

PATRICIA WILSON FIELD, Stetson University, DeLand, FL

CHALLENGES

Having a very limited travel budget is offset by our ability to host many invitational tournaments each year. We may range from 1 to 3 weekend tournaments during our month of fall ball and 6 to 7 weekend tournaments during our championship season in the spring. The past 3 years we have also hosted our local High School District Tournament, as well as our own Atlantic Sun Conference Tournament. With our own conference schedule, weekend tournaments, and regular season games, we have averaged 90-100 games per year on our field. Additionally, daily practice is conducted on our field by our own team.

This creates a very special challenge since the majority of playing time is during February to May, when our bermudagrass is dormant. This is a huge reason why we overseed with winter ryegrass. This helps with the wear on the field which also aids in the cosmetic looks and appearance.

Hosting teams from all over the country makes a pleasant experience as well. We work on the main wear areas (outfield positions) throughout the season with additional seed and fertilizer.

We removed bermuda turf in high shade areas of landscape and replaced it with crushed red rock (warning track material) in our picnic area. Redesigned the irrigation in common area to operate more uniformly and to compliment the landscape changes over the years. A wetting agent was introduced to facility and water management program.

Additionally we paint our infield therefore the infield must be wet prior to painting. We did have times when we had to wet the lines and batter's boxes with a backpack sprayer, prior to painting, when the reclaimed city water was turned off. We have now designed and built a water device onto our sprayer to enable us to wet and paint at the same time on a dry infield.

- ⊙ **Level of Submission:** College
- ⊙ **Category of Submission:** Softball
- ⊙ **Head Sports Turf Manager:** Steve Barnard
- ⊙ **Title:** Field Maintenance Technician
- ⊙ **Education:** Associate Degree, General Studies
- ⊙ **Work History:** Former foreman for the City of DeLand's Sperling Sports Complex for 25 years. Complex includes 35-acre park (one full size baseball field; three adult softball fields; three soccer/football fields, and four practice areas, a total of 22 acres of bermuda turf).
- ⊙ **Full-time staff:** Steven Barnard, field maintenance technician; Frank Griffin, head softball coach; Vanessa Bataille, associate head softball coach; and Joanna "JJ" Payette, assistant softball coach
- ⊙ **Original construction:** 2002
- ⊙ **Turfgrass variety:** Tifton 419 bermudagrass
- ⊙ **Recent renovation:** In 2010, the infield was tilled and laser graded; 23 tons of clay plus 1½ tons Turface added to infield; additional bullpen added on first base side; new scoreboard with full video display; replaced netting as needed throughout the complex; additional drainage added by practice area, hitting area, and first base dugout to help with washouts; palm trees added to landscape.
- We laser grade our infield annually or bi-annually to maintain the standard we set for ourselves; additions to the complex as well as improved existing facilities to reduce long-term cost and maintenance; maintain drainage slopes.
- We have crushed red rock (warning track material) within the facility (excluding infield); St. Augustine grass in the exterior perimeter of the facility; additional enhancements occur daily with new innovations and reconstructions.
- ⊙ **Overseeding:** We overseed in late November or early December after an application of preemergent. We use typically 500 to 700 pounds of Eagle Supreme perennial ryegrass on our entire complex.
- ⊙ **Drainage:** Sideline drains; slight valleys built into terrain emptying into culverts to retention area; field itself has a 1% grade to outfield.



SportsTurf: What channels of communication do you use to reach coaches, administrators and user of your facility? Any tips on communicating well?

Barnard: I have the unique advantage of the Head Coach, Frank Griffin, being my direct supervisor. This allows us to talk daily regarding the scheduling of the facility operations and planning around the team's practice and game schedules.

E-mails are used when mass information needs to be distributed to administrators, players and visiting groups. A member of our coaching staff and school site administrator meets with the visiting team representative to communicate the game day agenda and any policies and special needs request they may require.

A tip on communicating well is do not let small problems become big problems, address them early.

SportsTurf: What are your specific job responsibilities?

Barnard: Being the sole field maintenance technician for Patricia Wilson Field, I wear a multitude of hats. I am very lucky to have players and coaches that have pre and post-game duties to aid in the upkeep of the facility. Our players can put out and remove a full infield tarp with the proficiency that would make any major league grounds crew proud. They also help with the application of Turface on the infield when there is a weather issue.

Turf Maintenance: mowing, fertilization, pesticide application, aerification, top dressing, overseeding, water management, verticutting, ordering all products to be applied.

Irrigation: Repair and installation

Clay & Warning track: grooming infield and warning track areas, practice and game day set up, edging, rebuild and maintaining mound and plate with bag clay, refurbishing bullpens, raking, blowing or hosing lip areas, raking common warning track areas and keeping weed free, adding material as needed, aerivating infield.

General needs of facility: blowing and cleaning areas of batting areas, grand stands and sidewalks, repairs



and replacements of netting, windscreen and fences, help maintain garden areas along with ornamental beds, lubricating equipment, change oil and filters while doing any and all repairs that can be done in house, adjust reel mowers.

Participate in any and all projects or events during the year.

SportsTurf: What do find most enjoyable about your job?

Barnard: I find all aspects of turf management to be the most enjoyable part of the job.

SportsTurf: What task is your least favorite and why?

Barnard: The least favorite area I consider is to be the general facility maintenance tasks. Not that they are any less important in the day to day responsibilities but they do not generate my enthusiasm like growing good turf does.

SportsTurf: How did you get started in turf management? What was your first sports turf job?

Barnard: My first job was a Part Time position at the age of 17 years old with the City of DeLand, Parks and Recreation Department back in 1981 participating in a variety of field maintenance duties. After attending Junior College for 2 years and still undecided about a career direction, I met with Tom Sperling who was the Director of Parks and Recreation regarding a job opportunity in park maintenance. Four years later he entrusted me with the responsibility of supervising the Sperling Sports complex which was a 35 acre facility and over time became 22 acres of Bermuda. During that time I was fortunate to have Larry Nordman who was our Parks Manager to have as a mentor along the way. Before Patricia Wilson Field, Stetson Fastpitch Softball used Sperling Sports Complex to practice and play their home games. I met Coach Frank Griffin at this time which ultimately led to my current position.

SportsTurf: What changes if any are you implementing for the winning field in 2012?

Barnard: Turf care wise, due to soil analysis we increased our potassium rates and added in an advanced minor pack twice a year to aid in the deficiencies that arise in Florida soils. In the later part of 2011, we were able to implement a monthly wetting agent appli-



cation program which we were able to continue throughout the 2012 season which has proved very helpful.

Facility wise, we replaced or entire back stop netting, had the press box tower and grandstand painted. We were able to obtain our own triplex reel mower for the sole use of our facility.

SportsTurf: How do you see the sports turf manager's job changing in the future?

Barnard: We are always in a series of constant changes and adjustments. Pesticide regulations and conservations of water management will always be a constant challenge. With rising expectations and smaller budgets, it is important that good sound cultural practices are used. With the use of more modern technology and equipment we can perform some of these tasks in a timelier manner. With specific target dates to obtain each year and the windows of opportunities becoming smaller, by becoming proficient in organization and better planning skills it will enable the tasks to be met and completed on time and on budget. ■

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