

Most NFL players prefer playing on natural grass

EVERY 2 YEARS the National Football League Players Association surveys its members, asking them to rank the league's playing fields, best and worst, in both natural grass and synthetic turf categories, as well answer other question regarding their offices—the league's playing fields.

Seventy-two percent of players prefer playing on natural grass and 15 percent favor infill systems; 11% had no preference and the others didn't respond. Nearly 62% thought playing on synthetic turf would negatively affect their health after their careers are over. Nearly 93% said playing on artificial turf would shorten their careers; 91% said artificial surfaces cause more soreness and fatigue. And 85% said infill systems were more likely to contribute to injury.

Ninety-two percent of the players said they could tell the difference between softer and firmer infill surfaces but they were not as unanimous when it came to whether they preferred softer or firmer; 57% want softer, 17% firmer, and 27% had no answer.

Grounds crews

Nearly 85% of the players said

groundskeepers play a "very significant" role in natural grass field performance and less than 1% said crews' roles were "not significant". The numbers were much different for artificial infill fields, where only 25% said the roles were "very significant" and 49% said grounds crews play a "somewhat significant" role in turf performance. Eighteen percent said turf managers were "not significant" in performance of artificial infill systems.

Three in four players "strongly value" the work of ground crews, 21% "somewhat value" that work and less than 1% "do not value" grounds crew efforts. Forty-five percent of respondents attribute the condition of their fields to grounds crews; 28% credit ownership; 15% stadium management; and 5% give all these parties credit for field conditions.

When asked if the top-rated crews should be in charge of turf management for Super Bowls, 87% agreed and 7% said no.

This survey was conducted at NFLPA team meetings September through November 2008. A total of 1565 active NFL players from all 32 teams voluntarily participated. ■

Player comments

Here are some random comments NFL players made about the league's turf:

"Coordinate with shoe makers to see what surface/shoe combinations are the safest."

"Create a universal guideline for both grass and turf fields. Everything else is regulated and this should be as well. Some of these fields are injuries waiting to happen. Having different types of cuts of grass introduces a lot of guesswork for equipment staff and players."


"Grass is probably preferred by most players, me included. However, our game field is the worst I've ever played on. Green sand does not do the job for me like it does for television. I believe our field is extremely dangerous, especially later in the season. Something should be done!"

"I feel that a grass field that is very well maintained is the best field to play on. The best grass field I have ever been on is at Texas A&M University. Artificial infill fields always start out great . . . but after 2 years of soccer games and concerts, the field is a mess. The maintenance of the field is not good enough and I place the responsibility on the owner."

"Those franchises that cannot grow grass in November and December should re-sod more frequently or switch to synthetics. Overall the quality of the fields has improved dramatically however!"

"No more games in London!"

"If a cow cannot eat it, we should not be playing on it." ■



The grass that rolls into University of Phoenix stadium for games was voted best by NFL players.

Best five grass fields

1. Arizona Cardinals
2. Tampa Bay Buccaneers
3. San Diego Chargers
4. Carolina Panthers
5. Jacksonville Jaguars

Worst five grass fields

1. Pittsburgh Steelers
2. Oakland Raiders
3. Miami Dolphins
4. Chicago Bears
5. Green Bay Packers

Best five artificial infill fields

1. Indianapolis Colts (FieldTurf)
2. Seattle Seahawks (FieldTurf)
3. Baltimore Ravens (Sportexe)
4. Atlanta Falcons (FieldTurf)
5. Detroit Lions (FieldTurf)

Worst five artificial infill fields

1. Dallas Cowboys (RealGrass)
2. Minnesota Vikings (FieldTurf)
3. New York Giants/Jets (FieldTurf)
4. St. Louis Rams (FieldTurf)
5. Buffalo Bills (AstroPlay)

Case study: artificial turf cooling system at Whittier College

LIKE MOST COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC DIRECTORS, Rob Coleman at Whittier College had a tough time keeping up with the demands for his main sports venue, Chief Newman Field. During football season the turf had to be in top condition for Whittier's Division III home games, putting it off limits to all other events. Everything changed last summer, however, when the historic stadium was converted to artificial turf.

“The synthetic field completely revolutionized our sports program,” said Coleman. “Along with football, Newman Field now hosts an incredible range of year-round activities such as intramural sports, lacrosse playoffs, soccer leagues, plus local high school events, like sports camps, cheerleading competitions and much more. The field has become a multi-dimensional facility; activities are scheduled nearly round-the-clock.”

When the college decided to revamp the field, they had the financial support of enthusiastic alumni who could foresee the economic benefits of converting to synthetic. “We knew the new

field would generate revenue from outside activities, such as soccer leagues and sports camps, which help support our athletic programs,” said Coleman. Before making a decision, Coleman surveyed a number of synthetic turf installations at high schools and colleges in California.

He liked what he saw, with one exception: “The only disadvantage was the field tended to get hotter than a standard grass field, but we found a solution: state-of-the-art cooling which operates just like an irrigation system,” he said.

Ready to roll, Coleman decided to go with Byrom-Davey of San Diego, CA, for field design and installation. Headed by contractor Steve Davey, Byrom-Davey has completed more than 100 synthetic fields for colleges, high schools and

Right: Through-the-top access allows easier field decoder connection to solenoid.



community parks in California and Nevada, and is among the most experienced artificial turf installers in the country. General superintendent Paul Pankow headed up the effort at Whittier.

After graduation ceremonies in May 2008, the old field was demolished and within 3 months the new field was ready for football practice and a big calendar of sports-related events.

The renovation team decided on UltraBlade Dual Fiber from Sprinturf. UltraBlade features a straight, soft polyethylene fiber that has aesthetic appeal while also minimizing field injury, such as cuts and abrasions.

To handle the cooling function, the team selected Hunter's ICC Controller with remote, along with an Underhill 2Wire control system and Underhill M-125 long-throw sprinklers. The cooling system was installed just like a standard irrigation plan.

"Sprinturf was one of the first synthetic turf manufacturers to introduce the concept of a cooling system," says Jim McAllister, regional representative for the Sprinturf company, which has installed more than 400 fields across the U.S.

"Rinsing and dusting off the surface every week or two, especially on a high-demand field like Chief Newman, is a very practical idea. During hot summer months, it keeps the playing surface cool and comfortable and prevents heat stress or dehydration," said McAllister.

Newman Field covers 380 feet x 206 feet, approximately 80,000 square feet. During installation, a perforated drain pipe was laid around the perimeter of the field and a flat drain was then placed in a herringbone pattern on an impermeable membrane. Before the all-rubber infill carpet was laid down, the base was built up with 4 inches of aggregate stone, topped with a fine aggregate and Sprinturf's Stablon backing.

Eight M-125 valve-in-head sprinklers were placed around the perimeter. The M-125s have a 125-foot throwing radius and were spaced 120 feet apart, four along each sideline. Half the heads are adjusted to 180 degrees and four are set at just over 90 degrees. Each operates as a separate zone in the 2Wire system.

The M-125s feature two extra-high-capacity nozzles for an extended throw radius, along with a 4-inch pop-up height and a 22-degree trajectory. Sprinkler covers can also be fitted with green artificial turf so they blend right into the field.

"The M-125s provide enough long-distance coverage so that we only need cooling sprinklers along the edge of the field, which minimizes safety issues in the playing area," said Pankow.

"Cooling systems are strictly an option, but fields that have it are much more comfortable and safer for play from June through September."

Byrom-Davey proposed using two-wire because, they explained, it was more economical to install, easier to maintain and could quickly be expanded in the future, if needed. In 2008 Byrom-Davey installed a series of 2Wire systems on sports fields, using valve-in-head M-125 rotors as cooling sprinklers. They discovered their crews also prefer the new two-wire technology.

"It took just a day of two-wire training and our crews had it figured out.

"2Wire technology made it possible to run just two lines from the ICC to each M-125 sequentially around the field, while following the new 3-inch main water line. There was no extra trenching back and forth to the controller, though we ran a third wire as a spare.

"Having a third wire in the ground is good back-up in case a wire is damaged. It's a lot less expensive than cutting apart the synthetic turf," said Pankow.

The M-125 valve-in-head rotor features a unique design that is ideal for 2Wire turf cooling systems. The weather-resistant plastic housing has a removable cover for through-the-top access. With the cover removed, the installer can easily attach a field decoder to the sprinkler solenoid.

If troubleshooting is required, through-the-top access also means the synthetic turf never needs to be cut apart and repaired.

Before an event, the sprinklers are activated one at a time using the ICC remote. With a 125-foot throwing radius and 100-gallon-per-minute delivery, the entire field can be cooled and cleaned in a matter of minutes.



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"We pull a sweeper behind a golf cart once a week to pick up leaves and debris, and we pull a greens groomer every three or four weeks. The stiff groomer brushes spruce up the fibers so the blades stand up straight for a fresh appearance. That's pretty much it," said Coleman.

The price tag for Newman Field was \$700,000 to \$800,000. The synthetic turf was approximately \$450,000 of that amount and the cooling system approximately \$30,000.

"At Byrom-Davey we've been installing state-of-the-art synthetic track and fields for nearly 10 years and have seen significant improvements in quality, aesthetics and safety. Turf manufacturers typically offer 8-year warranties, but we've installed fields that have been down for 10 years and are still performing well," said Pankow.

"Our experience tells us that synthetic turf is the future in sports fields and tracks, especially in the Southwest where water use is a major concern," said Pankow.

Installation

"The first step is to snap the Underhill Decoder Module into the ICC Controller in the first module slot," said Pankow.

Each 2Wire field decoder was then programmed with a unique station address, using an Underhill portable programmer/tester. (There is also a built-in decoder programmer on the ICC Decoder

Module, which allows the installer to program a field decoder by inserting red and black decoder wires into the ICC Decoder Module.)

The crew routed the main two-wire cable from the ICC to each valve-in-head M-125 and connected the 2Wire field decoders to the sprinkler solenoids. Back at the ICC Controller, they ran the main two-wire cable through the conduit and attached the conduit to the controller at the large portal at the right side bottom of the cabinet. They finished by connecting the wires to the Decoder Module's L1 and L2.

As the controller "calls up" each decoder station, power runs down the main two-wire cable along with the digital signal (the address) specific to each field decoder. When the decoder/receiver hears its address, it applies voltage to the solenoid, completing communication and activating the sprinkler.

Both the 2Wire Decoder Module and field decoders have a two-year warranty that includes lightning protection, even with direct hits. Two-wire systems generally offer greater resistance to lightning damage because there is less copper wire in the ground. No field grounding is required for decoders along the two-wire path, but the Decoder Module should be properly grounded at the controller.

Hardwick Creative Services, Encinitas, CA supplied this article, www.hardwickcreative.com. ■

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Irrigation&Drainage By Paul Gannett

Reducing water use with remote weather stations

REMOTE WEATHER STATIONS provide an ideal platform for turf managers looking to reduce irrigation costs and water use. Equipped with soil moisture sensors, they can be used to automate irrigation based on soil moisture, or allow you to monitor soil moisture and optimize irrigation schedules. Typically web-enabled software provides the remote access to data from any web browser as well as the ability to remotely change system settings.

There are two ways to use this technology: one, use soil moisture readings to automatically turn on irrigation when soil moisture levels get low and two, monitor a timer-based irrigation system. In the latter case, you use the soil moisture data to verify that the desired range is being obtained and then adjust the irrigation schedule as needed.

In the first case, system alarms are configured to activate the

irrigation system when the soil moisture goes below the desired minimum, and to turn the system off when the soil moisture nears saturation. The set points depend on the soil type. Multiple soil moisture sensors can be deployed to get a better profile of soil moisture, and trigger irrigation if any area is too dry. A text-message notification can also be sent when irrigation is turned on. This way you can go out to the site and do a visual inspection to verify that all the sprinkler heads are in fact working.

The other approach is use the remote weather station to verify that the soil moisture is staying within the optimal range for the turf. If not, the irrigation frequency or duration can be increased or decreased as needed. Also, if a pressure sensor is included in the system, alarms can be set up to send a text message any time the pumps turn on.

A rain sensor can be added since it's often important to know how much rain fell at each site, since rainfall can vary widely over an area. This sensor can also be used to verify irrigation amounts if it is deployed in the irrigated area (if using a sprinkler-based system.) You also can add a second pressure sensor to your station to monitor filter clogging. This is done by connecting a pressure sensor to the lines on either side of a filter. When there is a large pressure drop across the filter, it means the filter needs to be cleaned.

Remote weather stations can save you time and money by boosting monitoring efficiency in three ways:

Reducing the cost of maintaining a weather station. After initial system deployment in the field, many things can happen. No matter how well-built and durable the hardware and sensors, rodents chew through cables; birds nest in rain

gauges; and lightning and vandals strike. What's more, different seasons may require you to change logging intervals or set an alarm weeks or months after you deploy your station.

The truth is, many users check on their weather stations, if possible. Data is just too valuable to risk losing it. These units allow you to log on to the Internet to ensure that things are running smoothly and make adjustments. If a problem is detected, you can make a field visit to fix the problem.

Reduce the cost of retrieving data. Visiting the field to retrieve data requires money and time. There may also be instances where you will need to do more than just download your data; field sampling or qualitative observations may be best done under certain environmental conditions, and it is good to know that you are not wasting time visiting a field site under suboptimal conditions.

Downloading your data remotely also means that there's no need to worry about taking a laptop computer out into the field. And since your data is available over the Internet, you can share it with colleagues from your office.

Reduce the costs associated with losing data. Remote communications lets you know if something is wrong as soon as you check your data on the Internet, or you can even set up sensor and system alarms that immediately notify you by email or text message when something goes wrong. It may even be possible to fix the problem from your desk. This reduces the chances of losing your data due to some type of system error. ■

Paul Gannett is with Onset Computer Corporation, www.onsetcomp.com, which offers the HOBO U30 remote monitoring system that incorporates either built-in GSM cellular or Wi-Fi communication.

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FIELD OF THE YEAR



DeWitt, Tribble lead Yellow Jackets to Field of the Year Award



RUSS CHANDLER STADIUM at Georgia Tech and groundskeepers Jon DeWitt and Todd Tribble won the 2008 STMA College Baseball Field of the Year Award. (Tribble has since become the athletic turf superintendent at Oklahoma State University.)

Russ Chandler is located on the historic Rose Bowl Field on the Georgia Tech campus in downtown Atlanta and features great views of the city's skyline. The stadium has been the home field of Yellow Jacket baseball for more than 70 years. It is named for A. Russ Chandler III, a major supporter of the college's baseball program, who funded construction of the first grandstand for the ballpark in 1985. Fans of the team still call the stadium "The Rusty C" due to its historically extensive use of aluminum in construction, though the current version was rebuilt in 2002 and features much more brick than aluminum.

Here, in the words of Tribble, is how he and DeWitt handled the record drought that plagued the southeast in the past few years:

"In early 2007, the southeastern United States was stricken with a drought as devastating as any on record, one so bad that residents of Atlanta faced the possibility of a drinking water shortage. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division declared a level four drought status for Atlanta and all counties within the vicinity in September, 2007. This declaration prohibited outdoor watering of any sort.

"For turf managers in the area, this meant all watering via irrigation was halted unless a product label specifically instructed irrigation following application. With overseeding of perennial ryegrass scheduled for early October, our crew was forced to rely upon rainfall to begin the germination process. Thus began our search for inventive ways to get water to the desiccated turf.

"We were initially able to borrow a truck that the landscape division of Georgia Tech was using to water trees and flowers around campus. The water was supplied by holding tanks that captured air conditioning condensate at one of the campus' larger buildings. We used this method to irrigate by hand twice until temperatures dropped, thus limiting the condensate being produced by the air conditioners.

"We then learned of a natural spring running directly underneath our football stadium that was collecting into an abandoned sewer line then pumped into a storm drain. We began the process of redirecting that water into seven 1,500-gallon holding tanks underneath our football stands. From there, we pumped the water into a 500-gallon tank pulled by a John Deere Pro-Gator to be used at the baseball facility across campus. The only way to then apply the water to the field was through fire hoses connected to the tank.

"Application of the spring water to the baseball field began after the football season concluded in late November. Because the turf was exceptionally dry from minimal rainfall, we initially soaked the profile until there was standing water. On a daily basis during late November/early December, a member of our staff operated the water trailer for the duration of the day to get the rye established. Two thousand gallons of water was required for the infield alone, while both sides of foul territory required 1,500 gallons. Each tank of water lasted approximately 20 minutes, with the fill-up process at the football stadium being an additional 40 minutes. We ran the water rig for up to 6 hours a day once the temperatures rose into the upper 80's in May.

"Having no overhead irrigation system affected our fertilization program greatly. We had to time all of our granular applications around natural rainfall. Because the infield and foul territory were the easiest to hand water, we

FIELD OF THE YEAR

could fertilize those areas and then follow with our tank system. As a supplement to the granular applications, we relied heavily upon liquid applications just before weekend series to maximize effectiveness. Hundreds of feet of hose were pulled weekly to accomplish this time consuming task, but our dedicated staff was up to the challenge."

SportsTurf: What's the most important piece of equipment or product in your program?

DeWitt: I think my mowers; everything one does to make the grass shine can be for nothing if your cutting units are not dialed in and perfect.

ST: What are your biggest challenges and how do you approach them?

DeWitt: On a regular basis user traffic is probably the biggest challenge; however, this last year's drought was the toughest working conditions I have experienced. Letting user groups know that there is a strong relationship between use and end quality, and that ultimately there is a threshold at which quality will be affected by overuse [also is challenging].

We take steps to protect wear areas by using covers whenever feasible. We also try to have someone on site for any event so that we can control how the fields are used and then jump on post-event maintenance

quickly to minimize damage and maximize recovery time.

ST: How do you communicate with management and field users?

DeWitt: It depends on the user. You learn whether phone, email or in person suits the relationship you have with a particular user. How serious the issue is also affects which form of communication is most appropriate for the particular situation. In person is great, but it is not always practical because of my own schedule, much less a coach's. Email is great for simple operations items because it is the fastest and easiest while also providing documentation for all parties involved.

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

DeWitt: "KIS"—Keep It Simple.

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

DeWitt: Coffee? What keeps any turf manager going; you're either passionate about this line of work or you would move on to something else. Certainly by the end of football or baseball season you're ready for it to be over, but generally speaking every day is an adventure.

ST: How do you balance work and personal life?

DeWitt: I try to make the most out of off peak work times to spend with family and sacrifice any personal hobbies for family time. I can pursue my own interests after the kids are grown. ■

Georgia Tech Baseball monthly maintenance and fertility program

<p>June----- Mow 3 days per week @ 1/2"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge 2x/month • Spray Monument @15g/Acre with Duplex @1oz/1000ft² • Verti-cut in 2 directions, sweep • Fert 19-19-19 (1lb/1000ft²) <p>July----- Mow 5 days per week @1/2"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge 2x/month • Aerate, sweep • Fert 34-0-0 (1lb/1000ft²) • Spray Launch @32oz/1000ft² • Spray Cascade @2.5 gals/1000ft and Duplex @ 1oz/1000ft² • Fert 34-0-0 (1.5 lbs/1000ft²) <p>August----- Mow 5 days per week @1/2"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge 2x/month • Spray Magnus @4oz/1000ft² and Duplex @ 1oz/1000ft² • Spray Ultraplex @2oz/1000ft, Nublade @3oz/1000ft², Launch@32oz/1000ft² • Aerate, sweep • Solu-Cal 3 tons • Fert 16-4-8 (1lb/1000ft²) <p>September-- Start of fall practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mow 5 days per week @ 9/16" • Edge 2x/month • Spray Heritage @ 3oz/1000ft² • Spray Nutra-Green@3.5oz/1000ft², Ultraplex @ 2.5oz/1000ft² • Spray Banner Max @ 2oz/1000ft² • Fert 9-18-17 @1lb/1000ft² <p>October----- Mow 5 times per week @ 9/16"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge 2x/month • Overseed with Perennial Ryegrass @20lbs/1000ft², topdress, drag in seed/sand • Spray Heritage@2oz/1000ft² • Fert 17-0-17 @0.5 lb/1000ft² <p>November-- Mow 3 times per week @3/4"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge 2x/month • Begin hand watering entire field for rye grass 	<p>germination with 500 gal pull behind tank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 25 tons infield mix, till, lasergrade, roll infield skin areas • Spray 5oz/1000ft Essential, 6oz/1000ft² PK Plus and Nutra Green, 3oz/1000ft² Ultraplex • Fert 13-0-0 @ 1lb/1000ft² <p>December-- Mow 3 times per week@3/4"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of fall practice • Edge 2x/month • Hand water entire field with 500 gal pull behind tank • Fert 13-2-13 @1/3lb/1000ft² • Spray 2oz/1000ft Ultraplex, 5 oz/1000ft² Essential, 5oz/1000ft² Nutra Green • Rebuild game mound, plate and bullpens • Spray Cleary's 3336 @6.5oz/1000ft² <p>January--- Mow 3 times per week@3/4"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin spring practice • Edge 2x/month • Hand water as needed with 500 gal pull behind tank • Spray Daconil @5.5oz/1000ft² and Subdue@1oz/1000ft² • Fert 13-2-13 @1/3lb/1000ft² • Fert 11-3-22 IBDU @1/2lb/1000ft² <p>February-- Mow 5 times per week @3/4"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge every week • Hand water entire field with 500 gal pull behind tank • Spray Subdue @ 1oz/1000ft² • Spray 34-0-0@.125lbs/1000ft², Hydro Grow@2lbs/Acre, Mn@1oz/1000ft², Ultraplex@2oz/1000ft² • Sul Po Mag @300lbs/Acre • Fert 13-2-13@1/4lb/1000ft² • Spray Heritage@2oz/1000ft² • Spray Zeritol @11.5oz/1000ft² • Spray Gary's Green @4oz/1000ft², Ferromec@2 oz/1000ft² and Ultraplex@2.5oz/100ft² 	<p>March----- Mow everyday @ 3/4"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge every week • Hand water entire field with 500 gal pull behind tank • Spray Banol @2oz/1000ft and Fungo-Flo at 4oz/1000ft² • Solid tine infield and foul territory, core out field • Fert with 13-0-0 @ 1/2 lb/1000ft² • Spray Magnus @4oz/1000ft² and Duplex @ 1oz/1000ft² • Spray Subdue@1oz/1000ft and 26GT@4oz/1000ft² • Wash edges of infield mix/calced clay • Aerate wear areas with solid tines, seed wear areas, topdress <p>April----- Mow everyday @3/4"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge every week • Hand water entire with 500 gal pull behind tank • Spray Heritage @1.5oz/1000ft² • Spray Magnus @ 4oz/1000ft² and Duplex @ 1 oz/1000ft² • Fert 16-4-8 @1/2lb/1000ft² • Spray Suprema @7oz/1000ft², TuffTurf and Ultraplex@2.5 oz/1000ft² • Core aerate infield and outfield, seed wear areas, topdress • Install new pitching rubber on game mound • Add clay to back arc of infield, front edge of home plate, baselines, cutouts <p>May----- Mow everyday @3/4"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge every week • Wash edges of infield mix and calced clay • Hand water entire field with 500 gal pull behind tank • Core aerate, seed wear areas, topdress • Spray Subdue @1oz/1000ft² and Fungo Flo@4oz/1000ft² • Spray Suprema @7oz/1000ft², TuffTurf and Ultraplex@2.5 oz/1000ft² • Fert 16-4-8 @ 1lb/1000ft²
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Alan Wilson, CSFM
Brian Wimble, CSFM
Brian Winka, CSFM
Shane Young, CSFM

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STMA celebrates 100th certification

The Certified Sports Field Managers (CSFM) program has certified its 100th person, Patrick Jonas, CSFM, from St. Andrew's Parks and Playgrounds, Charleston, SC.



The CSFM program was created in 2000 to signify and document the knowledge, skills and abilities of sports turf managers. The program validates a commitment to personal and professional excellence. Although 9 years have elapsed since the program began, the reasons for pursuing certification revolve around validation of professionalism.

STMA's first certified member, Ross Kurcab, CSFM, says, "I wanted to get certified to test and challenge myself to be a better sports turf manager. Now, I have the credentials to prove my competence, professionalism, and dedication."

Jonas cites a similar motivation, "I see certification as a way to add value to my employer. My agency provides me the opportunity to attend the STMA conference, and I want to take my professionalism as high as I can for them."

The drive for professionalism

Tony Koski, Ph.D., professor and extension turf specialist at Colorado State University, and Mary Owen, extension turf specialist at the University of Massachusetts, have been involved in the creation and development of the CSFM program since its inception. When asked about the impetus to create the program, they both point to the need to validate sports turf management as a profession outside of the turf industry.

"At that time there was recognition with-

in the ranks that sports turf management had at some point become a profession, but that recognition did not extend to the rest of the world—players, coaches, owners, administrators, and the public," Koski says. "It was apparent that we needed to not only recognize professionalism, but had to find a way to measure, maintain, encourage and promote it within sports turf management."

Owen concurs, and recalls the first committee meeting about certification. "It was in 1996 in Colorado," she says. "Members told educators that sports turf management needed to be recognized as a valued profession. Henry Indyk really took leadership of this idea. He paid attention what sports turf managers were doing and saying, and listened to their concerns," says Owen. "He believed certification to be the vehicle to demonstrate to the world that sports turf managers are professionals."

Kurcab was also involved with the creation of the program, and he couldn't agree more. "Competence is key in our industry, and sometimes the image to others outside the industry is that this business is for low-pay, unskilled workers. We all know better."

In addition to Dr. Indyk, Owen, Koski, and Kurcab, the original Certification Committee members included Mike Schiller, CSFM, Dale Getz, CSFM, Floyd Perry, Dr. A.J. Powell, Dr. David Minner, and Bob Patt.

From the beginning, this committee realized that this would not be a 'rubber-stamp' type of certification. "It would be rigorous and not for everyone," says Koski.

Owen acknowledges that developing a balanced program was key. "We placed a high value on field experience, and we knew that getting the right balance between experience and education would make our certification a strong program for the industry," she says.

Koski agrees. "By recognizing those who strive to always be at the 'top of their game', the bar is raised for those working in sports turf management." He adds that everyone benefits when you view your work

as a profession, and not just as a job, especially the employer.

"Employers of a CSFM benefit because those working with a CSFM are likely to know more and perform at a higher level and, most importantly, the players using a CSFM-managed facility can have confidence in its safety and playability," Koski says.

Some sports turf managers may have initially viewed the certification program as being developed for the managers of professional stadiums. Koski says that isn't the case. "When you look at the demographics of our 100 CSFMs that clearly hasn't happened," Koski says. "It is just as important that the field be safe for the 5-year old soccer player as for the professional athlete, and the CSFM program clearly recognizes that truth."

During the previous decade, the sports turf industry has been moving from an indistinct structure to a more significant one, as improved leadership, networking, and the certification program continue to elevate the profession. A result is that sports turf management as a profession is more recognizable. Industry advances make our certification program even more important today.

According to Koski, "Technology changes daily in the turf management world. The CSFM has to keep up-to-date on those advances through continuing education," he says.

Kurcab views the continuing education component as a logical extension of being a sports turf professional. "I've always said that if one has the passion for this line of work, then he or she should have a powerful curiosity to continue to learn."

Higher compensation

In addition to personal and professional affirmation, compensation levels for certified members are tracking higher. According to the STMA 2008 Compensation and Benefits Report, on average, certified sports field managers