

from the sidelines

A MIDDLE-AGED DEDICATION

REACHING YOU 25,000 readers through this column each month is a privilege that I appreciate very much. Not too many folks have the regular opportunity to say whatever they want to even a much smaller audience. Most months I try to share some interesting turf maintenance related news from industry experts or shine a spotlight on someone who deserves the recognition. (Some of you think I mention either Penn State and/or Joe Paterno every issue, too, and you're right, I just did it again.)

I turned 44 years old on the day I wrote this column. If you haven't already moved on to read Bob Campbell's column across the page, you may be wondering, So what? I'm not much of a navel-gazer so please forgive me for doing so here; at 44, my life is well over half lived, at least statistically, and yet there are many days I don't feel any older (or wiser) than I did at 22.

But, I enjoy my job. My extended family is healthy. I have some terrific friends whom I love. I hit the golf ball better than ever. I live on the side of a mountain (in a house, smarty-pants!). My life has never been so satisfying; I am fortunate.

Alas, I've got more hair in the ears and less on the scalp. I seem to spill food on myself every time I eat. I am invisible to all women under age 40. Taking my shirt off in public is unthinkable. My vertical leap is near zero. I fall asleep reading every night. I'm not as kind as I should be.

And the world is a scarier place than ever before not only because those who hate are terrifying but also because too many of us in the greatest country on earth take our freedoms for granted. Democracy depends on participation and not enough of us are doing our share, myself included. Our leaders should not be curiously scrutinized from every angle 24/7, because it keeps from public life too many genuine, quality people, leaving us with only ego-tists who love fame. Celebrity is not leadership. I sometimes fear our way of life will disappear.

Yet I look forward to my future as an ordinary Joe (!) with much anticipation because of my pretty little redhead of a wife and our wonderful preschool-aged redheaded son and daughter. Though I'll never invent anything or discover anything, never be considered an exceptional man, I still can be the best husband and father possible. And so I use this soapbox to pledge to those three redheads that I will try my damndest to lead an honorable life for the rest of my days.



ERIC SCHRODER, EDITOR

Comments always welcome.
Call Eric at 717-805-4197,
email eschroder@aip.com, or write
PO Box 280, Dauphin, PA 17018.

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Ph: (312) 846-4600 Fax: (312) 846-4638
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STMA OFFICE

1027 SOUTH 3RD ST., COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51503
phone: (800) 323-3875
email: STMAHQ@st.omhcoxmail.com
website: www.sportsturfmanager.com

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