LED BY LANDSCAPE & TURF TECHNICIAN DAVID PRESNELL, the Gainesville, GA Parks and Recreation Agency’s Bobby Gruhn Field at City Park Stadium was named STMA Schools/Parks Football Field of the Year for 2008. Charles Jarrard, parks maintenance crew leader, Barry Brooks, parks maintenance worker, and supervisor Jimmy Savage round out the team.

City Park Stadium has been around since 1916 and now features TifSport bermudagrass while hosting soccer and lacrosse games as well as football. In 2005 a sub-strata, sand-based drainage system and new irrigation system was installed, along with new turf, fencing, goal posts, perimeter walkways, retaining walls, and landscaping. Drainage issues and an uneven playing surface prompted the renovation.

“The one thing that sticks with me is that turf managers are professionals and should carry themselves like professionals.”-David Presnell
Presnell related in his award entry the challenges he’s faced during drought-related water restrictions:

“The sand-based drainage system has worked well in dissipating any sudden or prolonged heavy rainfall. The system also allows any irrigation water to pass through the surface rapidly and prevents the root zone from holding much water. A prolonged drought resulted in state Level 4 water restrictions that have made it very difficult to maintain the turf properly.

“We were directed to discontinue irrigation in the fall of 2007. Exemptions allow for use of irrigation systems to water in fertilizer and herbicide applications only. We were able to maintain the overseeded rye in good condition over the winter for soccer and lacrosse play in spite of the restrictions. We then applied Revolver to remove the rye in mid-April and with limited irrigation and the 6 inches of rain we had in April and May, the TifSport came out of dormancy.

“All went well until the first of June, when ironically we co-hosted a Turfgrass Field Day with our county extension service. The agronomists and turf experts from the University of Georgia were very impressed by our turf; however, the temperatures reached the high 90’s over the following weekend and by Monday we discovered that the turf had almost burned. This was attributed to the sand drainage system that contributed to higher soil temperatures.

“Sideline wear requires annual re-sodding on both sides of the field and the Level 4 restrictions allow for 10 weeks of irrigation, 3 days a week, when new sod is professionally installed. So we quickly ordered our sod and were able to water it and the existing stand minimally, bringing back the turf.”

**SportsTurf:** How has the recession affected your operations?

**Presnell:** Our budget has certainly tightened with the recession. We have subcontracted our chemical program in the past but decided this year to bring it back in-house. By handling our fertilization and IPM program internally, we have been able to better manage costs, make more timely applications when needed, and be more efficient. The recession has impacted our operations in a similar manner, with a focus on cost reduction and increased efficiency.

**Bobby Gruhn Field Maintenance Schedule**

**January**
- Fertilize field with 18-0-0 Ammonium Sulfate (1# of N per 10000ft²)(500# Total)
- Re-Seed any bare spots with perennial rye if needed (30 days prior to pre-emerge)
- Irrigate only to target wilt
- Mow field weekly or as needed @ 1.25 inches

**February**
- Lay-out and paint Soccer field & Lacrosse field
- Contact school and have them bring Goals (Soccer & Lacrosse)
- Apply Pre-Em ergent to field at mid-month to target summer weed germination (5-5-25 granular fertilizer w/ 1% Ronstar / 6.7# product to 10000ft²)
- Irrigate only to target wilt
- Mow field weekly @ 1.0 inches (Twice weekly by end of month as temps begin to rise)

**March**
- Take soil sample and have analyzed
- Check/test irrigation system
- Spot spray 3-way liquid post emergent to target broadleaf weeds
- Fertilize field with 29-3-8 + 6% Fe (1# of N per 10000ft²)(300#s total)
- Irrigate as needed in conjunction with temperatures and rainfall
- Back-Lap Reels
- Mow field every other day @ 3/4 inch

**April**
- Spot spray 3-way liquid post emergent to target broadleaf weeds
- Add nutrients/lime as recommended by soil analysis
- Chemically remove Perennial Ryegrass at mid-month with Revolver (.4oz per10000ft² / 17.4oz per acre)
- Apply Heritage Fungicide at a rate of .4oz per 10000ft² / 17.4oz per acre
- Fertilize field with 16-4-8 (1# of N per 10000ft²) (500#s total)
- Monitor transition to Bermudagrass
- Begin irrigating as needed (monitor rainfall to allow 1.5 inches of water weekly)
- Mow twice weekly @ .75 inches (mow rye every other day at beginning of month if needed)

**May**
- Core Aerification w/ 3/4” tines and remove cores
- De-thatch and sweep field
- Lay-Out and paint field for Spring Scrimmage (Bring Field Equipment)
- Fertilize field with 29-3-8 + 6%Fe (1# of N per 10000ft²)(300#s total)
- Re sod any needed areas at mid month
- Topdress new sod after putting down
- Irrigate as needed (monitor rainfall to achieve 1.5 inches water per week)
- Mow every other day @ 1/2 inch

**June**
- Take soil sample and have analyzed
- Core Aerification with 5/8” tines (remove cores) and Top-dress with 1/4 “USGA” Topdressing Sand (50 tons)
- After aerification fertilize field with 29-3-8 + 5%Fe (3/4# of N per 10000ft²)(2000#s total)
- Mid month fertilize field with 29-3-8 + 5%Fe (3/4# of N per 10000ft²)(2000#s total)
- Irrigate as needed (monitor rainfall to achieve 1.5 inches water per week)
responsive to problems as they occur. Of course we’ve had to make some scheduling adjustments and retool some of our older equipment, but it has been a positive experience.

**ST:** What changes to your maintenance plans are you expecting to make this year, if any?

**Presnell:** I am always tweaking existing practices and trying new things. Our maintenance program has been very effective over the past couple of years so we are not looking at any major changes. I am looking at some different fertilizers and possibly adjusting the application times of our fungicide program. One very positive change we made this year was increasing the number of core-aerifications this year and it seems to have been extremely beneficial.

**ST:** What’s the best piece of turf management advice you have ever received?

**Presnell:** I have received a lot of great advice and hopefully will continue to get great advice from fellow turf managers. The one thing that sticks with me is that turf managers are professionals and should carry themselves like professionals. Always continue to educate yourself and always be open to new ideas. I also love the “Give an extra 15 minutes” and George Toma’s “And then some” attitudes.

**ST:** How do you balance your work and personal time?

**Presnell:** This is a challenge. Maintaining our fields and facilities at the high level our clients and community expect requires many hours and lots of nights and weekends. I have a great wife and children who support me. During football season when I am working the most hours my family will come to the games so we can spend some time together.

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

**Presnell:** I would love to see myself with Gainesville Park & Rec and managing turf. The community here is really football-minded and I take a lot of pride in the football field. But one thing is certain, I will be managing an athletic field and providing a quality, safe surface for athletes to play on.

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