



Klute manages multiple users, wins College Baseball award

Hawks Field at Haymarket Park in Lincoln, NE won the 2007 STMA College Baseball Field of the Year Award. Athletic turf manager Josh Klute and full-time crew members Jared Hertzler and Jen Roeber are to be commended for maintaining a top-notch playing surface in the face of heavy use, from the minor league Saltdogs and the University of Nebraska baseball team, not to mention the state high school tournament and various camps, etc.

Klute says there's an advantage to having two tenants though and that's a larger budget for maintenance and seasonal crew members. And that comes in handy when the Cornhuskers want to practice on any Nebraska winter or spring day when the temperature is at least 40 degrees and the crew has to clear the snow off the infield tarp for infield practice!

SportsTurf: What's most important piece of equipment or product in your program?

Klute: I would say my field sprayer. It is very important for me to have a sprayer to apply all my foliar products, fungicides, insecticides and herbicides. It makes it a lot easier to load up the tank and spray the field or outside landscaping when little time is allowed. I would say second is my aerator even though I don't get to use it very much because the field is not available on consecutive days very often.

But what is even more valuable than any piece of equipment is my crew. I am very fortunate to have the help that I am allowed. Let's face it, without my crew I would not have the quality field that I have now and probably would not have this award. I give a lot of credit to my crew because they work very hard and get tasks accomplished that would not get completed if

I did not have them, especially with the short time frame we have here to do maintenance.

ST: What are your biggest challenges and how do you approach them?

Klute: By far my biggest challenge would be getting the field open a few days to do some field maintenance. The field is constantly being used from February to November. Overall we have more than 255 events and with Nebraska weather that is a large number. The University has around 175 events including their games, youth baseball camps, high school and junior college games, practices, and visiting team's practices. We also have around 80 other events including Lincoln Saltdogs games, High School state baseball tournaments, other baseball events, boy/girl scout sleepovers and other on field promotions. So it is hard to find time to do common field maintenance. There are not very many ways I can approach these challenges. I do my fertilization applications mostly at night after games and try to solid time if there is two straight days off. This year I actually did not get to pull cores and top-dress because there were never enough consecutive days off on the field. Any time that there is time off on the field we need to work extra hard on catching up and getting the maintenance done that is needed.

ST: How do you communicate with management and field users?

Klute: During the winter months we have two operation meetings every month where the University and Saltdogs management get together and talk about projects and planning for the upcoming year. I've learned that the more everyone is on the same page the more smoothly things will go. The people that are most important to communicate with during the year are the coaches and players. This is a tough situation because I do my absolute best to get with the coaches and try to explain my philosophies and get them to cooperate. I understand their goal is to win games and put themselves in position to win by practicing and doing whatever drills they need to do to win. The only thing I can do is manage the wear that is being put on the field. I do that by trying to get the coaches to move their drills around and try to educate the players of why I need them to cooperate while still focusing on their goals. As we all know that is easier said than done. I'll leave it at that.

ST: How do you keep your "engine" charged to do your best every day?

Klute: It is rather difficult from February to November but once a homestand begins I started a rotation of giving one employee off



Haymarket Park guards groundwater

Groundwater and environmental stewardship are important components of effective turf management. A new program of The Groundwater Foundation, Groundwater Guardian Green Sites, recognizes the stewardship efforts of turf and green space managers.

The program is open for participation to sites across the country. Groundwater Guardian Green Sites are essentially places with a lot of green space that implement groundwater and surface water-friendly practices to maintain the site.

To earn the exclusive Groundwater Guardian Green Site designation, site managers complete a simple application that documents their site's groundwater-friendly practices related to water, pesticide and fertilizer use, pollution prevention, and environmental stewardship. Sites receive Green Site designation by earning at least 70% of the total applicable points based on the site's current practices. The application is available for download online at www.groundwater.org/gg/greensites.html.

Being good guardians and good stewards of groundwater is something turf managers strive to do every day, whether it's through efficient water use, managing fertilizer and pesticide use, or controlling runoff. The Green Site program publicly recognizes sites for their groundwater and environmental stewardship, provides an opportunity for site staff to educate themselves and site visitors about groundwater, documents the environmental benefit of the site's groundwater-friendly practices, and encourages the sustained use of these best practices.

The program has involved a variety of sites, including Haymarket Park. Jen Roeber, Haymarket Park's assistant athletic turf manager, said, "The [Groundwater Guardian Green Site] application made me think about all the ways that what we do impacts water. I hadn't really thought about our operation that way before."

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a night. Between my two assistant, interns and I, we rotate nights off starting after batting practice setup in the afternoon. As long as there is no real threat for rain I will join in on the rotation. I am fortunate to have really good assistants and interns that I can trust and not worry about a thing when I leave the park and there is an event going on. Having one or two nights off in a homestand is not a lot of time off but it is just enough to help us stay charged.

Also, I believe it is important to have fun when we work so many hours together. Our crew gets along with each other very well and having

fun, while still getting our work done, helps pass time by a lot faster.

ST: How do you balance work and personal life?

Klute: I am slowly learning this one. I am very fortunate to have my wife, Teri, who understands what goes on in my profession and the hours it takes to succeed. She is very supportive of what I do and she never complains about all the mornings, days and nights I work. She often has to come to the games at night to see me but I have turned her into a baseball fan so she doesn't mind it so much. She also doesn't hesitate to help out

when ever she can, including late night emergency tarp pulls. But if there is a time when I need to leave work right away because something has come up, it all goes back to having a great crew. I have total trust in my crew to step in and correctly get the job done. ■

The STMA Field of the Year Awards Program has been made possible through the generous support of its sponsors. They include Carolina Green; Covermaster; Hunter Industries; Turface Athletics/Profile Products; Scotts Turf Seed; and World Class Athletic Surfaces.