

HS teacher, students win Football *FIELD OF THE YEAR*

Marc C. Moran, a horticulture and turfgrass science instructor at Atlee High School in Mechanicsville, VA, and Jim Anderson led Moran's all-student staff to a win in the Sports Turf Managers Association's 2006 Schools/Parks & Rec Football Field of the Year Awards contest.

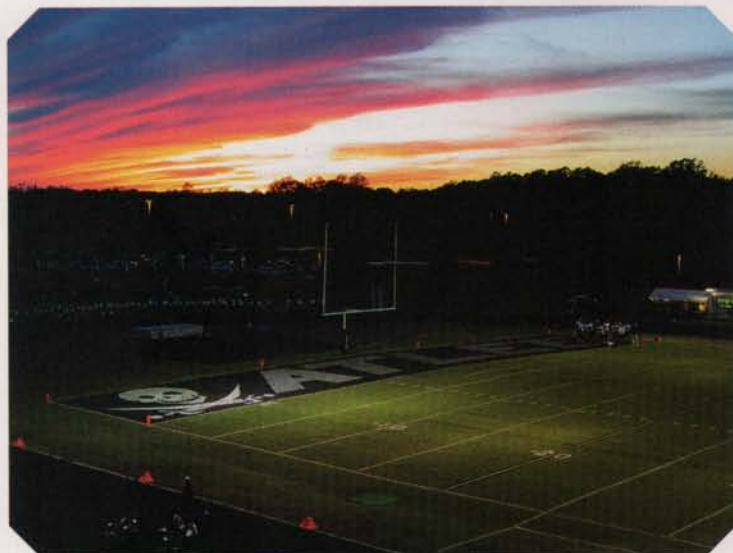
Moran, who has a degree in ag education from Virginia Tech and is working toward his master's at Penn State, began working with the school's practice field in 2000 as part of a class project. Then asked he was asked to take over management of the sports turf facilities in 2001.

SportsTurf: How did you get started in turf management?

Moran: In the fall of 2000, I was approached by our new football



coach asking if I could give him some help in growing grass. He figured I could give him some insight into how to grow plants since I was an agriculture teacher. I had some limited experience with lawn turf after spending a few years in lawn product sales at the local farmers co-operative. That base knowledge of chemicals, fertilizers, and turf products gave



me some foundation for making some basic decisions. I simply incorporated this project into my existing horticulture classes and we slowly began to do more and more with the fields as time went on.

By the end of our first year we had taken three football/soccer fields into our care. During the first year, my students and I learned about field



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RAIDER STADIUM'S MAINTENANCE PLAN

January	Field covers checked every other day.
February	Field covers checked every other day.
March	Field covers checked every other day. (Remove when temperatures get above 60°F.) Mow at 1" as needed
April	Fertilize 15-30-15 Starter fertilizer at 1lb. N per 1000 ft ² Apply 200lbs. calcitic limestone Core Aerate two directions, drag cores and remove debris Mow at 1", increasing frequency as green-up continues
May	Apply Revolver Herbicide for perennial ryegrass transition Broadleaf weed control spraying with liquid nitrogen application of 1/4 lb. N per 1000 ft ² Apply post-emergence crabgrass control as needed Shatter-tine Aerate in two directions Apply 200 lbs. calcitic limestone Mow at 1", increasing frequency as green-up continues
June	Deep Tine Aerate entire playing surface, 1 1/2" x 12" cores Top-dress with 1/8" Calcined Clay Vertical cut and Drag in cores Overseed wear areas with Riviera Bermuda Grass at 1 lb. per 1000 ft ² Apply Ammonium Nitrate at 1/2 lb. N per 1000 ft ² , every two weeks Mow at 1", 2 to 3 times per week as needed
July	Shatter-tine Aerate in two directions Apply 200 lbs. calcitic limestone Vertical Slicing of turf in one direction Apply Ammonium Nitrate at 1/2 lb. N per 1000 ft ² , every two weeks Mow at 1", 2 to 3 times per week as needed
August	Shatter-tine Aerate in two directions Apply 200 lbs. calcitic limestone Apply Ammonium Nitrate at 1/2 lb. N per 1000 ft ² , every two weeks Mow at 1", 2 to 3 times per week as needed
September	Shatter-tine Aerate in one direction Apply Ammonium Nitrate at 1/2 lb. N per 1000 ft ² Mark field weekly for Football Games Mow at 1", 2 to 3 times per week as needed
October	Shatter-tine Aerate in one direction Apply Commonwealth II Ryegrass at 10 lbs per 1000 ft ² Apply 30-5-10 Fall Fertilizer at 1 lb. N per 1000 ft ² Mark field weekly for Football Games Mow at 1 1/2", as needed
November	Apply Commonwealth II Ryegrass at 2 lbs per 1000 ft ² in crown and wear areas Mark field weekly for Football Games Mow at 1 1/2", as needed
December	Cover field with field covers, inspect every other day Work with students to evaluate previous management plan and make improvements for the coming spring.

marking, logo layout and design, pest management, nutrient management, and irrigation. Year one was a crash course into nearly every aspect of sports turf management. Since then, my students have taken over the primary management of two baseball diamonds, two softball diamonds, two football/soccer practice fields, and Raider Stadium for which we won this award. We are also responsible for all game day setups and we work with our Athletic Director in coordination of stadium operations. I have been fortunate to be able to incorporate both teaching and sports turf management.

ST: How do you communicate with others as turf manager?

Moran: For me and my program, education is our first line of defense when it comes to questions about what we do and why we do it. By teaching the students, it's like having 40 turf managers out there with the answers to what's and why's. I work hard to teach my students so they can be informed of the rational behind certain decisions and they use that to field questions that a lot of the public may have.

Being a coach myself, I work hard with other coaches to find out what things they may want, but I also work to keep them educated to what we are doing on their particular fields. I spend a lot of my time talking with our school administration, athletic/activities director, band director, physical education teachers as well as athletic coaches about maintenance schedules and long term plans as they pertain to certain fields under our care. Our stadium sees a lot of use from a variety of groups and sports and by keeping these people in the loop, we have been able to get a lot more accomplished.

We also work to keep our community informed of what we do and why we do it. As an arm of our education program we conduct adult education courses as well as e-mail updates to parents about lawn and turf care. The program also maintains a website that shows a lot of our field photos and description of our curriculum. We also have an area that allows people to email questions or concerns.

If it were not for our relationships with the all parties involved, we would not have had an opportunity to be a FOY winner.

ST: Do you plan any adjustments, large or small, to your maintenance plan in 2008?

Moran: In 2008, we plan on experimenting with intermediate and transitional ryegrass overseeding instead of perennial ryegrass. We

hope it will reduce the need for us to chemically remove ryegrass, thus helping us reduce the expense of spraying transitional chemicals. We are also hoping to employ a more rigorous aeration and topdressing program. Recent renovation of a Turfco top dresser has expanded our ability to apply topdressing.

We are also looking at experimenting with some fertilizer additives used in agronomic crops and seeing how they impact turf and root growth of our bermudagrass.

ST: Do you hope to purchase any new equipment or product for 2008?

Moran: New equipment? What's that? Actually, we are looking to invest in some quality sideline covers and hope to do more with turf blankets. We have been fortunate to have some used turf blankets donated to us and we are really pleased with how well those have performed. We would like to take that to a larger scale. As for equipment, we are currently renovating some tractor mounted reel mowers and we are in the process of designing a new



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aerator to be built in our agricultural mechanics class. Basically, if we cannot afford it, we build it or fix it.

ST: How do you balance your family life with work demands?

Moran: I have a very supportive family and girlfriend. My family has always encouraged me to be passionate about anything I do, so they understand why I do what I do. They know I'm like that with my teaching and it overflows into my coaching as well as my role as sports turf manager. My girlfriend has been very understanding as well, and incredibly supportive.

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

Moran: My greatest pleasure comes from teaching. I'm fortunate that I have had some incredible students who seem to get as much out of the field looking good as I do. It truly is a joy to see them work so hard and stay so committed to doing it right. They amaze me sometimes with their incredible ideas. How many field managers can say that they can get a crew to mow 15 acres and paint a full football field in an hour and fifty minutes? They are the main reason I applied for the award. When asked how I did it, I just tell them I filled out the application and ordered the fertilizer, and the kids did the work.

I still have students who e-mail, call, or visit and always ask how are the fields are doing,

what we painted in the endzone, or what mowing pattern did we try this week. It's a real treat to know that they still care about how things are done and that the students I have now continue to do it the way they did it. They still carry that commitment to quality.

ST: What's the biggest headache?

Moran: Well sometimes, on a rainy day, the kids! As much as they work hard, at the end of the day they are still kids or young adults and they like to goof off. So you have to have patience, patience, and a little more patience. But over the years I have learned to have the second year guys do certain things and sometimes the first year guys need to learn how to paint straight lines on the practice field before taking on the stadium.

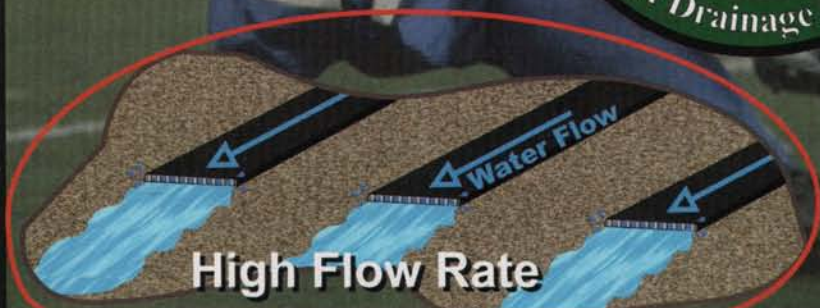
Other than "boys being boys," I have a lot of the same hurdles that all sports turf managers deal with on a daily basis. Money and Traffic! Too much traffic and not enough money, but I have learned not to complain. I am fortunate to have a supportive athletic administration as well



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as support from the school board that work to make great decisions for our athletes as well as for my classes. I have also found that Support from the Sports Turf Industry, the VSTMA, and the STMA has proven to be more valuable than any budget boost.

ST: What's your biggest challenge and how do you approach it?

Moran: I think my biggest challenge comes with educating the public. I work hard to let the public know how hard we work on our field and how much time our students commit to making our facilities better and better. With all that work, we still get pitching wedge work out of our end zones and all sorts of other "for granted" use of the facility.

I also have to work hard to let parents know that the Sports Turf industry is a viable profession where their sons or daughters can excel and earn a quality education at many major two and four year colleges. Our dual-enrollment class has helped us to further that crusade to get parents to look at this as a college bound class and not just as an elective. ■

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