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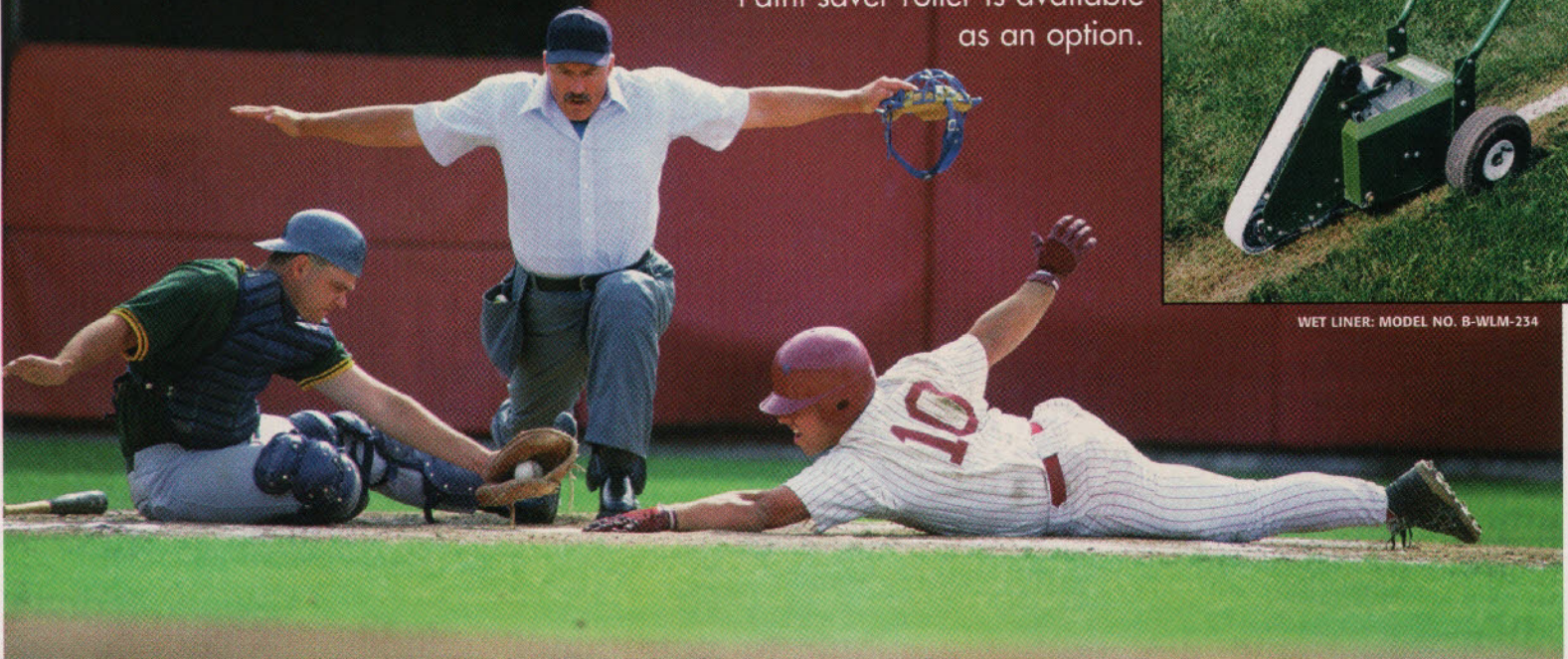
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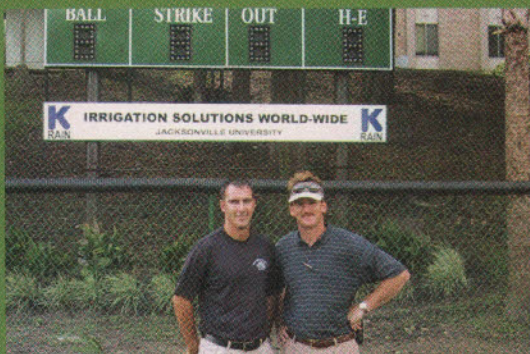


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from the sidelines

Call in the pros

Included in our Founding Fathers' ideal of a free America was the concept that everyone can benefit from education. Both George Washington and Benjamin Franklin developed "agricultural societies" that provided educational opportunities for farmers and industrial workers. These societies influenced the 1862 legislation that permitted the establishment of what today are known as "land grant" universities. The university-related Cooperative Extension Service was established in 1914 and agents are still on the job today.

Extension agents help people help themselves. Don Fowler, now a retired Penn State agent, decided years ago that helping out turf managers was as much a part of his job as assisting vegetable farmers. He made connections with Dan Douglas of the Reading Phillies and they began to put together a sports turf manager group through educational programs. Dan and his peers would provide the technical expertise, and Don the education knowledge to produce programs for turf managers.

Long-time PSU extension agent Jim Welshans recalls how the alliance got its first members. "Don and Dan organized a meeting at the Farm Show Arena and they had a great idea. Whoever showed up at that meeting was an automatic member! So they started with 170 members right off the bat. Today the Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO) is one of the most respected of all STMA state chapters. But that's not the Don Fowler story we want to tell. Here it is:

In 1996, after KAFMO had established itself as a premier sports turf resource, Little League Inc., paid them a visit to ask for advice on rebuilding the field at Lamade Stadium in Williamsport. Little League's 50th anniversary was approaching and as part of the celebration, they wanted the "best Little League field anywhere," says Welshans.

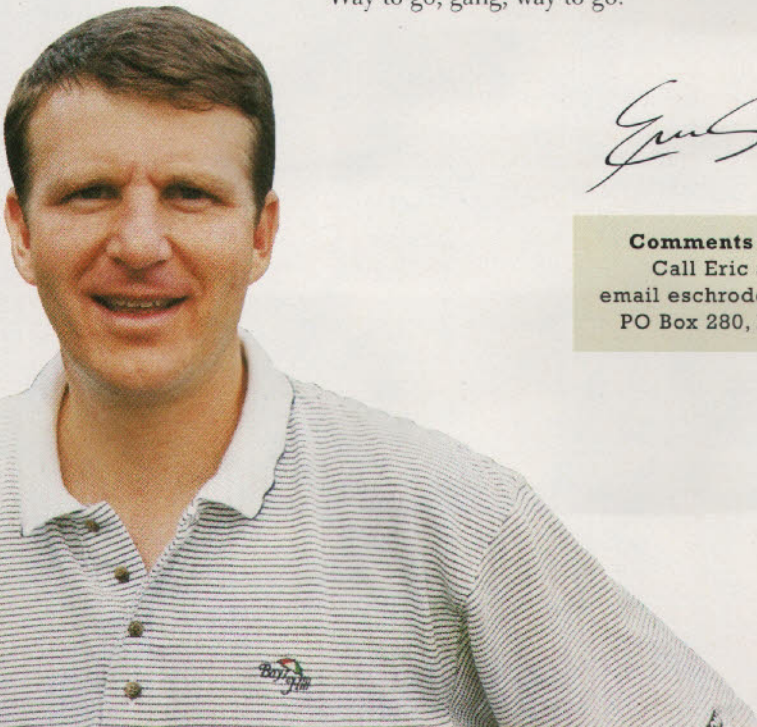
KAFMO designated Fowler "clerk of the works" for the rebuilding project and now, 9 years later, he leads a team of KAFMO volunteers each August to get and keep Little League's two home fields in world-class shape during their World Series.

"We're here for 12 days," says Fowler, who splits his all-star crew between the two fields. "Everyone has their assigned tasks." He talks with a smile as he gently rakes the mound at Lamade. What Fowler doesn't say is that he's there for all 12 days, while shifts of KAFMO volunteers come and go during the same period. But the decision-maker Fowler is a fixture.

Little League provides lodging, a meal ticket, and nightly dinners cooked especially for the volunteers. So, though their contributions are not taken lightly, there's no mention of any grounds personnel, volunteer or not, in the LLWS media guide, which is unfortunate.

Millions of fans worldwide watched the LLWS play out on two immaculate fields to determine a winner, and not too darn many of them knew why those fields looked so good. But you do, now—Don Fowler and his KAFMO crew.

Way to go, gang, way to go.



Comments always welcome.
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president's message

A big step forward

The STMA marketing committee began a major initiative during the last quarter of 2002 with the focus on upgrading the perceived image of the association and of the profession of sports turf management. Introduction of this new trio of marketing tools—the logo, tagline, and public relations positioning statement—is the first step in this ongoing initiative.

The new logo makes a bold statement because of the thick, heavy typeface. It has a clean, professional look that fits the sports world and the green industry and will transform well onto everything from letterhead and clothing to business cards. The logo was designed with a thicker typeface in order to appear more prominent. Obviously, the green of the logo design was used as a symbol of the green industry. The “p” in sports comes down far enough to tie in “managers association,” and bring together the whole logo. This logo can be used either with or without the tagline.

The tagline takes an everyday phrase “an expert in the field” and plays upon it to get across that STMA members are the absolute “experts” both in the field of sports turf and on the playing field. “Partners in the Game” portrays professionalism and positions STMA members on equal footing with others in the organization or athletic department. The tagline is a catchy, easily recognizable phrase to be used for marketing purposes.

“The sports industry can count on the healthiest and safest playing fields because sports turf managers are unequalled in expertise and professionalism.”

This public relations positioning statement is short, concise and “positions” the association in one sentence. It will be used in membership brochures and other recruitment materials and for such media statements as press releases and public service announcements.

I hope you are all in support of the changes to our association’s “storefront!” The membership has asked us to help sell the professionalism and expertise of the sports turf industry and of you, a member of it. This new logo, tagline, and public relations statement will be the first impression that our employers, our associates and the green industry will get of our profession. In upcoming educational sessions you will receive additional training and tools to help you “take matters into your own hands” with this outreach. The marketing committee is also working to establish formal alliances with other green industry associations in an effort to shine the best light on our members and our industry. Realize that the STMA can only do so much. As members of STMA, we need to

audit our individual professionalism and role. Be the best ambassador that you can be for yourself and the profession. Together we need to use all the tools that we are presented with and work to become more valuable to our facility and to this industry.



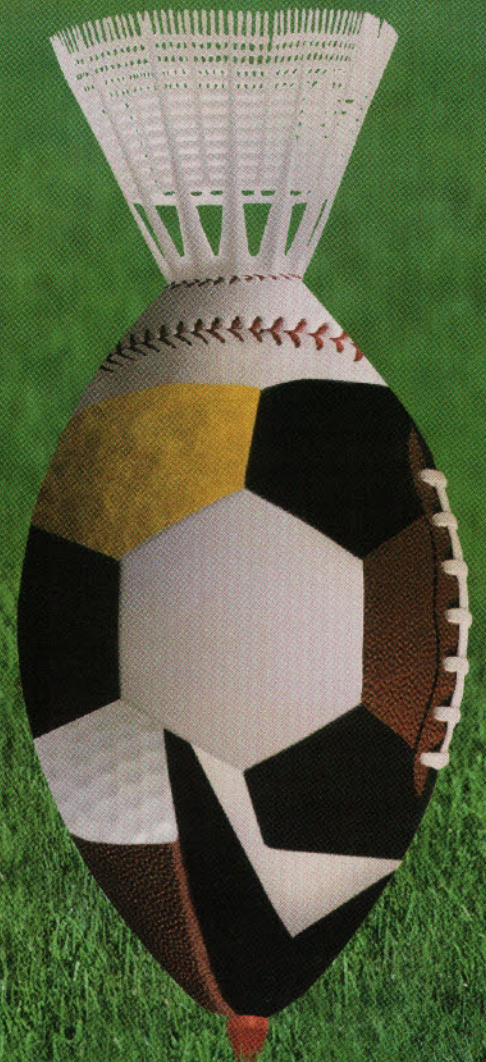
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Chapman Field of Cumberland Valley (PA) wins Field of the Year

BY SUZ TRUSTY

Chapman Field of the Cumberland Valley (PA) School District earned the 2002 Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) Football Field of the Year Award in the High School division. 2002 was a banner year for the field, the school district, and for grounds supervisor James L. Koontz, Jr. and his staff. Chapman Field also earned the STMA KAFMO Chapter Football Field of the Year honors and was named Top Football Field in the Midstate region by the state's major newspaper, Harrisburg's *Patriot News*.

The native soil of Chapman Field is Hagerstown loam. In May of 2000, the field was renovated. A sand grid drainage system was installed running north-south and east-west to a depth of 18-24 inches. This channels water into a subsurface drainage network of four-inch pipe. A 1-percent crown was established to facilitate soccer, as well as football, play. The full-field, in-ground, irrigation system was installed using popup heads. With the majority

of games played at night, the field is equipped with four light posts, each with 30,1500-watt light fixtures designed to focus on soccer, as well as football.

Koontz says, "Sodding was originally scheduled for June, but delays pushed back the scheduling. When the large roll sod arrived it was rejected due to poor quality. Small sod squares were laid in mid-July with the hope that the field would be ready for play in late August. Heavy rainfall occurred during the installation process when only part of the sod was in place. Once the field was again workable, they tried to re-lay the sod that had been displaced and lay the sod that had remained on pallets. Some wasn't usable, so new squares were bought in. Though the sod didn't have sufficient time to knit properly, the field was used for the full fall schedule. These events led to stripping the turf and installing large roll sod in the spring of 2001. By fall,

the field was performing to expectations, with only a minor drainage problem. That was resolved in the spring of 2002 when we installed a 4-inch drain on the home team sideline."

Besides Chapman Field, there are nine other inter-conference (PIAA) high maintenance fields on the main campus. The three field hockey fields become lacrosse fields in the spring. The football practice field is the javelin and discus site in the spring. The outfields of both the baseball and softball fields double as sites for fall field hockey games. The three soccer fields are used from early spring through late fall for soccer. Camps and strength conditioning keep some level of activity on nearly all the fields throughout the summer. There are 25 additional fields spread across the six outer school sites that are used for physical education classes and non-conference athletic events.

Koontz had been involved on a part-time basis throughout the renovation process and moved into his full-time position in October 2000. Besides Koontz, the well-organized grounds crew consists of three other full-time employees: Ron Miller, Robert Fitting, and Bill Heckert. This four-person staff is not only responsible for the athletic fields, but also the mowing, mulching, shrub trimming, and all other agronomic services, as well as the equipment maintenance and the painting and snow removal for the District's 221 acres.

Koontz is quick to praise his staff for their dedication and commitment, noting, "Our grounds crew is focused on providing the highest quality possible in the facilities we maintain. Assignments are slanted to their individual strengths as a mechanic, mower operator, and line painter, but all will contribute whatever it takes to accomplish our goals. Key to keeping the program moving forward is the support and commitment of director of facilities Mike Willis and athletic director Dave Bitting."

Chapman Field handles so much action it almost needs a revolving door. The fall sports season begins in mid-August and runs at least through the first week of November. During that period it will host 20 football games, serving the Varsity, Junior Varsity, Junior High and Midget teams, ten pre-game workouts and nine boy's soccer games.

Student Recognition Night takes place on a football game night around the third week of the season. Before the game all students participating in football, cheerleading or band, from the elementary school, junior high and high school, line up on the field to be acknowledged by the crowd. That can put up to 5,000 people on the field. And, before exiting the field, they form a huge "receiving line" for the home team to run through to kick off the game.

In mid-September, the field hosts a 1-night band competition involving 10-11 bands, along with their props, trailers, floats, and acoustics shells. The All-Star Football Game takes the field during the second full week of November as the senior all-star players stage an east-west championship game that also serves as a fundraiser for the Big 33 Championship game.

Koontz says, "We do attempt to rotate fall field use to get two days vacant each week to work in needed maintenance. We also try to schedule almost a full week off in mid-October so we can cover the field to spur seed germination to increase turf density for the end of the playing season."

"With the every increasing number of events and a state-ranked powerhouse football team always on the verge of a state Quad A title, we need seating for 8,000 people. It's not uncommon for there to be up to 10,000 people at a rival game and at the first regional playoff game we've also earned the right to host two of the last three years during the second week of November."

Koontz and crew put the field through an extensive post-season maintenance program, then cover it from around Thanksgiving through the end of



Cumberland Valley School District just completed a \$75 million renovation and expansion to keep up with community growth.

March. During this only true downtime for the field, they still check it every other day, moving the anchoring sandbags and monitoring turf conditions.

The spring season brings six girl's soccer games, back to back Junior Varsity and Varsity, and four boy's and four girl's lacrosse games, all played between the third week of April up to the third week of May.

Summer action includes a three-hour per day Midget football camp in June that drew over 50 in 2003 and a second one the third week in July that drew 20. Cross-country uses the field for summer practice and there's summer strength conditioning for all sports that puts players on all the fields. There are some former players now active in the NFL who also use Chapman Field for conditioning during the summer.

ing the summer.

The award-winning field conditions were achieved despite other extreme challenges. By early 2002, most of the East Coast had endured 2 years of severe drought conditions. Koontz says, "In February of 2002, the Governor declared a drought emergency for Cumberland County and limited water use to one watering per week. All irrigation schedules required approval by the state's Department of Environmental Protection and, once approved, county and local governmental agencies, including the local police department, were notified of

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“Once established, the scheduling was set. If the football field irrigation was scheduled for Monday we had to irrigate then, even if there was light rain on that day, because we would not be able to irrigate that field again until the next Monday. That base level of moisture was essential for field preservation. All water use had to be rationed, the use measured and reported, no matter what the water source. That wasn’t an issue for us. We use city water and were already metering it.”

Though the restrictions were severe, they were much improved over the water use ban of the drought emergency 4 years earlier. The KAFMO STMA Chapter, the Pennsylvania Golf Course Superintendents Association, and the Penn State extension team joined together to present a solid case of safety, environmental and economic issues to the Department of Environmental Protection that earned water use rights for athletic field and golf course preservation during drought emergencies. Koontz says, “The use of wetting agents proved valuable as a way to ‘stretch’ our irrigation plan. We applied it at the start of each irrigation cycle to help percolate and even out the water. We also found it helped speed seed germination. Being blessed with a wet spring, we were fortunate not to have to turn on any irrigation until June 17. Once fall rolled around, tropical storms Isidore and Lilli supplied the needed rainfall to help us through what could have been an extremely difficult season.”

In many ways, the 2003 weather pattern has been even harder for sports field management. A wet winter and very wet, cold spring started the cycle. Koontz says, “We’ve really had to think out of the box to balance the fertility, irrigation, and other maintenance practices through all the weather fluctuations in order to maintain turf density and quality. We cover Chapman Field over the winter and generally remove the cover by the end of March. Because of the weather, we didn’t remove the cover until the second week of April. The turf was lush and tender so we needed to baby it into shape for the start of soccer the third week of April. We spike aerated, reseeded, and applied fertilizer and biostimulants. It held up well through the spring soccer and lacrosse season, with only a bit of thinning in the middle of the field.

“We started a more aggressive program right after lacrosse, in our first downtime of the season. We went in with deep tine aeration, dragged the cores back in, topdressed with 85 percent sand and 15 percent peat, and seeded with our bluegrass blend. We also started foliar applications of biostimulants with some additional soluble fertilizer on a 2-3 week scheduling based on temperatures,

rainfall, and turf conditions. This was supplemented with granular fertilizer applications. We generally maintain a 1-5/8-inch mowing height during the growing season, with a three-times a week mowing schedule adjusted to the turf growth. During this wet, rainy spring period, we allowed the turf to reach a 2-inch height, to reduce overall mowing hours.

“Within a week of the end of lacrosse, conditions changed to hot and dry, with temperatures consistently ranging into the 90s. We had no measurable rainfall until July 21. We gradually reduced the mowing height to 1-5/8-inches and maintained that height. Then the skies opened with 3-1/2-inches of rain within 3 days, and temperatures dipping into the 75 to 80 degree range. By the first of August, we repeated the aggressive program we’d used right after lacrosse, this time in preparation for the fall football season.”

Koontz earned his BS degree in agronomy and environmental science from Delaware College. He incorporates this into his sports turf management program along with all of the background gained in his current position and through experience working on his uncles’ farms, in a landscaping company, and on the golf course.

He notes the careful planning and management of water, fertility, and biostimulants help him balance turf conditions to avoid putting any fungicides on the field. He also alters his bluegrass blend each year for overseeding applications. Selections are based of color, disease resistance, and other performance factors. The 2002 bluegrass blend developed for him by his supplier contained P-105, Tsunami, Touchdown, Blacksburg, Chicago 2 and Rugby 2.

He says, “I’ve found I get the best results by feeding the soil rather than focusing on the plant. If the total inputs throughout the year keep the soil healthy the turf top growth will reflect that. I look beyond the N, P, K and pH to the micronutrients, tracking things like the balance between the calcium and magnesium. I use gypsum to provide calcium, keep the

soil loose, and harden the plant. We do soil tests twice a year. I choose the biostimulants based both on those results and on what the products contain, such as phosphoric acid for basic Pythium control. I also limit perennial ryegrass use to the end of the football season, applying no more that 600 pounds throughout that period, to gain the greatest benefits from the disease resistance of the bluegrasses.

“We’re constantly adjusting the program, looking for ways to make our best results even better.”

Suz Trusty is communications director for the Sports Turf Managers Association. She can be reached at 800-323-3875.



The award-winning field conditions were achieved despite enduring 2 years of severe drought conditions.



Jim Koontz says, “It’s a team effort and we’re totally committed to accomplishing our goals.”

ST