

# THE PRICE IS RIGHT:

## Chad's certifications make him an industry leader

**S**ports fields are a hot commodity and the construction industry that creates and maintains them is as competitive as the sports that play out on them. So when your livelihood depends on building and maintaining those fields, doesn't it make sense to learn everything you can?

Chad Price thinks so. As the owner of Carolina Green Corp., a full-service athletic field construction company in Indian Trail, NC, Price is a strong advocate of remaining informed about the ever-evolving sports facility industry.

"A lot of things have continued to improve," Price noted. "The equipment, the science behind it, the education for, the training for it, even the associations for it. It just keeps changing."

Price has made staying current on technology and techniques his priority, to the point where he holds not one but two certifications related to the sports field industry: Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) obtained through the Sports Turf Managers Association, and Certified Field Builder (CFB), from the American Sports Builders Association.

While the two certifications differ in focus, both have prerequisites, including in-the-field experience as well as educational and activity requirements. Once all those are satisfied, each certification includes a written exam.

Price, who maintains both certifications, said he is glad to have gotten them—and that they continue to reap rewards for him.

"Both certifications have been very helpful professionally and personally as well," he notes. "I will say this about both tests; the material is different, there is a different emphasis on things for each, but both are very fair and thorough examinations."

The ASBA's Certified Field Builder program includes several options; builders can elect to gain certification as CFB-N (Certified Field Builder-Natural) indicating knowledge of natural grass fields, or CFB-S (Certified Field Builder-Synthetic), for those who concentrate on artificial turf. The CFB designation indicates a knowledge of both types of field.

In Price's opinion, while the ability to market his work is enhanced by the dual certifications, the increased benefit is to his customers, as well as other buyers, who can finally feel confident about finding an expert.

"It gives us the ability to give assurance to the owner that they will have people out there who know what they're doing. I'm just really happy and excited and thankful that STMA and ASBA offers these."

Price gained his CSFM certification approximately 10 years ago. He was delighted to see it offered in a still-developing industry.

"I've been in business maybe 27 years, and building fields exclusively for about 23 years. When I started, there was no construction manual; in fact, there was very little written information at all about how to do this or how to do that. There were very few contractors that specialized in it around the country."

Colleagues would share information, he noted, but "everyone was trying to learn from one another. I got the CSFM first; it was maybe the second or third year it was offered."

It wasn't until a number of years later that he heard rumblings about ASBA's plans to offer its own certification test, this one for field builders.

"Once I heard the CFB test had become available, I absolutely wanted to be the first one in that room."

The industry had grown, he noted, and a test was sorely needed to help owners find knowledgeable help.

"At the time, there were architects who knew how important it would be to have a qualified contractor, and how much we needed a pre-qualification requirement if someone wanted to bid on a job."

Owners, he noted, were not getting fair bids, since many contractors simply did not know all the facts about sports fields, whether synthetic or natural.

"You'd be competing for a job against someone who



▲ Chad Price, CSFM, CFB

thought you could go to the site and put stone down and grade it and put turf down and there you go. It's certainly not that simple. We were all hitting our heads against the same issues."

Badly built sports fields fail, and owners often did not have the funds to correct the myriad problems they were faced with. Price was glad to see a certification that would finally provide a benchmark.

"I think the certifications certainly hold a lot of weight," said Price. "More and more people are incorporating that into their specifications. Obviously it helps me when we see it on requirements."

The science of sports turf is growing overall. More universities are offering sports turf programs, and those programs are being expanded to cover not just golf (for which some were originally designed) but the plethora of other sports played.

"It's an exciting time," said Price. "I really feel like we're on the cusp of all that."

Certifications such as CFB and CSFM are not granted in perpetuity; those who hold them must maintain them on a regular basis by accruing educational and activity points.

"There's no question in my mind; if you can pass that test, without question you are qualified," said Price. "You have the knowledge."

It's not just personal opinion, either. In a 2008 decision by the Attorney General of Massachusetts, the AG upheld the right of a local school district to restrict bidding for a running track project to companies employing an ASBA Certified Track Builder. In defending its bid-

ding restriction, the school district successfully argued it had encountered serious problems regarding the workmanship in prior track installations justifying the use of the certification requirement as a means of identifying qualified contractors. (It is also worth noting that the Massachusetts Attorney General Office supported a town's right to include minimum contractor experience clauses in bidding documents as long as they were reasonable).

Price is not surprised about the growing demand for certification and he is glad to see it. "I'd say certifications definitely sets us apart from other companies. It's good that there is a standard."

Note: Information on the Certified Sports Field Manager exam is available from STMA (<http://www.stma.org/>). Information on the Certified Field Builder exam is available from ASBA (<http://www.sportsbuilders.org/>) ■

*Mary Helen Sprecher is a free lance writer who wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association. ASBA is a non-profit association helping designers, builders, owners, operators and users understand quality athletic facility construction. ASBA publishes Sports Fields: A Construction and Maintenance Manual, a comprehensive guide to the design, construction and maintenance of sports fields. The book is available for purchase either in hard copy or in electronic form. Information is available at [www.sportsbuilders.org](http://www.sportsbuilders.org).*

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