



Penn State's soccer field

wins Field of the Year

Bob Hudzik, athletic field supervisor at Penn State, his assistant Herb Combs, and their entire crew won the 2006 STMA College Field of the Year in the Soccer category for their work at on-campus Jeffrey Field.

Originally built in 1969, the 2.5-acre field saw more than 200 hours of action last year, including men's and women's lacrosse and the Special Olympics. Turf varieties include the Kentucky bluegrass cultivars P-105, Touch-down, and Midnight, with overseeding of perennial ryegrass in the spring during renovation and in the fall as needed throughout the wear areas. Rootzone composition is two inches of sand over Hagerstown silt loam, and the field

is drained via a sand slit, 2.5 x 10-foot system.

Jeffrey Field is the most extensively used athletic facility at Penn State, hosting more than 50 home events a year and numerous practices. The many events each year creates a lot of strain on the various goal areas exclusive to each sport, requiring resodding those areas in the late fall so there are no bare areas for the spring sports.

To battle drainage problems (poor subsoil and excessive thatch), Hudzik put in place an intensive aeration, verticutting, and topdressing program. Using their new Toro Pro Core 648 and selecting the tightest spacing possible, they removed much of the thatch and subsoil. Once the cores were pulled they removed them, leaving behind very little unwanted

material. After aeration was complete they topdressed the entire field with 1/4 inch; one month later they aerated again, but this time using the Quad-Tine Head. This attachment allowed the crew to poke 60 holes at once and remove a lot of thatch, producing a much more desirable playing surface.

Overcoming bad irrigation system

The irrigation system wasn't designed for the field it was designed for the equipment that installed the system. During installation the pipe was trenched with a nontraditional trencher, which wouldn't allow for close trenching to the grandstands or fences. The contractor decided it would be okay to place irrigation heads 10 feet in from the edge of the field in



Jeffrey Field, with Beaver Stadium and Mount Nittany in the background.

order to get his piece of equipment in to complete the task. In addition to the 10-foot gap, 180 degree heads were installed. This left the crew with a 10-foot strip 360 feet long on both sides of the field that weren't getting watered.

Fixing the problem without creating major distribution issues required Hudzik to replace all the 180-degree heads with 238-degree heads. The switching irrigation head approach didn't totally fix the situation, but allowed the crew to manage the situation with only a few small hot spots to worry about hand watering.

Q&A with Hudzik and Combs

Being in charge of the athletic fields at University Park is a huge responsibility but Hudzik and Combs found some time to answer a few questions via email:

SportsTurf: What qualities make a great soccer field and how do you meet those levels regularly?

Hudzik: Here's our list:

- A good stand of turf (fertility, disease resistance by fungicide applications)
- Low Height of Cut (increases turf density)
- Increased mowing frequency (3-4 times a week)
- Level surface for true ball roll (aeration

and topdressing once a year)

- Good drainage (aeration and topdressing)
- Aesthetic appeal (mowing patterns)
- Bright, crisp and straight lines (stringing lines every time you reline and using a thicker paint, not as watered down)
- Most importantly, a GREAT CREW who takes pride in all the work they do!

ST: If you had to operate on a smaller budget, e.g., a parks and rec guy, what would you keep in your maintenance program and what could you do without?

Hudzik and Combs: If we had to operate on a smaller budget we would keep our fertility levels at the same amount (4-6 lbs. of N) and the ability to water when needed. We also would want the same amount of grass seed, purchase weed control products, and have the opportunity to aerate at sometime throughout the year.

We could eliminate fungicide applications, sand topdressing, as well as a decrease in the amount of paint we use and frequency of mowing.

ST: What are your specific job responsibilities?

Hudzik: Maintenance for all outdoor athletic facilities at Penn State used by all varsity teams, club sports, intramural programs, classes, general public recreation, and football parking.

ST: How do you see the sports turf manager's job changing in the future?

Hudzik and Combs: As society continues to change so do our job responsibilities. In the future sports turf managers will have more pressure to provide perfect field conditions all the time, in season and out of season. Coaches will continue to be more demanding in what type of conditions they want. Budgets will continue to get cut and managers will still be expected to provide the same conditions with fewer resources.

Technology will help in providing perfect conditions if budgets will allow for upgrading of equipment.

Managers will have to wear more than one hat, requiring them to do more than just grow, mow, and paint athletic fields. The ability to keep a good grounds crew intact as times change will help make the transition smoother.

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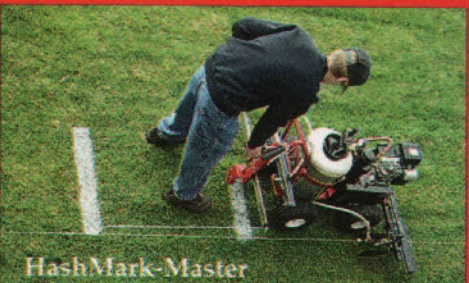


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FIELD OF THE YEAR



MONTHLY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

January

- Equipment repairs
- Indoor field maintenance
- Snow removal

February

- Equipment repairs
- Indoor field maintenance
- Snow removal

March

- Equipment repairs
- Indoor field maintenance
- Take soil samples
- Start mowing

April

- Charge up irrigation system
- Field preparation for lacrosse season

May

- Start preventative fungicide control
- Apply grub control
- Start fertilizer program (1 lb. N/1000)
- Layout field for spring soccer games
- Continue mowing, increase frequency when needed
- Monitor irrigation program, increase or decrease frequency as needed
- Resod goalmouths if needed

June

- Field renovation after spring season: verticut, aerate, topdress

- Fertilize (1/4 lb. N/2 weeks)

- Continue preventative fungicide control
- Apply additional fertilizer as needed
- Set up staging for week-long Special Olympics events
- Continue soil testing
- Tissue test as needed
- Monitor irrigation program
- Edge field once

July

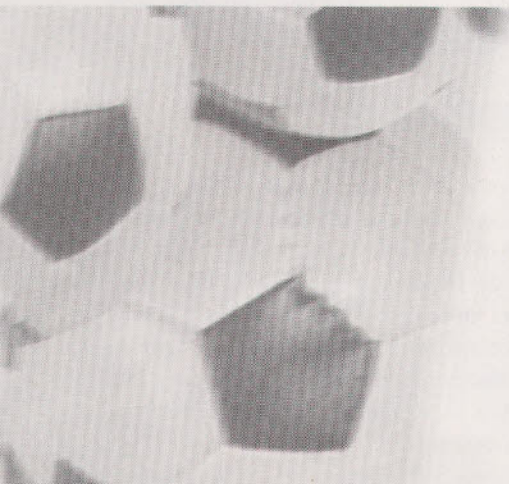
- Continue fertilizing (1/4 lb. N/1000)
- Continue preventative fungicide applications
- Tissue test as needed
- Monitor irrigation program
- Edge field once

August

- Continue preventative fungicide program
- Fertilize (1/4 lb. N/1000)
- Layout field for the soccer season
- Spray iron before first game for aesthetic purposes
- Paint and mow more frequently
- Fill divots as needed
- Continue to monitor irrigation program
- Edge field once

September

- Final preventative fungicide application
- Fertilize (1/4 lb. N /1000)



Opposite page: The Penn State athletic field maintenance team: seated, from L to R: Rodney Hockenberry and Paul Curtis; standing, Clarence Lohr, Chad Alterio, Mark Kresovich (Group Leader), Bill Stoner, Athletic Fields Supervisor Bob Hudzik, and Athletic Fields Assistant Supervisor Herb Combs.

- Monitor color and apply iron as needed
- Continue to mow and paint regularly
- Fill divots as needed
- Aerify wear areas
- Overseed with ryegrass as needed

October

- Apply fertilizer (1/4 lb. N /1000)
- Decrease mowing and painting frequency
- Continue to monitor color
- Fill divots as needed
- Overseed as needed
- Decrease irrigation frequency

November

- Reduce mowing frequency
- Resod wear areas as needed
- Winterize irrigation system
- Dormant fertilize (1 lb. N/1000)

December

- Apply fungicide for snow mold control
- Begin equipment maintenance



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