

# KOBS FIELD, MCLANE BASEBALL STADIUM,

*Michigan State University, East Lansing*



● **Level of Submission:** College  
● **Category of Submission:** Baseball  
● **Sports Turf Managers:** Jared Knoodle, CSFM and Amy Fouty, CSFM  
● **Title:** **Jared:** Groundskeeper; **Amy:** Athletic Turf Manager  
● **Education:** **Jared:** BS in turfgrass management; **Amy:** 2-year degree, turfgrass management  
● **Experience:** **Jared:** I have worked in the sports turf industry since 2006. As a student at MSU I worked 3 of 4 years on campus on athletic fields at MSU. I was involved in the renovations of the baseball, softball, and soccer field while I was a student. As a student I went on an internship working for the San Francisco Giants. I was hired full time the next year and I spent 3 seasons as an assistant groundskeeper. I then spent a summer at Comerica Park working for the Detroit Tigers as a member on the grounds crew. Currently I have been working back at MSU as a Groundskeeper

1 since January 2012. I manage the daily operations of the Old College Field Complex on campus.

**Amy:** I have been a sports turf manager for 15 years: 5 years at the University of Michigan in charge of daily field operations for football and soccer, and 10 years at Michigan State in charge of athletic field management and field construction for the athletic department.

● **Staff:** We do not have staff that is just dedicated to the field. Jared is a seasonal groundskeeper who handles daily operations at our Old College field complex from March 1 through November 31. We have another seasonal staff person who assists Jared on baseball softball, soccer, and general grounds during that same time frame 40 hours per week as well, Marc Novicki. His responsibilities center on the soccer and grounds portion of the complex; Jared primarily handles softball and baseball.

Each year we have two sports turf management interns from our turfgrass management program at

MSU. This year Tom Ellis, 2 year turf, and Evan Rogers, 4 year turf, worked with Jared and Marc from March 1 through November 31 at the complex part time during the school year and 40 hours a week during the summer. In addition to this staff we have two student-athletes who work part time in the summer at the complex. These are typically baseball, softball, track, or soccer student-athletes. We have staff scheduled 258 days a year for the Old College field complex.

● **Original construction:** The site of Kobs Field was originally purchased by Michigan State's Board of Agriculture in 1900 for \$1,137.50. Kobs Field was dedicated in 1969 to John Herman Kobs, who served as head coach at Michigan State for 39 seasons (1925-63).

● **Turfgrass variety:** Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, annual bluegrass.

● **Rootzone composition:** Sandy loam native soil; 75% sand.





## Equipment List

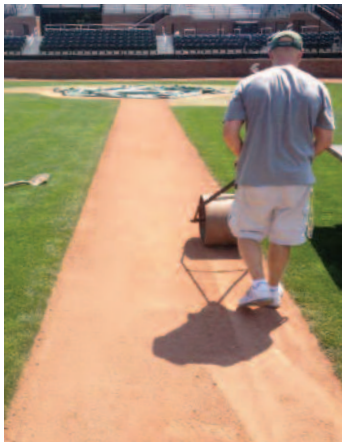
- Toro Workman
- Harper Field vacuum
- Toro Multi-pro 1200 sprayer
- John Deer Tractor 4300
- Toro Sand Pro (marketing agreement demo)

- Honda Rotary push mower
- Toro 3500-D Sidewinder (marketing agreement demo)
- Toro Greensmaster walk behind (bought used)
- Toro Procore 648 (borrow from golf course)
- Toro Procore 864 (demo)
- Ty-Crop topdresser drop style
- Tow behind drum roller

- Walking roller
- Gandy drop spreader
- Anderson broadcast spreader
- Field striper
- Edger
- Hand tools
- Two Bow Dry water removers



# Kobs Field, McLane Baseball Stadium



## WHY STMA SHOULD CONSIDER YOUR FIELD A WINNER?

**Fouty:** I cannot express how proud I am each day to work with an outstanding turf staff who has taken the lead in proper communication with coaches, staff, and players to create a “team” working environment for the success of the field as well as the team. In addition to this, the time, effort, and care taken each day by the staff and students to make Kobs Field the best in the Big Ten, makes me proud to be a part of our operation and help these young folks learn their trade for future success. We have continually strived to be the best with limited resources and staff and have the support and understand of our administration and baseball team during the 4 seasons of the year we experience during the Big Ten baseball season.

**Knoodle:** I feel that Kobs Field should be considered Field of the Year because of the progress we have made in the playing surface. As a student I was a part of the initial renovation and now 6 years later I lead the daily operations on the field. Although we do not have a full time staff even a quarter of a Major League Baseball facility I feel we manage the field and teach our interns, students, coaches, and players the same techniques used in order to give them the look and feel of playing on a Major League Baseball field. That being said, it takes a great deal of communication on behalf of myself, crew members and coaches to discuss the proper technique and daily tasks that need to be completed in order to keep the field playing at its very best.

With many games finishing and almost every practice taking place after work hours, it is very important that players help us by tarping the mound and home plate, dragging the infield and base paths. We hold a “groundskeeper hour” where I train the players and coaches on the way we like to maintain the field. Another reason I feel we should all be considered a winner is the extra time we take to pay attention to the “little things” that many spectators and players do not see but expect to be completed. We pack holes with clay everyday in the season, we nail drag and drag every single day, bases are cleaned after every game, dugouts are cleaned everyday, bullpen turf areas are cleaned everyday. These are just a few of the things we take great pride in. The main reason I feel we should be considered a winner is we bring a big league playing surface to college athletics with minimal staff.

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

**Fouty:** Communication has been a critical piece to the puzzle for the success we have shared in the field’s operations area. One of my communication

strategies is always, communicate early and often. I try to always plan for challenges and discuss them with those around me to come up with acceptable solutions prior to the problem. With a small staff and limited resources, organization in key to getting the job done professionally. There is so much technology with smart phones, computers, etc. Communication is fast and easy, my office is always on my hip.

**ST:** What are your specific responsibilities?

**Fouty:** Our area is responsible for maintaining all the outdoor athletic fields for the Athletic Department here at MSU. This includes a grass practice football field, an artificial practice football field, a stadium football field, a practice soccer field, a soccer game field, a softball field, and a baseball stadium. In addition to this we maintain the hitting and pitching building, indoor practice football facility, and various general grounds and landscaping in and around these areas. I am also involved in projects as assigned related to outdoor facilities which could be anything from field renovation, concert preparation and planning, to stadium maintenance projects.

**Knoodle:** I manage the day to day operations of the Old College Field Complex on campus which include a practice and game soccer field, softball field and baseball field. We also maintain all the general use turf areas and landscaping inside the complex.

**ST:** What tasks do you find most enjoyable?

**Fouty:** I enjoy the opportunity to work on a variety of projects and mentor staff and students whether they are turf students or student-athletes.

**Knoodle:** The most enjoyable part to me is being outside and being able to work with my hands and using teamwork with staff to perform and complete a task. I also enjoy being at MSU with a great turf program, allowing me to teach new turf students while they are in school.

**ST:** What task is your least favorite and why?

**Fouty:** My least favorite task would be all the paper work. I am not much of an office person.

**Knoodle:** My least favorite part or task is telling coaches and players due to weather the game will have to be canceled. We do not have many of these issues but whenever they come up it is a challenge to make everyone understand the safety of the player is always number 1 and the playability of the field is very important as well. Sometimes Mother Nature wins.

**ST:** How did you get your start in turf management? What was your first job?

**Fouty:** I have always loved sports and being outside. I began my career at a golf course taking care of clubhouse grounds 22 years ago. I worked on the golf side for 8 years and attended Michigan State University earning a Turfgrass Management degree in 1996. As time went on, I was given the opportunity to take care of the daily operations for football and soccer field management at the University of Michigan for 5 seasons. The ultimate opportunity to return to my alma mater came in December of 2003 when I was offered the Athletic Turf Manager position at Michigan State University for the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. I have been here 10 seasons and take great pride and pleasure doing what I love for MSU. I became CSFM in 2004.

**Knoodle:** I have worked in the sports turf Industry since 2005. As a student at MSU I worked for 3-4 years on the athletic fields. I was involved in

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the renovation of the baseball, softball, and soccer complex while I was a student. As a student I also went on an internship in San Francisco working for the Giants. I was hired full time the next year and I spent 3 seasons as an assistant groundskeeper for the Giants. I then spent a summer at Comerica Park working for the Detroit Tigers as a member of the grounds crew and returned to MSU to be the groundskeeper for baseball, softball, and soccer in 2012. I just became a CSFM in January 2014.

**ST:** What practices do you use to keep your infield skin in peak condition?

**Fouty:** We feel it is key to start with a good base, which we add plenty of conditioner preseason and nail drag, mat drag, roll, repeat a couple times. We then add conditioner as needed throughout the season. We try to keep it about 70% calcined clay, 30% vitrified clay for a great surface. Whenever we have an event i.e., practice, game, or camp we nail drag, mat drag and water first thing in the morning, and depending on time we may mat drag and water again right before the event. After the event we nail drag to again to get all the cleat marks and get us back

to level as best we can, followed again by mat drag and water. We also leaf rake edges after every event and broom every other and completely blow out edges with water two times a year. Usually right after the MSU baseball season and right before the fall ball season starts.

**ST:** What changes if any are you considering or implementing for the winning field in 2014?

**Fouty:** We are always striving to get a more consistent playing surface and we will continue to try new things if we think we can save some time or become more efficient in the way we manage and implement our management practices

**ST:** How do you see the Sports Turf Manager's job changing in the future?

**Fouty:** The job has, and will continue to, become more scientific and more professional. I would like to think that there will be a return to natural grass playing surfaces as field management gets better and construction of fields continues to get better. ■