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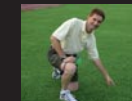
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The 21<sup>st</sup> Sports Turf Managers Association Conference & Exhibition will be held January 12-16, 2010 at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort & Convention Center in Lake Buena Vista, FL.

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## STMA members represent in MiLB awards

NINE SPORTS TURF MANAGERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERS are among the groundskeepers honored by their respective minor leagues with post-season awards. Most winners are selected through votes by managers, coaches and umpires. Each of the 16 minor leagues select a winner and all winners are invited to enter the STMA Minor League Sports Turf Managers of the Year Awards that CEO Kim Heck presents at the Baseball Winter Meetings each December. The STMA Awards Committee judges the entries based on the fields performance, cultural practices, game day routine, field use, staffing, budgeting, resources, etc. There are four winners, one each from AAA, AA, A, and Short Season/Rookie leagues.

Tom Nielsen of the Louisville Bats was voted International League Sports Turf Manager of the Year. Voted on by International League field managers and pitching coaches, the award was established in 1992 to recognize outstanding effort and excellence in the care and maintenance of a baseball playing surface.

Corpus Christi Hooks field superintendent Garrett Reddehase was named the Texas League's Turf Manager of the Year in voting by league managers and umpires. Reddehase, who has been involved with the grounds crew at Whataburger Field since the building of the facility in 2005, has been the club's head groundskeeper since October 2007.

Reno Aces grounds manager Eric Blanton was the Pacific Coast League winner. "It is a great honor to receive this award," Blanton said. "My crews, both day and night, deserve much of the credit, as I would not have been able to maintain at such a high level without their hard work and dedication."

Dan "Dirt" Douglas of the Reading Phillies was named the winner of the 2009 Eastern League Diamond Pro Sports Field Manager of the Year Award for the fourth time in his career, as voted on by EL field staff and umpires.

In the Carolina League there was a tie between Kinston's Stephen Watson and Myrtle Beach's Chris Ball, while in the California League Peter Hayes of the Lake Elsinore Storm won the award. Opie Cheek was named tops in the Florida State League for his work with the Clearwater Threshers, and Brennan Prestley of the Spokane Indians won in the Northwest League.

### SAFE Jacobsen golf tournament returns

The SAFE Jacobsen Golf Tournament, one of the highlights of the STMA Conference every year, returns to Greg Norman's ChampionsGate, world Headquarters of David Leadbetter Golf Academy. This time around we'll play the National Course, a more traditional American layout; in 2006, the event was played on the links-style International Course at ChampionsGate. The course is located just 10 minutes from the STMA Conference headquarters hotel. Proceeds from the tournament benefit the SAFE Foundation. A great way to kickoff your time in Orlando.

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## Dues payment help is available

AS WE MOVE INTO THE FINAL MONTHS OF 2009, I know that the economy and what it is going to do in 2010 is on all of our minds. It is definitely a topic that your STMA Board of Directors regularly discusses because the beginning of the year marks two very important activities for the association: STMA conducts the dues renewal process and we hold our annual conference and exhibition. These two events fund 75% of the association's budget.

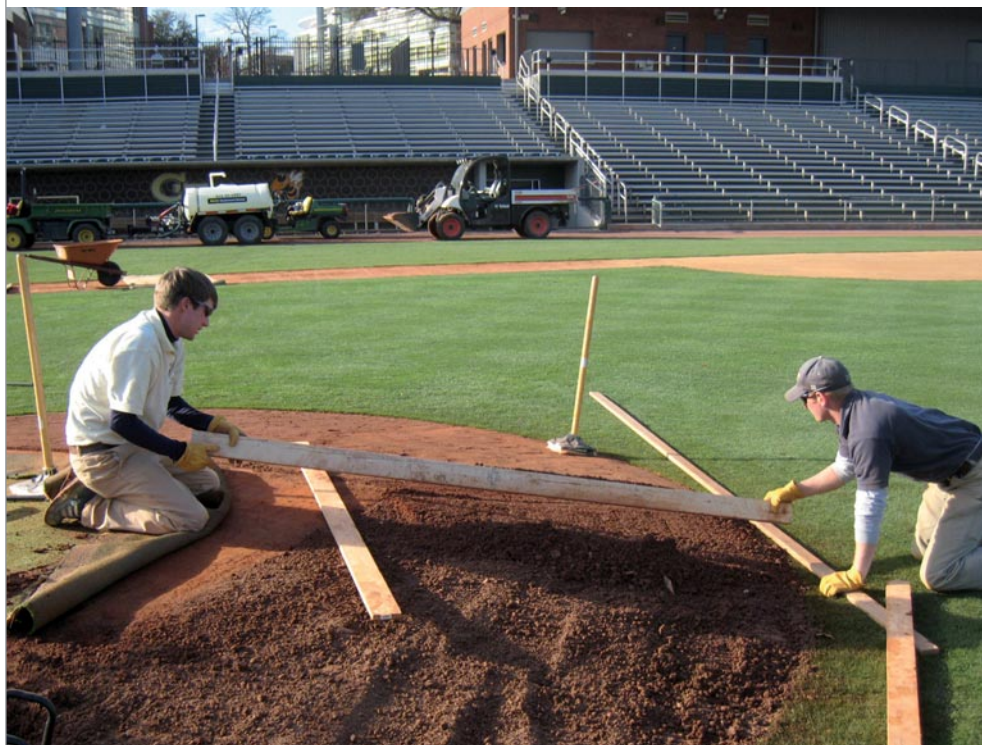
STMA has been tracking 5% behind our 2008 membership numbers all year. Although I'd like to report that our numbers grew this year, the fact that this percentage lag is small is a true credit to our memberships' commitment to STMA. With budgets and other resources being cut, our membership has stepped up and continued to support STMA. I ask that you consider this same commitment for 2010. Dues renewal notices will be sent later this month. Our staff at Headquarters will be happy to work with you if you are unable to pay the entire dues amount at one time. STMA also will extend your membership for up to 6 months if you are unemployed at the beginning of the year.

We continue to bring services and resources to you as a member, and hope that you feel you receive more value from your membership in STMA than the actual cost of membership. If you haven't checked out the new technical information available to you, please go to the website, [www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org). Staying connected with peers during uncertain times provides a strong network of support, which can really help all of us with our field management.

I have spoken with many members who are excited about the upcoming conference in Disney. Most are adding on a family vacation before or after our event. If you haven't considered a vacation, Disney's prices are the best they have been in years and Florida in January will give you a warm break.

I want to call attention to the very essential role our members take in selecting the leadership of this association. The annual election process will be conducted this month. Voting members will receive a hard copy ballot in the mail, but there are instructions included on how to vote electronically. Please take the time to review the candidates' biographies and vision statements on our website to help you cast your vote. The Directors up for election include those representing the categories of Parks and Recreation, Academic, Higher Education and the elected At-Large position. The ballot will also contain two members slated for the Secretary/Treasurer race. The full slate of candidates is on page 42 of this issue and can also be found on the STMA website. Please cast your ballot and ensure that you have a voice in your association's leadership.

# Maintaining turf year-round: voices from the South



*Editor's note: We asked some prominent sports turf managers from south of the Mason-Dixon Line for comments on maintaining turf 12 months a year. Our panel includes: Joe Collins, CSFM, Samford University, Birmingham, AL; Clark Cox, CSFM, University of South Carolina, Columbia; Jon DeWitt, CSFM, Georgia Tech, Atlanta; and Jeff Salmond, CSFM, University of Oklahoma, Norman.*

**Is there down time during the year regarding regular maintenance?**

**Salmond:** First is to classify “down time.” During each in-season sport, down time may be one day or a couple of weeks between events. Out-of season-sports, we may have one week or one month depending on camp/clinic and event schedules. But there really isn't an out-of-season.

Whatever down time that is allowed, the regular maintenance scheduled will depend on its ability to be performed and recovered from within its respective time period. For example, aerification—short down time (1 day), solid tine aerify with less than ½-inch diameter tine. Longer down time (2 weeks or more), hollow tine aerify with the diameter determined by rate of grass growth and weather.

**Collins:** We have down time in the winter after football season and before baseball/softball season. Equipment maintenance is done throughout the year when the odometer calls for it. On reel mowers I try to schedule grinding and that type of thing for the down time in the winter.

**Cox:** Not really. Things slow down in June and July but we still have to work around camps and special events.

**DeWitt:** Probably the quietest time is early summer. Everyone has just had it from the school year, has likely been run through a regional(s) gauntlet and so forth. People just scatter. After that camp season fires up which means bodies everywhere, and doing anything can be complicated. Then there is a slight break in August before school and fall football. After that it's just hold on tight. We have gone to a bowl game every year I have worked here so football practice just keeps rolling along late in the season. December and January are not at a rushed pace, but things must be done to prepare for baseball that gets rolling in late January. At least we don't have to move snow!

**How do you keep equipment maintained, irrigation systems, etc., if there's year-round play?**

**Collins:** We just have to schedule time for equipment maintenance no matter what. We can't afford for a piece of equipment to go down in one of those critical times such as a game day. We've been good at getting fluids changed, blades sharpened, and filters replaced in the midst of regular maintenance.

**DeWitt:** Luckily, our fields were built very well and this includes the irrigation systems. Consequently, we rarely have major issues. We will outsource something if it's a major problem or we have multiple events and we simply cannot get to it. Planned upgrades (head replacement, leveling and the like) we will schedule for our quietest times, and preferably during good turf recovery weather. This generally means June. We will dedicate one of our utility vehicles to irrigation service over the summer so we can work most efficiently without having to load and unload tools and parts, etc.

We are also lucky in that we lease most of our most important equipment, which generally means fewer break-downs and loss of productivity; furthermore, we have warranty coverage throughout our lease period. I typically check mowers for daily quality of cut. The crew and I can fix most issues that arise; however, we also have weekly support from Jerry Pate Turf and Irrigation's mobile service guys who can fix anything that has come up that we are not able to fix either because of time or complexity of the problem.

**Cox:** We do our best to perform maintenance around practice schedules and games. Communication between our staff and the coaches is critical to eliminating conflicts.

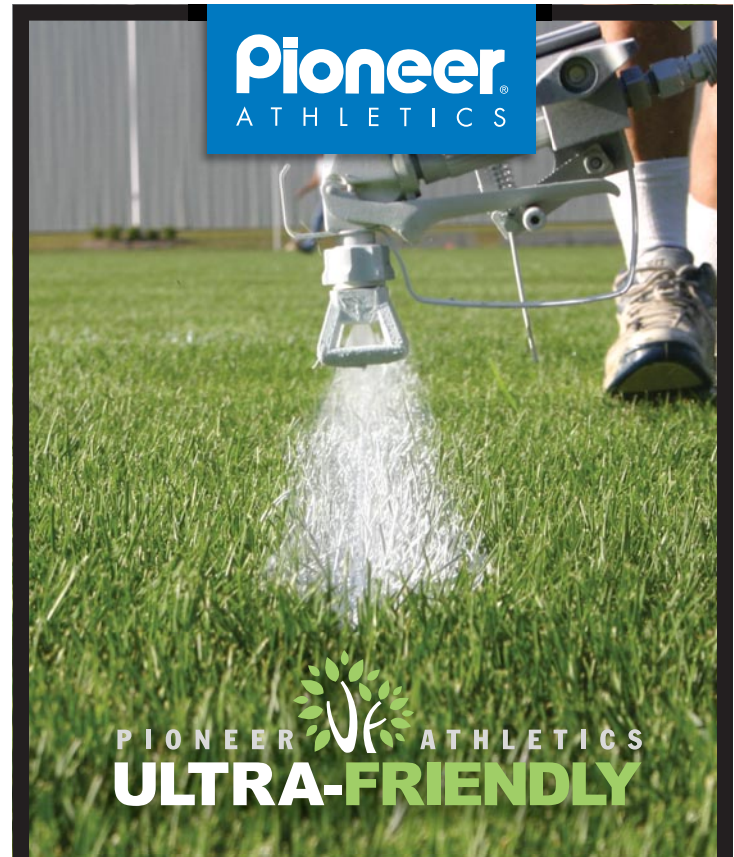
**Salmond:** We are fortunate to have multiple reel and rotary mowers, practically one mower per athletic complex. Therefore, if a mower is down for scheduled maintenance or is in need of repair and adjustment, we are able to compensate by sharing mowers. Our irrigation systems are charged year round. Laterals and main lines are at least 2 feet deep in the ground. Irrigation repairs are handled immediately and are resolved in 24 hours or less. Each of our athletic complexes is maintained by one or two staff members that are able to keep things going during illness or vacation time.

**What are the biggest challenges to maintaining both cool and warm season turfgrasses simultaneously?**

**DeWitt:** Transition back to Bermuda in the spring is without a doubt the biggest challenge. The severity is greatly affected by how long we must hang on to the Rye. For example, if we have a baseball regional we have to hang on to the Rye through the first of June. The competition from the Rye while the Bermuda is trying to break from dormancy is very detrimental to the Bermuda.

Some golf courses around Atlanta have either eliminated or greatly reduced their overseeding due to this problem. Some sports turf managers have also begun to remove the Rye from their stadium fields after the last home game. This can be conditional on whether or not administration is comfortable with having a dormant field for recruiting, conditions of field for the spring game and general appearance. However, the cost associated with "pushing" Bermuda with fertilizers to grow back in and the risk of having to resod in these economic times can be a fairly convincing argument for early Rye removal.

**Salmond:** Traffic and over-use, especially during both periods of transition. Many of our sport surfaces are used into early winter and again in late winter/early spring. Typically our spring sport surfaces must stay in the overseeded ryegrass until June. The three week "down time" around the end of December/early January makes it difficult for recovery before the start of the next season. We do not possess growth blankets for our large surface sports such as football and soccer to aid in elevating soil temperature to maintain growth or aid in a quicker spring green-up. We will be looking to purchase growth blankets soon. We do have a



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growth blanket that we use for the baseball infield grass surface.

**Cox:** The biggest challenge is the transition from Perennial Ryegrass back to Bermudagrass. With increased play in early summer the Bermudagrass has a hard time overcoming both the competition from the Ryegrass and wear.

**Collins:** One of my biggest challenges is working in overseeding in the fall during competitive seasons. Merging the playing schedule with the weather conditions has been a concern every year. Timing has to be just right for establishment of winter turf and sustaining high playing standards. I expect a little down time in the spring for transition back to warm season but the off season is more forgiving. I wait until spring seasons are complete before taking out ryegrass.

**“Transition back to bermudagrass in the spring is without a doubt the biggest challenge.”**

**Briefly describe your overseeding program (if you overseed).**

**Salmond:** We try to target 15-25 lbs/1000 sq ft of perennial ryegrass for our overseeding rates on our sports fields, dependent upon the type of aggressive sport and the impact of the surface that is used particularly in the spring. If the sport does not require the ryegrass to be the actual playing surface, we target the lower end of the seeding rate range to provide spring color and help with an easier transition. We have found when overseeding that our best stands of ryegrass on bermudagrass have occurred when all the seed goes out all at once, rather in smaller rate applications to the desired overall total.

**Cox:** We usually overseed our fields with Perennial Ryegrass in early to mid October or as our schedule allows us. Typically we will apply seed at a rate of 10 to 20 pounds/1000 sq ft. We apply the seed with a drop seeder that has spikers on it to help with seed to soil contact. We topdress with sand following seeding. We remove the ryegrass chemically in early April on all fields except baseball and softball. The ryegrass on those two fields is killed immediately following the last home game usually early June. Last season we chemically removed the ryegrass from the football field in December which made for a much smoother transition in the spring.

**DeWitt:** I have found October 1 to be a great target date for the Atlanta area. However, we could go 2+ weeks earlier or later depending on weather and/or schedule. I like to get 15lbs/K out on the first application and touch up as needed; this varies greatly from field to field.

I usually go with a standard starter like 18-24-12 at or near the time of initial seeding. I also like to spray BannerMaxx at “green-cast” of Rye emergence for both its fungicidal protection and PGR

affect. We use a lot of sprayable fertilizers on the Rye to get it up and going. We will apply fungicides preventively and/or as needed based on disease pressure, which this year has been outrageous with all the rain.

**Do you use chemical products and for what purposes?**

**Cox:** We do use chemicals to remove the ryegrass from all our fields. Fungicides are also used to prevent disease in the spring. Herbicides are used both for pre-emergent and post-emergent weed control.

**Collins:** Yes we use chemicals for many reasons, assuming this refers to transitional ryegrass control. I have sprayed out my ryegrass the past 7 or 8 years because the length of time it takes for temperatures to get high enough to kill ryegrass. Usually, by the time it is hot enough we are a mere 6 to 7 weeks before the start of fall practice for soccer and football and that’s just too close for comfort.

**DeWitt:** This might be too broad to realistically answer. We use wetting agents to control water in the soil profile. We use pesticides as needed for weed, insect, and fungus control. We spray a lot

of fertilizers.

**Salmond:** Yes, we do use a few chemical products, mainly for targeted herbicide, fungicide and insecticide applications only. Our fungicide program is subtle. The University of Oklahoma Athletic Department has developed green initiatives that our field management department has become an integral part of and plays a big role in. We implement more organic and microbial type liquid chemical products either through spraying or irrigation injection. We hope to install injection systems at each of our athletic complexes in the future.

**How do you deal with any heat issues on your synthetic surfaces?**

**DeWitt:** Unfortunately, we do not have any kind of irrigation on our one synthetic field (football). My understanding of the research on watering synthetics for cooling is that it is not all that helpful anyway. Furthermore, it can create a cloud of humidity over the field that can actually make conditions worse for the field users.

Our solution to an extremely hot synthetic field is to not use it during the hottest part of the day. This is mostly just an issue in the summer during camp season. So, if we run three sessions the morning and evening sessions will be on the synthetic and the afternoon will be on grass.

**Collins:** We have a water cannon set up for our synthetic surface, but the positive effects are debatable. By the time the system runs completely through the initial area is dry again and temps are high. We are getting only short periods of relief from watering. There is also the choice of coaches of having conditions wet and hot or dry and hot, I think most of them prefer hot and dry as opposed to suffocating humidity along with 130 degree ground temperatures.