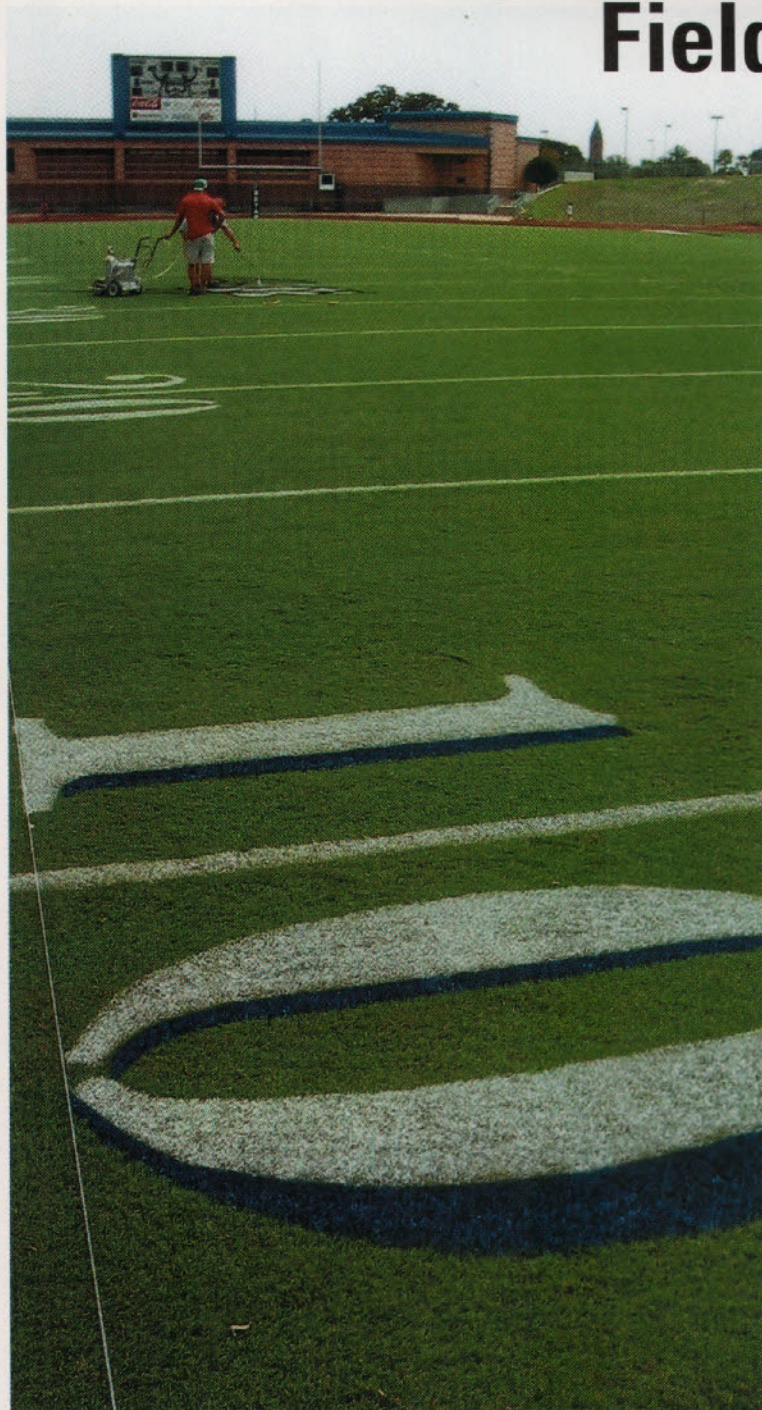


Bryan (TX) High School lights up

Field of the Year Awards



David Hanus, grounds and athletic field supervisor for Bryan High School, Bryan, TX, hit the Daily Double this year by winning the Sports Turf Managers Association Field of the Year Award in two categories – Schools & Parks football and Schools & Parks softball.

Hanus has been maintaining the fields at Bryan for 14 years and now has 14 fields of hybrid bermuda spread over 23 acres. Along with his one full-time assistant, Derald Bell, and part-timers Philip McAdam, Andy Hood, Cheyne Solesbee, and Josh Slayback, Hanus provides safe and aesthetic playing surfaces for his student athletes.

SportsTurf recently asked Hanus some questions about his background and turf philosophies:

ST: First question – how true to life was the movie “Friday Night Lights”?

Hanus: The movie exaggerated some things to make it more entertaining, but there’s no denying the popularity and importance of high school football in Texas. Many of the stadiums rival what you find at many small colleges, complete with video replay boards and seating for over 10,000. And Texas is one of the top states for producing quality football players for college and pro teams.

ST: Please share a few ways you get the most out of your maintenance budget.

Hanus: We stress the basics: regular mowing at the recommended height is at the very top of the list, along with watering as needed and regular fertilizer applications. Each field will be aerated numerous times during the growing season and topdressed with sand during summer. Nothing fancy, just keeping the turf as healthy as possible to prevent problems.

I’ve managed to keep records of our field maintenance for prior years, so we know what has worked for us and what hasn’t. The chemical budget is very small, so we’ll just make a spring pre-emerge application on most of the fields for crabgrass control and then rely on spot treatments for other weeds. Fungicides are on a spot-treat basis, too, and even then only on game fields and only when critical. And we like to add Primo to the field marking paint when we initially line practice fields and middle school game fields in order to stretch the painting intervals.

During winter, we will make the field logos for the upcoming season out of 6 mil. poly. We don’t get to purchase large equipment very



often, but our mechanic, Leonard Muesse, does an excellent job of keeping everything in running condition well past their normal life expectancies due to his preventive maintenance program. Our original reel mower, purchased in 1994, is still going strong for example.

ST: Tell us about your background, how you got interested in turf management, and what your specific responsibilities are now. How has membership in STMA helped your career?

Hanus: I've always been interested in plants, something I inherited from my grandfather. I was always planting vegetable gardens in the

back yard and mowing most of the lawns on our block. A neighbor had a yard full of roses, shrubs, fruit trees, just about everything, and I was always interested in how they grew.

I majored in horticulture at Texas A&M University and after graduation worked as a county extension agent for 5 years. During that time I worked with several school districts and golf courses in setting up maintenance programs, and that's when I really became interested in turf. Then after 6 years with a lawn care company, I was hired in 1992 by Bryan Independent School District. I oversee the grounds maintenance at 28 campuses and 14 athletic fields with a full time staff of 15.

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FIELD OF THE YEAR



I rely on Derald Bell, our athletic field technician, for most of the daily maintenance on the fields. He makes sure everything is done to keep the fields in great shape. We've also been fortunate over the years to have turf students from Texas A&M work with us on a part-time basis each semester. They get turf management experience and we get enthusiastic workers; it's been a fantastic arrangement!

STMA has been very important in my career. I've been fortunate enough to attend three annual conferences since 1996. The sessions are always practical and informative, and the contacts you make are invaluable. I don't have to tell you how willing turf managers are to help others

in the industry, whether it's sharing information or even loaning equipment. It's a brotherhood and STMA is the main group.

I remember several years ago wanting to paint our endzones with diagonal lines just like Notre Dame does. So I looked up their field manager in the STMA Roster, called him, and he willingly gave me all the information on the number of lines and how they were angled. I also keep in touch with the STMA members at nearby Texas A&M and Tomball ISD, asking questions and trading information. *SportsTurf* always has something I can incorporate into our programs, and I use the website for its links to suppliers.

ST: How do you communicate with field users, fans, and administration?

Hanus: I stay in regular contact with all of the coaches. If there is a need to do something on a field that may be disruptive to practices, I'll contact them beforehand and work around their schedule as much as possible. They appreciate what we try to do with the fields, so they work with us. Email is used often, but I also see most of the coaches regularly due to the time spent on-site. I also communicate several times a week with the district's athletic director via email or in person to keep him updated on the overall field picture, such as specific problems we are facing or if some juggling needs to be done with schedules.


ST: What's your biggest challenge this season?

Hanus: Our biggest challenge has been the weather. The conditions last fall and winter made overseeding with perennial ryegrass a challenge. We had long stretches of warm temperatures and a total lack of rainfall. The last half of this summer has also been very dry. Since our local water supply is high in sodium, we need periodic heavy rains to "flush" out the fields and keep them at their best.


ST: What's the best part of your job? The worst part?

Hanus: The best part of my job is being able to spend each day working on athletic fields. I've always loved sports, so this is a way to stay involved and have some impact. When everything comes together and the field is in great shape before a big game, it's extremely rewarding.

I guess the worst part of the job is dealing with issues that all turf managers face: the weather, the budget—all the things that challenge us daily. ■




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