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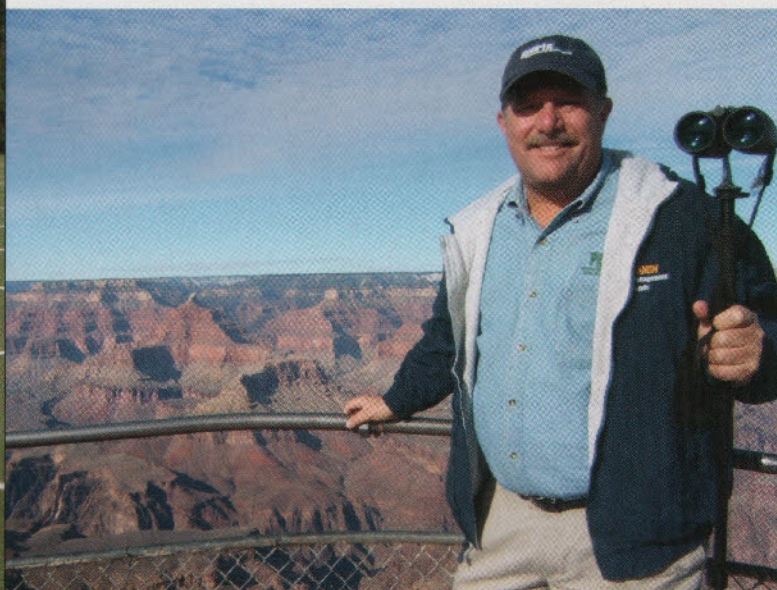
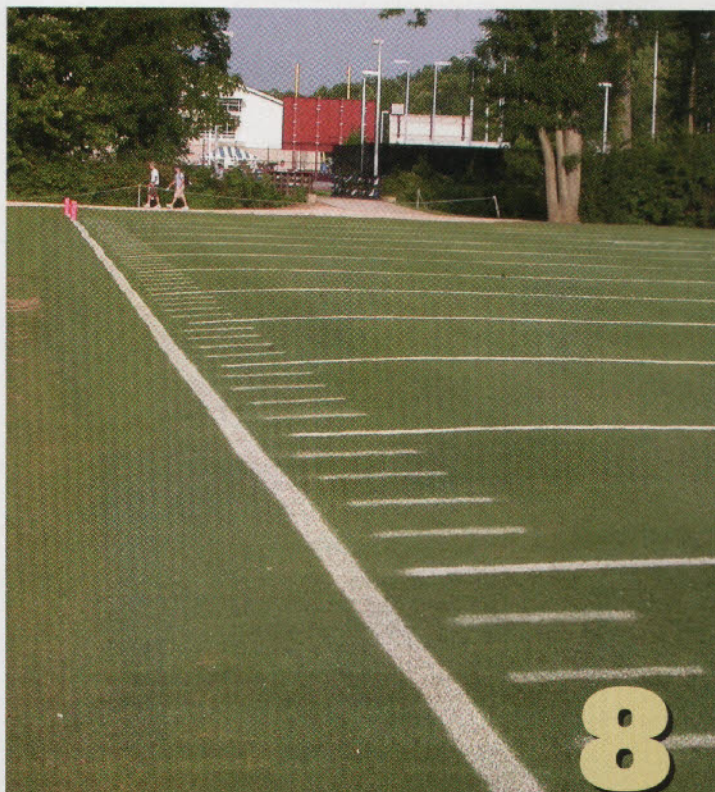
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On the cover: Troy Crawford, sports turf manager for the City of Colleyville, TX, gets the traditional "Gatorade shower" from his crew for their winning a Field of the Year Award.



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From the Sidelines

SportsTurf

New website for sports turf managers



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As the only audited magazine in the country devoted exclusively to the concerns of sports turf managers, we at *SportsTurf* take a lot of pride each month in providing you with the best information to help you do your job better.

And, like just about every other business in the country, we have a presence on the World Wide Web via the Internet. Recently our website was hacked into and digitally beaten to a pulp that would make Florida citrus growers proud. Why anyone would bother messing with that old site is a true mystery; some computer geek's basement must have been leaking radon like crazy, who knows?

But we were prepared because www.sportsturfonline.com was close to being ready to launch this spring. So last month we went "live" with this new website even though not all the interactive functions have been fully developed. This site is meant to meet the growing demand for more instant communication expected in today's business environment. It is NOT intended to be simply an online version of this magazine.

"With the launch of SportsTurfOnline we hope to create a community where sports field managers, sports facilities managers, designers and contractors can gather to get the latest news, share ideas, and find new suppliers and customers. We feel that this new site will be a great complement to STMA.org, as well as the print edition of *SportsTurf* magazine," says Douglas Hebbard, group publisher of M2MEDIA360's Green Media division, which consists of *OPE*, *Landscape and Irrigation*, *Arbor Age* and *SportsTurf* business to business magazines.

The top of the new site features links to the home pages of Green Media and each of the other three aforementioned magazines, so that you can get a comprehensive overview of the entire green industry or take a closer look at a specific market. It also has an "Industry Jobs" section, where you may view or post job openings—free of charge. Plus, near the upper right corner, you may click on a weather radar map to go directly to The Weather Channel's website, where you may find out the latest weather conditions and forecasts.

The left edge of the site is divided into four main sections: news and features, resources, interactive and contacts, all with several subsections. The "news and features" section contains articles and archives, daily news, product news, personnel news and a calendar of events. The "resources" section features the media kit/editorial calendar, classified ads, buyer's guide/directory, an online subscription form, and industry links to top organizations and other resources. The "interactive" section will feature attractions such as virtual trade shows and e-newsletters. The "contacts" section is self explanatory, listing all of the vital contact information for the magazine's sales and editorial staff.

Please take a moment to visit our new home—and yours—at www.sportsturfonline.com and respond with your thoughts at eschroder@m2media360.com. We hope that this new tool will help enlarge and enhance the professional sports turf community as it provides an outlet for comments, advice, and questions for all.

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President's Message

Getting outside feels good

Getting outside, polishing diamonds, and working fields felt extra special this spring! What a long and challenging winter so many areas of the country and beyond endured. It seemed at our place that even coaches and administrators had more patience and realized the difficulty we all had in getting fields playable for spring sports.

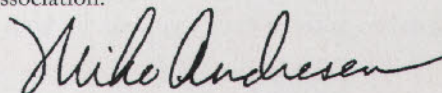
Noted author and speaker Hanoch McCarty is quoted as saying, "Let your friends, colleagues and family know about the good you see; it will help them see it too." We made an effort on our crew to simply make sure each day we came with a positive outlook and attitude. Sure, tempers were short at times and stress seemed to be omnipresent, but we were committed to being the one staff at Iowa State with a positive outlook no matter what the challenge. When someone would bemoan the endless winter, we talked about the treat it was to have winter behind us and turf actively growing.

One aspect I didn't anticipate with the positive vibe was how the Field Crew seemed to find our pace more quickly than in years past. We were hitting on all (OK, most) cylinders early! We still bobbled a few and fumbled a few, but the crew seemed excited, motivated, and very prideful of their work this spring. Maybe just pushing the past away and focusing on what we can do to maximize today while thinking about tomorrow made a big impact on our crew dynamics.

Did McCarty's quote have an impact? All I know is that work wasn't work this spring. It was back to being fun and rewarding. We work in sports and athletics, folks. We drive to parks and stadiums for our jobs. Take a fresh look, and I hope you can see it doesn't get much better than that. I know our crew appreciates the renewed perspective. The bonus comes when your crew pounds out work better than anyone thought they could. It's such a phenomenon that some of the guys are 2 weeks now wearing their lucky socks. They're afraid they'll mess up the karma.

I want to let you know about the work by the Bylaws Committee on our Governance structure that I mentioned at our annual meeting (see page 43). The Committee is working diligently to write bylaws that clearly present the new Officers' ascension process and other revisions affecting your Board. The most dramatic change is having Officers serve 1-year terms. Another modification combines the Secretary and Treasurer positions into one single office. The committee work is well underway. Updates will be communicated electronically on our website at www.STMA.org, and regularly in this magazine, our official publication. The Committee will present these changes for a membership vote later this fall. Please dig in to how the changes will affect STMA and be prepared to vote. I think the changes will have great positive impact on STMA!

It's a real privilege and pleasure to serve on your behalf. Thank you for being a member of this great association.



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Throughout the South and even now into the upper transition zone, bermudagrass is considered the primary choice

for intensively used summer and fall use athletic fields. Although it could be argued that other species like Kentucky bluegrass may be more visually attractive, a successful athletic field surface is not necessarily one that looks the best but one that maintains persistent ground cover and forms a reliable turf. Therefore, when making a species selection decision, turfgrass functional characteristics such as recovery from use should be considered before appearance.

Compared to most other grasses bermudagrass is difficult to beat for its recuperative capacity. I would equate bermudagrass to the heavy-duty 4x4 pick-up truck of the turfgrass world. It is durable, tolerates reg-

ular, close (1/2-3/4 inch) mowing heights, and when properly maintained will provide more consistent seasonal performance than alternative species like Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass.

Compared to the cool-season turfgrasses bermudagrass is susceptible to far fewer summer diseases, and so requires fewer fungicides to maintain its best appearance. In terms of other pest problems, many turf managers treat annually with insecticides to protect their turf against white grub feeding. With bermudagrass this problem is virtually nonexistent. This is a big plus as the public is very concerned about pesticide exposure, particularly on recreational fields used by children.


Probably one of the main advantages to bermudagrass for athletic fields is its growth habit. It is a creeping grass and spreads by both above and below-ground

creeping stems. Over time, this growth produces a durable mat of organic material at the soil surface which confers an additional level of wear tolerance. This is particularly helpful where cleated shoes are worn which may tear the turf.

A final advantage to bermudagrass is that it produces a deep, extensive root system that enhances the already very good heat and drought tolerance of this warm-season species. The abundance of stems and deep roots make bermudagrass a more reliable choice than cool-season grasses on fields where an in-ground irrigation system is absent or where irrigation head coverage is less than adequate.

With all the positive attributes of bermudagrass it is important to remember that no species is perfect all the time. Probably the biggest weakness for bermudagrass is

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that as a species cold tolerance is highly variable, and many widely planted cultivars are prone to potentially severe winter-kill, especially when planted in climactic zones above the lower transition zone of the United States.

Additionally, when maintaining bermudagrass it responds and looks most attractive when mowed and maintained with a reel-type mower. For lower budget facilities this may be a limiting factor to successful bermudagrass fields. These mowers are more expensive and require more technical skill to properly maintain an even and effective cutting height. Discussions with a turfgrass equipment supplier may help answer some of these questions for your individual situation.

Overall, however, the positives factors for planting and maintaining bermudagrass for an intensively used summer and fall use athletic field far outweigh the risk of potential winter-kill. Additionally, advances in bermudagrass planting techniques and the

rapid establishment of bermudagrass make this problem less of a concern.

Ohio River Valley problems

Like any potential management problem, the first approach to developing a solution is the old adage "right plant-right place", meaning choose grasses with superior genetics to achieve superior performance. For bermudagrass winter-kill concerns, this is best attacked by planting newer more cold tolerant cultivars. In addition, from a management perspective, intensive traffic during dormancy periods should be avoided.

Winter-kill is a complex problem and many factors besides cultivar and traffic may play a role in the severity of winter-kill. For example, during the spring of 2007 serious winter-kill was observed throughout much of the Ohio River valley, which includes southern Indiana, Ohio and northern Kentucky. In many cases the existing bermudagrass completely died. The exact reasons are not

known but the primary factors affecting winter-kill level of plant dormancy, soil and plant moisture status, and the duration and intensity of low temperature exposure.

During the winter of 2007, December and January temperatures were often approximately 5 degrees or more above normal. By contrast, during the first 3 weeks of February temperatures were approximately 5-10 degrees below normal. With lows at or below zero and no snow cover in some regions, winter-kill was expected because during the time the plants were subjected to warmer temperatures they never fully went into winter dormancy and so were more sensitive to lethal cold temperatures. This was especially pronounced on older cultivars with less winter hardiness.

As anyone that manages turf knows, the weather in each individual year can be highly variable and extremely difficult to predict. To combat this, many turf managers are using lightweight protective covers