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On the cover: Centurion Field at the Christian Academy of Louisville won the 2007 STMA Schools/Parks Football Field of the Year. Andy Davis is turf and grounds manager and his assistant is Chris Miller. Background image courtesy of istockphoto.com.

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Holidays throw work/family balance in sharp relief



ERIC SCHRODER
Editor

eschroder@m2media360.com

717-805-4197
P.O. Box 280,
Dauphin, PA 17018

Many dedicated sports turf managers spend a lot of time at work. This can be especially noticeable during the holiday season. We asked three Certified Sports Field Managers how they maintain a healthy work/family balance:

Kevin Malone, 52, is manager of the Baker Field Athletic Complex at Columbia University in New York City. Kevin spends nearly 4 hours a day commuting from Long Island via train. Malone says his family issues aren't about spending time with his children because they are college-age; rather, he does what he has to do because part of his compensation package is free tuition for his daughter to attend Ivy League Columbia, which is worth about \$40,000 a year. As well, the university picks up 50% of his son's tuition at St. John's University, which is worth another \$10K a year.

His football season is as crazy as anyone's; he sometimes spends about 75 hours a week on the job during the season even though he's a salaried employee. "It's not expected; I choose to do it," he says. "It's the right thing to do, and it's worth it. I love what I do even during the long, tiring days."

Kari Allen, a veteran of minor league baseball, spent the past year as an hourly worker for the first time and it's made a difference in her lifestyle. "I am not the person making all of the management decisions for the fields so I no longer bring any work or work-related stress home with me, and I only work a typical 40 hour week. The family/work balance is not a major issue for me at this time," she says.

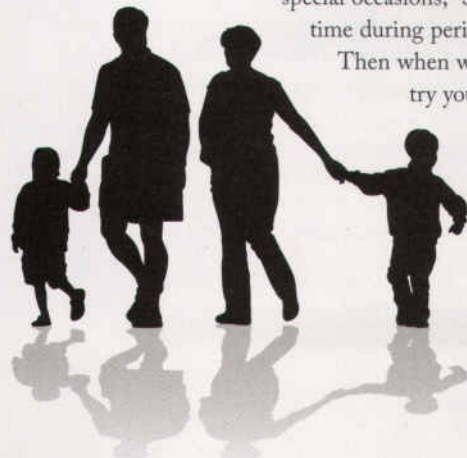
"This balance had been a challenge for me previously, however. I am extremely fortunate to have a husband who has worked in minor league baseball and understands its demands."

Jeff Salmond is athletic turf manager for the University of Oklahoma. "I believe that you need to have a wife and family that are very understanding of your profession. You need to be able to communicate, stay on the same page, and be able to have some give and take.

"My wife, Loida, is also in college athletics and we have a young daughter. We really have to work together and coordinate our demanding schedules. Between our schedules there are a few missed birthday parties, holidays and special occasions," Salmond says. "Therefore we try and make up for lost time during periods of inactivity, which sometimes may be minimal.

Then when we have times with family at home or the holidays, you try your best to give them 100% of your undivided attention.

"I also believe that you have to surround yourself with trusted and loyal staff . . . that you take care of because they are your lifeline."



1233 Howard Street, Suite 2I
San Francisco, CA 94103
Phone 415-839-5060
Fax 415-398-3511
www.greenmediaonline.com

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SportsTurf
MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

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STMA Office
805 New Hampshire Suite E
Lawrence, Ks 66044
Phone 800-323-3875 Fax 800-366-0391
Email STMAinfo@sportsturfmanager.org
www.sportsturfmanager.org

Editorial
GROUP PUBLISHER Douglas Hebbard
EDITOR Eric Schroder
TECHNICAL EDITOR Dr. Scott McElroy
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VP OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Gerald Winkel

VP OF CIRCULATION AND

COLLATERAL SALES

Joanne Juda-Prainito

PRODUCTION & OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

Mary Jo Tomei

DIRECT MAIL LIST SALES

Cheryl Naughton 678-292-6054

cnaughton@m2media360.com

Reader Services

DIRECTOR OF READER SERVICE

Joanne Juda-Prainito

Readerservice@m2media360.com

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

Phone 847-763-9565 Fax 847-763-9569

REPRINTS

Cheryl Naughton 678-292-6054

cnaughton@m2media360.com

Advertising Sales Representatives

J.F. Purcell

135 E. 55th St., 5th floor

New York, NY 10022

917-421-9059

jpurcell@m2media360.com

CT, DE, GA, MA, MD, ME, NC, NH, NJ, NY, PA,
RI, SC, VA, VT

Ann Cannon

134 N. LaSalle St., Suite 1700

Chicago, IL 60602

312-236-4900, ext. 1105

acannon@m2media360.com

AR, IA, IL, IN, KS, LA, MN, MO, ND, NE, OK, SD,
TX, WI

Joy Garipey

16267 W. 14 Mile Rd., Suite 202

Beverly Hills, MI 48025

248-530-0300, ext. 1401

jpgaripey@m2media360.com

AL, FL, KY, MI, MS, OH, TN, WV

Bruce Loria

626 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 500

Los Angeles, CA 90017

213-596-7226

bloria@m2media360.com

AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY

Classified Advertising Sales

Glenn Belton

626 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 500

Los Angeles, CA 90017

213-596-7212

gbelton@m2media360.com

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Strength in numbers

Thank you for being a member of the Sports Turf Managers Association. On behalf of the Board of Directors, Staff, Committees and fellow members of our association, I sincerely mean, 'Thank You.'

As members and people who work in the sports and turf management industries, we all realize the importance of continuing education, experience, passion for what we do, and networking with peers. As we develop our personal goals and the objectives to reach those goals, I trust STMA gets better each day in becoming a great resource for you. Providing those elements is certainly the goal of our Association.

The only way we succeed in our goals is through commitment and resources. Commitment from volunteers may be STMA's strongest asset. Obviously the committee system in STMA thrives and accomplishes great results because of the willingness so many members have in giving back to this industry. We do it with trust that we're making a difference in image enhancement, professionalism and making our industry richer for the next generation of Sports Turf Managers.

Volunteerism also happens locally. Stories we read about, hear about and live first hand, where individuals or groups help with community projects leave a remarkable impression and also reflect positively on the entire profession. I benefit because of the work you do. Voltaire, the great French philosopher and writer summed it up: "Appreciation is a wonderful thing; it makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well."

January starts a new membership year. As we grow and become a more relevant Association and industry, we'll have more opportunities to attain our greater goals. We know that our membership roster is tiny compared to the pool of potential members. You are responsible for positioning us where we are today, in a great place! We know this Association needs to expand to truly represent the sports turf industry. Please help us to grow in 2009. If we all simply introduce a potential member to STMA, we'll all benefit. Know the website address (www.STMA.org), know the toll free number by heart (800-323-3875) and know what you'd tell a potential member about what STMA means to you. You'll be doing your part.

There's no difference between a commercial member and a professional member in the desire to make STMA "bigger and better." As we grow as an industry, our commercial partners recognize this and invest even more in our needs. Their interest is certainly to help us succeed, both at your facility and throughout the country and world. As we succeed in managing sports fields and enriching athletes' lives, our partners succeed as commercial enterprises.

It's a privilege and honor to speak on behalf of the STMA membership. More importantly it's a privilege and honor to be one person in this great collective group of members. Voltaire's words are on point, and I benefit every day from my association with STMA and each of you. Thank you.



MIKE ANDRESEN
CSFM

mandrese@iastate.edu

Mike Andresen

Making it through a minor league season *without sod*

By Joey Stevenson

One of our goals this past season was to play an entire baseball season without using sod. Simple, right? Not so fast! With 72 Triple-A home games and 12 extra event baseball games, a few softball games, a Girl Scout concert, and five other “extra events” the

idea of no sod was truly a distant dream. But, as I write this in mid-October, we were able to accomplish what I thought was not possible. This is the story of how we did it.

The ability to do this was put into motion several years ago. Located in central Indiana, the northern part of the transition zone,



Indianapolis Indians groundskeepers: Joey Stevenson (left) and assistant Evan Buckley.



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LitterKat is outfitted with Dual On-Board vibrators in the collection baskets, quickly and easily redistributing infill while the electric actuator allows for an infinite level of height adjustment. The brushed aluminum collection baskets are designed for easy removal and emptying.

The structural parts are equipped with a durable, long-lasting powder coat finish. All this sits on forged aluminum wheels. And don't forget the tow-behind magnet for pickup of unwanted ferrous objects. The powerful 6-foot wide unit pulls objects from deep in the surface into the magnet — keeping your surface safe and ready for action.



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the field had to be constructed properly. Composed of 100% sand rootzone and re-surfaced in 2003 with 100% Kentucky bluegrass (varieties include Blacksburg, Quantum, Midnight, Limousine, NU Destiny, and Rugby), Victory Field is regarded as a top playing surface. Recently, in central Indiana and other “northern” locations, we’ve seen the use of cold-tolerant Bermuda grasses. Since this option was out of the question for us, one of the best reasons we are able to tolerate wear comes straight out of the summer of 2005.

That summer in Indiana was extremely hot and dry. What typically happens to bluegrass 2 years after sod and hot/dry conditions? You guessed it—summer patch. With the stories I heard and pictures I saw, 50-60% of the field was completely devastated. Again with re-surfacing out of the question, the next best option was seed. This turned out to be one of the best opportunities to implement a perennial ryegrass mixture of seed (varieties Paragon, Grand Slam, and Pizzazz).



Top: Intern Brian McDougal in front of mound with no sod.
Bottom: Back arc at 2nd base, another seeded area.

After 4 years of overseeding with our perennial ryegrass blend and alternate years with our bluegrass blend, we have accomplished roughly a 60/40 rye/blue playing surface. Since the ryegrass has been implemented we have seen the playing surface tighten up 10-fold and overall provide an excellent playing surface. It is also pertinent to mention ryegrass has good wear and drought tolerance, hence the nickname “perennial drygrass.” It also tolerates low mowing; the seed germinates rapidly, and for those interested in mowing patterns it stripes extremely well.

So was it just the perennial ryegrass that helped us? The answer is “Heck no.” Also implemented in 2005 and tweaked over the past few years were using organic fertilizers for all granular applications. At Victory Field we use an all-Nature Safe fertilizer program, spring and fall applications of 12-2-6 60% ammonium sulfate (not so organic) and summer applications of 10-2-8 all organic.

When a pound is not a pound

One of the misconceptions I have heard is a pound of nitrogen is a pound of nitrogen. This is simply not the case when you’re using organics vs. synthetics. Fertilizers can be composed of ammonical nitrogen, urea and inorganic salts, and other forms synthetic nitrogen. The key for organic fertilizers is the source of nutrients that are meal-based. The benefits of using a product like this are: increased microbial activity, low burn potential, improved CEC with humus, improved soil structure during heat and drought periods, and high protein meal releasing nutrients over a 7-8 week period. Also, the sulfate applications in the spring and fall allow for excellent spring-green up and building up carbohydrates and sugars moving into the summer and for fall feeding. Ammonium sulfate also has the ability to lower soil pH in the rootzone that improves micro-nutrient uptake and the spread of root disease like summer patch.

With the correct turf blend and the use of a properly balanced fertilizer program we have seen no wear issues and no outbreaks of disease since 2005. We use the philosophy of KISS—Keep It Simple, Stupid. The fertilizer program is based on application intervals of two weeks and the use of only two granular fertilizers in stock. We do not deal with headaches of a long list of fertilizer choices and in the end our turf is the healthiest we have ever seen.

So with these two crucial steps in place we still had to pay close attention to how we managed our wear areas. With our goal of no sod for an entire season, preparations had to begin at the conclusion of the 2007 season.

After we concluded our fall overseeding in early September, a second application of perennial ryegrass seed was drop spread just to the edges. At first when the seed began to germinate our edges looked extremely strange since ryegrass seedlings are about five shades lighter in color than a mature blue/rye field. This may have looked like a mistake at first but after weak seedlings were thinned out by winter and two spring core aerifications our edges were in perfect shape to take on the season.

This second application of ryegrass seemed to get our edges to nearly 80-90% ryegrass. In the past the mound had been re-sodded to