

# F.O.Y.

Field of the Year



## Blanton is MVP for Forest City (NC) Parks & Rec

**I**T COULDN'T HAVE BEEN EASY but McNair Field in Forest City, NC won the 2009 STMA Schools/Parks Baseball Field of the Year without the benefit of even one full-time employee dedicated to its maintenance. Brian Blanton is nominally the head groundskeeper but he is also superintendent of the town's golf course; he has two full-timers on the links who also work on the baseball field itself,

while two other employees maintain all the parks and outside areas of McNair Field. So that translates into very little sitting around time for Matthew Gowan, Chuck Freeman, Bobby Adair and Mike Flynn, not to mention Blanton of course. Blanton wrote in his award entry: "The challenge of not having any full-time employees dedicated to McNair Field has been a tough one.

[Beyond the staffing challenges] we also are under many time restraints. And, keeping the field playable during the wet season in May is still another challenge. "We have to use our VertiDrain deep tine aerator (3/4-inch holes by 10 inches) to help control water on the field, which works very well. We host many games, including American Legion and Coastal Plains League contests; some weeks we have a game every night. "We have overcome the many challenges that sod can bring. We get our sod from a nursery 120 miles away, so in order not to make that trip as often, we started growing our own sod, which is cut by the nursery super thick, approximately 3 inches. Our sod grows on top of a tarp that sits on a concrete pad, which enables us to give the same care to it that we



give to the field itself. The convenience of having sod at the field after each game enables us to keep the field in great shape.”

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

**Blanton:** Rutherford County previously was a huge textile producer. When all of the plants closed down it left a lot of people unemployed, like the majority of the textile towns in America. The baseball team has really given everyone a reason to come together. Forest City’s Town Council members want the field to be as clean and green as possible every game. They look at it as providing a service to the community. They provide me with all the necessary resources to make the best playing surface possible. The field is the “crown jewel” of the town’s recreation facilities and operations have only been slightly affected by the recession.

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

**Blanton:** Maintenance plans for this year should remain the same with a few excep-

tions. Due to the fact our ryegrass is thicker than anticipated a couple more vertical mowing sessions have been needed. Also there have been discussions about buying laser equipment and performing the yearly skin renovations ourselves instead of contracting the work to other companies.

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

**Blanton:** The best advice that I have received was to not be afraid to ask questions when in doubt. There is always someone out there who has found themselves in the same situation and found a solution. I am fortunate enough to have salesmen that were superintendents at prestigious courses in my area. They have a wealth of knowledge and are great resources that allow me to stay updated on what other turfgrass managers are doing for disease prevention and what disease pressure they’re experiencing.

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

**Blanton:** During spring and summer there is very little balance between work and

personal time. Trying to maintain ryegrass at 5/8 inches through the month of June in the Carolina heat is tough. It seems like you’re always dragging hoses and chasing hot spots even while using the best wetting agents. With the 75 games played between April and mid-August McNair Field becomes my “home away from home.”

**ST:** If you could have any turf manager job in the country for a week, what would it be and why?

**Blanton:** I would like to work on the crew at Turner Field for a week to observe their field maintenance techniques. Some possible questions I would ask is how they transition from rye to bermuda and at what height they maintain their grass at different times of the year. The climate in Atlanta is very similar to that of the Carolinas therefore the experience at Turner Field would give me another perspective on how to keep McNair Field at its best.

**ST:** How do you work with those who use your facilities to promote better turf?

**Blanton:** The coaching staff of the Forest

## Bench Zone® Sideline TURF Protector



### VIPOL® Matrix Material Keeps Grass in Top Shape

#### CLEATS CANNOT PENETRATE

*Rain, sports drinks, & body fluids drain thru and are not absorbed*

#### SIMPLY HOSE OFF TO CLEAN.

Matrix fabric lets air and sunlight thru, so it does not “smother” grass. Lighter in weight. Much easier to handle. Low profile reinforced edging. Grommets every 18”. Standard Sizes: 15’ deep x lengths 75’, 100’, 125’, or 150’. Custom sizes available. 16 Standard Colors: Lt. Grey, Royal, TD Gold, Navy, Green, Dark Green, Red, Orange, Burnt Orange, Dark Brown, Purple, Beige, Maroon, Black, White, Vegas Gold.

Double coated **CHROMA-BOND®** Multi-color Imprinting is non-fading and scuff-proof for vivid, permanent logos and get-back lines.

Used since 2005 by NFL & NCAA teams.

100% MADE IN USA

SOLD BY THE BEST SPORTS EQUIPMENT DEALERS

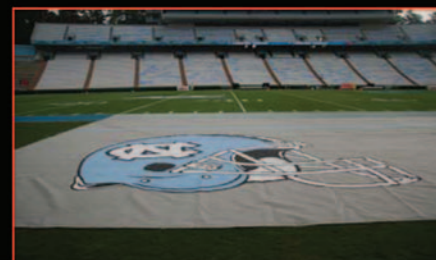
800-823-7356

**AER-FLO®**

www.aerflo.com

© 2010: AER-FLO, INC.

Trademarks property of Aer-Flo, Inc.



#### NCAA:

Alabama	N. Carolina
Auburn	Notre Dame
Central Florida	Oklahoma
Citadel	Penn State
Connecticut	Pittsburgh
Florida	Purdue
Florida State	Rh. Island
Georgia	San Diego
GA Southern	So. Carolina
Georgia Tech	Tennessee
LSU	TN State
Maryland	Texas
Miami	Texas A&M
Michigan State	Virginia
MS State	VA Tech

#### NFL:

Bears	Jaguars
Browns	Packers
Cardinals	Steelers
Chargers	Texans
Chiefs	Titans
Dolphins	+ MORE

City Owls and I work together to schedule maintenance and practice times. Before batting practice can begin the infield screen must be placed over the field and fungo will be hit off the on-deck mats. I also ask that they limit the number of players standing around the turtle at one given time to limit compaction of the field. The staff and players are always cooperative and helpful at keeping McNair Field the best in the Coastal Plain League.

Achieving the Field of the Year honor would not be possible without the dedication of my crew. I would like to thank Matthew Gowan, Travis Keever, and Tim Blanton. Their countless hours are much appreciated. I also want to give a special thank you to my wife and son for their understanding of my long hours and late nights. ■



## McNair Field Monthly Maintenance/Fertility Program

### JANUARY

Mow 1x/week at 1"

### FEBRUARY

Mow 1x/week at 1"

Edge 1x/month

Drag infield

Week 1-Fertilize 16-4-8, spray .5 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

Week 2-Fertilize 16-4-8, spray .25 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft. & 2 oz. Fe/1,000 sq. ft.

### MARCH

Mow 3x/week at 7/8"

Edge 2x/month

Drag infield

Hand water dry spots as needed; aerate wear areas with solid tines

Week 3-Fertilize 32-3-12, 1 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft. coated with Barricade .75 ai/acre

Week 4-Spray Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Subdue, 5 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Gary's Green, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; and UltraPlex, 3 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

### APRIL

Mow 3x/week at 3/4"

Edge 2x/month

Drag infield

Hand water dry spots as needed; aerate wear areas with solid tines

Week 1-Spray Primo, 11 oz./acre

Week 2-Spray Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Alliette, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Gary's Green, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; UltraPlex, 3 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 3-Deep-tine aerification; spray Cascade, 8 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 4-Fertilize 24-5-11, spray .5 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

### MAY

Mow 3x/week at 3/4"

Edge 4x/month

Drag infield

Hand water dry spots as needed; aerate wear areas with solid tines

Week 1-Deep-tine aerification

Week 2-Spray Cascade, 8 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Fertilize 24-5-11, spray .5 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

Week 3-Spray Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Subdue, 5 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Gary's Green, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; and Banner, .5 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

### JUNE

Mow 4x/week at 5/8"

Edge 4x/month

Drag infield

Hand water dry spots as needed; aerate wear areas with solid tines

Skin maintenance-1 ton soil conditioner, nail dragged and rolled

Week 1-Verticut ryegrass to aid in removal; Fertilize 24-5-11, spray .5 lbs. N/1,000 sq. ft.

Spray Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Alliette, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; manganese, 6 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 2-Fertilize 28-3-10, 1 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

Week 3-Deep-tine aerification

Week 4-Fertilize 34-0-0, 1 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

### JULY

Mow 4x/week at 5/8"

Edge 4x/month

Drag infield

Week 1-Spray Revolver to remove ryegrass, .32 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 2-Fertilize 28-3-10, 1 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

Week 3-Fertilize 21-0-0, 1 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.; spray Primo, 11 oz./acre; and Meridian, 17 oz./acre for grub control

Week 4-Fertilize 17-17-17, .75 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

### AUGUST

Mow 4x/week at 5/8"

Edge 4x/month

Drag infield

Week 1-Spray Primo, 11 oz./acre

Week 2-Fertilize 34-0-0, 1 lb. N/1,000 sq. ft.

Week 3-Re-sod areas around home plate and baselines with TifSport

Week 4-Spray Primo, 6 oz./acre and Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

### SEPTEMBER

Mow 3x/week at 5/8"

Edge 2x/month

Drag infield

Week 1-Spray Primo, 11 oz./acre; fertilize 32-3-12, 1 lb./1,000 sq. ft.; spray Sevin, 6 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 2-Deep-tine aerification

Week 3-Spray Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Alliette, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; and Banner, 1 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 4-Spray Primo, 11 oz./acre

### OCTOBER

Mow 2x/week at 1"

Edge 1x/month

Drag infield

Week 1-Topdress with 40 tons of sand; sow perennial ryegrass, 8 lbs./1,000 sq. ft.; fertilize, 5-11-31, 1.5 lbs./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 2-Spray Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.;

Subdue, 5 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; Banner, 5 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; and Gary's Green, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

Week 4-Spray Daconil, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.;

Alliette, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.; and Gary's Green, 4 oz./1,000 sq. ft.

### NOVEMBER

Mow 2x/week at 1"

Week 1-Fertilize 16-4-8, .75 lbs. K/1,000 sq. ft.

### DECEMBER

Mow 2x/week at 1"

Week 1-Add 10 tons of infield mix; laser grade, roll skin areas and bullpens; and rebuild game and bullpen mounds