

# FIELD OF THE YEAR



## Search for sustainability helps Oregon win another *Field of the Year*



**T**HE SPORTS TURF MANAGERS ASSOCIATION (STMA) has honored Oregon's Pape Field with its prestigious Field of the Year Award for the university and college soccer division. Built in 1998 in conjunction with the Ed Moshofsky Sports Complex, Pape Field stands out as one of the nation's finest collegiate soccer venues and is home to the University of Oregon women's soccer and lacrosse programs.

The 81,000-square-foot field sits adjacent to three football practice fields that encompass a total of 265,000 square feet, with the entire area also used by other varsity teams during off-season conditioning. Underneath the turf, the underlying drainage system is equally state-of-the-art, with a herringbone design and lateral piping every 15 feet, atop a sand base that facilitates quick drainage. The root zone is 12 inches of modified USGA blend sand from the Columbia River Basin,

and lies over a 4-inch gravel blanket. This system, when first installed, had a percolation rate of 14 inches per hour. A fully automatic RainBird irrigation unit is also permanently in place, and its 64 heads provide a 1/4 inch of water in 45 minutes.

Pape Field is maintained by Oregon grounds manager Eric Fasbender and his staff, who's work on the Kilkenny Practice Field previously won the 2007 Field of the Year Award for football. [Editor's note: Fasbender has since left Eugene and now is at LSU.] "I am tremendously honored to have Pape Field recognized in this manner," Fasbender said. "This award is a testament to our staff and the hard work that they put in behind the scenes. Whether the sun is shining or the rain is falling, they are out there to make our athletic fields the best in the country. I have always dreamed of winning a Field of the Year Award, and now we have two of them!"

Steve DiNatale and Kenny Hoffman also were honored for the second consecutive year as Oregon's assistant groundskeepers. Jason Anderson was the grounds intern for the year.

The STMA Field of the Year Award program began in 1992 and there are five field types for which awards may be given: Baseball, Football, Soccer, Softball and Sporting Grounds (Lacrosse, Rugby, Field Hockey and Tennis). For each field type, awards may be given in three categories: Professional, College and University, and Schools and Parks. This year there were a total of just 10 awards presented.

"I have always thought that Pape Field was one of the best in the nation," said Oregon soccer head coach Tara Erickson. "It's nice to have that validated by this award and is a testament to our fantastic grounds crew. My greatest compliment about Pape Field is that I never have to worry about it and how the surface could affect my team or the game. I know it is going to be perfect for us every single day."

From the award entry: "Since installing Kentucky bluegrass on our grass fields on campus, we have had great success with our turf, but we continue to strive to get better and push the envelope when it comes to innovative ideas and practices. In January 2008 we took on a new challenge, in addition that we face regularly like overseeding, Poa annua control, and battling the weather. Our new challenge was to become a "green operation" and work to be "sustainable" in our maintenance practices. This goal has been one of the most difficult to achieve, especially given the timetable to execute the plan, but it has also been the most rewarding.

"We began this quest by examining our fertilizer program and looked for ways to reduce inputs and maximize efficiencies with our products. Our old program consisted of all granular, slow-release applications that would be applied every 3-4 weeks. We wanted to know how efficient this program was, so we began to take soil and tissue tests monthly to see how the nutrients that we applied were being taken up by the plants. The results showed that many of the nutrients were leaching out or were being tied up in the profile and were not available to the plants. We knew that our old program was successful in growing outstanding turf that was durable and recovered well from wear, but it was not 'green'.

"With our soil and tissue samples in hand we began to research different products and programs that could meet our needs. We wanted to improve our efficiencies but not lose any of the performance we had come to expect from Pape Field. After all, it played host to not only games and practices for women's soccer, but also served as the competitive and practice field for women's lacrosse as well as being home for Oregon football, soccer, and lacrosse camps in the summer. Our search ended with a combination of soluble and liquid fertilizers to be applied bi-weekly that would be available to the plant immediately and remained soluble in the profile so the plant could access the nutrients.

"In addition to the change in product we also began to research adding microbial populations that could help mine the nutrients that were present, but not available to the plant. Early (2008) fall we added a large population of microbes to help reduce thatch and free up nutrients that were locked in our soil. Thus far, the results have been successful and we look forward to seeing what the future brings.

"Changing something that was proven effective took a leap of faith, but the change has taken Pape Field to the next level with playability, wear resistance, turf recovery and overall turf health, while allowing us to become better stewards of the environment by maximizing use of fertilizers. We will continue to push the envelope with innovative thinking and outstanding actions." ■

### January

Equipment maintenance/repair  
Remove growth blankets mid-month  
Mow at 1 ¼" as needed

### February

Paint lacrosse weekly  
Mow at 1 ¼" as needed  
Sweep field as needed

### March

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 and ammonium nitrate plus calcium at ½ lb. N/1000  
Poa annua control spray application  
Paint lacrosse weekly  
Mow at 1 ¼" as needed  
Sweep field as needed  
Seed goal areas weekly

### April

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 and potassium nitrate plus calcium at ½ lb. N/1000  
Paint lacrosse weekly  
Paint soccer weekly  
Mow at 1 ¼" 3x/week  
Sweep field as needed  
Seed goal areas weekly

### May

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 plus calcium at ½ lb. N/1000  
Poa annua control spray application  
Paint lacrosse 1st week of month  
Paint soccer 1st week of month  
Aerate, overseed and topdress mid-month  
Fertilize with Rx Gold after overseeding for establishment and growth  
Mow at 1 ¼" 3x/week

### June

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 plus calcium at ½ lb. N/1000  
Paint football last week of month  
Mow at 1 ¼" daily

### July

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 plus calcium at ¼ lb. N/1000  
Paint lacrosse first week of month  
Paint soccer second week of month  
Aerate and topdress late in month  
Fertilize with Rx Gold after aeration and topdressing for turf recovery and growth  
Mow at 1 ¼" daily

### August

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 and potassium nitrate plus calcium at ¼ lb. N/1000  
Paint soccer weekly  
Mow at 1 ¼" daily  
Seed goal areas weekly

### September

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 plus calcium at ½ lb. N/1000  
Paint soccer weekly  
Poa annua control spray application  
Aerate and topdress mid-month  
Fertilize with Rx Gold after aeration and topdressing for recovery and growth  
Mow at 1 ¼" daily  
Seed goal areas weekly

### October

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 and potassium nitrate plus calcium at ½ lb. N/1000  
Paint soccer weekly  
Aerate and topdress mid-month  
Fertilize with Rx Gold after aeration and topdressing for recovery and growth  
Mow at 1 ¼" 3x/week  
Sweep field as needed  
Seed goal areas weekly

### November

Fertilize bi-weekly w/ STS 1000 and potassium nitrate plus calcium at ½ lb. N/1000  
Poa annua control spray application  
Paint soccer weekly until mid-month  
Aerate, overseed and topdress mid-month  
Fertilize with Rx Gold after overseeding for sees establishment and growth  
Cover field with growth blankets  
Mow at 1 ¼" as needed  
Sweep field as needed

### December

Equipment maintenance  
Monitor seed germination and establishment