



Left: Scott Falahee and Jeff Kotas at work. Photo by Mark Frever, CSFM, Director of Grounds, Albion College. **Right:** Steve DiNatale working on campus of University of Oregon. Photo courtesy of Eric Fasbender, CSFM.

Advice on reaching “the next level” in your turf career

Editor's note: We asked some prominent members of the sports turf community how turf managers can get to “the next level” professionally, whether that might be management or moving up the crew ladder:

Mike McDonald, CSFM, U of Minnesota turf manager

Sometimes when you're talking to or working alongside a turf manager or another crew member, you can tell if the person enjoys the profession or is just doing a job. Those that come up to you or a group of people and start asking questions, listening to what other people have done, are the ones you can tell are looking to improve themselves and their workplace.

They can't get enough information to put into practice and see what they can do better to improve their grounds. That is the way to get to the next level, networking with your peers and showing pride in your job and work. People take notice of that kind of commitment and desire to move forward.

Marcus Dean, CSFM, assistant sports turf manager, U of Kentucky

In order to “reach the next level,” I think people have to be driven to be the best at everything they do (some people might

think this is a bad trait!). The “dirt and grass” crew member cannot ever get complacent in what they are doing daily. I think as soon as you get completely satisfied with the job you are doing, you start to decline.

I am never completely satisfied with myself. I constantly look back and try to figure out how and if something can be done better. You know that you are going to make mistakes but you have to learn from those mistakes. To reach “the next level” I think a person has to stay up to date with the latest research and technology, and be able to network and not be afraid to ask questions.

I say all of this and yet I don't feel as if I have reached the next level. I have a great job, work with great people at a great university, but I still have some climbing to do on the professional ladder. But I am not job title hunting at all; I have interviewed and been offered “next level” jobs, but decided the overall situation was not better than my current job.

In January I passed the CSFM test and hope that it will lead to career advancement. There are a lot of reasons that I wanted to be certified; I think there will be jobs within the sports turf industry that require certification and I don't want to limit my possibilities. Being a CSFM shows the administration at UK that I

have added some credibility (by the way, they have never questioned our department's credibility!). It also allows UK to have a recruiting edge over other schools that don't have a CSFM employed. This is one way that I can help recruit world class athletes to UK and allow our athletic department to climb in the Athletic Directors Cup standings. Being a CSFM in Kentucky has inspired other sports turf managers to get interested in the CSFM program (Editor's note: Dean is president of the state's STMA chapter). I can help the entire state of Kentucky advance the quality of sports turf while carrying out my daily job. Isn't that what the STMA is all about?

Jody Gill, grounds coordinator, Blue Valley School District, KS

Achieve as much education and continuing education as possible. Also, consider achieving CSFM, CLT, CLIA or any other certifications that may be applicable to your career. Be willing to work extra hours when necessary especially when you have an opportunity to learn something new.

Volunteer for projects that may be out of your comfort zone or something in which you may need more experience. Be sure your supervisors know that you would like to move into a management position in the future. Most good managers enjoy and take pride in helping good employees move up and take on more responsibility. As with any endeavor, take pride in everything you do. Have a real passion for this industry and make sure it shows in your work. When you achieve your goal, be a positive role model and give back to the industry.

Kim Heck, CEO, Sports Turf Managers Association

Sports turf managers are responsible for so much more than maintaining athletic fields. They manage budgets, inventory, purchasing, capital equipment, recordkeeping, environmental programs, personnel....the list goes on and on. Many are definitely in a management role at their facilities.

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The real issue is how do sports turf managers proactively elevate their stature at their facilities to gain more recognition for their good work? It really starts with how you conduct yourself as a sports turf manager because how others perceive you is reality.

Here's a checklist for sports turf managers who want to be sure they are doing everything possible to be perceived as a professional at their facilities:

- Are you available and responsive to questions?
- Do you react calmly and positively, even when there is criticism?
- Do you embrace new technology, or are you thought of as being 'set in your ways'?
- Are you proactive when there are problems by communicating any potential issues to your boss, and then do you also bring solutions?
- How flexible are you when you have to make changes to your daily, weekly or monthly management programs?
- Are you on time and prepared for meetings?
- Dress appropriately for those meetings?
- Present accurate and unbiased information during those meetings?
- Do you "think big" and bring ideas that excite people?
- Are you considered a "team player"?
- Have a firm hand-shake?
- Look people in the eye with self-confidence?
- Do you have an "ethical" business reputation?
- Do you deliver on your promises?
- Are you committed to continuous learning and gaining skills beyond those needed for your job?
- Do you mentor your staff and position yourself as a role model for them?
- Do you champion the good work of your staff?
- Do you empower your staff to make their own decisions?
- Do you set and maintain high expectations for all who work with you?
- Do you take responsibility for your mistakes and those of your subordinates?
- Do you make a point of thanking employees and praising them when they do a good job?

It goes without saying that sports turf managers have to do an excellent job with the resources allocated to them for field prepa-

ration and presentation. It is the softer skills that will differentiate you.

Mike Andresen, CSFM, facilities & grounds manager, Iowa State

To me "the next level" means to be a better professional, a more respected professional and a more valuable employee. If we truly focus on the job we currently have and strive to grow in that job we most certainly become a better professional and more valuable employee. Certainly you'd be more marketable should you choose to entertain other opportunities in this profession.

We're fortunate to work in the competitive athletics arena and

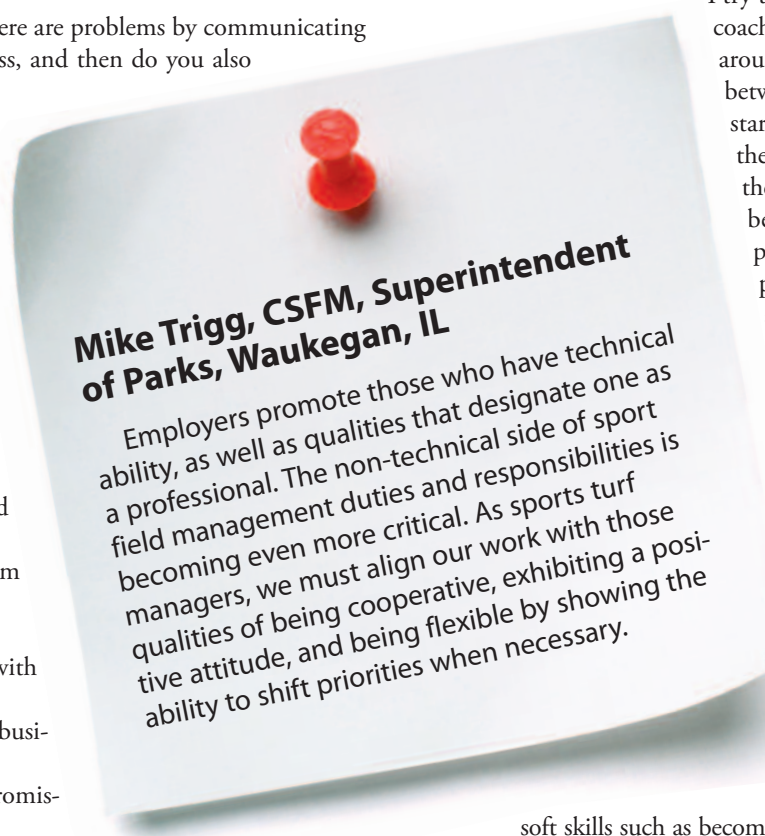
I try to learn from the administrators, coaches and athletes that we work around. The number one difference between an average athlete and a star athlete is the ability to focus on the task; his/her own skills and their ability to help the team be better than its individual parts. Focus every day on really producing for your team (crew) and for the teams you work with. I don't necessarily mean produce volumes of work, I mean produce perfect work. We don't worry about other entities at our business. Simply, they don't know our jobs so what makes us think we know theirs? Focus.

Agronomically we are the expert for our employer so that end of our game has to be rock solid. We should focus effort on keeping those agromonic skills solid. Focusing on

soft skills such as becoming an exceptional listener, communicator, budget manager, crew manager and trusted co-worker are traits that will set you apart from average. I like the adage of "don't take yourself seriously but do take your profession seriously."

Achieving the designation of Certified Sports Field Manager quantifies your level of professional focus and willingness to work intently on hard and soft skills. No employer owes you or me anything except a paycheck for satisfactory work. Very basically, we are a commodity hired to do a job for our employer. From day one it's our job to earn respect and privilege and I believe we pretty much end up being given the level of respect we earn.

This profession can be pretty humbling and can beat us down at times. We're individually not as good as we sometimes lead ourselves to believe and we're certainly not as incompetent as we sometimes feel. Look around at the giants of STMA and what traits do



you see? I see humbleness and focus above all else. Do a self evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses. Ask people you trust to give you honest feedback.

Work hard on skills that are not strengths but don't beat yourself up and think you can change them overnight. Determine steps you'll take, such as reading and attending educational seminars and conferences to help you improve. My boss recognizes her number one resource isn't the mower we own, it's the person doing the mowing and she invests in nurturing that asset. A tip: kind and constructive words go further than any amount of money ever will. People depend on us and take cues from us. Supervisors are named by the boss but leaders are named by the crew. You have to earn the hat of "leader," it's not bestowed. Strive to be the leader!

It's critical that you know what makes those around you "tick," including coaches and administrators. You need to know their personalities and be able to meet their style. At times you'll need to motivate, discipline, teach, learn, negotiate with and so forth. Most of all keep your eyes open and maximize every opportunity you get to improve your "game." Those opportunities flash through our lives every day and only when you focus on that part of your life will you even see them.

Those giants I see in STMA and this profession are successful in my eyes because their focus is on maximizing everyday opportunities to make themselves and their teams better. It sounds goofy but

professionally I really do believe the "destination" (whatever your definition is) is not the fun part; the climb to get there is the real gratification and with proper focus you'll get to feel some of that gratification every day!

Troy Smith, CSFM turf manager, Denver Broncos

Moving to a management position requires a combination of experience and education. If you acquire a two or four year degree then you should have the "book smarts" for the job. Once you take an internship or job in the sports turf industry, you then learn how to do the daily, weekly and monthly jobs that the job requires.

As you gain "field smarts," you will learn that that is more than one way to do the job. All of this will build a foundation for you to draw from in the future. Your supervisors will then begin to ask you what is best for a situation and this is where you use your combination of education and experience. You will also begin to watch your managers and take a little bit of management style from all of them (either good or bad) to develop your own management style.

You should begin to gain the confidence of your employer with time and the transition from a crew member to a management position should be on its way. Continuing your education, continued employment and obtaining your certified sports field manager designation are all examples that will show your employer that you are serious about your earned management position. ■

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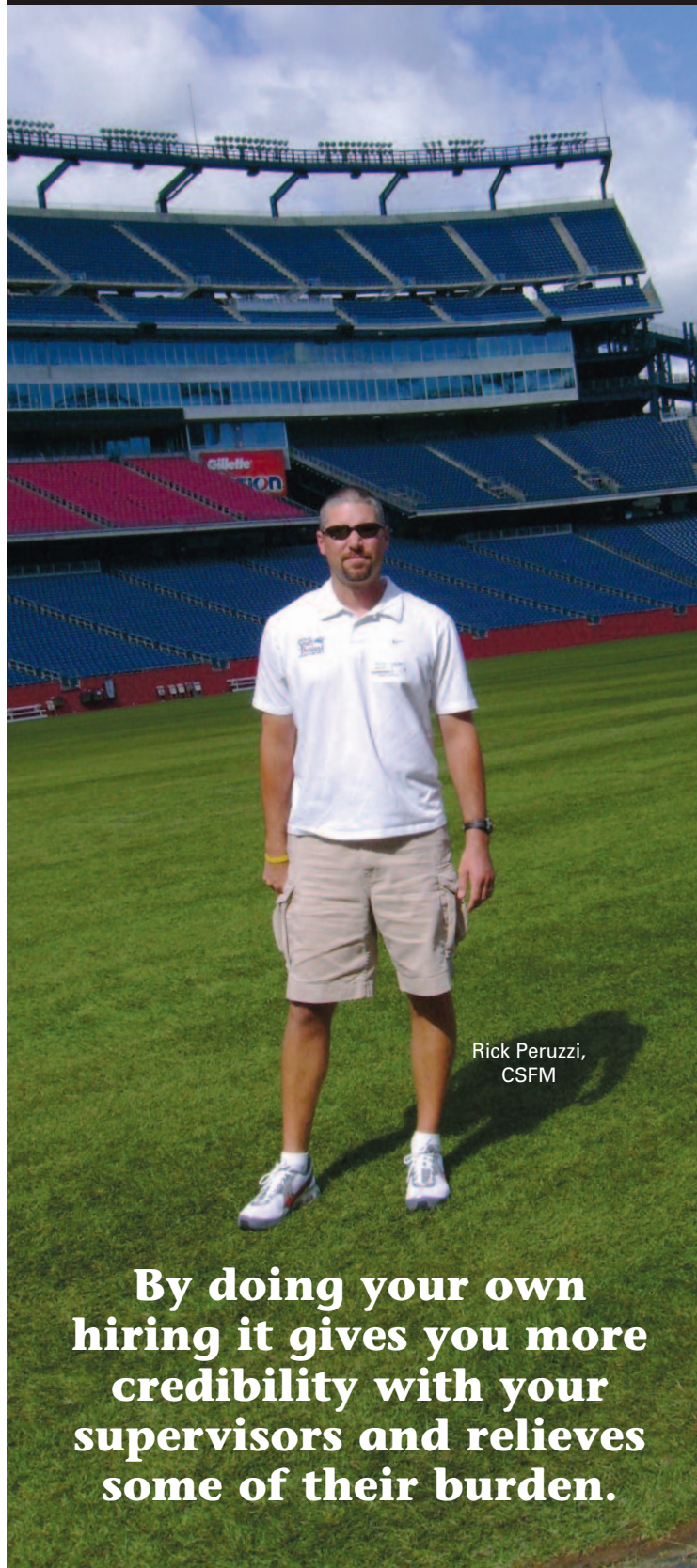
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By doing your own hiring it gives you more credibility with your supervisors and relieves some of their burden.

Good sports turf help is hard to find

THIS IS THE TIME OF YEAR, for many of us in the northern climates, when we start to get excited about the upcoming season especially when many of us have just traveled to a warmer climate to attend the STMA Conference. This year was no different for me when I traveled to San Jose, especially where it was the warmest part of the country during the week.

As I caught up with friends and colleagues, especially persons in warm climates, I found myself looking forward to getting back into the swing of things back home in Maine. What made this difficult was the obvious reason that here in the Northeast we have snow on the ground with more on the way until mid-March, if we're lucky.

I have always treated conference as a way to recharge my batteries, given the 2 months without any outdoor activities, and start to gear up for the upcoming season in 8-10 weeks. Tasks that are routinely done are servicing equipment, taking inventory and ordering of materials, start laying out use schedules and other small projects that always seem to be talked about when the season is upon us but haven't the time to start or complete them. With that being said; the hardest task that I face every year is the hiring of seasonal employees through the months of April and November.

Hiring employees, whether full or part time can be a difficult and tiresome process. It is especially hard to try to find qualified individuals to work a fulltime schedule and only be a part time employee for \$10-\$11 per hour. More times than not you end up hiring persons that are not knowledgeable of what it takes to maintain sports fields at the level we expect.

This can result into some much unneeded stress for you as the turf manager. You find yourself constantly training the individual and explaining the why's and how's of the job and end up feeling that you are taking steps backwards instead of moving forward. We all want to hit the ground running in the spring but that is not always the case and is dependent on the quality of the employees in your crew.

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Another situation that I have encountered, which you see in a lot of park and recreation departments, is one in which the park supervisor or superintendent is responsible for the hiring of seasonal employees. In this instance they may become consumed with the idea of getting bodies in to do general park maintenance tasks instead of identifying the needs of each crew. As the sports turf manager this notion does not always help and makes things more difficult for you as user groups are knocking on the door to get out and use the fields. Let's face it though we are not going to the moon, but we still need able individuals to get the work done and understand the goals of the crew throughout the season.

The most important thing you can do as the sports turf manager, if you are not doing so now, is to lobby for yourself and let your supervisors allow you to hire your own seasonal crew. This is important because you actually get to meet the individual instead of getting a description from your supervisor. You know what you are looking for in an employee and this allows you to directly relay to them what your expectations are as the sports turf manager. You are going to be able to share your passion and ask them specific questions that may or may not be asked by your supervisor, who is hiring for the whole department instead of for your crew.

By doing your own hiring it gives you more credibility with your supervisor(s) and takes some of the burden off of them, especially in the spring when everything seems to happen at once. I guarantee they will appreciate your helping them in this process, especially when you are going to have work with this individual closely for the next 7-8 months. This process is also a great training aide for if and when you step into a supervisory position.

Being that good help is hard to find, the next question you have to ask yourself is who do I hire? I personally struggled with this early in my beginnings as a sports turf manager and eventually learned from my mistakes. I have found that former athletes often have a greater appreciation for what you are trying to put out for a product day after day. Even though they may not have played a sport on the field or fields you maintain but they understand the tendencies of athletes in respect to each sport.

For example, someone who may have played football but not baseball will have the understanding of why clay surfaces need to be maintained a certain way because of the footing action in pitching or running on a skinned area, just as a football player likes a tight turf-grass field for good firm footing to make quick cuts



The hiring of seasonal or temporary labor can be a tremendous benefit if managed properly. The employment of seasonal labor can save considerable funds while filling many labor shortage problems. It also provides the opportunity for employees to gain experience and be evaluated for future promotion to full time status.

The City of Bowie Parks Department had hired seasonal labor for many years but has only recently used this important employment tool to maximize its benefits. When this program was begun many years ago, it was mainly to provide summer employment for the City's youth. And since it employed unskilled labor the pay scale was minimum wage. This approach was changed 10 years ago because of a decline in interested applicants and the need to have employees later in the season. We created a two tiered pay system, one for summer help and one for temporary labor. We currently employ eight to ten seasonal workers.

The summer help employees work from June through August and are typically high school kids. The best of these are then recruited to return, and many work through college. They get an increase in pay every year they return. The temporary workers start in April and work through mid-December and are paid at the same rate as an entry level Parks employee but without benefits. Since we have changed our hiring procedures, we have had many more qualified applicants than positions. The program has worked so well that the current full time staff of 32 has seen half of the employees make the transition from seasonal or temporary labor to full time. And when a vacancy does occur, it is almost always filled by a temporary staff member negating the need to go through the outside hiring process.

Summer help crews work with various crews doing line trimming, refuse pick up, painting, planting flowers, and miscellaneous labor. Most of this work is performed by those that have never worked before and are learning what manual labor is all about. The work performed by temporary laborers would also consist of working with an assigned crew operating mowers, line trimming, working in and around storm water management ponds and channels, ball field maintenance, and the bulk leaf program. These individuals typically are more mature and have worked for our department for more than one season or have an employment history in grounds maintenance.

We have had excellent success hiring retired individuals who are looking for employment in the milder weather months. They tend to have excellent work habits and can bring a wealth of knowledge and skills from their respective former careers that can have a very positive influence on younger staff members. It has never been more important than the current time to maximize the efficient use of labor of any type and the use of seasonal employee's can give a grounds maintenance operation the required labor force to complete the many numerous and labor intense projects. ■

Ed Hall is superintendent of parks & grounds for the City of Bowie, MD.

during a game. The concept is the same even though they are two different surfaces and maintained entirely differently.

Having this understanding eliminates any communication barriers between you and the employee and allows you to have a conversation about playing conditions without physically being on same site as the employee. This also gives the employee an opportunity to trust their instincts in regards to what is a safe playable field, which brings me into my last point.

Last summer an individual asked what I do for a living and then asked what I do exactly. My answer seemed a bit bizarre even to me. I proceeded to tell them what I don't do, which was mow, paint lines, drag skinned areas, or clay work; in other words what I like to call the "glory" stuff that the user groups and fans see. I labeled myself of more of a behind the scenes person, i.e. fixing irrigation problems, cultivation practices, trimming fence lines, and hand mowing. This individual thought I was crazy because I was the one doing the "grunt work" while my crew was out doing the fun stuff.

Maybe he was right but there is a method to my madness. As each employee in a crew becomes familiar and comfortable with any task they begin to take ownership in that task especially when they start getting compliments, and not just from the sports turf manager. That is when you see the pride and passion

begin as the season moves on and soon after that they start calling it their mower or infield groomer and you're left doing the behind the scenes tasks. This allows you, however, to focus on the big picture of your facility and to plan projects and upgrades that you may want to do knowing that the daily tasks are getting done to your standards. This helps you become a better manager and provides the skills necessary to become an effective manager.

Hopefully most of you are doing a lot of these but for those who are not you need to get out and pound the pavement some and be an advocate for your facility and start early. [Ed's note: Rick was expecting this to run in the March issue, not April!] We have enough to worry about as it is, we don't need to add to the chaos by procrastinating the process of finding good help.

Lastly, to reiterate one point made earlier, let your crew members take part in the glory tasks as to allow yourself to plan and manage your facility. Remember, you can always tell who the sports turf manager is because he or she is the one watering the skinned area; that is one job my crew will never take away from me. ■

Rick Peruzzi, CSFM is the sports turf manager for the City of South Portland, ME.

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Being “green” an opportunity for sports turf managers



Top: Trotta speaks with UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner at UN headquarters.

Bottom: GSA-NY sponsors a Great American Cleanup event.

WHAT AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY we have! As the world struggles through a rocky economic landscape we simultaneously wrestle with the environmental issues that challenge the status quo of the industrial age. Here in the 21st century we've come face to face with the realities of our misguided trajectory:

- the reckless disregard for the ecosystems that define Earth
- a mistaken belief in the biosphere's ability to absorb and dilute unlimited wastes
- an entire civilization unsustainably powered by dirty fossil fuels.

A new era brings the promise of a new paradigm. The quest for cleaner, “greener” ways has become a mainstream topic. People around the world agree that our children deserve nothing less than the clean air and water of a healthy planet, teeming with the robust diversity of life. Human ingenuity can pave the way to that future and stimulate a new innovation-driven economy based on sustainability and balanced with the planet's natural processes. Rip Van Winkle may not realize it, but the science and political wills are emerging and the work is underway. It's an auspicious time for sports turf managers to secure our position in this bright green future.

Natural grass is the ideal recreational surface and, when appropriately managed, affords many environmental benefits like cooling and oxygenating the air and filtering water. We turf managers need to recognize our own roles within the environmental movement. Those of us who maintain the green space necessary for humankind's well-being belong on the front lines of this movement, alongside wind turbine installers, conser-

vation officers, recycling staff, solar panel technicians and others working today to shape tomorrow.

As spectators we'd be pushed aside. As participants we're in the game as green leaders for a greener future. We need to collectively embrace this identity and project this image to a society that benefits from our diligence but is too often unaware of our indispensable contributions.

The Ecoflag

I am very pleased to be associated with an organization that is leading the effort to link sports and environmental stewardship. The Global Sports Alliance (GSA) is an official partner of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Our mission is to promote environmental awareness and action in the world of sports. The GSA was established in Japan in 1999 by Dr. Tatsuo Okada and has since spread around the world. Our symbol, the ecoflag, is currently flying in 54 countries, which includes the participation of GSA-USA. Under the leadership of President Jane Poynter, GSA-USA is growing, with teams now in several US locations.

Since its inception the GSA has been primarily an effort driven by athletes, teams, coaches and sporting goods manufacturers. The significance of their involvement is obvious. I'm honored to serve as the team captain of GSA-New York and to bring the perspective of a facilities manager to the organization. As sports venue managers and decision-makers we wield tremendous influence to effect environmental change. The GSA would warmly welcome other athletic field professionals to join in our international initiative.

GSA-USA is excited to announce two collaborative projects. The first was launched in the autumn of 2008 in partnership with the Sports Turf Managers of New York (STMONY). GSA-New York is working with STMONY to manage a new feature on the STMONY website called "The GREEN Corner," which reports on GSA activities and focuses on up-to-date 'sports and the environment' information, a valuable resource for progressive sports enthusiasts.

The second collaboration involves the Sports Turf Managers Association. At the STMA board meeting in March, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed by the presidents of the two organizations that opens the door to opportunities to work together for the benefit of our industry and our environment. Initially, a new link on the STMA website leads to GSA's "Global Forum for Sports and the Environment" (G-ForSE), the world's largest database on the topic. It can be found on the Environmental Stewardship page under the Resources Technical Info tab. This webpage also provides the "Green" Sports Event Guidelines, jointly issued by the STMA and GSA-USA. This document is a useful checklist for anyone wishing to soften the environmental impact of a sports event.

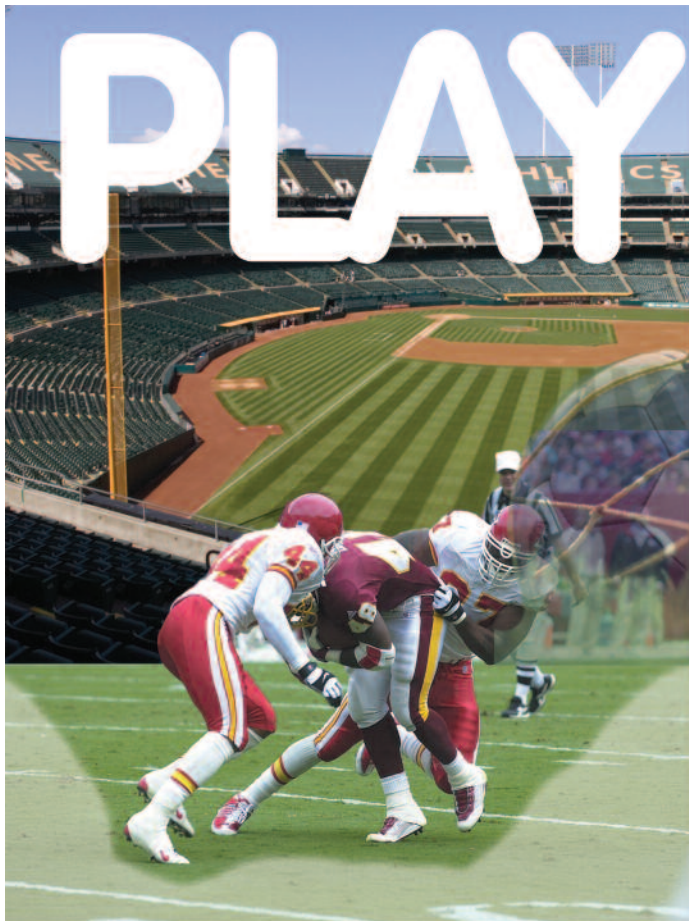
We're hopeful that these resources will provide ideas and inspiration to guide sports facilities managers in amending programs as

needed to lessen our impact and to achieve our individual and institutional environmental goals. Even small changes, implemented industry-wide, would change the face of sports and recreation. Environmental stewardship is a team sport and must surely be a guiding principle in the management of society's recreational space.

We can look forward to forging new partnerships with those who share our commitment to 'consider the environment' in the world of sports. We can address environmental problems by being part of the solution and by doing so, clarify and elevate our professional image. We can work proactively and transparently in these challenging economic times to ensure that our contributions to society are recognized as a necessity, not a luxury—providing skilled management of vital sports and recreation facilities and serving as dedicated, expert stewards of the Earth. Our work is representative of tomorrow's eco-realism, where humankind's quality of life is a palpable factor in the sustainability equation.

The world is changing. What an incredible opportunity we have! ■

Kevin Trotta, BS, MA, is a sports turf manager, New York Team Captain of the Global Sports Alliance and principal proponent of Environmental Turf Craft.



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Establishing thresholds for turfgrass management

THRESHOLD. We heard the term when we prepared to take the test for a pesticide license. We refer to it when we discuss Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Thresholds are benchmarks for determining when to take an action

involves the use of chemical or nonchemical methods, good stewardship begins with an established threshold. As managers of our sites, we initiate an action when a threshold is crossed.

correct a problem. Like pain thresholds or risk thresholds, it is different for everybody. But whether the problem is pests, the grass is the wrong shade or the soil is too wet or dry, the question is: how do you arrive at that limit and set the threshold?

There are different kinds of thresholds. When IPM was originally developed, control measures were based on *economic* thresholds. Pest population and the resulting damage had to exceed a threshold where the costs to apply a pest management treatment was worth the benefit of reduced yield loss. There had to be an economic gain for treatment to be worthwhile. If the pest population (and the resulting damage) was low enough, it would not pay to take control measures.

In the green industry, we consider two additional types of thresholds: *injury* and *aesthetic*. Injury threshold refers to the level of damage a plant can tolerate. Injury thresholds tend to be more precise because the level of damage associated with a specific pest density is known. For example, how many white grubs per square foot of turf are acceptable? A few might not be a concern on low maintenance turf grass. Sites that use a biological control such as milky spore disease for Japanese beetle control would desire a small Japanese beetle population to help sustain the milky spore culture in the soil. But, on a sports field where footing is critical, the turf manager may be concerned that the strength of the turf could be compromised by even a small number of grubs per square foot.

Aesthetics are subjective, so what “looks good enough” at one site might not be acceptable elsewhere. The amount of aesthetic quality decline that a field can tolerate is referred to as the aesthetic threshold. Because aesthetic

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to make a change. Subjective and arbitrary, thresholds are lines in the sand.

Site specific sports field and landscape management is built around thresholds. Whether our decision to use a control

A threshold is a valuable tool for a grounds manager because it sets a parameter. A threshold becomes a component of policy and quantifies when a corrective action must be made using resources (time and money) to

Continued from page 22

value is often of primary concern in turfgrass sites, individual tolerance levels are variable. For example, on a high profile sports field, dandelions probably would not be tolerated. On a public use community sports field, dandelions might be completely tolerated. At the high school stadium field, a few dandelions might be tolerated, but when the weed population reaches a certain level, a decision is made to employ some type of control.

Some pests present health, safety or legal concerns, so thresholds are more clearly defined. Stinging insects that inhabit the soil or outdoor structures are not tolerated because of health, safety and liability issues. Poison ivy growing on fences or near places where children play is undesirable. Certain thistles are considered noxious weeds in some states and are prohibited by law.

Typically, most people think of biotic pest problems (weeds, insects and diseases) in relation to thresholds, but abiotic causes such as traffic wear, soil compaction, drought or excess rainfall can all have their own unique thresholds when a decision must be made whether or not to do something. This action threshold is an arbitrary limit that is established to determine that a response (or a treatment) is warranted to arrest a problem.

Consider the action threshold based on money (economic threshold). How much of the problem (pests or abiotic causes) can be tolerated before it begins to cost something either in repair costs or a quality devaluation?

Turfgrass managers may be willing to tolerate different levels of pests or environmental conditions in different situations and make site-specific management decisions. If a baseball game is cancelled because of wet field conditions at the community use level, people are inconvenienced and, at best, disappointed. But, when the problem becomes chronic, and people are unhappy and disgruntled enough, they might reach an action threshold and raise funds to correct the problem.

The first step in establishing a threshold is to develop quality standards for your site. Identify those areas that receive different priority levels of service. For each area make a list of the expectations of quality levels. Then, make a list of pests, conditions or environmental problems. For each item on that list, quantify the density of pests or the percentage of area that exhibits damage. Determine action thresholds for when a response will be made to address the problem. Finally, list all control responses that will be made starting at the gentlest and ending with the strongest response.

Many landscape and sports field managers base their threshold decisions on these factors:

- The problem in terms the pest or conditions, severity, and the type of damage.

Sports Field Quality Levels

Level 1 Sports Turf	The field is a showplace. The field was constructed properly, is highly managed, use is limited; blemishes are few and are corrected immediately.
Level 2 Sports Turf	Very high quality sports field. The field was constructed properly, is properly managed, use is controlled, occasionally develops noticeable blemishes that are corrected promptly.
Level 3 Sports Turf	Good quality sports field. The field is safe, playable and has an attractive appearance. May have chronic problems due to design and construction problems, but the field is properly managed, and well maintained. The field has some blemishes from use.
Level 4 Sports Turf	Common sports field. The field receives basic maintenance. Might have overuse and drainage issues
Level 5 Sports Turf	Poorly maintained, unkempt field receives maintenance sporadically. Has overuse and drainage issues

Examples of Threshold Differences Between Level 2 & 4 Sports Fields

Here are some examples of threshold differences for 2 different field quality levels. The examples shown are only suggestions, and are not meant to be all inclusive. Sports Field Managers are advised to customize their own lists for their respective sites.

Level 2 Turfgrass Sports Field (Sample)

Pest or Condition	Count or % per sq. ft. or Area	Action Level	Control Treatment	(optional) Proactive Treatment Next Season
Weeds	< 1 weed per 100 sq. ft.	>1 weed per 100 sq. ft.	Hand pull, Resod, Herbicide treatment	Improve cultural practices, Resod, Change soil, Preemergent herbicides
Harmful Insects	< 1 body per sq. ft.	>1 body per sq. ft.	Insecticide treatment	Use insect resistant grass seed, or sod' Biorational controls
Disease	2-3 patches/1000 sq. ft.	Detection	Improved cultural practice Fungicide	Use disease resistant grass seed or sod Improve cultural practices
Drought	50% Management Allowable Depletion	Detection	Irrigation	
Soil pH	6.2-6.8	When pH levels move to the range limits	Soil amendments	
Mowing Height	¾ to 1 inch turf height	When grass height grows by ½	Mowing with sharp mower blade, Plant Growth Regulators	
Turf Density	100%	Detection	Resod or seed as appropriate	Resod or seed as appropriate
Litter	Zero tolerance	Detection	Immediate cleanup	

Level 4 Sports Field (Sample)

Pest	Threshold Count or % per sq. ft. or Area	Action Level	Control Treatment	(optional) Proactive Treatment Next Season
Weeds	<10% of area	>10% of area	Improve cultural practices Herbicide treatment	Improve cultural practices, Preemergent herbicides
Harmful Insects	< 5 bodies per sq. ft.	If damage is noticeable	Insecticide treatment	Use insect resistant grass seed, Biorational controls
Disease	Moderate amount of disease is expected	If damage is noticeable	Improve cultural practices	Use disease resistant grass seed Improve cultural practices
Drought	Field is not irrigated	Turf allowed to go dormant	Reduce activities, traffic and inputs	
Soil pH	6.2-7.5	When pH levels move to the range limits	Soil amendments	
Mowing Height	3 inches	When grass height grows by ½	Mowing with sharp mower blade,	
Turf Density	75%	< 75%	Resod or seed as appropriate	Resod or seed as appropriate
Litter	Light to moderate amounts	Police litter before mowing	Cleanup	

- The correction options available such as different cultural practices, planting resistant varieties, nonchemical or chemical pesticides, and the resources available.

- The perception of the problem (from a public relations standpoint) and who it concerns.

- The objectives of the property owner in relation to financial risks, liability, safety, health hazards and community values.

A number of tools are available to assist the sports field manager in determining thresholds for their fields. The "STMA Field Safety Checklist" is helpful for establishing safety thresholds. Just recently, the STMA has made available the "STMA PCI Pilot" as a tool for STMA member sports turf managers to use in assessing the current playing conditions of an athletic field at a given point in time. Both of these tools are available free to STMA members and can be found on www.stma.org. The "Field Wear Index," developed by David Schlotthauer and featured in the February 2008 issue of this magazine, is another useful guide for establishing thresholds based on traffic and wear, and suggests when to perform aeration, renovation and other tasks.

Once the standards, thresholds and treatment options have been set, continue to regularly monitor all of the problems and conditions on the site. After a treatment, schedule a follow up inspection. Develop a checklist and keep records so that the effectiveness of the program can be measured. Use this information to assess the effectiveness of the turf program and find ways to improve it for next year. After several seasons of recording and evaluating, a long-term trend toward better turf quality and low pest populations should be noticeable. Remember that these standards become a living document, which means that it can be amended regularly for maximum effectiveness. ■

Don Savard, CSFM, CGM, is athletic facility/grounds manager for Salesianum School, Wilmington, DE.

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Turf management strategies for large complexes



THE LOUIE POMPEI SPORTS PARK in Glendora, CA is a community sports park that hosts football, softball, soccer and numerous community events. The high percentage of foot traffic the turfgrass and soil are exposed to create a challenge for George Munoz and myself, our management team. The following are some considerations that must be met for our turfgrass:

- The turf must be green and attractive to the eye.
- It must be safe to play on with no clumps or uneven terrain on the playing surfaces.
- We must implement integrated pest management strategies.
- No standing water on any of the fields; we constantly strive for good drainage.
- An efficient use of water; we must be water wise in our irrigation management practices.

A sports turf manager strives for the concept "green is good." Finding the correct diet for our turf is challenging. It would not be a prudent management decision to use strictly nitrogen as the sole source of a fertilizer on the sports turf.

Before we began to apply any fertilizers to the fields, we conducted a soil analysis. With the information that we now have regarding our soil, we can implement the proper turf and soil fertilizer diet. We use a slow release fertilizer exclusively, which provides a controlled feeding for 10 weeks. Advantages of this approach include:

- Slow release fertilizers provide a sustained color to the turf without sacrificing root growth at the expense of the leaf.
- Particle size of the slow release fertilizer is important; the slow release fertilizer that we use is uniform in particle size, so the application of the product is uniform on the turf. Applying a slow release nitrogen fertilizer to the turf decreases the potential for tissue burn from the application.

We mow our TifSport hybrid bermudagrass twice weekly at 1.5 inches with a Toro Reelmaster throughout the year. At this height we are able to provide the players with a safe cushion during practices and games.

All 7 acres of turf are aerated monthly, based on our windows of opportunity and inconvenience to the players; we aerate with either solid steel tines or hollow tines. When we are planning to topdress we will switch to hollow tines. Hollow tines will remove a section of soil and that exposed soil channel can now be filled with sand or organic matter. The solid steel tines simply push the soil to one side, do not pull a section of soil up, and so we don't have to remove cores.

To keep the turf attractive in cooler temperatures, we overseed with Grand Slam perennial ryegrass. Its seed germinates in 5-7 days, it is not clumpy, and has a nice dark, green color. Grand Slam has a low incidence of disease, though it does get rust but we manage that through a fertilization diet.

Windows of opportunity

Managing the windows of opportunity is extremely important for us. For example, we begin our overseeding schedule in late June or early July. The existing soil temperatures are warm and there's plenty of sunlight. Football practice at the sports park does not begin until August so the Grand Slam seed is fully developed by the time football starts. The seeding rate that we implement is 10 pounds of seed to 1,000 square feet of turf. In conjunction to applying the seed we also apply a starter fertilizer, such as 6-24-24 (follow the label rate for seeding purposes). We apply the perennial ryegrass seed a minimum of three times before our window of opportunity closes. The final reseeding is usually done in mid-November.

We use IPM strategies to assist with weed control. We manage crabgrass two ways: first, in the early spring we will treat our 7 acres with pre-emergent herbicide pendamethalin (Pre-M). This allows us flexibility for duration of control; in our case, 6-8 weeks. Secondly, we aerify. To effectively manage crabgrass in a sports turf, you must manage compaction because crabgrass thrives in soils that lack oxygen. This means you also have to manage the percentage of water that

the turf receives since soil that is allowed to become saturated has a good chance of becoming anaerobic. Soil that does not drain effectively will become a habitat for crabgrass.



Help needed

Having adequate labor to manage your turf is the single greatest limiting factor. In addition to the sports turf we also have hardscape and numerous planters that require attention. In order for us to be successful with our turf management program, we have introduced drip irrigation to all of the planters throughout the park. By regulating the percentage of water in selected landscape zones we have been successful in reducing our labor time in these areas. Consequently, we can now spend more time managing the sports turf.

The entire sports park is run on a Rain Bird Maxicom irrigation system. Its efficiency allows us to grow healthy plants without introducing a weed problem in the planters. Hand weeding is not an efficient labor management strategy!

As with most municipalities we must watch the bottom line. Fortunately, by being proactive with our best management practices throughout the park we are capable of producing a very competitive stand of sports for the community to play on. ■

Mike Ventura is landscape maintenance supervisor for the City of Glendora, mventura.ci.glendora.ca.us.



John Mascaro's Photo Quiz

>> Answer: from page 17

This is a new method for topdressing that has not quite caught on nationally...April fool! Actually, the sand being deposited and spread out on this stadium field is in preparation for a 3-day AVP Pro Beach Volleyball tournament at the University of Colorado's Folsom Field during the July 4, 2008 holiday. The event featured Olympic Gold medalists Misty May-Traenkle and Kerri Walsh. First, railroad ties were used to outline the five regulation sized sand volleyball courts that were strategically located directly on top of the stadium turf. Next, 25 ton semi trailer end dump trucks drove directly onto the field and deposited the sand into the court areas where

massive front end loaders (like the ones pictured on page 17) spread it out. After the event, stages, stands, plywood and railroad ties were removed and then the sand was removed with front end loaders. Next, 4 inches of the field was excavated using a Koro TopMaker, then 2 inches of USGA sand was brought back in, tilled and then laser-graded. Irrigation heads were then re-installed before the laying of big roll sod. This process finished on July 16 which was 51 days before the first home football game.

Photo submitted by Jason E. DePaape CSFM, Athletic Field Manager, University of Colorado at Boulder.

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz please send it to John Mascaro, 1471 Capital Circle NW, Ste # 13, Tallahassee, FL 32303 or email to john@turf-tec.com. If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos submitted will become property of SportsTurf magazine and the Sports Turf Managers Association.