

What I wished I had learned in turf school

JOSH MCPHERSON, CSFM, University of Missouri

I wish I knew that I should apply for scholarships. After serving on a board that gives away a scholarship, I was surprised at the lack of people that actually apply for them. I never applied for scholarships in school because I never thought I would receive one. The same philosophy can be carried over to the STMA's Field of the Year program. I believe many people do not

apply for Field of the Year because they do not think they can win.

ABBY MCNEAL, CSFM, Wake Forest University

I wish I had learned stronger communication skills to better talk with coaches, athletes, parents, and user groups. These are the irate people that we have to teach about our jobs, yet all of them think they can do a better job since they each have their own home lawn.

Sports turf managers are always training these people about the importance of our work and why they need to adapt some of their needs/desires to provide a good playing surface for all. Apparently we have the ability to grow grass overnight and make field surfaces dry during rain (or snow) events, so they make requests that are reasonable to them and out of the world to us. The ability to talk in a manner that they understand would certainly have paid off by now.

Another skill that I wished I had learned is the ability to manage the wild ideas that marketing/ promotions departments provide for fan entertainment. I always thought the fans are there for the game, so why do we need confetti,

Coaches and general managers are on everyone's list of people we need to communicate with regularly...

>> **ERIC FASBENDER, CSFM,**
right, jokes with LSU baseball
Coach Paul Mainieri.



fireworks, race cars, motorcycles, 100+ dancers with pompoms that leave debris everywhere, animals (live mascots), and mattress races?

Lastly, I wish I would have found the course that would have taught me about "other duties as assigned." I would take that class several times now, where can I sign up?

LUKE YODER, San Diego Padres

When I was at Clemson from 1990-1994, I did not know what email was and no one had a laptop. I still had an electronic typewriter. It would have been nice to learn a little about computers but I missed out on that boat

I could have benefitted from spending more time, or taking a class, dedicated to reel and bedknife adjustment, sharpening, grinding, adjusting height of cut, and so on, or in other words on specialized golf and turf equipment maintenance

Another good class would have been "Infield Skin 101," covering maintenance, installation, renovation, etc., that really got into Particle Size Analysis of infield skin, percentage of sand/silt/clay, and breaking down each size of sand, etc., really getting into how they test infield material, and how to read a report.

Or how about one on how to evaluate different types of soil reports and tissue tests from different labs and different soils across the country, and how to make adjustments with minor and macro nutrients in order to get to a level that the plant will maximize growth without compromising long term or short term health.

Finally, a class that would teach you how to never say "NO" to upper management when they ask "Can we do this on the field?" This class would teach you how to give a very diplomatic/politically correct answer that would make you look like a team player while clearly stating the pros and cons, i.e., "Sure we can do it but this is what it will cost and this is what will result when we do."

ERIC FASBENDER, CSFM, Louisiana State University

It is a terrifying but exciting thing when you realize that you have graduated college and have to enter the real world. You are trading the relative safety of the classroom

and getting together with friends in the evening hours for a beverage in favor of the unknown world where you have to make decisions in real time that can affect the outcomes of games and players experiences. Disease always looks different on a slide projector in a classroom than when you are looking at it in person and having to devise a solution. The knowledge we gain through or formal education and continuing education is an important foundation to our careers but there are also invaluable lessons to be learned outside the classroom.

One topic that I wish my professors touched on more was the development of your working relationships. The people you surround yourself with and the relationships we build off the field are a key component in how successful we can be on the field. Developing relationships not only with your crew, but with coaches and the other departments within your organization can help you to dodge or sidestep possible damage or wear to our playing surfaces and also increase our visibility when our fields are look-

ing good. Too many times we are only recognized when something bad happens.

Coaches and general managers are on everyone's list of people we need to communicate with regularly, but how many of us just pop in to say hello to our marketing department, equipment managers or sports information staff? These are the people that can help us avoid potential problems because they are on the front lines with us. Once you take the time to get to know them and have a chance to educate them about what our job is all about, you can work together to minimize the impact to all parties involved. The more people you can have in your corner, that understand what it is that you are trying to accomplish, the better your fields can perform.

The important thing to remember is that whether you have been in this industry for 30 years or just recently graduated, it is never too late to implement new ideas and you are not alone. Once we realize that the more people we have on board with what we are doing, the easier our job becomes. ■

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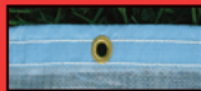
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