Lebanon Valley College 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.

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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 bio-stimulant 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, shrubbery 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.”

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