



Changing careers: four who did it speak out

Boyd Montgomery, CSFM, CSE



Editor's Note: Tom Burns, Boyd Montgomery, CSFM, CSE, Jimmy Rodgers, CSFM, and Jay Warnick, CSFM, all had

successful careers as sports turf managers before taking jobs with companies that supply the industry. We thought it would be enlightening to hear how another side of the business is working out for them.

Burns, formerly head groundskeeper for the Texas Rangers is a professional consultant for Diamond Pro; Montgomery is a district sales manager for Toro who previously was the director of facilities and grounds with Sylvania (OH) Recreation; Rodgers is sports field specialist for Luck Stone Company after MLB and NCAA Division I stints; and Warnick was an NFL and NCAA Division I turf manager before going to work for World Class Athletic Surfaces.

SportsTurf: What factors led to your decision to change course in your career?

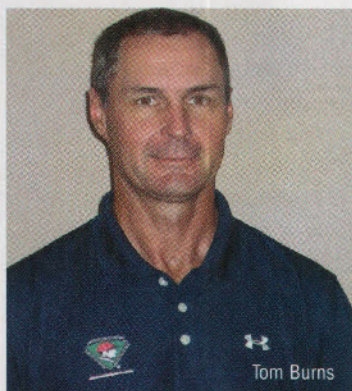
Montgomery: I have always been someone that dreams big and demands more out of myself and life. I also believe that things happen in your life for a reason and sometimes things happen that you may not have laid out in detail. I loved my position in Sylvania and I really appreciated the opportunity that it afforded me. I learned a lot about the profession as well as my internal drive. I could have easily decided to stay in that position for the long haul and probably had a good career. While that was a comfortable feeling, I knew that I wanted more challenges and opportunity to stretch myself.

I have always been intrigued with business operations and management and when this opportunity presented itself, it just felt right!

I am very fortunate that I found a culture within Toro that fit with my personal growth and learning. Nothing ever comes easy and you need to be willing to apply the needed focus in order to succeed.

Rodgers: I was unhappy with my time away from my family. At times I felt like I was missing a great deal in their lives and I was not real happy about that. A good opportunity presented itself that also allows me to spend time with my family.

Burns: There were several factors involved. First of all there was the time away from family. I just got married 4 years ago and my wife is a flight attendant who travels quite a bit. The schedule in Texas is 90% night games so when she was home, she often was already in bed when I got home and I was gone before she got up. I get to spend more time at home now.



Tom Burns

With the weather here there were also a lot of weekends at the park during road trips to prepare for the upcoming homestand. Having been in this business for 28 years, I can't tell you how

many birthdays, weddings and other family events that I missed due to my job. I guess I got tired of my life being controlled by a baseball schedule and a weather report!

The second factor was my age. I turn 50 this year. What was I going to do in 10 years? Did I want to do this for the rest of my life? These are questions that we all face at some point. Here in Texas, the weather comes in extremes. How long do I want to fight with a tarp? I guess I had reached my mid-career crisis! I know it surprised a lot of people but I felt like I had no room for advancement. The opportunity with Diamond Pro came up and it allowed me to stay in the industry and I did not have to relocate. I get to promote a product that I believe in and do educational clinics across the country. It was the right offer at the right time.

Warnick: I never really considered this as much of a change of course because I am still able to be a part of this industry that I love. However, the process did begin several years ago when a World Class rep stopped by the stadium where I was working, and very humbly left some of their products for me to try. Our friendship began at that point and grew as time went on. I watched how they treated me and other customers not because they were trying to sell them something, but because they respected the job that sport turf managers are doing, and they truly empathized with the struggles and challenges of those in this industry. At one point I thought "If I were to ever leave my own facility it would be to join World Class," but I never really thought that day would come. It was really never about looking to leave, or change course as much as it was taking the chance to associate with and work for people that I have looked up to and appreciated how they treated me.

SportsTurf: What are the biggest differences in your lifestyle now?

Burns: The biggest difference is that I now have nights

These guys are in good enough shape to play for hours. Is your turf?



PRINCESS-77
Certified Hybrid Bermudagrass
Cute Name. Tough Grass.

If you're not using **Princess 77**, you might want to give us a call before your playing field turns into dirt.

Known for its rapid establishment from seed, deep green color, the fineness of the blades and ability to handle high traffic areas (like a soccer field), **Princess 77** has a faster recovery time and uses less water than 419.

Princess 77. Only from Pennington Seed. Available at your licensed seed or sod supplier.



For info, e-mail: sportturf@penningtonseed.com, or call: 1-800-286-6100 ext. 280 or visit: www.penningtonseed.com

Fill in 121 on reader service form or visit <http://oners.hotims.com/14679-121>

UNIVERSAL AERA-VATOR™



One machine, One pass. Aerate and overseed at the same time. With an optional slicer shaft and multi-tine shaft,

the Universal Aera-vator increases versatility and lowers your equipment cost.

f First Products
INNOVATIVE TURF EQUIPMENT

CALL FOR A FREE VIDEO TODAY
800-363-8780
SALES @1STPRODUCTS.COM • WWW.1STPRODUCTS.COM
164 OAKRIDGE RD, TIFTON GA 31794

FACILITY & OPERATIONS

and weekends free. The MLB season can really be a grind. For the past 28 years I rarely got to enjoy a holiday weekend during the summer. The "busy" time of year has changed 180 degrees. In September we are gearing up for the trade shows and our busy shipping season, which lasts through April. I have the opportunity to visit groundskeepers across the country and see their operations. I also get to participate in several seminars and clinics which is something that I really enjoy.

Warnick: I think the greatest difference is that in managing my own facility I was in my own world, focused on serving coaches and players and administrators; at times agonizing over and counting each blade of grass and how I could stretch it to the end of the season. Now, I am a small part of that same world for others, and involved in trying to make their jobs easier. I can stand in the shop or out on the field and listen to a sports turf manager as they vent about event load, billbugs, summer patch or many other challenges, and in some very small way I can relate and try and give encouragement, but mainly I just listen.

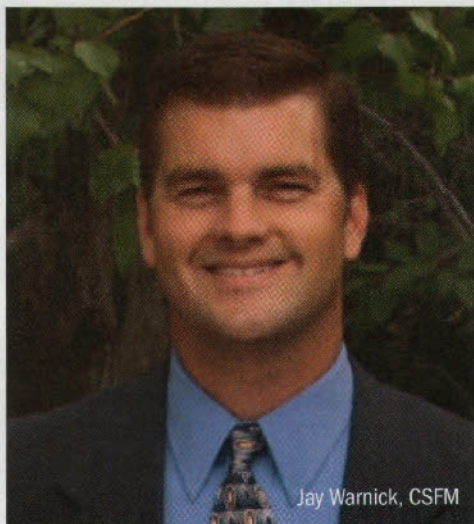
Montgomery: Travel would be the biggest difference. I am on the road about 70-80% of my time. I have enjoyed this aspect as I am able to get out into the region and meet great turf managers and share ideas. To me it is all about the customer no matter if you are on the public or private side. If you truly work toward solving and caring about their needs, you will be successful. It took me a while to learn this aspect. When I was in Sylvania I made a number of mistakes because I had not matured to a point where I realized it was more about what you give than what you get.

Working in the corporate world is totally different than the public sector. It takes a different mindset, culture and willingness to accept and encourage change to grow the business and operations. It is a fun journey, one that I am glad to be at in this point of my life.

Rodgers: I don't listen to weather forecasts at all, as a rule. I coached one of my son's Little League team last year, and spend a lot more time with my family. My physical activity has decreased, but I am consuming far fewer hot dogs.

SportsTurf: What, if anything, do you miss about managing turf daily?

Rodgers: I miss seeing immediate rewards and/or failures in my job. I miss the smell of freshly mowed grass almost every day. And I miss the interaction with highly competitive people, although in the business/sales world, competitiveness is displayed differently and that has taken some getting used to.



Warnick: I have to admit feeling jealous several times when I have been at someone else's facility as they are busily preparing for an event. I miss that rush of adrenaline that comes before the teams enter the field for the start of a big game, I miss being on the mower in an empty stadium early game-day mornings, and I miss getting on the tractor and aerating in early spring just after the snow melts.

But I will say with all of that I have found new things to love like helping a high school to paint their logo on their field for the first time and watch as the players and parents see it for the first time.

Montgomery: I always enjoyed getting out in the trenches doing the work and the satisfaction I got by finishing a project and having the end users rave about the facility! I still get some of this externally with several of the outside projects that I work on with Toro.

Burns: It's been almost 2 years since I left and this is the first time that I really had to think about that and put it into words. I have always thought about what I don't miss about it. Probably the thing I miss most is the fact that you get to see the results of your labors. I have always looked at the field as a

living organism. It is almost like nurturing a child. I do miss the challenges of dealing with weather extremes, the satisfaction that you get when you get the game in when nobody thinks it will be played.

At the risk of sounding like grumpy old goat, I miss the days when I gave the weather report to the umpires and we determined when the game would be played. There are, in my opinion, too many people involved in those decisions now. It doesn't need to be that hard. The thing that I miss most is being at the ballpark and getting paid to be there!

SportsTurf: If the right opportunity was presented, would you return to managing sports turf?

Montgomery: The million dollar question! It would be difficult! I love the industry and the profession. It would take the job of a lifetime in order for me to even consider it. I love what I am doing now and the opportunities that it has opened up for me. I have goals that I have set for my life, career, and family. I look at every opportunity with that context in mind.

Burns: If the opportunity came up where I was allowed to do the job the way that I think it should be done I would have to say ... maybe.

Rodgers: If all the ducks lined up correctly, and I could wait until my three children were all graduated from high school, maybe ...

Warnick: I feel so happy and lucky to be doing what I'm doing, that I can't imagine looking elsewhere.

SportsTurf: What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?

Rodgers: Still, in some way, being aligned with sports turf management, as I am today. I remarked recently that I am actually doing more sports field management today than I was 2 years ago. Most customers that I visit want to pick my mind, (what's left of it anyway) and invariably, I consult with any number of challenging situations daily.

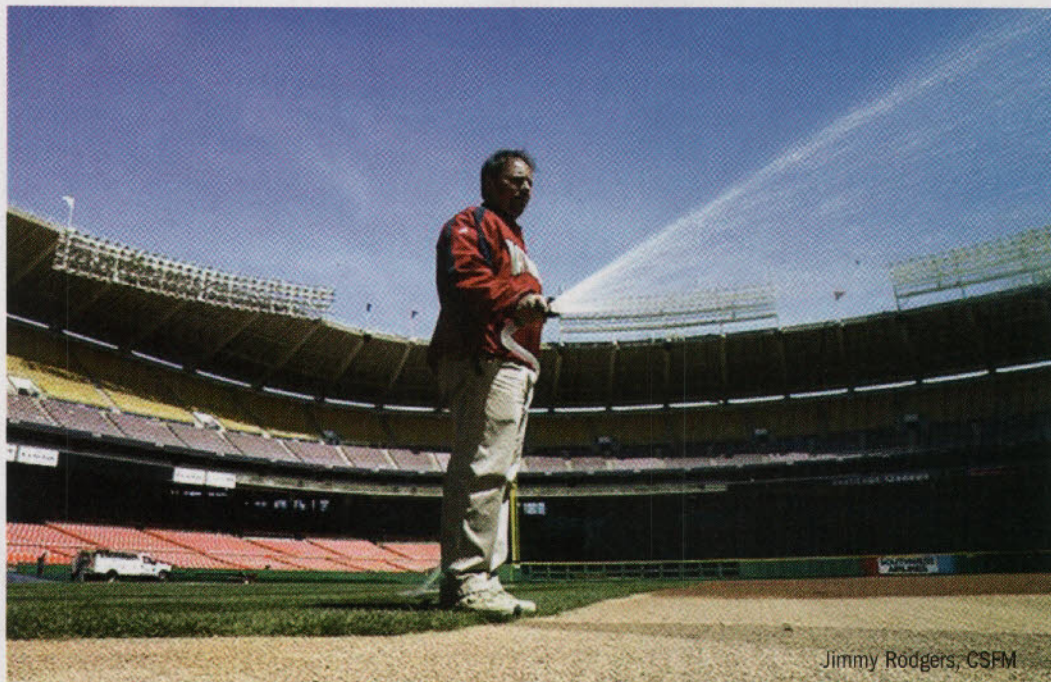
Warnick: I would hope I would be doing a good job for World Class, and be a valuable resource to those who are managing turf-grass. I will continue to be an active member of STMA, and hopefully able to contribute on a committee or two.

Montgomery: If you can't tell, 10 years from now I will not be doing what I am

doing right now! By this, I mean I will continue to grow and learn and I am sure that it will open up doors within Toro for me to apply my knowledge and expertise. My hope would be that I will never be too far from the turf industry.

One thing is for certain, change will happen and there is a higher power that guides all our lives. With the right perspective and attitude I plan to accomplish anything that I have the opportunity to do.

Burns: Good question, I haven't really given it much thought. I enjoy what I am doing right now and hope to be involved in the industry as long as I have something to offer. I will have to get back to you on that one. ■



Jimmy Rodgers, CSFM

MAKE A CLEAN SWEEP!



- The patented Recirculating Air System minimizes dust that can filter back onto seats and facilities.
- PTO- and gas engine-powered models let you tow with any tractor or utility vehicle while wireless remote control puts management in the operator's seat.
- The wide brush in combination with the Turbo Vac system provides excellent pick-up on all surfaces, including pavement, artificial turf and granular rubber pellets.
- A wear-resistant, replaceable blower housing liner and direct hydraulic drives help reduce maintenance costs.

To find out more, visit
www.harperindustries.com/104a

HARPER INDUSTRIES, INC.

151 E. Hwy. 160 • Harper, Kansas 67058 • Phone: 620.896.7381 • Toll-Free: 1.800.835.1042 • info@harperindustries.com
www.harperindustries.com

Fill in 119 on reader service form or visit <http://oners.hotims.com/14679-119>