



## Off-season/non-traditional events at your facility

**Y**OUR BOSS CALLS and tells you you're hosting a series of concerts on the sports field you have poured your time, knowledge and dedication into. The worst possible scenarios flash through your mind as you picture masses of traffic, soil compaction and dead grass. Fortunately you are not the only sports turf manager that needs to deal with event issues. With proper planning, preparation and communication, your sports field can be back and in playable condition within a few days. Rest easy with some tips to help your event go more smoothly.

Keep invoices, rental agreements and any other receipts or paperwork. You never know when this may be needed.

### BEFORE THE EVENT

Events are stressful, but sports turf managers that stay involved and communicate openly often see the most success. Involving yourself from the beginning and staying informed is essential so you are aware of plans and expectations for the event. Be sure to attend all the contract talks and event meetings with the event promoter, administration and other individuals. Do your research and be prepared to ask questions, present concerns, communicate your needs and influence how the field is used. You know your field best, so be prepared to explain in detail why something can or cannot take place. Establishing clear lines of communication with key individuals can help avoid miscommunication, establish your own credibility and give you the opportunity to present realistic expectations for field recovery.

The following questions can be presented during meetings to assist you in determining expectations for the event and to develop a field recovery plan.

- How many events will be taking place?
- Who will be using the field? What age group takes part in the events?
- What shoe type is needed for the event?
- What will participants be doing during the event? What sport or event will be taking place?
- How many participants will there be? Will there be seating or parking issues?
- What time of year will the event take place? What time of day will the event take place?
- How long will the event last? What is the frequency of the damage? One day? Two weeks?
- Where on the field will the damage be taking place?
- What is the budget for the event and the field?
- Are there any site or location issues that need to be addressed?
- How will the field be needed? Will a floor covering be put down? Will the turf be used?
- Is the event being scheduled around other events? What is the time period to get the field back into playable condition?

Prepare a budget in advance based on expected damage. This should include field maintenance before and after the event, field repair, field protection, replacement costs, staff and labor costs, and any other costs associated with the event. Present it to the event promoter and administration. Be honest in your budget and be realistic and clear with what is necessary to get the field back in healthy, safe, playable condition in a reasonable time period.

Keep accurate and detailed records. Keep a copy of the contract so you know exactly what you are responsible for. Take pictures of the entire event from start to finish. Keep invoices, rental agreements and any other receipts or paperwork. You never know when this may be needed.

Manage your staff respectfully and efficiently. Keep a positive attitude to prevent both you and them from getting stressed out. Train employees so everyone is equally skilled and you are not limited to certain people

doing specialized tasks. This builds respect and trust within the crew. Reward creativity and teamwork. And most importantly, have fun.

Manage your turf. Maintaining the quality of the field right up until the event takes place will promote faster recovery. Even if the field is being replaced, maintaining the field at a high level will display your dedication and professionalism and may give you leverage during contract and budget negotiations.

Use your network. STMA provides an excellent network of sports turf managers that have extensive event experience and are always more than willing to provide insight and tips on their own experiences.

### POST-EVENT

Now the real work begins. Depending on the event and the damage your field sustained, recovery can vary. Some events may require total field replacement, while other events may only need cultivation, topdressing, and seeding to get the field back into safe, playable condition. After the event is over, take stock of the damage and determine if it is what you expected or if there is additional repair necessary. Communicate with administration about the damage and be honest. Sugar coating the condition of the field will only hurt you in the long run. The bottom line is if you planned properly prior to the event, presented realistic expectations about damage to administration, and agreed on a budget, the recovery process can be relatively quick and successful.

Events can be stressful, but by keeping a positive attitude and an open mind, you can accept the challenges and turn it into a fun, learning experience that will benefit you for the future. ■

*This is the third in a series of seven articles in the 2010 Ewing Professional Development Series. STMA and Ewing have again partnered in this series to bring sports turf industry professional development and career issues to the forefront. For more information, go to [www.STMA.org](http://www.STMA.org) or [www.Ewing1.com](http://www.Ewing1.com).*



» **SOCCER CITY** in Johannesburg, South Africa

# Building Soccer City for the World Cup

Interview with Fanus Cloete CEO Evergreen Turf of Johannesburg, South Africa

**O**NE OF THE WORLDS MOST TAXING EVENTS for sports turf, this year's FIFA World Cup was even more strenuous due to one of South Africa's coldest winters on record. If you religiously watched the 2010 World Cup or just the final match at Soccer City in Johannesburg then you have probably seen a field built, maintained or supplied by Evergreen Turf, the largest supplier of sod in the southern hemisphere.

Fanus Cloete, the CEO of Evergreen Turf in Johannesburg, South Africa, discussed in a recent interview many of the challenges and successes that his company found while constructing and maintaining several fields for the international event,

including: Soccer City, Ellis Park, Vodacom Park, Moses Mabhida Stadium, four partial stadium training venues and five base camps.

FIFA's website calls Soccer City, home of the final match between Netherlands and Spain, "One of the most artistic and awe-inspiring football venues on the African continent." Soccer City was an ideal location for the final match of the inclusive World Cup given the country's political history. A symbol of a unified South Africa, the stadium hosted Nelson Mandela's

first mass rally after his release from prison. Built in the mid 1980s, Soccer City, and several of the other stadium fields were due for some serious upgrades to meet FIFA's modern standards.

In November 2008, Evergreen Turf began construction on Soccer City's new premier pitch. According to Evergreen Turf's website, "The specification required a 'premier' playing field to be constructed incorporating technology to produce high drainage, non-compacting sand growing medium over a gravel layer with subsoil drains." Many

of these soccer fields, especially Soccer City, were designed to withstand the high impact of the World Cup, while balancing potential weather disturbances. Specifically, the Soccer City field was designed to drain 3.9 inches of rain per hour, while maintaining proper grass growth. While this system's capabilities have not been tested during the World Cup, the field did receive 4 inches of rain and remained playable during the Confederations Cup in June 2009.

Of course the high rate of water evacuation can be attributed to the field's fast-draining sand and drainage system, but Cloete believes that the incorporation of Fiber Reinforced Natural Turf, is what makes the entire field playable. The key to how the system works lies in the construction of the field.

Evergreen Turf began by excavating the first 9.8 inches of existing soil. The drainage and irrigation lines were then installed, followed by a laser graded gravel layer. A USGA approved silica sand, amended with 3% organic matter and 3% topsoil, was then brought in and leveled. StaLok Fiber, the fiber blended into the rootzone to reinforce the natural turf, was then spread at a rate of 6.6 lbs. per ton of sand, by use of a spreader, but in most cases spread by hand as the government encouraged the use

FIFA's website calls Soccer City, home of the final match between Netherlands and Spain, "One of the most artistic and awe-inspiring football venues on the African continent."



Illustration © istockphoto.com/3dfoto

of local labor for the World Cup. This was then tilled to a 3-inch depth with a Rotadairon. Again the field was leveled by laser grader to a specified 1% crown. Finally, the sand base was saturated and Kikuyu stolons were sprigged.

Most World Cup fields were sprigged with Kikuyu, some were sodded with TifSport and almost every field was overseeded with Rye, although Cloete said that “in some areas the Rye will transition very quickly because of the tropical climate.” While Kikuyu does well in shady conditions and recovers quickly from wear, from a maintenance standpoint Cloete was not completely sold on the idea. “I do not believe that Kikuyu was the right grass to use. The thing about Kikuyu is that the rhizomes are really thick, requiring us to verticut quite often. This made things difficult as the specifications required us to start overseeding in early March.”

TifSport was used in Moses Mabhida Stadium because of the unique challenges that construction presented Evergreen Turf. Roof construction on the stadium limited Cloete’s team to a very short time frame for the field installation. Not having enough time to establish sprigs, let alone effectively establish sod, Cloete says he relied heavily on new technology emerging from the US and Australia, the StaLok Instant Play system, most notably used at the University of Phoenix Stadium, home of the Arizona Cardinals and site of the U.S. vs. Mexico Soccer friendly 3 years ago. Growing the TifSport in the new system, allowed him to deliver a playing surface that performed like an established field in a much shorter time frame.

## MANAGING MAINTENANCE

Cloete oversaw the maintenance on 22 fields through the end of July. He keeps three men on most of the Stadiums and high use practice fields and uses a roaming crew of 7 men to help repair divots.

In an open-air stadium like Soccer City, Cloete noted that the cold made for a different schedule for his crew: “We started with a 4/3/4 fertilizer during overseeding, moved to a 5/1/5, then to a Green Sulfate and finally we used a MAP (Mono-Ammonium Phosphate) to stimulate root growth during cold on fields without the Fiber Reinforced Natural Turf.”

Cloete explained his crews’ schedules have to work around the main events, having to complete all maintenance after each game. Post-game work included repairing divots, mowing in two directions to FIFA’s required pattern, and then covering the fields with crop blankets. Such a meticulous schedule can be quite physically demanding on the crew, Cloete noted, “Sometimes the guys would not get out of there until 3 a.m., and it was difficult working in such overnight cold.”

Part of maintaining many fields for such a high traffic event is avoiding over-manicuring during the actual tournament play. Cloete explained his methods, “We did not topdress during the tournament. During the growing season we would mow the fields very low and topdress with a sand and fiber mix.” Equally essential to fostering the future maintenance of these fields is Cloete’s planned post-World Cup field management: Cloete planned to hollow tine aerate the fields after

*Continued on page 23*

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By Mary Helen Sprecher



» **Far Left:** THE COTTING SCHOOL, located in Massachusetts, has a fully handicap-accessible field for the use of its students. Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Campbell Peters, The Cotting School

» **Left:** CHILDREN PLAY on the artificial turf field at The Cotting School. Most children are classified as medically fragile which impacted decisions regarding design and construction of the field, as well as materials.

» **Bottom Left:** THE COTTING SCHOOL FIELD measures 100 x 125 feet and allows students to participate in sporting events just as their able-bodied counterparts do.

## GROWING NEED

According to industry insiders, it all starts with understanding the needs of the athletes and to understanding how much that need is growing. And make no mistake about it: adapted sports programs are on the rise.

“There are many fields being built for children with challenges,” says Daniel Wright, an STMA member with Sport Turf Company in Whitesburg, GA. “In our area, it is mainly baseball fields constructed with a rubber surface where wheelchairs can roll without difficulty. There are a number of these in the Atlanta area and they have established a Challenger Baseball League. From what I know, those fields are used a lot.”

In its most recent High School Athletics Participation Survey, the National Federation of State High School Associations found that adapted sports currently being offered to students with physical challenges included basketball, bowling, floor hockey, soccer, softball and track.

The American Association of Adapted Sports Programs, which works in partnership with educational agencies across the US to establish programs, policies, rules, regulations and more for students with physical disabilities, has also compiled its own list of sports, which include many of the above, as well as wheelchair handball, wheelchair football and beep baseball (played on a flat grassy surface by students with visual impairments). Move up to the rank of elite athletes and you’ll find the Paralympic Games, where a wide range of sports (summer and winter, indoors and outdoors) are contested.

But all those athletes had to start somewhere, and most likely, they started on the playgrounds and playing fields of their local schools. And while the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) certainly plays a part in the design of many facilities, its work can only do so much to help ath-

## Creating a level playing field for all athletes

**W**HAT’S SEPARATING THE KID in a wheelchair from his or her able-bodied peers who are playing sports? It might be a lot more than the sidelines of the field.

It might be things many people don’t notice: a gate that is just a bit too narrow to get a wheelchair through or a field that is too muddy and uneven for a child who uses a wheelchair or a walker to feel safe. It might be furnishings or benches that an athlete can’t get past easily. It might even be a field that lacks just a few accommodations that turn it from being merely usable into an arena that allows the athlete to develop, and to compete with, his or her skills.

The good news, however, is that mak-

ing an athletic field more accessible doesn’t have to mean making drastic changes. Designers of athletic facilities, sports contractors and suppliers of materials have all worked with individual facilities to help break down the barriers and make athletic programs more available to all. Changes, large and small, can be implemented by acting now.

And that’s the most important thing to do: act now. Don’t wait for a student who is wheelchair-bound (or otherwise mobility-impaired) to request special accommodations. Being proactive can mean the difference between an athlete who becomes an enthusiastic participant, and one who goes away disappointed. (And in today’s litigious society, the latter scenario is never a good thing).

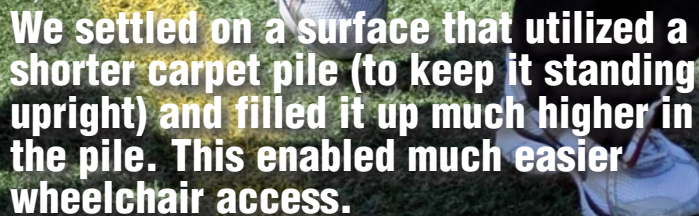
letes with physical challenges. That's why it's up to those who help build and manage fields to do their part to help break down those barriers.

## LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD (REALLY)

Sometimes, the needs of individuals with mobility impairments are overlooked because they're a small percentage of the population. That was not the case in the Cotting School in Lexington, MA. The school is specifically for students with special needs. Of its approximately 120 students, 40% have wheelchairs or walkers, according to president David Manzo.

"We have a fully accessible campus of 14 acres, but when I arrived, we had one hurdle left: how do you get kids in wheelchairs and walkers to play outside on a sports field? We have children in all kinds of wheelchairs, including some power chairs, which are really heavy. It just can't be done without a synthetic surface."

Cotting worked with Boston-based athletic facility designer Stantec Sport, which studied the students' needs and came up with a game plan for a field that would work.



**We settled on a surface that utilized a shorter carpet pile (to keep it standing upright) and filled it up much higher in the pile. This enabled much easier wheelchair access.**

"Our response was to test a number of different types of synthetic turf, which is accessible," said Stantec's Patrick Maguire, also an STMA member. "Grass is not. We settled on a surface that utilized a shorter carpet pile (to keep it standing upright) and filled it up much higher in the pile. This enabled much easier wheelchair access. We also made sure to remove all latex and rubber from the carpet and the infill. Instead of latex backing we used urethane and instead of crumb rubber we used thermoplastic elastomer (TPE)."

Polytan USA of Marietta, GA was one of the suppliers who contributed to the project. Athletic facility contractor RAD Sports of Rockland, MA did the construction. The finished field opened in September 2009 with an all-school soccer game. And that was just the beginning.

"We've been able to do Saturday morning soccer programs, so that children can play soccer on the field. These are things their typically developing peers are doing," says Manzo. "Parents, grandparents, everyone, comes out and watches the kids play."

Manzo is pleased with the field which allows wheelchairs to roll easily, but still protects children who fall. The students are all medically fragile, he notes, so accidents on the playing field are a big concern. The field measures 100 x 125 feet which, as he notes, might be modest to some schools, "but for us, it's perfect."

Sometimes, the lessons from someone in a different sport can help field managers understand their own facility better. Jeremiah Yolcut, who works with the United States Tennis Association, says that in

wheelchair tennis, it's the actual entryway onto the court that can give players trouble.

"While it's standard for many facilities to have 42-inch wide gates, you want to have a wider opening for players in wheelchairs because of what we call the camber, or the angle in the wheels that you'll see in an athletic wheelchair," says Yolcut. "You're much more likely to go to a 48-inch wide opening because that means you don't have to take a wheel off the chair to get it through the gate."

While not all players are self-conscious about having to get out of a wheelchair and 'scoot through' any gates, then reassemble the chair inside (or have it passed over the fence to them), most would rather have one less barrier. Amenities and accessories on the sidelines of the field, including team benches, seating for statisticians or scorekeepers, etc., should be chosen with the athletes in mind. Make sure such items can be moved easily so that players can get past it without a struggle.

Making it easy, notes Yolcut, means the player has a more enjoyable experience. Making it difficult can leave a bad taste in an athlete's mouth, "and you don't want people leaving the sport and thinking, 'They don't seem to want to make this easy for me, so why should I bother to play?'"

When working to make accommodations for the athletes, remember that such events may begin to draw spectators who have mobility limitations as well. If applicable, adjust seating so that someone in a wheelchair is able to have good sightlines and to have adequate seating around them to fit their friends, either able-bodied or not. No spectator wants to sit in an area that is isolated from the rest of the crowd.

According to Yolcut, the USTA tends to pick out tournament facilities that are attractive to everyone. Facilities with elevators, without steep ramps, and with seating that allows spectators who are wheelchair-bound (or otherwise mobility-impaired) to move around easily all make for a good experience.

## SAFETY FIRST

Then there are the aspects of wheelchair competition that many people don't even know about, according to Matt Hale of Halecon in Bridgewater, NJ. Having these, he notes, can make all the difference between a facility that is not just accessible but welcoming.

"Something I believe is critical, yet often missed is adequate shade for temperature control," Hale notes. "Many individuals with spinal cord or brain injuries are extremely sensitive to temperature, particularly to heat. Some can have life-threatening heat reactions which can occur with little warning. Plan as much shade as possible. I would just stress that surfaces that throw off heat should be avoided. The more shade, the better."

Synthetic turf can hold heat, so keep a careful eye on the surface temperature, and make sure players, administrators, parents, coaches and officials, as well as spectators, are taking all necessary safety precautions.

Plan for athletes' needs both on and off the track or playing field, Hale adds. Having water sources at or near the facility is a must, but so are some other things. "If possible, a cool-down area would be helpful, possibly an enclosed space attached to a bathroom facility, air-conditioned, with electric outlets and water. This space could

# Facility&Operations

not only provide emergency cooling, but also are a private area for suctioning. Many people with high spinal cord injuries have difficulty breathing, and often use ventilators for assistance. At times, the airway can get blocked with secretions, thus creating an urgent need for suction. Proper suction would require a source for water and electric.”

## LEGAL ISSUES

ADA legislation was an enormous help to individuals with physical limitations, but it's far from the end of the road. Parents of students with physical challenges want their kids to be able to participate in sports, and athletic associations are working to develop programs to accommodate their needs.

In addition, new laws are being enacted all the time. One that has the potential to impact all athletic programs in schools across the state of Maryland, for example, will take full effect in 2011: the Fitness and Athletic Equity Law for Students with Disabilities. In short, it ensures that students with disabilities are provided equal opportunities to participate in physical education programs, and athletic activities in Maryland schools. Other states may follow with their own versions.

If you're just starting out, you might be thinking that everything seems very complicated. Remember that making an athletic facility accessible is a process and not an event. Start by seeing to the little

things, e.g., ensuring adequate handicap-accessible parking, curb cuts, etc. Check the width of any gates, and make sure a wheelchair can fit through. Talk about the necessity of shady, cool areas for athletes and spectators. Familiarize yourself with the rules of adapted sports and see if changes need to be made to your facility. Talk to coaches, athletic directors and your local high school or college athletic association.

At the end of it all, though, kids in wheelchairs are, well, kids. And just as with their able-bodied counterparts, they may be interested in any number of different sports; therefore, a sports field should be ready to accommodate those. The Cotting School initiated its Challenger Little League program this spring, according to Manzo, who says students were expressing interest in the program as early as winter.

“The kids were really excited,” Manzo says happily. “Our teams are the Orioles, the A's, the Dodgers and the Cardinals. We don't have the Red Sox because we're in Massachusetts, so obviously every kid would want to be on the Red Sox. And we don't have the Yankees. Obviously.” ■

*Mary Helen Sprecher is a free lance writer who previously has written articles for this magazine on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) is a non-profit association helping designers, builders, owners, operators and users understand quality sports facility construction, [www.sportsbuilders.org](http://www.sportsbuilders.org).*

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the World Cup, and topdress with the sand and fiber mix.

Because Cloete and his crew are maintaining the fields during South Africa's winter season ("the coldest winter ever on record," Cloete said), certain concessions had to be made. Cloete noted, "We are currently mowing at a height of 3/4 inch on the stadiums. Because of the cold, we have to leave the practice fields at the mowing height of a true inch."

The crew was able to recover after a potentially devastating incident right before the World Cup: "The fields were specified to be overseeded at a very high rate, 300-lbs per acre," Cloete reported. "This overseeding practice used quite a bit of water that caused Pythium on one field in particular. This wiped out 1/3 of the field 2 weeks before the World Cup started. Because of budget, the entire field could not be removed, so we resodded certain areas with the reinforced sod. These resodded areas performed better than the rest of the existing field."

This year, the World Cup fields have had to deal with a particularly blustery winter. How do these temperatures affect the soccer matches? Cloete responded, "The grass was not growing as much as we anticipated. It never reaches below 25 degrees in Johannesburg, but it has several times this winter." Yet, with peculiar weather patterns came anomalies that can be devastating to grass: "It is not a wet cold, just a dry cold that creates a black frost." Despite these challenges, Cloete is satisfied with the results. "We are very happy with how well the fields are holding up during this cold."

Still, managing to elicit great performances from fields under such conditions involves some ingenuity. "There is one area at Soccer City that is completely shaded," Cloete explained. "In this area we bring in grow lights overnight. Because this area was left untarped, it was hit with some black frost that produced slight discoloration. Other than that the field is looking very well." Looking well is an understatement for a field that has seen quite a bit of activity, the Super 14, Confederations Cup, British Lions Tour, Tri Nations Tournament, normal soccer matches, and World Cup games in recent months. Even with such activity, Cloete noted there have been no compaction issues on any fields that have the Fiber Reinforced Natural Turf, but some of the other fields required VertiDraining before the World Cup.

Cold, disease, long hours, and heavy traffic, despite all of these challenges, the results of Cloete's expert management are noticeable by FIFA standards. FIFA grades the fields by the amount of slips per game, with five or fewer slips considered a perfect field. Soccer City averaged only two slips per game. Cloete believes careful construction and meticulous management aside, there is one substantial reason for the performance on these fields of the World Cup: "You really saw better performance on the base camp fields that get 3 to 4 hours of intense practice a day. When we resodded the wear areas with the reinforced sod grown it withstood traffic as well, if not better than the established sod."

Not only are the benefits of Cloete's hard work evident on the field, but the off-field rewards are noticeable in countless ways: "We are all a bit more relaxed now," Cloete admitted. "Guys are having fun all over and there is enough beer to keep them warm. It has been really a great experience for South Africa as we have seen more than double the amount of tourists than were expected." ■

*Michael Petitti is a freelance journalist working in Los Angeles.*

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# University of Tennessee and AstroTurf break ground on new research center

**T**HE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE and AstroTurf recently broke ground on the new Research Center for Safer Athletic Fields. The ceremony was held at the UT Institute of Agriculture's East Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center in Knoxville. Former UT football star Eric Berry was on hand along with researchers and AstroTurf representatives to celebrate the occasion.

The center, which is the first of its kind in the country, will conduct research on both natural and syn-

thetic playing surfaces, using 60 small-scale athletic research fields, as well as mechanical and human studies in order to simulate playing conditions. The overall goal of the project is to make playing fields safer for athletes in the future.

This project is the brainchild of Dr. John Sorochan, associate professor in plant science at UT, and Dr. Jim Brosnan, assistant professor in plant science. The two will head the research at the center.

"This is something I've dreamed about for a long time," said Sorochan. "We do have now, easily, the single largest sports turf research program in the world and our

efforts are dedicated to making athletic fields safer for all levels of playing surface, synthetic and natural grass, but more importantly, it's for all levels of play."

"We both got involved in sports turf research because we knew that there were things we could do to athletic fields to make them safer for athletes," Brosnan said.

Eric Berry, who attended as the ceremony's special guest, explained his enthusiasm for the new research endeavor.

"I'm very excited to get this under way," said the Kansas City Chiefs 1st-round pick. "A lot of people don't understand how much strain and how much stress turf can



*"This is our field of dreams. It's been built and everyone is coming."*

» Above: DR. JOHN SOROCHAN Below: GROUNDBREAKING LINEUP at the new Research Center for Safer Athletic Fields at the University of Tennessee.







» JIM PRETTYMAN, left, COO of AstroTurf, with Eric Berry, former Volunteer safety and #1 pick of NFL's Kansas City Chiefs.

actually have on an athlete's body.

"I think this is a very good deal," he said. "I think this research will benefit a lot of athletes, and I'm very appreciative of everything being done to help us out and just for looking at us as people.

"As athletes, we already have 11 guys trying to take our heads off every play, why have the turf after you also?"

AstroTurf, which is donating the start up and construction costs for the new center reiterated their commitment to safer athletic fields and the research necessary for them.

"AstroTurf stands for quality, research, ethics-based marketing, and excellence in products that we make and we are extremely interested in safety," said COO Jim Prettyman, who was on hand as the company's spokesperson for the event.

"This was a really great opportunity for us to take what we stand for in AstroTurf and put it into play with a world class university and I can't tell you how excited we are to be working with the University of Tennessee," he said.

"I want to give a lot of accolades to AstroTurf because they've had the vision and they are actually funding more natural grass research for athletic fields than anyone else has in history," said Sorochan. "This is our field of dreams. It's been built and everyone is coming."

Research at the outdoor facility will begin as soon as fall 2010, and the center is expected to be fully operational by 2011. ■

*Justin West is Website Editor, School of Journalism & Electronic Media, University of Tennessee in Knoxville.*

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By **Tim Richardson**  
and **Andrea Kunicky**



“After seeing how much the players enjoyed the mound, I showed it to a few coaches and others in the local baseball community,” said Murphy. “It seemed to just take off from there.”

As demand for the mounds grew, he set up a side business out of his parents’ garage and made mounds at night. Murphy eventually gave up his teaching job to focus full-time on ProMounds, Inc. as the demand for the product grew. He never expected the mounds he made from his parents’ garage would ever turn into a multi-million dollar business.

But Murphy was hearing from customers that they were unaware that he sold anything more than the original mound. Since indoor facilities were such a key part of his business, Murphy wanted to upgrade his service to them. So he asked his clients about their specific needs and launched On Deck Sports, the retail division of ProMounds, Inc.

“After surveying the indoor facilities that we worked with, our catalog expanded to include the items they needed, not just our mounds,” Murphy said. “Creating On Deck Sports seemed to be the most appropriate way to demonstrate that our company was more than just the mound. Our product lined included artificial turf, netting, screens and more.”

Today, On Deck Sports’ offers over 3,000 products, including various items under their budding recycled turf operation. The company’s first entrée into recycling turf came in 2003 when it purchased an 18,000-square foot soccer field that was being removed. In purchasing the field, Murphy saw two immediate opportunities.

## Coach-turned-businessman recycles synthetic turf fields

*Editor’s note: This article was written by staff of Maroon Public Relations, Columbia, MD.*

While recycled turf is a core business area for the retail division of Massachusetts-based ProMounds, Inc., the baseball manufacturing company was actually formed in 2001 out of a need for a different product.

Former Division I player Joe Murphy was teaching and coaching high school baseball in New England and was frustrated by the snow prohibiting his team from practicing outside. Needing a way to workout his pitchers, he developed a portable mound with a high-density foam core that could be used in the gym without harming the surface. The mound was a hit with his players and its popularity quickly spread throughout the New England baseball community.

“After seeing how much the players enjoyed the mound, I showed it to a few coaches and others in the local baseball community,” said Murphy. “It seemed to just take off from there.”

Murphy said, "I saw a situation that enabled us to help protect the environment by ensuring the field didn't wind up in a landfill, and allowed us to provide our clients with a quality product. Plus, it helped reduce the disposal costs for the group from whom we were buying the turf."

Recognizing the versatility of the turf, On Deck Sports recycled the turf by customizing areas for batting cages, indoor training facilities and even doggie day care centers. But the company's major acquisition in this business area came in 2005 when it purchased the turf from the Carrier Dome at Syracuse University. After that transaction, On Deck Sports began to aggressively pursue purchasing more used turf.

"This gave us the opportunity to offer our clients a quality product at a price-point that was more affordable for them than purchasing the product brand new," said Murphy.

On Deck Sports began working with a company in Georgia to store and distribute the turf to customers worldwide. Among the additional turf fields they purchased were the SkyDome in Toronto, the Louisiana Superdome, the Indianapolis Colts' field from the RCA Dome, the Duke University practice field and the field at BC Place Stadium before the 2010 Winter Olympics. On Deck Sports has donated turf to U.S. military posts for use by troops as golf mats while serving in the Middle East.

Beginning in 2006, On Deck Sports began purchasing 10-12

## On Deck Sports has donated turf to U.S. military posts for use by troops as golf mats while serving in the Middle East.

fields a year, the equivalent of around 1,000,000-square feet of turf. To help accommodate this significant component of the company's business, Murphy purchased a 30,000-square-foot turf warehouse and distribution center in Georgia.

"From indoor facilities and baseball fields, residential lawn projects to custom commercial ventures, turf presently accounts for a significant portion of On Deck Sports' sales, said Murphy. "While the most popular application is for use in baseball and softball batting cages, we have provided recyclable turf to clients for use in dugouts, football sidelines, facilities for soccer, lacrosse and paintball, track covers and much more." ■

*Tim Richardson is executive vice president and Andrea Kunicky associate account executive with Maroon Public Relations, Columbia, MD. Photos courtesy of ProMounds, Inc./On Deck Sports.*

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## Survey reveals NCAA athletic departments are going **Green**

**PROGREENSPORTS** has announced the results of its second annual survey of environmental sustainability practices among NCAA athletic departments.

Key decision makers in over 70 large NCAA athletic departments participated in the May 2010 survey. More than 90% of the survey respondents are Associate or Assistant Athletic Directors of Facilities or Operations, Facilities Managers, or Campus-wide Sustainability Directors from Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools.

The 2010 Athletic Department Sustainability Survey indicates that 80% of key decision makers in athletic departments have a positive perspective on developing environmental initiatives. Nearly 40% of athletic departments have formed an internal “green team,” almost twice as many as in 2009. More than 35% of the athletic departments have developed or are actively considering developing a sustainability plan with short- and long-term goals. More than 80% of athletic departments expect the emphasis on environmental programs to be increasing in the future.

Mark McSherry, President of ProGreenSports, said, “College sports programs are a powerful venue to engage ath-

letes, students, fans and alumni in environmental initiatives. Athletic departments are starting to recognize the leadership opportunity and are looking to implement meaningful and authentic green programs that make good business sense too.”

McSherry points out that the University of Colorado at Boulder has a best-in-class zero waste and energy reduction program at Folsom Field and has attracted significant sponsorship support. “College athletics can leverage their brand and develop a profitable green business model that attracts sponsorship and green advertising while expanding their environmental programs and impact,” McSherry said. “A green athletic department can be the ideal public face of a university’s overall sustainability program.”

The 2010 NCAA Athletic Department Sustainability Survey reveals detailed information on sustainability initiatives for energy, recycling, water conservation, green building and renovation, and green maintenance. The full Survey Report is available for free at [www.ProGreenSports.com](http://www.ProGreenSports.com) and includes key findings, trend analysis, survey results and a comparison to green practices among professional sports teams. ■

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# TURF SEASON

**Editor's note:** Periodically we will ask turf managers how their "turf season" is going. Here are some responses from minor league baseball:

## SHAWN MOORE, Albuquerque Isotopes

Our turf season has been very good considering it has been hotter than a \$2 pistol. We had 25 out of the 30 days in June over 90 degrees. Our *poa annua* has not responded well to this. Normally we will see summer kill in our *poa annua* around mid-August, but as of July 1 we already have several sections of *poa annua* that are gone. Growing Kentucky bluegrass in the high desert has always been tough, but along with the heat in June we have had only 2 inches of precipitation all year.

On the upside, our wear has been very minimal. We have only had to resod once

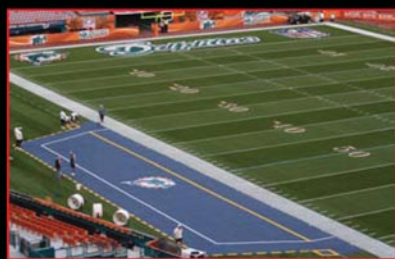
since college season ended. Our Kentucky bluegrass has responded very well to the fertilization program, which starts with a slow release nitrogen regiment. Through our suppliers, we have a schedule set with the timing of the release of nitrogen. Our nitrogen source will release .1 lbs. per week. From here we add quick release nitrogen as needed. We fertilize hard with potassium from spring till fall pushing for root development. In the past we have used phosphorus on a limited basis to try and prevent the spread of *poa annua*. Now that the amount of *poa annua* has increased so much we are increasing our P to develop healthier *poa annua*. Our spray program has been very limited this

**We are hoping to finish the second half of the season strong and healthy. We are staying optimistic and learning new lessons everyday.**

year due to the loss of our sprayer. We hope to re establish that program as soon as possible. We are dearly missing the micro-nutrients that we received from our spray program.

We are hoping to finish the second half of the season strong and healthy. We are staying optimistic and learning new lessons everyday.

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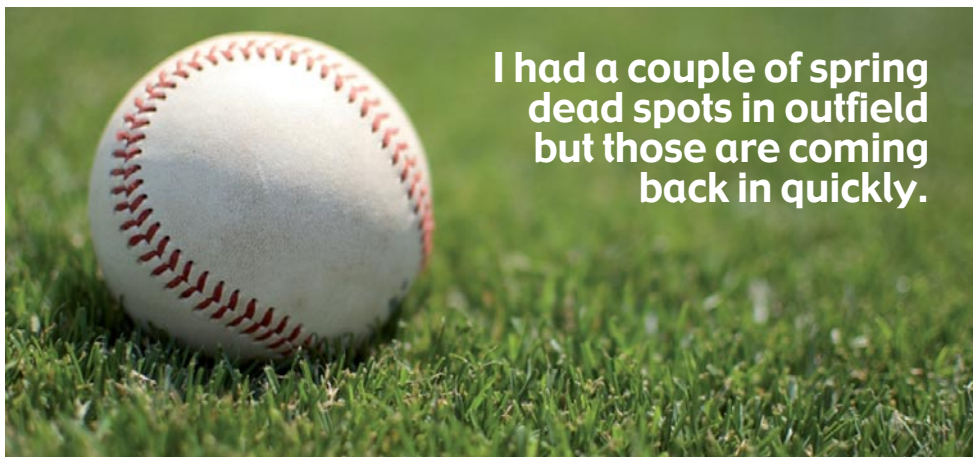
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**I had a couple of spring dead spots in outfield but those are coming back in quickly.**

**ERIC BLANTON,**  
Reno Aces

Nothing major to report. No problems that we have had. One thing that is going extremely well is that we have not had to do any resodding on field. The normal wear areas, pitchers mound front and back, shortstop and second base position

area, umpires spots, etc have held up extremely well.

**BLAKE ANDERSON,**  
Greeneville Astros

I am a groundskeeper that works for Southern Athletic Fields Inc. We are under contract with the Astros for the work I do

on the field. I have 419 bermuda and overseed with rye for the college baseball seasons. I started this job in December and this was the worst winter they have had here in east Tennessee in awhile. Temps were down in the teens for a long while and stayed cold until about April. Temps warmed up quickly and I think that is what helped my transition back to bermuda. I had a couple of spring dead spots in outfield but those are coming back in quickly. This is my first experience with bermuda and it is just what everyone has said about it and what I've read about. I really don't intend on doing anything special with the grass besides just spiking, ferting and a little PGR. I have just one problem and that is the visiting team walks across the grass to their dugout. I try to put down as many protectors as I can and ropes to keep those areas looking good. ■

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