

# Gordon Field, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

▼ Anne Beckingham's chocolate lab, Bazyl, is part of the staff, chasing geese off the fields and serving Vassar in many ways, Anne says.







- ◎ **Level of Submission:** College
- ◎ **Category of Submission:** Soccer
- ◎ **Head Sports Turf Manager:** Anne R. Beckingham
- ◎ **Title:** Athletic Fields Supervisor
- ◎ **Education:** Bachelor's degree in Business/Golf Course Supt.
- ◎ **Experience:** Buffalo Bisons internship, 2006; Altoona Curve internship, 2007; Vassar College, 2008 to present
- ◎ **Other crew to recognize:** Brian Harnen, Josh Wyatt & Jonas Narvarro
- ◎ **Original construction:** 2006
- ◎ **Turfgrass variety:** Tuckahoe Kentucky bluegrass with Lofts Supreme Sportsmix/Matrix Fairway Mix in the goal mouths and bench area.
- ◎ **Overseed:** We overseed CONSTANTLY in the fall. We use a Loft's sports turf mix - KBG and PR in the goals and bench areas. We do this approx 5-7 times per soccer season - usually before a men's game. We solid tine these areas, overseed and then topdress with USGA sand. We also overseed the entire field after core aeration in late October. This year we are going to solid tine (3/4") two directions and then slit seed with our Landpride.
- ◎ **Rootzone:** 100% sand, with soil amendments including Bolster, Keyplex, Respond III wetting agent, Holganix 38 Special.
- ◎ **Drainage:** Multiflow Flatpipe which drains into an 8" trunkline around the perimeter of the field and drains into a cistern located next to the field.



## CHALLENGES

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

**Beckingham:** Our channels of communication are casual. Normally our coaches either e-mail or give a call to my office or cell phone. If I see them on their fields (and they aren't busy) I like to just say a quick hello and make sure

they're set for games or practices. We have a great working relationship with our assistant athletic director as well as our facilities director. They are always in contact about field use, weather, schedules etc. They understand my concerns about all of our fields and are so helpful in decision making—always trying to do what's best for our facility. We've come a long way as far as getting on the same page regarding field guidelines and



I trust their judgments as far as making good decisions for field use.

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

**Beckingham:** I'm the Athletic Fields Supervisor. I'm responsible for organizing the maintenance of all aspects of our fields and tennis courts. I manage fertilization, pesticide applications, mowing, trimming—all things that have to do with field maintenance on a daily basis. We are also responsible for three areas on campus that house students and faculty, what we call "outside properties." We are responsible for mowing and maintaining these areas as well. I'm also considered a working supervisor. In my initial job interview I really stressed that I wanted to be able to work right along with my staff and so that's what I do! We make a good team that's for sure.

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**ST:** How did you get started in turf management? What was your first sports turf-related job?

**Beckingham:** My "real" home is in the Adirondack Mountains—Old Forge, NY. Strictly a tourist area, there wasn't much in the way in employment that didn't have to do with tourism. I was a greenskeeper at our local 18-hole golf course for 14 years. I realized that there would be no advancement for me at this course so I decided to apply to the State University of NY-Delhi. My degree is a bachelor's in business/golf course superintendent. Summer semester requirements were to work as an intern in the turfgrass industry. I was so fortunate to be able to work for two minor league baseball teams for two of my internships and then I was hooked on sports turf management!

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**ST:** How do you balance your work and personal time?

**Beckingham:** My husband, Pete, and I will be married 35 years this September. He is the most forward thinking, accepting man I know. And, he's my best friend. He lets me live my life and has always encouraged me to reach any goal that I've set for myself. We live a little over 3 hours away from each other. We try to see each other about every other weekend or so (depending on what season it is) and really look forward to wintertime when the fields are put away. We've learned to appreciate each other so much more, mostly because of distance and time restraints. We just make time and try to figure it out! While it has been good for

both of us to be independent, it has also strengthened our relationship. And, I've gotten to see Pete grow in his independence and I know he has definitely seen me grow in mine. I must say, though, that I do miss him.

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**ST:** What changes are you planning to make or have you made to your maintenance plan for 2013, if any?

**Beckingham:** In the immortal words of Brian Harnan (best bud, co-worker, staff member, and person from whom I have deleted a LOT of files from his head), "Anne, if it's not broken, then don't fix it." Yes, we may tweak our program, experiment with new products etc., but for the most part we're happy with our results. Our aim is to make the best fields for our athletes and coaches. When we get good reviews from them, it means a lot to us and that we've done our job.

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**ST:** Are you yet involved in "sustainable" management practices? If so, what are you doing?

**Beckingham:** I really like to experiment with new products especially ones that might reduce chemical inputs into the soil. This past year I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Rossi, Dr. Fefer and Brady Nash. We tried different application rates of a product called Civitas (mainly a golf course product and not registered for sports field usage yet in New York State). I kept in touch with a few of my golf course supers to see how they were using it and how it performed on their courses. It turned out to be a wonderful product as far as water use—it cut irrigation use almost in half on one of the fields. I also tried different fungicide and fertilizer applications rates throughout the summer and saw some good results with product reduction too. We are willing to try any product that will encourage sustainability, and like to be able to share information with our schools in NYS through seminars. Since there is a "no pesticide law" in effect for our schools, any product that would be helpful to them through our experimentation is a bonus.

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**ST:** How do you see your job changing in the future?

**Beckingham:** I would like to have things remain the same. My staff does a great job and we take great pride in our fields. We would love to have an NCAA game on ANY of our fields. Our men's soccer team had a great year last year so we're pretty hopeful for all of our teams. However, if there was an MLB groundskeeper looking for a good assistant . . . :D ■

