

THE JUNGLE, LOUISA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MINERAL, VA



- ⊙ **Level of Submission:** Schools/Parks
- ⊙ **Category of Submission:** Football
- ⊙ **Head Sports Turf Manager:** Michael Hopkins
- ⊙ **Title:** Turfgrass Science Instructor/Sports Turf Manager
- ⊙ **Education:** Bachelor's degree in Agriculture Education
- ⊙ **Work History:** Through my excavation company, I have worked with a local turf grass consulting firm for the past six years building sports fields. In 2009, I started teaching Turf Grass Science at Louisa County High School and, as a result, took over management of the athletic fields.
- ⊙ **Full-time staff:** Bill Pelott, Joe Bradford and Jimmy Null. And the Advanced Turf Science class known as "The Jungle Turf Crew."
- ⊙ **Original construction:** 1995
- ⊙ **Turfgrass variety:** Patriot bermudagrass
- ⊙ **Rootzone composition:** Native soil (clay)
- ⊙ **Overseeding:** We are overseeding this year with 1500 lbs. per acre of rye grass, 1/3 in early Sept., 1/3 in early Oct. and 1/3 in late Oct. I was able to spread the first application after 6" of rain and before a varsity game with the idea of the seed being incorporated by the players. With the other two applications, I will use a slicer to work the seed into the soil. I have found with Patriot that the mat is so tight and thick it is hard to get good germination without some type of mechanical incorporation.
- ⊙ **Drainage:** Crowned with a 1.5 % slope and side drains.

The Jungle Turf Crew created a motto that was announced at the game that night: Neither earthquakes, hurricanes, vandalism, nor tropical storms can keep the Jungle Turf Crew from preparing the field for the mighty Lions.

CHALLENGES

The “Jungle” has always been known as the place to be on Friday nights in Louisa because of championship play by our Lions, fireworks, sky divers, a real lion and many more side shows. It took on a totally new meaning on Sept. 23th when a 5.8 earthquake struck our school causing it to be condemned. During the next three weeks, while the middle school was being turned into a temporary home for our 1500 students, we had two home games scheduled for our varsity football team. The Principal, Athletic Director, and I got together and decided that the school and community, which had also been devastated by the epicenter of the quake, needed something to inspire hope and rally the community. We decided it would be our beloved Jungle, since that was one of the only structures not affected by the quake. We planned a Community Pep Rally on the Thursday night before the first game. To complicate things, Hurricane Irene came up the East Coast the weekend before, dumping over 5” of rain on the field. The Jungle Turf Crew showed up for 3 days to prepare the field for the game. We completed all work on the field before the pep rally, which drew over 1000 people, thinking that we would have an easy day on Friday. To my surprise, I arrived on Friday to a field that had been vandalized by four students from the visiting team. They had spray painted graffiti from one end of the field to the other, on the press box, and score board. I called the Jungle Turf Crew and we went to work. We sprayed the field with a turf dye first and then repainted all lines, numbers and logos; completing the task just in time for the paint to dry enough to play one of the most important games in our history. That night we had over 6,000 people in attendance, which was the second biggest crowd ever to watch a game in the Jungle. No one in the stands could tell that any vandalism had taken place. The following week we had another challenge just as big. A tropical storm came up the coast dumping over 6” of rain on the field Tuesday through Thursday. Every time we started painting the sky would open up and wash the paint away. On Friday the sun came out and for the second week in a row, we painted the entire field on the same day as the game. The Jungle Turf Crew created a motto that was announced at the game that night: Neither earthquakes, hurricanes, vandalism, nor tropical storms can keep the Jungle Turf Crew from preparing the field for the mighty Lions.



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

Hopkins: Most of my communication goes through the Athletic Director. He is then in touch with coaches and administrators daily. We all find e-mail and cell phones as our primary line of communication. Since students are my work force, I learned text messaging rather quickly. Our school and athletic department both have great websites so this is a great resource to get information out fast and to a large number of our end users. With that being said I am still from the “old school” and believe face to face meetings and conversations are the most effective way to communicate.

SportsTurf: What are your specific job responsibilities?

Hopkins: My contract says that I am a teacher but I wear a number of other hats at Louisa County High School. I am the CTE Department Chairperson and because I teach Turf Science, I took the responsibility of maintaining the football stadium. I also help retired baseball coach Bill Pelot oversee the baseball field, softball field and practice facilities. Because I also teach agricultural mechanics and have a shop, I do a lot of the small repair jobs not only with the turf equipment and facilities but also around the school.

SportsTurf: What do you find most enjoyable about your job?

Hopkins: Without a doubt what I find most enjoyable about my job is teaching students how rewarding and challenging managing sports turf can be. Most students come to me thinking that this career is mostly mowing grass. I always tell my students the first day of class that by the end of the semester when they turn on the TV to watch a game being played on turf, they will be looking more at the grass than the play on the field.

The other thing that I find most enjoyable is going to the stadium the night before the first home game, turning on the lights, sitting back in the stands and looking out over the field. That's when you realize the entire year's work to get to that point was worth it.

SportsTurf: What task is your least favorite and why?

Hopkins: I would have to say my least favorite task would be aerification. It's always hot, you are traveling about 1 mile per hour and at each pass the field looks bigger and bigger.

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

Hopkins: I kind of backed into this field. I contribute getting started in the business to my brother who owns Innovative Turf Applications and Consulting, Inc. He helped me start a business 10 years ago servicing and grinding reel mowers. I also have an excavating business through which I have helped him build, grade, or install irrigation on athletic fields. So when the opportunity arose to teach Turf Science 3 years

The Jungle monthly maintenance plan

JANUARY

- Preventative maintenance on equipment and sharpen reels
- Apply any lime recommended from soil test

FEBRUARY

- Apply Ammonium Sulfate 21-0-0 at .75 lbs. N/M to start waking up rye-grass
- Order paint for season

MARCH

- Start mowing about mid March at 1”
- Apply Ronstar pre-emergent at 3 lbs. per acre

APRIL

- Mow at an average of twice per week at 1”
- Spray three way herbicide for broad leaf weeds if needed
- Start up irrigation and perform audit

MAY

- Mow three times per week at 1”
- Spray revolver herbicide to transition out the rye grass and release the Patriot at 17 oz. per acre
- Shatter tine aerate
- Spray Roundup around edges and posts
- Apply 30-10-10 50% poly coated at 1.5 lbs. N/M
- Run irrigation as needed

JUNE

- Mow three times per week
- Apply ammonium sulfate 21-0-0 at .75 lbs. N/M
- Adjust cutting height to .75”
- Deep tine aerate 1.25” x 12”
- Evaluate high traffic areas and decide if to sprig
- Slice aerate to promote lateral growth
- Topdress with compost
- Run irrigation as needed

JULY

- Mow three times per week at .75”
- Slice aerate to promote lateral growth
- Apply 30-10-10 50% poly coated at 1.5 lbs. N/M
- Spray Roundup around edges and post
- Monitor irrigation daily
- Hand irrigate areas on field not getting enough water
- Post-emergent spray MSMA for summer annuals if needed 1.5 quart/acre

AUGUST

- Mow four times per week; adjust cutting height to 1” at mid month
- Shatter tine aerate
- Slice aerate to promote lateral
- Apply Ammonium Sulfate 21-0-0 at

.75 lbs. N/M
Monitor irrigation daily
Clean side drains and edge grass along them
Hand irrigate areas on field not getting enough water
Locate and mark corners of field
Have large logos surveyed and points marked
Use stencils to lay out rest of logos and paint all logos 2 weeks before first game
Grind reels and bedknives on reel mower

SEPTEMBER

Apply growth regulator to slow top growth and promote lateral growth
Mow at 1” twice per week
Apply blue tag certified perennial rye grass at 500 lbs per acre
Apply starter fertilizer 14-28-14 at .5 lbs. N/M
Sweep field after varsity football games to remove thatch pulled up by cleats
Roll field if needed after games
Paint logos, lines, hash marks and numbers before games
Run irrigation when needed
Walk field to replace divots after each game
Spot overseed high traffic areas after each game

OCTOBER

Mow average of twice per week at 1”
Apply Blue Tag certified perennial rye grass at 500 lbs. per acre
Apply starter fertilizer 14-28-14 at .5 lbs. N/M
Slice aerate to incorporate ryegrass
Sweep field after varsity football games to remove thatch pulled up by cleats
Roll field if needed after games
Paint logos, lines, hash marks and numbers before games
Walk field and replace divots after each game
Spot overseed high traffic areas after each game

NOVEMBER

Winterize irrigation
Apply Blue Tag certified perennial ryegrass at 500 lbs. per acre
Slice aerate to incorporate ryegrass
Last mowing

DECEMBER

Take soil samples
Reflect on past year's deficiencies and plan for next year's accomplishments



Hopkins: Last year we changed all the paint schemes and logos, installed new goals, switched brands of paint, and changed most of our management plan. We also changed schools three times because of an earthquake. This year I am hoping our changes are not as drastic. We are laying sod on the area where spectators enter the bleachers and are making some small changes in the paint schemes. We are also looking at doing some landscaping that will promote school spirit. As always, we are constantly looking for ways to improve what we are doing and make it more efficient. I try to instill in the students that they should never be satisfied with the status quo but should always be looking for ways to improve.

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

Hopkins: I think education and research will play a major role in the future of sports turf managers. As the field gets more technical, sustainable management practices become more of the norm and not the exception. Also managers are going to have to educate themselves more in the future than ever before as they decide between synthetic or natural fields. ■

ago, it seemed to be a natural fit for me. I requested to have a major roll in managing the fields because I felt that that was the only way to effectively teach my students.

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

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