

# F.O.Y.

Field of the Year

## Taylor Stadium/ Simmons Field, University of Missouri



- ⦿ Level of Submission: College
- ⦿ Category of Submission: Baseball
- ⦿ Head Sports Turf Manager: Josh McPherson, CSFM
- ⦿ Title: Director of Sports Turf Management
- ⦿ Education: Bachelors Degree
- ⦿ Field of Study: Horticulture/Turfgrass
- ⦿ Full Time Staff: Jerry Cummings, Brandon Coleman
- ⦿ Students/Interns, Part-Time and Seasonal Staff: Craig Barry, Chad Cook, Ben Kraemer, and Evan Pratte (Director of Baseball Operations)

### The STMA Field of the Year program

The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) recognizes that you make personal and professional contributions to our industry and to the organization you serve. Therefore, the STMA distinguishes fields from around the country with the Field of the Year Program. Through our Field of the Year Program we are able to greatly further one main element of our mission: To gain acknowledgement for the professionalism of our members.

The 2011 awards were presented this month at the STMA Annual Awards Banquet in Long Beach, CA.

In addition to being featured in *SportsTurf* magazine winning fields will also receive a plaque recognizing the field and the sports turf manager, registration to the STMA Conference, up to \$500 toward travel/lodging at the STMA Conference, and STMA signature apparel for the winning sports turf manager and crew.

## SIMMONS FIELD

- ☉ **Original construction date:** 1959
- ☉ **Size:** 121,900 sq. ft.
- ☉ **Use:** 800 hours of baseball specific include NCAA competition, High School regular and post season games, and baseball camps.
- ☉ **Variety(s) of turfgrass(es):** Kentucky bluegrass with perennial ryegrass in the wear areas.
- ☉ **Overseed:** This year overseeded with 'Rush', 'NuDestiny', 'Award' and 'Impact'. Also use RPR ryegrass to overseed the walk up areas, grass baselines and areas around the mound.
- ☉ **Mix composition:** 91 % Sand 9 % other
- ☉ **Other mix:** 2% Silt, 2.9% Clay, 4.1% Gravel
- ☉ **Drainage:** Herringbone system
- ☉ **Challenges:** This season was the most challenging I have ever survived since being a sports turf manager. Columbia (MO) led the country in most above average snowfall for a season at 320% above normal this year with 45.6". We had one of the wettest springs on record with 4.31" of rain and 13.79" of snow in March, and we had 45+ days in the 90's with the peak of 108 on August 2nd. It was the first time in my career that I printed of safety standards for how many hours you could be outside in below zero temps and how many hours you could be outside with temps in 100's.

Since the heaviest snow was in February when the team was practicing we had to do whatever was possible to get them outside. We borrowed two snow blowers and started removing the snow. It took days to finally break through all of it but little by little we started seeing the field.

The spring had many tarp pulls and lots of hand dragging because it was too wet to get any machines on the field. We have Kentucky bluegrass baselines and all the moisture and play took its toll on them so we decided to do a mid-season replacement. Due to snow we actually did the replacement a day before the game. If the NFL guys can sod before a game why couldn't I, with thick cut sod. I had them cut the sod at 1.5" and we installed it. The coaches and players loved it, and it is still holding up to this day.

The summer heat combined with the camp schedule made keeping 1.25" bluegrass a real challenge. I had always played around with bio-stimulants but this is the first year I used a program. I used Floratine Astron, Knife+ and Power C3 when I sprayed my fungicides (program designed by myself and Dr. Lee Miller of the University of Missouri) and was able to keep my grass growing and

green through most of the summer. The baseball coach said it was the first time they had green grass after the month of June.

Besides the weather the other reason I wanted to submit for Field of the Year is because of my student interns. When I started at Mizzou I told the students our goal is to win an award and they helped me prepare this application. They work so hard and I want them to be showcased for their efforts. The intern program was started by Dr. Minner and Dr. Brad Fresenburg with Jeff Salmond, CSFM as one of the first to participate. The interns get to do everything on the field and when they graduate they have years of actual working experience as well as having a degree.

**SportsTurf:** You mentioned a lack of records in your entry. What kind of record keeping do you use?

**McPherson:** I have been tracking everything in my Outlook Calendar this past year. I share the calendar with my co-workers and we are trying to record everything we do. Specifically we are tracking fertilizer, chemical, topdressing, and aeration applications. We are also putting notes for spreader settings, etc. This helps us fine tune applica-

tions our next time out. We are also recording disease instances or any unusual things we may find on the grass. For example my first year here we got summer patch on the bluegrass earlier than I thought we would see it in the year. After recording it in Outlook I would go one year in the future and put Summer Patch arrived last year on this date and then put a 2-week reminder to give me enough time to purchase some fungicide. I would then get the reminder and start monitoring for Summer Patch, watch the weather and apply a preventative if conditions were right. I believe this helped us keep the diseases under control last year. I would also put in all "last-minute" requests that would come through during a sports season and proactively see if they needed to be done the following year so we could do them on a practice or off day for the teams.

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

**McPherson:** I always try to meet face to face and to have one point of contact with each team. Sometimes different coaches

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within the same sport will have different ideas on things. I always find right before practices, on the actual field, great ideas or requests will be made that may not have been thought about in an office meeting. We have weekly meetings with administrators to keep them updated on everything. As long as I take care of the reasonable coach requests and stay within budget the administration allows me to do my job.

**ST:** What are your specific job responsibilities? What do you find most enjoyable? What task is your least favorite and why?

**McPherson:** I am in charge of maintaining the sports field and grounds for the Mizzou Sports Park. If it is an athletic field or the grass and landscaping around our athletic properties I am responsible for the upkeep. I love being a part of the student-athlete experience. I enjoy knowing that the hard work and dedication by my team help make that experience better for everyone we have an encounter with whether you are a Mizzou athlete or a visitor.

**ST:** What changes if any are you considering or implementing for the winning field in 2012?

**McPherson:** We are always trying to get the field better. I don't think any of us in this industry think the field is in perfect shape. I am working on increasing the drainage behind home plate. I also put in a FieldSaver infield on my softball field this August and I am going to see how that surface works for us this spring and see if I might need to adjust my infield at baseball. We are really going to work on the details this year. I think most of the talks I am going to at the conference are baseball related. I feel like I can never learn enough about infield maintenance.

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

**McPherson:** I answered this question 4 years ago and I talked about being more conscious about the environment. I think that is still very important for the future. I find myself promoting the benefits of a natural turfgrass field. I think the more we promote natural turfgrass and the benefits to the environment the better we will all be. ■

# Monthly maintenance and fertility programs:

## JANUARY

- Snow removal
- Indoor turf cleaning
- Indoor mound repair
- Drag warning track and skin area if dry enough

## FEBRUARY

- Outdoor practice begins weather permitting
- Mound and home plate repair
- Drag warning track daily
- Mow 1.25"
- Apply 1 pallet Turface Heritage Red calcined clay
- Apply 1 pallet Diamond Pro Dark Brown vitrified clay
- Turn on isolation valve for quick coupler behind the plate

## MARCH

- Repair mound, homeplate, drag warning track daily
- Subdue Maxx 1.0oz/1000 if wet when applying tarp and temperature going up
- Mow outfield 1.25" and infield at 1" every game day (minimum 3 days a week)
- Apply 20 bags of soil conditioner every 2 weeks (ratio of vitrified or calcined determined by weather conditions)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- Turn on irrigation
- Biweekly needle tine aeration on infield and surrounds
- Biweekly spot seed with RPR

## APRIL

- Repair mound, homeplate, drag warning track daily
- Mow outfield 1.25" and infield at 1" every game day (minimum 3 days a week)
- Apply 20 bags of soil conditioner every 2 weeks (ratio of vitrified or calcined determined by weather conditions)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- 1lb N / 1000 of 32-0-8
- Drive XLR8 64oz / Acre
- Weekly needle tine aeration on infield and surrounds
- Bi weekly spot seed with RPR 15

## MAY

- Repair mound, homeplate, drag warning track daily
- Mow outfield 1.25" and infield at 1" every game day (minimum 3 days a week)
- Apply 20 bags of soil conditioner every 2 weeks (ratio of vitrified or calcined determined by weather conditions)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- Weekly needle tine aeration on infield and surrounds
- Bi weekly spot seed with RPR
- Irrigation based on ET
- Headway 3oz/1000

## JUNE

- Repair mound, homeplate, drag warning track minimum 1x a week
- Mow outfield and infield at 1.25" (minimum 3 days a week)
- Apply 20 bags of soil conditioner every 2 weeks (ratio of vitrified or calcined determined by weather conditions)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- Irrigation based on ET
- Headway 3oz/1000
- Banol 3oz/1000
- Acelepryn 8oz/acre 16

## JULY

- Repair mound, homeplate, drag warning track minimum 1x a week
- Mow outfield and infield at 1.25" (minimum 3 days a week)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- Irrigation based on ET
- Headway
- Subdue Maxx 1oz/1000

## AUGUST

- Drag warning track minimum 1x a week
- Mow outfield and infield at 1.25" (minimum 3 days a week)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- Irrigation based on ET
- Aerate 5/8" tined on 2" x 2.5" spacing
- Topdress 40 tons of 90:10 sand
- Headway 3oz/1000
- Subdue Max 1oz/1000
- Laser grade infield
- 1lb N / 1000 of 32-0-8 17

## SEPTEMBER

- Repair mound, homeplate, drag warning track 2-3x a week
- Mow outfield 1.5" and infield at 1" (minimum 2 days a week)
- Apply 20 bags of soil conditioner every 2 weeks (ratio of vitrified or calcined determined by weather conditions)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- Biweekly needle tine aeration on infield and surrounds
- Bi weekly spot seed with RPR
- 1lb N / 1000 of 32-0-8
- Seed 3 lbs/ 1000 'NuDestiny', 'Award', 'Impact', and 'Rush'
- Irrigation based on ET
- Irrigation audit and repairs after running daily through summer, added 5 heads this year

## OCTOBER

- Repair mound, homeplate, drag warning track 2-3x a week
- Mow outfield 1.5" and infield at 1" (minimum 2 days a week)
- Apply 20 bags of soil conditioner every 2 weeks (ratio of vitrified or calcined determined by weather conditions)
- Spray Floratine Astron 2oz/1000, Power C3 3oz/1000, and Knife+ 3oz/1000
- Biweekly needle tine aeration on infield and surrounds
- Bi weekly spot seed with RPR
- 1lb N / 1000 of 32-0-8
- Deep Tine Aeration
- Topdress 40 tons of 90:10 sand
- Irrigation based on ET 18

## NOVEMBER

- Drag Warning Track
- Mow outfield 1.5" and infield at 1.5" (minimum 2 days a week)
- Good edge and re-sod thin areas
- Get field ready for spring baseball in case it snows until March again

## DECEMBER

- Anything we can do
- Equipment maintenance