Turf needs to be Be
Shirts tucked in, a crew that looks
The bag that
Hunger can
Everybody’s ultimate job is making
Has the oil been
Have a plan for each crew member pre and
28 SportsTurf
the increased amount of traffic
best and be healthy to withstand
tournament to make it look the
program/plan that you follow.
Tournament Schedule should be
durable as well as green. The
20 minutes of work and 2 to 3
all know, most tournaments are
hours of waiting for the work to
start again. We have tried to put
together some tips for use during
your tournaments to make them
go smoother and to make your
job easier. These are just some of
the tips that we have thought
about and hopefully, they can be
some that you can use during
your tournaments this year.
Time your fertilizer schedule
to build up to the tournament
and beyond. Turf needs to be
durable as well as green. The
Tournament Schedule should be
incorporated in your year long
program/plan that you follow.
You will be building toward the
tournament to make it look the
best and be healthy to withstand
the increased amount of traffic

Dirty dozen, plus
two, tournament tips

TOURNAMENT
PREP starts days
and weeks before the
first pitch of your
tournament. As we

that your fields will have over the
course of the tournament. Also,
the schedule should allow for ade-
quate time for your field to recov-
er and your plan should have
enough maintenance practices in
place after the tournament to help
your field recover.

Out of Gas? Equipment in
good repair? Has the oil been
changed, tires properly inflated,
reels sharpened/backlapped, grease
fittings lubricated, fluid levels
checked, daily fill all machines
with fuel. There is nothing worse
than running out of gas on the
infield groomer while trying to
drag an infield before the games.

Under Cover? Arrange ahead
of time where the crew will be
located during the “downtimes.”
A tent, pavilion or some other
place that is covered where the
crew can relax and be during the
games is essential. Taking care of
the crew should be a top priority!
If you are the head groundskeep-
er, taking care of your crew is
important due to the fact that they are a reflection of you and your
work during the year. If they feel well and properly hydrated, fed
and not sunburned, they will put forth their best effort during
the tournament. Also, during the long days, a relaxing chair/chaise
lounge is a great place to rest during the downtimes.

Readiness; prepare for worst case, hope for the best case. Be
prepared for weather. A meeting a few weeks in advance of the tour-
nament to devise an action plan as to whose call is it to tarp or not.
Once the game starts, if you have a tarp, it usually rests on the
shoulders of the umpires along with the groundskeeper. You need
to have a reliable weather forecaster on your team to call for
updates. Also, let him know that he is just as important as the per-
tap tamping the mound, and he can feel a part of the tournament.
He can even alert you to changing weather patterns/forecasts.

Not Hungry? If you have a chance to eat, eat. Hunger can
cause short tempers, especially in tense situations which will happen
during long hot days of tournaments. Eat foods that are not very
heavy on your stomach. Pizza is easy, but not always best. If food is
not easily accessible at your venue, plan ahead and pack a cooler
with sandwich meat, cheese, bread and condiments for the crew.

Always Look Professional. Shirts tucked in, a crew that looks
uniform looks professional when on the field. The crew is just as
important as the teams taking the field for play. Look like a team,
act as a team. In order for you to be taken seriously as a
groundskeeper and as a crew, you need to present yourself in a pro-
fessional manner. If you look professional, then you will automati-
cally earn the respect of the umpires and tournament coordinators.

Manage Your Crew. Have a plan for each crew member pre and
post game. Delegate duties, making sure you have qualified people
(full timers in position to get the job done in a timely manner. Use
volunteers, which are very important keys to success, alongside full
time people so they can be better equipped to help with future tour-
naments.

Everybody’s Job is Safety. Everybody’s ultimate job is making
the field safe and playable. This is not just limited to the field; make
sure the shop area and equipment are safe for the crew to use and be
around. Be sure to remove all items from the field that are not
needed for play. The last thing you want to do is leave nails or hand
tools (chalker, rake, tamp, shovel, spool of twine, etc) on the field
for a player to find later. Do not leave anything behind and the last
person leaving the field should be responsible for checking the play-
ing area to make sure that all items are removed.

Never leave home without a change of clothes. The bag that
you pack should include socks, shoes, shorts, shirts, toiletries, towel,
pullover for night time and rain gear. Two pair of shoes is impor-
tant, one for morning prepping time of the field and one pair for
the pre game and post game work. Dew will make your shoes just as
wet as rain.

Take time to drink plenty of water or sports drink.
Dehydration can lead to serious health problems that can put you...
in the hospital if not careful. Be sure to avoid the drinks with lots of caffeine and carbonated water during the tournament, or any other drink that might dehydrate you. Staying hydrated with water or sports drinks can make you more effective when working on the fields and make your time spent at the tournament more enjoyable and rewarding.

**Togetherness.** As a Charles Bloom, SEC Baseball tournament director once said, “The grounds crew is the glue that holds Tournaments together.” The entire crew needs to understand that one part of the crew is just as important as the other. If you are repacking bullpen areas, dragging the field or chalking, they are all important duties that need to be completed to the best. We all want to give the team that plays in the championship game the same field as the first teams to play in the tournament.

**Inventory All Materials and Hand Tools.** Some items you need to have on hand as you prepare for the tournament: field conditioners, drying agents, mound clay, marking chalk, and enough tools to accommodate your crew, e.g., rakes, tamps, drag mats, etc. The list of tools needed vary depending on the size of your tournament crew and the facility being maintained. A backpack blower is often overlooked as a tool used for fields. It can be used at night or early mornings for cleaning dugouts, blowing out your lips from the day of play. It is a time saving tool. Try not to use the backpack blower during the day as it disrupts other fields or coaches trying to prep his team for the game.

**Pre and Post game entrance exit, where does the crew enter the field?** Do we have easy access to the tarp? Who is responsible for opening the gate for field access? Is the way we enter the field also going to be used for emergency vehicles? If so, don’t block the gate with equipment. Who is responsible for closing the gates and securing it before game?

**Sunscreen for Use.** Waterproof/sweat proof sunscreen SPF 30 or greater is ideal. Bullfrog works great too for prevention of sunburn. We also recommend using a straw hat, with a wide brim on it to prevent any unnecessary sunburn on the forehead. Some aloe might be nice to have in the refrigerator just in case someone does get a little sun burned.

We encourage hosting tournaments to be able to spotlight your facility not only locally, but regionally and nationally also. It is a great opportunity for people to view all the hard work that goes into making tournaments a success.

---

Bill Marbet is President of Southern Athletic Fields; Brad Esary, Waldo Terrell, CSFM, and Glenn Lucas are all in sales and/or marketing with the company. Southern Athletic Fields, Columbia, TN, has served as the grounds crew provider for the SEC Baseball tournament (1999-present), TSSAA Spring Fling Championships, Tennessee Junior College Baseball/Softball Tournaments, Atlantic Sun Championship, and Sunbelt Conference among many others. Photos used by permission of Southeastern Conference.