

# Lebanon Valley College sets small college bar



Lebanon Valley College (PA), led by Kevin Yeiser and his staff, Keith Evans, Ryan Schmidt, and Chris Tshudy, won the Sports Turf Managers Association's 2005 College Complex of the Year Award. LVC previously has won two other Field of the Year awards, and Yeiser's fields are in demand by local high schools, community groups, NCAA championship tournaments, and have been used as training sites for Olympic and other international soccer teams.

One Saturday last year, Yeiser reports, the 100-acre complex hosted a high school soccer match, a 20-team field hockey tournament, a college softball game, and a college baseball game, all within 10 hours. "In order to keep overtime costs down, some staff started work later in the day so they could stay later to do some cleaning up and light maintenance immediately after the events. We have found that any work that can be accomplished after events saves us time the next day to focus on other work," says Yeiser.

*continued on page 34*



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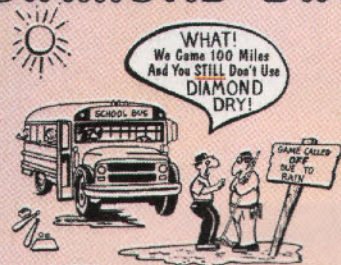
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## FIELD OF THE YEAR

### Lebanon Valley College complex maintenance

#### March

Winter cleanup; light application of quick release fertilizer; hand overseeding and topdressing where needed.

#### April

Broadleaf applications

#### May

Annual grass control; mid-month biostimulant application; insect control application; apply slow-release fertilizer at month's end; start renovations as fields become available

#### June

Preventive disease control if necessary; begin wetting agent applications; irrigate if necessary; continue renovations

#### July

Apply wetting agents; irrigate; sports camp preparation; disease control if needed

#### August

Renovate camp damage where possible; apply wetting agents; irrigate; apply fertilizer at end of month

#### September

Liquid iron or fertilizer supplement application; fertilizer application; spot topdressing and seeding

#### October

Spot seeding

#### November

Core aerate; baseball and softball infield renovations for spring; late fertilizer application to all fields

All this from a Division III liberal arts school with less than 1,700 students. Yeiser says, "We try to keep all our fields game ready to help recruiting. To do this and keep within our budget, we constantly are reviewing and adjusting our work schedules."

All Lebanon Valley's fields have native clay/loam soil rootzones indigenous to the area. Yeiser last year introduced sand into the profile of some of the game fields to improve drainage. Calcined clay is also added to the soil profile of turf areas and in the skinned areas. Those skinned areas also consist of Diamond-Tex infield mix and vitrified clay.

Only the football field (originally constructed in 1902) has a drainage system, a 40-year-old terra cotta-like material that runs laterally across the field approximately 18 inches in depth and which Yeiser says "works beautifully."

Yeiser is responsible for planning and implementation for all aspects of the field maintenance and is involved with field planning and design. He's also responsible for maintaining the entire 200-acre campus. Add to the game fields, practice fields, and intramural fields are all the complex's landscaping that Yeiser and staff maintain. "You won't find a chainlink fence or traditional steel bleachers anywhere in our complex," says Yeiser. "We planned carefully to take advantage of surrounding land features and existing tree lines to create venues that complement [nature]."

"We have surrounded the fields with flowering and shade trees, shrubby beds, ponds, fountains, waterfowl, and every space is linked together by walkways and bridges throughout," says Yeiser.

So when does Yeiser get to go home? "I have a very understanding family and a wonderful wife. It is easier now than it was when my son and daughter were growing up. I would like to think that they understood that the job had responsibilities that needed my time but I was always there for my family when it was most important. I tried to set an example and be the kind of father they can be proud of," he says.

Speaking of pride, Yeiser says the greatest pleasure he derives from his job is "watching the reaction from recruits and others who visit our complex for the first time." ■

# Berry, Olivet Nazarene win Field of the Year



**E**ditor's note: Larry Berry, CSFM, who won the 2005 College/University Soccer Field of the Year Award while working as the assistant physical plant director at Olivet Nazarene University (ONU), has since taken a new position as director of physical plant at Lee University in Cleveland, TN. Berry answers a few questions here, followed by some information on ONU.

**ST:** What's the greatest pleasure you derive from your job?

**Berry:** It is difficult to pin down one greatest pleasure from my job. My responsibilities involve much more than just sports field management. If I had to pin down one thing in that area I would say that when someone hunts you down to tell you that the field performed well there is no greater compliment or satisfaction. We generally hear about things that are wrong in our industry from

everyone affected. Usually hearing nothing at all means that things are good. When someone takes the time to find you and let you know the field's performance was excellent you know it meant a lot to them.

**ST:** How did you prepare for, and then "repair" after, the Chicago Bear training camps at Olivet Nazarene?

**Berry:** Preparing for training camp involved many factors. We had a tremendous staff of people at Olivet that worked to construct four fields when we learned the Bears were coming to our facility. We did the majority of work in-house when building the fields so we had the fortunate experience of hands-on field construction several times over.

Our biggest challenge during the first years was to develop a system of maintenance that provided a great product not only for the Bears, but also for the student athletes at



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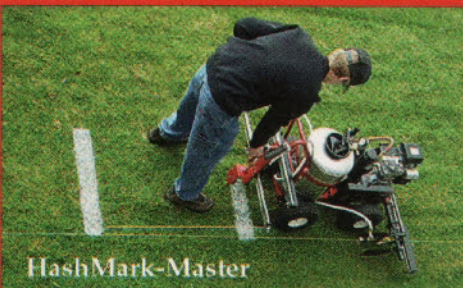


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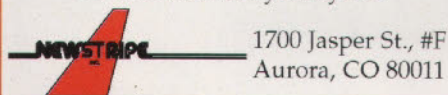
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**FIELD OF THE YEAR**



Olivet. Obviously, during training camp the practices cause a significant amount of damage to the turf. Olivet's teams start in the spring before the growing season begins and end late fall after the growing season ends. That only gives us a small window of opportunity to renovate with no traffic or activity in the summer before the Bears arrive.

We found the best approach for us was to be extremely aggressive with aerating, seeding, and topdressing throughout the spring, summer, and fall. We continually tweaked the program over the years to produce a system that has allowed us to keep from resodding to this point and use 100% bluegrass for overseeding and renovation. We have stayed flexible with our program as weather and other factors always need to be taken into account, but the basic maintenance plan worked wonderfully in that situation.

**ST:** What tips do you have for turf managers who must operate with limited budgets? How do you prioritize spending?

**Berry:** So many in our industry operate and accomplish so much with limited funds.

Budgets are scrutinized by administrations and it is important to put the funds where they work the best based on their decisions. Sometimes it's hard for us as sport turf managers to accept [these decisions] positively, but I try my best to go with the flow and work with what I have and focus on how to improve with the resources that have been made available.

Becoming negative about the obtainable funds and displaying a bad attitude about it does nothing to help the fields or improve your situation. I have found that some of the most basic things, things that do not cost significant amounts of money, can provide a solid foundation for improvement. For example, keeping clean and sharp mower blades takes more time but it also limits stresses to the grass, so that's a great low cost way to improve your turf.

We also learned that getting in touch with other local groups that do similar work allows you to share equipment. Sharing equipment allowed us to do work that normally we could not do, mostly cultural things for turf and dirt work with the skinned areas on the ball fields.



Trying to prioritize spending can be difficult. So many things come into play with weather factors, field use, and environment. I look at making sure equipment is maintained well and then try to see what is left for other things. I develop a basic program with whatever money is available and build from there if other funds become available.

**ST:** What do you think becoming a Certified Sports Field Manager has meant to your career?

**Berry:** It is probably a little early to tell how it may have helped me in my career. I have been fortunate enough to accomplish a lot in a short period of time, especially in regards to field construction and turf maintenance programs. When I decided to take the CSFM exam, part of me just wanted to see if I really had developed the type of knowledge that I knew many of my colleagues had in the STMA. I have been very fortunate to have access to some very knowledgeable people who have helped me out tremendously, like Ken Mrock with the Chicago Bears, and administrative leaders at Olivet like Matt Whitis. Matt gave me the freedom to develop my knowledge base over the past several years by taking courses and working with organizations such as STMA.

Olivet Nazarene is a private NAIA college in Bourbonnais, IL, 60 miles south of Chicago. The campus includes approximately 250 acres, with a 30-acre athletic complex that includes 14 acres of sports fields. Larry Berry reported in his FOY application that his field care budgets were increased only slightly in the past 10 years. The school relied on sound cultural practices and creative budgeting to keep their fields in shape. ■

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