

Grandad Didn't Have a Cell Phone



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My grandfather passed away in 2004 at age 92 so he could have hooked a cell phone onto his overalls while he farmed if he'd wanted. But he didn't have much use for modern technology (save the latest combine); heck, he didn't even bother with cable television and never once flew in an airplane.

Grandad couldn't have imagined in 1955 or 1965 or 1975 that one day he could call Uncle Bill from the seat of that combine. Yet today he could not only make a call but also use the phone to check when his crops might get some rain.

My point? Not too long ago turf managers probably dreamed about growing natural grass in an enclosed stadium, or employing a robot to mow their acreage. "Maybe in the future," they might have mused.

Well, as Dr. Dave Minner and Dr. Andy McNitt pointed out at the Sports Turf Managers Association's Conference last month, "The future is here." In their tandem presentation at the Conference's Opening Session, both educators painted an exciting picture of how turf managers' jobs are changing and will continue to change. Dr. Minner showed slides of the construction in Phoenix of the NFL Cardinals' new stadium, which features a field that literally moves in and out of the enclosed stadium on rollers and Teflon skids. He also had slides from Van Cline at Toro showing Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology that now can measure your fields' water content, soil compaction, and turf stress.

Dr. McNitt said the turf manager profession is "in the middle of a revolution," and that in the future success in turfgrass management will require 5% hard skills and 95% communication skills. As an example, he suggested that sports turf managers regularly (even just once every spring) produce a simple newsletter that shares with his or her field users some of the why and how of turf maintenance and how the users benefit.

General agreement exists among the attendees and commercial exhibitors at the STMA Conference on one thing: the sports turf industry is growing. Sports turf managers' professionalism and ability to effectively communicate, to "management" and end users, needs to keep pace.

For more news from the STMA Conference, see www.greenmediaonline.com for our special report from the show.

Oversight Dept.: In our Field Construction Company Directory in the December 2005 issue, we unfortunately neglected to list ABC Sports Turf in Houston. You can reach them at 281-493-3327 or www.abcsporsturf.com. We regret the omission.

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The Official Publication Of The Sports Turf
Managers Association

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SportsTurf (ISSN 1061-687X) (USPS 000-292) (Reg. U.S. Pat. & T.M. Off.) is published monthly by Bev-AI Communications, a M2MEDIA360 company at 760 Market Street, Suite 432, San Francisco, CA 94102. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to SportsTurf, P.O. Box 2120, Skokie IL 60076-7820. For subscription information and requests, call Subscription Services at (847) 763-9565. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$40 US & Poss.; 2 years, \$65 US & Poss.; 1 year, \$65 Canada/Foreign Surface, 1 year, \$130 Airmail. All subscriptions are payable in advance in US funds. Send payments to SportsTurf, P.O. Box 2120, Skokie, IL 60076-7820. Phone: (847) 763-9565. Fax: (847) 763-9569. Single copies or back issues, \$6 each US/Canada; \$9 Foreign. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA and additional mailing offices. COPYRIGHT 2006, SportsTurf. Material may not be reproduced or photocopied in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

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