781-829-2900
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EARTH ANCHOR SYSTEM
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Foresight Products/800-326-5369
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PORTABLE GENERATORS
Coleman Powermate has a new line of Honda-powered portable generators available, ranging from 5,500 to 6,500 watts. All three new models have Honda GX overhead valve engines that shut down automatically if oil runs low; one model features electric start. Each model has tires, fold-down handles, and 5.6-gal. metal gas tanks. A special idle control reduces engine speed and noise when the electrical load subsides.

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

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/416-745-1911
For information, circle 134

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
For information, circle 133
STOP THEM IN THEIR TRACKS

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SkateStoppers/858-576-9492
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BACKTOPS

Z-Fold basketball backstops, T-Frame backstops and backstop structures with a 25-year warranty are now available. Quality gymnasium dividers, wall pads, volleyball systems and PE equipment are also available.

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