HOME TEAM ADVANTAGE

When the safety of your players comes first, look to Bannerman, the leading Groomer manufacturer for over 24 years, to shape, level, and care for your baseball diamonds, warning tracks, and walking/bike trails. The B-BP-4 Ballpark-4® (shown) and the B-BP-6 Ballpark-6®, B-DM-6 Diamond Master® (shown) models have five standard tools, including: Ripper Blade, Rake, Leveler, Roller, and Brush. Accessories available include: Wing Brush Kit, Top Link Kit, 50-gallon Water Tank Kit with spray nozzle, and NEW Highway Transport Kit. Restore your diamond’s luster in 20 minutes or less with one of the industry’s leading groomers.

New to the Bannerman family of groomers is the B-MG-6 Master Groomer. This brush unit is the “Quick and Slick” answer to working in light to heavy topdressing and other turf building materials down to the base of the grasses, that you’ve only dreamed of, until now. For use on greens, tees, fairways, and all types of sportsturf surfaces both synthetic and natural.

Bannerman
THE HOME OF SPORTSTURF MAGIC

41 Kelfield Street, Rexdale, Ontario, Canada M9W 5A3
CANADA 1-800-325-4871
USA 1-800-665-2696
www.sportsturfmagic.com
GREEN... AIN'T IT?

• TWO-TIME WINNER "SPORTS FIELD OF THE YEAR"
MICHAEL W. SULLENBERGER
SPORTS TURF MANAGER, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY, FAIRFAX, VA

"Our Stadium Soccer Field is the 2003 Sports Turf Managers Association Soccer Field of the Year. I use K-Rain for one reason and one reason only. I demand the best. The K-Rain ProSport works, period. Nothing in the industry provides better coverage. The ProSport performs and it's built rock solid."

"Quality and reliability sold me on K-Rain. I expected that. Their customer service took me by surprise. There is no comparison to the K-Rain experience. No one does it better, I won't use anything else."

Call 1-800-735-7246 for more information, free demo and to find the K-RAIN Distributor nearest you.

K-RAIN ProSport®... Simply the Best

1-800-735-7246 | www.krain.com

© K-Rain Irrigation Systems Inc.
cover story

2004 STMA Professional Complex of the Year
26 Surprise (AZ) Recreation Campus, a 170-acre, $73 million gem of recreational amenities, features Surprise Stadium, the new home-away-from-home for both the Kansas City Royals and Texas Rangers.

features

GREEN SCIENCE
08 Balancing soils for sportsturf
Overused fields, limited budgets, and poor soil conditions can make for conditions only a magician could properly maintain.

TURF MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT
14 Essential questions before purchasing used equipment

18 Spreader technology: manufacturers' roundtable
Representatives from four major spreader companies answer questions about topdressing, their latest innovations, and how to use them.

FIELD OF THE YEAR
38 Re-visiting how Blue Valley beat winterkill

AROUND THE GROUNDS
30 The best plants you're not using
While the main focus of sports facilities is often on turf, the areas surrounding playing fields are important, too.

32 Let's talk internships
Eight turf managers and university professors opine on all aspects of providing, and securing, turfgrass-related internships.

34 Photo gallery of Super Bowl turf installation

departments

06 From the Sidelines

07 STMA President's Message

40 STMA in Action

41 STMA Chapter News

42 Marketplace

46 Q&A

ON THE COVER: Football warm-ups at the Surprise, AZ, Recreation Campus.
Play hard.

Land soft.

Brock Performance Base Technology for Synthetic Turf.

Imagine playing a game only 20 minutes after a 100-year rainstorm. On a dry field.

Brock is a patented porous composite that replaces stone under synthetic turf. Brock drains water laterally off the field four times faster than a traditional stone base. And, because Brock is an engineered composite, it eliminates the risk and uncertainty of installing stone. Brock is also designed to create an ideal playing surface: firm and fast to run on, softer to fall on. Brock even reduces the time and money needed to install a synthetic turf field.

Maximize drainage. Minimize risk. Your field is too important for anything else.

Call 1.877.276.2587 for more information, samples, and a field nearest you. Or go to www.brockusa.com to learn more.

©2006, Brock USA
Some reports on our April issue are in and they are not pretty. First, in our story on Blue Valley School District’s field of the Year-winning football field, we ran two “before” photos showing winterkill’s effect on the field instead of one “before” and one “after” shot. The latter showed just how well Jody Gill and his crew in Overland Park, KS, overcame the problem. Please see pages 38-39 in this issue to find out how they did it. My sincere apologies to everyone at Blue Valley SD for this regrettable mistake.

Also, I heard loud and clear from some readers who took exception to what they thought was too much, as well as unbalanced, coverage of synthetic turf in April. Our coverage was in no way an implied endorsement by the Sports Turf Managers Association of any products.

We were responding to interest in the subject that was on display at the STMA annual conference last winter. And we devoted space to synthetics because it was part of April’s Editorial section. After its survey of players, coaches, managers, and scouts about major league baseball’s transition.

Some reports on our April issue are in and they are not pretty. First, in our story on Blue Valley School District’s field of the Year-winning football field, we ran two “before” photos showing winterkill’s effect on the field instead of one “before” and one “after” shot. The latter showed just how well Jody Gill and his crew in Overland Park, KS, overcame the problem. Please see pages 38-39 in this issue to find out how they did it. My sincere apologies to everyone at Blue Valley SD for this regrettable mistake.

Also, I heard loud and clear from some readers who took exception to what they thought was too much, as well as unbalanced, coverage of synthetic turf in April. Our coverage was in no way an implied endorsement by the Sports Turf Managers Association of any products.

We were responding to interest in the subject that was on display at the STMA annual conference last winter. And we devoted space to synthetics because it was part of April’s Editorial section. After its survey of players, coaches, managers, and scouts about major league baseball’s transition.

Sometimes later this year, an STMA Task Force made up of turf managers, researchers, and synthetic reps will complete a White Paper addressing why one might select a certain type of field, using 15 criteria the Task Force is developing. This unbiased, fact-based document will be published in SPORTSTURF as well as elsewhere.

Now for some good news …

In case you missed it, USA Today had a neat item in its April 4 Baseball Opening Day special section. After its survey of players, coaches, managers, and scouts about major league baseball’s infields revealed Petco Park as the favorite in the National League, the paper interviewed Luke Yoder (Mr. Hole-in-One) to “find out what makes a great field.”

Luke, whose title is “Director of Landscape and Field Maintenance,” shared these interesting tidbits:

On mowing: “Grass moved in a pattern every day develops a grain that can cause the ball to move erratically.”

On his “spike test”: “When a player walks or runs around the field, you want to have spike marks but not footprints.” Luke goes on to say he tests by sticking a key into the field; it should go in easily and when pulled out the dirt shouldn’t break apart.

On the infield “lip”: “You should be able to put a blindfold on, put one foot on each surface (outfield grass, infield dirt) and not feel the transition.”

Next thing you know, Luke’ll have his own Bobblehead Doll Day at Petco … but he wouldn’t be the first turf manager to experience it! Yes, Thomas Marks, head groundskeeper for the AAA New Orleans Zephyrs for 7 years (and former star pitcher for the University of New Orleans) will be honored with his own bobblehead doll, which will be given away on May 20. Now that’s professional respect! Congratulations, Thomas.
Advancing STMA through Committees

It is so gratifying to observe our committee process at work. In my April message, I reported that the association was refining and enhancing the committee system. In addition to the 11 standing committees, 10 sub-committees were established, and a Past President's Advisory Council and a Synthetic/Natural Turf Task Force were formed. More subcommittees will be appointed throughout the year to help facilitate and manage specific committee projects. To date, more than 100 STMA members are involved in our committees.

This past month I participated in two separate programs with STMA members. The first was in early April at the Illinois Chapter Spring Sports Turf Workshop, which was conducted at Northwestern University. I had the opportunity to tell chapter members and others in the industry about our committees' work and the various initiatives underway. Since the educational program was on synthetic and natural turf management, I shared important information about STMA's work in this area. STMA is committed to developing factual "white papers" to bring information to the STMA membership and to the industry. Abby McNeal, CSFM, chairs this newly appointed Task Force, which has representation from those in research, the commercial segment, and field management side for synthetic and natural turf-grass. As this core task force needs information, additional subcommittees will be created.

Another important topic I covered was about the work of the 2006 Conference Committee. Committee Chairman Mike Andresen, CSFM, and the conference committee members are underway with program planning of the 2006 Conference in Orlando, FL. Also, Membership Committee Chair Lynda Wightman and that committee's members are developing a plan to recruit new members of STMA and retain current members. One of their initiatives is to conduct a survey of the STMA membership to determine awareness and perceived value of association services.

Because of various committees' work, I foresee a need to reactivate the Bylaws Committee. There are issues dominating committee discussions that need to be more clearly defined by the bylaws. The bylaws should be a working document to be used, reviewed and revised as necessary, and viewed as a valuable resource for the association to promote sound decision-making for every circumstance.

In mid-April, I traveled to Fort Myers, FL, to participate in a seminar at the North Fort Meyers Community Park and to promote STMA. I had the opportunity to discuss our Certification Program and the Certification Committee initiatives with parks directors. A highlight of the visit was discussion about the value that certification brings to members personally and professionally. My message was that certification recognizes our members' achievements and symbolizes our commitment to the profession — that it is not just a "test" for sports turf managers nor just an acronym placed after our names.

Whenever I have the opportunity, I truly enjoy speaking about committee goals and initiatives and the hard work of the STMA committee volunteers.

MIKE TRIGG, CSFM
mtrigg@waukeganparks.org

http://www.sportsturfmanager.com • STMA
Balancing soils for sports turf

The sports turf manager has perhaps the most difficult agronomic conditions to manage in all of agriculture. Overused fields, limited budgets and poor soil conditions make for situations that only a magician could properly maintain. One of the best tricks in the sports turf magician's bag is a quality soil testing protocol. A good soil testing program can help to produce a turf that is more deeply rooted with less stress and disease issues, and a soil that is open and more capable of proper drainage, leading to fewer turf related problems and fewer liability issues.

A good soil testing protocol can help produce a healthy soil. A healthy soil is a living, breathing entity that consists of a chemical, a physical and a biological profile. All three disciplines need to work in harmony in order to create a sustainable environment for a quality turf. As the soil opens physically more air and water moves through the soil creating a better environment for the proliferation of beneficial soil microorganisms.

Following an approach of "balancing the chemistry and feeding the soil" allows the sports turf manager to create an agronomic environment that is sustainable, one that reduces inputs and lessens common problems. Balancing the soil starts with a quality soil test, one that looks beyond pH and NPK fertility alone. Feeding the soil addresses need to balance the important carbon to nitrogen ratio in the soil. Recent research studies at Penn State have shown significant improvement in field quality when composts were used as topdressing.

"We began an aggressive soil testing program on all of the Fairfax County Park Authority athletic fields back in 2000, and within a few seasons we were seeing some amazing results. We have 275 fields, which is quite an inventory, and it took 2 years to sample all the fields and act on the soil reports. Our soils were consistently low, sometimes very low, in calcium and potassium and high in magnesium with relatively high CEC's. Combined with aggressive aeration and a more natural-organic approach to nutrition, turf quality has really improved," says Bob Studholme of the Fairfax County (VA) Park Authority.

The soil testing protocol that was established for Fairfax County was set up using standard and water-soluble "paste extract" soil tests performed by Logan Labs of Russell's Point, OH. Chemical imbalances were identified on most sites throughout the park system's fields. Many of the imbalances were extreme. Most sites had very tight soils and water drainage was a serious concern. Roots were shallow, clipping volume was weak and wear recovery was poor even on the irrigated sites.

All 275 fields were tested over a 2-year period and a program was established for each site. The issue of most concern on the majority of sites was a very high level of magnesium in the soil and weak levels of calcium and potassium. For the most part, the most frequently recommended inputs were high calcium limestone and gypsum. Some sites showed calcium levels as low as 35% base saturation with magnesium levels above the 25% mark. Ideal calcium percentages should be in the 60-70% range with magnesium levels between 12-17%. This combination of low calcium and high magnesium consistently produced tight, compacted soils and weak turf. As the high calcium lime was applied, calcium percentages started to improve and magnesium percentages fell on the soil test reports. On all fields as this balance began to take place the soils became less compacted, rooting was deeper, recovery was better and rates of fertilizer fell.

According to Studholme, "This program saved the County untold sums of..."
For every field,

there's a John Deere well within reach.

John Deere Assured Certified Pre-Owned equipment. What if you could have John Deere quality equipment on your field at a price that fits well within your budget? You can, with John Deere Assured, the only pre-owned turf equipment that comes with an ironclad one-year warranty. Each piece of John Deere Assured equipment must pass an exhaustive 100-point checkup. And any parts replacement is done with genuine John Deere Parts.

Now you and your crew can enjoy the quality, support, and service of John Deere equipment at a price that looks good on any bottom line. To find out more about John Deere Assured, call your local John Deere distributor or 1-800-537-8233. www.JohnDeere.com
money. The results that we experienced are striking. The soils opened up physically in only a few years of work and we’ve been able to reduce the amount of inputs to maintain quality turf, despite the sometimes frustrating endeavor of managing in the Transition Zone. We still have some pest problems of course, but the severity has lessened and recovery is much improved. Before taking this approach, the turf would show signs of stress at the first hint of unfavorable environmental conditions. We were constantly battling Dollar Spot and Brown Patch through the summer, and thin stands of turf were prone to weeds. Now it’s a whole new ballgame: the turf is much more resistant to climatic changes, recovery has improved, the soils drain better, and the denser stand of turf out competes most of the weeds. And all of this while reducing fertilizer input,” says Studholme.

According to Jim Heck, Lead Agronomist at Soil First Consulting who has developed recommendations from the Logan Labs reports for the Fairfax County Parks system, “We look at the whole soil report to help us identify imbalances on the soil colloid. Ideally we would like to see a base saturation of 68% calcium, 12% magnesium, 5% potassium, 2% sodium, 3% trace nutrients, and 10% hydrogen for soil based fields. On soil based fields base saturation percentages are a good tool to help us identify the physical and biological profile of a soil.

“These percentages are not as good a tool on low CEC sand based fields where we rely as much on the sufficiency levels as we do the relationships between the nutrients,” says Heck. “The real key is that we look at the big picture and don’t get stuck on soil pH alone, or single nutrient analysis as most conventional instruction teaches. Many times with the Fairfax County soil tests we made changes to a site using what the soil test told us to do, which went against what the pH was suggesting. We ask the question ‘why is the pH what it is?’ This allows us to build recommendations that are based on the whole soil profile.

“In the case of Fairfax County there were many fields where we applied high calcium lime to the soil to lower high magnesium levels and reduce calcium deficiencies,” Heck says. These applications affected the soils in very positive ways but may not have been suggested if we were focused only on soil pH.”

Think of the pressure that a typical sports field in most school or park settings is placed under each year. Some fields handle as many as 20,000 set of feet in one season. That can be equivalent to one ton or more of direct vertical pressure per square foot of soil surface. In areas of the crease or down the center of the field that pressure can be even worse.

“Our fields are used heavily; they basically have a 30-34 week season. There is an event of some sort on them pretty much every day during this time, unless closed for weather related issues. We have over 1.1 million residents in Fairfax County and the demand for athletic field space is tremendous. Once we started using soil reports and balancing the soil chemistry, the fields started to show improved water drainage and rooting within a couple of years. There is no question that this approach has led to much more sustainable turf while reducing the need for rescue remedies. I believe that balancing soil chemistry and enhancing soil biology is the cornerstone to any turf program. The proof is in the pudding,” says Studholme.

Soil testing for sports turf is not a new practice but too often it is taken for granted. Developing a complete soil testing protocol with a quality soil-testing laboratory can pay significant dividends. Looking at what the soil test is telling you is the key to building the best nutrient management programs. “We went beyond conventional wisdom and we made the changes that we were seeking for years,” says Studholme. These changes start by balancing the soil chemistry.

Joel Simmons is a former Penn State County Extension Agent and has taught Soil Fertility in the Rutgers University Turf Management Program since 1996. He also is the owner of EarthWorks Natural Organic Products and Soil First Consulting. He can be reached at www.soilfirst.com. Logan Labs is located in Russell’s Point Ohio and can be reached at www.logan-labsllc.com.