



>> **Photo credit:** Medallion Athletic Products, Mooresville, NC

Overseeing synthetic turf installations

THERE'S A NEW FIELD going in. And you've just been informed you're responsible for supervision, oversight and all the rest of the management.

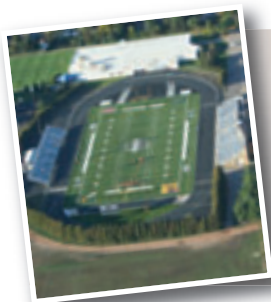
For those whose experience pertains mainly to field management, that can be a daunting task. Sure, you know how a field is built—base, sub-base, drainage, surface, infill and so forth—and how it's maintained, but how can that really help you work with the pros who will be doing the install?

Easy, say those in the industry: bring all your knowledge to the table, and be ready to share it.

"Be available," says Jeff Emanuel of Nemaha Landscape Construction, Inc. in Lincoln, NE. "Communication and logistics beforehand makes everything go smoothly when the job gets started. That should be the number-one priority. The field manager is a great resource to catch things before and at the time of install to make sure final build-out meets the field manager's and the owner's need."

Coming into the project, you already have an advantage, whether or not you're aware of it. You're on site every day, or just about every day. You know things about the use of the field, the problems it might have experienced in the past, and lots of other information that are invisible to the contractor, who is just looking at the surface. So here are some pieces of the puzzle you can put down on paper:

- The field itself: List everything you know about when the field was built, who did the construction originally, what surface it is, and any changes that have been made to it over the years. List its regular maintenance program and types of equipment used.



- Problems: Does the field (or the area around it) have any problems, such as drainage issues? Make sure you note those.
- Field use: What types of sports is the field hosting, how often and at what levels? Any other uses (graduations, festivals, marching band practice, etc.) should also be noted.
- Weather: According to Norris Legue of Synthetic Surfaces, Inc. in Scotch Plains, NJ the weather can impact a new field greatly, and anyone charged with supervising installation should have a good grasp on it: "No two outdoor installations are the same," says Legue. "Hot, cold, damp, dry, wind, passing clouds and rain are all factors that quickly get people into trouble. Also, outdoor installations under variable conditions are a different world than indoor installation under stable environmental conditions."

Something the field manager can do to keep the lines of communication open, says Emanuel, is to "attend regularly scheduled meetings to stay up to date and in the loop. Be approachable and get to know the install foreman. A good foreman will respect a reciprocal relationship."

Both sides need to keep an eye on the construction documents, and also on the field itself. Sometimes, things look good on paper, but don't work in real life. And in many cases, the field manager is the person who will know immediately whether something will or will not be effective.

"Be honest," says Emanuel. "If the field manager doesn't like something, that needs to be brought to the builder's attention so they can discuss and remedy issues before the task or project is past the point of no return."

Many field managers, because they're skilled in maintenance, want to chip in and help with the construction as well. Emanuel cautions against that.

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>> **Photo credit:** Rettler Corporation, Stevens Point, WI



>> **Photo credit:** Warner Larson, Inc., Boston, MA

"Don't commit to performing work that is part of the builder's scope of work; promises can be made where they shouldn't by field managers wanting to help out and expedite the process. A good relationship is key, but actual physical help or directing the work isn't always a good thing. Input is one thing; however the builder's foreman shouldn't modify the scope of work without all project stakeholders agreeing to modifications to the original scope of work."

As with all projects, there are best practices. Emanuel says his include the following:

Do:

- Be proactive and think outside the box.
- Stay in the loop on decisions that affect the field manager's ability to manage/maintain the field when finished.

Don't:

- Make promises/changes you as the field manager can't keep.
- Approve any changes before the field designer/architect (if applicable) or owner approve them.

The installation of a new turf field may be one of the most important projects for your facility. And to make it pay off, you need to keep open the lines of communication. Communication, after all, is like currency—it works best when it flows both ways, in equal measures. ■

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association. Available at no charge is a listing of all publications offered by the ASBA, as well as their Membership Directory. For info, 866-501-2722 or www.sports-builders.org.

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