

FIELD OF THE YEAR



Michael Buras,
CSFM



Historic Longwood Cricket Club wins new STMA Award

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2008, the STMA Field of the Year Awards included a “sporting grounds” category to expand the pool of potential winners to include those sports outside the “Big Four,” football, baseball, softball and soccer.

Longwood Cricket Club is a tennis club that had its first tournament in 1882 and was the site of the first Davis Cup competition. Longwood last hosted its cricket in 1933. Located in Chestnut Hill near Fenway Park outside Boston, the club

opened in 1877 and in 1881 Longwood member Richard Sears became the first United States singles champion.

Today Michael Buras, CSFM is Head Groundskeeper in charge of this historic real estate. He has his BS in plant and soil science with a concentration in turf management and has been at Longwood 12 years. Buras is also vice president of New England’s STMA Chapter and the sports turf representative on the New England Regional Turfgrass Foundation’s board of directors.

Left to Right: Brandy Mirth, Michael Buras, Ben Polimer, Andrew Walsh, Tim Burns, Charlie Bartlett, Victor Maillet



FIELD OF THE YEAR

The staff at Longwood includes Ben Polimer, Tim Burns, Charlie Bartlett, Neil Johnson, and Andrew Walsh. They tend to the *poa annua* on native, sandy loam soil over a 7-month season.

Buras says, "With only a handful of comparable tennis clubs in the US, I have no peers within driving distance where I can go and share information. I did go see Eddie Seaward at Wimbledon though, the undisputed leader in grass courts.

"The sports turf and golf industries provide the basis for our management, but neither has the same demands as our turf. We need knowledge from both regimens to fit our specialized requirements; our soil needs to be compacted and firm as a putting green and grass cut as a fairway, all while being expected to survive wear comparable to a sports field," says Buras.

"In 130 years Longwood has had only five head groundskeepers, a sign of the job's esoteric requirements," he says. "Each manager has passed on his experience, his vision of the ideal court, what he did to achieve them. And each new groundskeeper has modified these methods to fulfill the ever-increasing expectations of players and spectators."

ST: What are the unique challenges in caring for tennis courts?

Buras: Longwood currently has about 1000 tennis loving members playing on 25 grass and 19 clay tennis courts. The management of grass tennis courts has many of the same challenges other sports turf managers deal with. What is unique is that lawn

tennis is played on a compacted soil with grass cut at 5/16 of an inch. The court must be 100 percent dry for safe play and much of the wear is in concentrated areas.

ST: Do you play tennis?

Buras: Most of the grounds crew plays tennis. In August we split into two teams with some of the teaching staff and play the "Grounds Crew Classic" tennis tournament. Playing tennis is lot of fun and it adds to our awareness on how the courts are playing.

ST: What are your responsibilities at the club?

Buras: My responsibilities include working with a staff of ten that manage the tennis courts, lawns, gardens and various construction projects. Communication with tennis staff, club management and members regarding condition of the courts, tournaments and special events is particularly important at a club with so

many courts and players. As only the fifth head groundskeeper at Longwood in 131 years an important responsibility is upholding the high standards of my four predecessors and passing along their methods and techniques to the next generation of sports turf managers.

ST: What's the best piece of turf management advice you've ever received?

Buras: I can't say one piece of advice has been the best. I have received so much valuable advice from educators, peers, friends and family I can't list them all, but probably the most important lesson I have learned is from watching my father. Hire good people and treat them well.

ST: How do you keep your "engine" charged to do your best every day?

Buras: There are a number of ways I keep my "engine" charged to do my best every day. I am fortunate to work in a profession that I love (I read turf text books for fun.) At work I am surrounded by coworkers who are devoted to Longwood and professional sports turf management. Being involved with professional associations keeps me in contact with passionate sports turf managers that work on all different types of fields. The members of Longwood are committed to having a great facility. They trust and support the grounds department so that we are able to look for and investigate new ways to improve the tennis courts and this keeps the job fresh and exciting. They always support professional devel-

opment opportunities, like when they sent me to England last summer to visit Wimbledon!

ST: How do you balance work and professional life?

Buras: My wife, Mary Ann, is the important link in balancing work and personal life. She understands the in-season demands of the job and is always there to help at home and at work. She has hammered in her share of nails on the clay court lines and accompanied me on many nights when irrigation needed to be shut off after a thunderstorm.

ST: What are your favorite things to do off the job?

Buras: Off the job I enjoy coaching youth sports and following the Boston sports teams. When I can find time in the summer, a round of golf on Cape Cod and then going to the beach with my 7 and 9 year old daughters is an ideal day. ■



STMA Regional Conference and Exhibition set for June at Iowa State



Iowa State is hosting STMA's June 24-25 Regional Conference.

STMA, in partnership with eight chapters from the Midwest, will be bringing national level education and an outdoor exhibition to Iowa State University in Ames, June 24-25, 2009. The Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, MO-KAN, Gateway, and Ozark Chapters approached STMA about jointly hosting a conference in the Midwest, and STMA Immediate Past President Mike Andresen, CSFM offered up the facilities on the Cyclones' campus. While focusing on Sports Turf Managers, STMA encourages attendance by members and crew alike, and will be providing education for all levels of sports turf experience.

Attendees will be afforded an intimate look at the Iowa State University athletic facilities, as well as an in-depth view of some of Dr. Dave Minner's notable sports field specific research on the ISU turf plots. Brad Jakubowski will be presenting on fertilizers as well as repeating a very popular session from the National Conference in San José, "Weather 101: Fundamental Meteorology for Turf Managers."

In another repeat of a popular session from the National Conference, STMA

Board Member Dale Getz, CSFM, CSE, will be presenting "Communicating with Coaches, User Groups, Administrators, and Other Nefarious Characters." Dr. Andrew McNitt of Penn State and John Netwal, CGCS, have been invited to speak at the as well.

Another STMA Board Member, Larry DiVito, head groundskeeper at Target Field in Minneapolis, the future home of the Minnesota Twins, will be recounting his work at another MLB facility, Nationals Park, in Washington, D.C. The focus of his presentations will be "Constructing a New Major League Facility from Scratch," as well as how to integrate state of the art environmental practices at a facility. Also planned are hands-on demonstrations that will cover topics such as Workplace Safety, Mowing Patterns, Field Maintenance Handwork, and Irrigation Issues.

According to Dr. Mike Goatley, STMA Conference Education Chairman, "You will

not find a better sports turf specific educational experience outside of the STMA Conference and Exhibition held every January."

Registration costs for the 2-day event are \$75 for a member of STMA National or one of the eight participating chapters and \$95 for a non-member. This price will include 2 days of education, entrance to the exhibition, an attendee gift, and most meals. Online registration will be available, so keep checking back at www.STMA.org for the most up to date information regarding the event.

STMA has also negotiated reduced rates at two Ames hotels. The AmericInn provides hot breakfast every morning and has double-occupancy rates starting at \$79. The Country Inn and Suites, which neighbors the AmericInn, and also serves a daily hot breakfast, as well as a cocktail hour, starts at \$89. For those looking for more economical accommodations, there are four-

person, two-room suites available starting at \$109 at the Country Inn and Suites. Both properties are less than a 5 minute drive from the Iowa State Athletic Complex and each are taking reservations at these special rates through May 27. Call 515-233-1005 for the AmericInn or 515-233-3935 for the Country Inn and Suites, and mention



Virginia Tech's Dr. Mike Goatley, STMA Conference Education Chairman.

that you are with the Sports Turf Managers Association to get the negotiated rate.

Put June 24-25 on your schedule and start talking to your employer about making sure that you are able to attend this incredible educational opportunity. If you have any questions, please contact STMA at 800.323.3875 or STMAInfo@STMA.org. ■

DiVito to oversee Twins' new field construction



Larry DiVito, left, and Bill Deacon, New York Mets manager of field operations, at a panel discussion on infield maintenance during the STMA Conference.

STMA Board Member Larry DiVito has been announced as the new Head Groundskeeper for the Minnesota Twins and their new ballpark in downtown Minneapolis, Target Field, which is slated to be ready for Opening Day 2010. According to MLB.com, DiVito is only the second Head Groundskeeper in the history of the Twins. The other was STMA Founder Dick Ericson, hired in 1961 to oversee Metropolitan

Stadium. The Twins have played on a synthetic surface in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome since 1982.

The Twins received more than 150 applications for the job before narrowing the search down to 10 finalists, and then finally selecting DiVito. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to build another field at the MLB level. Opening Target Field and bringing big league baseball back outside in Minnesota for the 2010 season is going to be exciting for all of the fans in Minnesota Twins' territory," DiVito said.

DiVito, entering his 15th year in professional baseball, comes to the Twins from the Washington Nationals, where he spent the past 3 years as Head Groundskeeper for the team. After two seasons at RFK Stadium sharing the surface with D.C. United of Major League Soccer, DiVito was instrumental in the planning and construction of the field at Nationals Park.

Before taking the job with the Nationals in 2006, he worked as the grounds crew supervisor for the Los Angeles Dodgers for four seasons. He began his career in professional baseball in 1995, when he took over as head groundskeeper for the Triple-A Pawtucket Red Sox in Rhode Island.

Originally from California, DiVito is a 1993 graduate of San Francisco State University with a B.A. in Sociology/ Urban Studies. He currently serves as the STMA Director who represents facilities used by professional athletes. He chairs the Scholarship Committee and co-chairs the Conference Off-Site Workshop and Tours subcommittees.

DiVito says, "I appreciate the impact that STMA has had in helping me to grow my career opportunities. Our association is in a position to educate people at all levels of our specialized industry and improve playing conditions across the country." ■

STMA aligns with Global Sports Alliance-USA

The STMA is pleased to announce that it has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Global Sports Alliance-USA (GSA-USA) to "promote the principles of environmental stewardship in the world of sports," and "environmentally responsible sports related activities."

The document, signed by STMA President Abby McNeal, CSFM at the spring 2009 Board Meeting, and Jane Poynter, President of GSA-USA, indicates the two organizations' shared commitment to promoting environmental stewardship among sports enthusiasts and to demonstrate leadership. STMA CEO Kim Heck reports that the Board of Directors is strongly supportive of the collaboration. "Our Board is excited to share information and work with GSA-USA on initiatives that preserve

and protect our environment." This GSA / STMA cooperative agreement opens the door to future opportunities to work together in promoting environmental leadership in the world of sports. It establishes an avenue for STMA and GSA-USA to communicate freely and to work together on issues of common interest. Additionally, the agreement invites, supports and encourages these organizations to jointly plan and carry out projects that are mutually beneficial and of environmental significance.

STMA and the GSA-USA will share information and will identify opportunities to work cooperatively to promote the principles of environmental stewardship in the world of sports: the area where the organizations' missions and objectives overlap. ■

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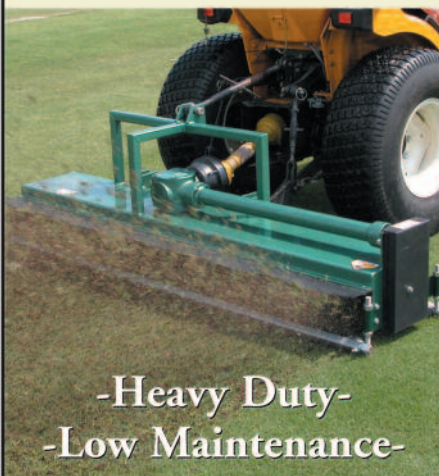
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Chesapeake Chapter STMA (formerly Mid-Atlantic Athletic Field Managers Organization – MAFMO Chapter STMA): www.ccstma.org

Colorado Sports Turf Managers Association: www.cstma.org

Florida #1 Chapter: 954/782-2748

Gateway Chapter Sports Turf Managers Association: www.gatewaystma.org

Georgia Sports Turf Managers Association: www.gstma.org

The Greater L.A. Basin Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association: www.stmalabasin.com

Illinois Chapter STMA: 847/263-7603

Intermountain Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association: www.imstma.org

Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association: www.iowaturfgrass.org

Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org. (KAFMO/STMA): www.kafmo.org

Kentucky Sports Turf Managers Association: www.kystma.org

Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association (MiSTMA): www.mistma.org

Minnesota Chapter STMA: www.mstma.com

MO-KAN Sports Turf Managers Association: www.mokanstma.com

New England STMA (NESTMA): www.nestma.org

Nebraska Sports Turf Managers Association: 402/441-4425

North Carolina Chapter of STMA: www.ncsportsturf.org

North Florida STMA Chapter: 850/580-4026

Northern California STMA: www.norcalstma.org

Ozarks STMA: www.ozarksstma.org

Sports Turf Managers of New York: www.stmony.org

Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey: www.sfmanj.org

Ohio Sports Turf Managers Association (OSTMA): www.ostma.org

Pacific Northwest Sports Turf Managers Association: www.pnwstma.org

Southern California Chapter: www.socialstma.com

South Carolina Chapter of STMA: www.scstma.org

Texas Sports Turf Managers Association: 866/897-8621

Tennessee Valley Sports Turf Managers Association (TVSTMA): www.tvstma.com

Virginia Sports Turf Managers Association: www.vstma.org

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Cut Here

The Double Whammy

*I've got two problems with my field and need some advice, but don't use my name because I'm embarrassed and don't want my boss to think that it's my fault. I mow my Kentucky bluegrass football field at 1.5 inches and my baseball field at 1 inch. We routinely top-dress and aerify the football field; I guess we have about 65% sand by weight to the depth of the 3-inch aerifier tine. The first problem is that both fields are contaminated with approximately 30% annual bluegrass and the second problem is that the Kentucky bluegrass I seed each year in worn areas germinates but just seems to get smothered by the annual bluegrass. On the baseball field some patches of *Poa annua* are 10 feet across. How do I get rid of the annual bluegrass and get more of the good Kentucky bluegrass back in my fields without killing everything with Roundup and starting over?*

Double Teamed in Detroit

First, don't feel embarrassed. Golf courses have been plagued with this problem for years and now we are seeing increased *Poa annua* invasion on sports fields that are mowed close, irrigated, and worn thin just when the annual bluegrass is establishing in late summer and early fall. The good news is that mesotrione, trade name Tenacity, has been recently labeled for use on golf courses and sod farms and is currently being considered for commercial lawns and athletic fields.

Tenacity will certainly be useful for cool-season athletic fields because it has pre and post emergence activity on crabgrass and annual bluegrass. It can also be used at time of seeding; that is very convenient because of the constant overseeding and inter-seeding that is required to keep fields producing continuous turf cover. Here are some strategies to control *Poa annua* with Tenacity and Roundup, while using higher nitrogen rates to speed Kentucky bluegrass establishment:

High school and minor league baseball fields that are infested with annual bluegrass and complete their season in early September can be aggressively inter-seeded with Kentucky bluegrass and then treated with Tenacity at time of seeding. As an extra measure of control, large patches of annual bluegrass devoid of Kentucky bluegrass can be treated with Roundup one day before or after Kentucky bluegrass seeding.

Our research trials have demonstrated that Roundup or Tenacity, applied within a day of seeding Kentucky bluegrass, will not have any negative impact on Kentucky bluegrass seed emergence. A month after Kentucky bluegrass seedling emergence repeat applications of Tenacity can be applied every 10

days not to exceed an annual application rated of 16 fluid ounces per acre. Repeat applications of Tenacity are necessary for effective control of annual bluegrass.

After the first application *Poa annua* turns yellow, by the second it is white, and after the third application plants are shriveled and brown. Post emergence control of annual bluegrass does not work in the spring and summer because the annual bluegrass seems to outgrow the herbicide affect. Tenacity applied in the fall usually gives complete kill by spring because the injured annual bluegrass plants are not able to survive the winter.

The Major League Baseball season can extend into October so aggressive inter-seeding of Kentucky bluegrass and visible bleaching of the *Poa annua* from Tenacity treatment needs to be considered if applications are made during the playing season. Another consideration in baseball is that by the start of the spring baseball season in April the condition of the field will be the same as it was at the end of the growing season in November (i.e., dead patches of Tenacity killed annual bluegrass or dwarf Kentucky bluegrass plants still visible in drill rows). This leads to the second part of your question that involves how slowly Kentucky bluegrass establishes during the fall growing season.

In high traffic areas of the field where grass is going to wear out, seed early and seed heavy with Kentucky bluegrass even if there appears to be 100 percent turf cover when the football season starts in September; better yet seed in late August. What we have also learned is that you need to really feed the establishing Kentucky bluegrass plants to make them grow faster, tiller more, and ultimately cover more ground. The usual rate of 1 lb N/1000 sq. ft./month is just not enough to get the job done with such a short

establishment season and in the presence of competing traffic. Instead our trials show (thanks to a tip from Tom Verips, CGCS who was using high nitrogen rates to quickly grow-in Kentucky bluegrass at the new Otter Creek Golf Course) that 4, 6, and even 8 lbs N/1000 sq. ft. from urea applied in split applications produced more turf cover as nitrogen level increased.

To force establishment after seed germination apply 0.5 to 1.0 lb N/1000 sq. ft. every 7 days until the end of October anywhere that you are pushing Kentucky bluegrass to fill in from fall seeding. So, if you're double teamed by Kentucky bluegrass that is too slow and annual bluegrass that is too aggressive on your baseball and football fields, then add Tenacity and extra nitrogen to the team in the fall. ■



A Kentucky bluegrass baseball outfield infested with annual ryegrass in September before Tenacity application (above) and after Tenacity application (below).

Q&A




BY DR. DAVID MINNER

Professor, Iowa State University

Questions?

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