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# SportsTurf

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## Griggs leads Wizards crew to FOY victory in KC

Typical of the sports turf profession that the 2009 STMA Field of the Year Professional Soccer winner's pitch is inside a baseball stadium.



**On the cover:** 2009 STMA Professional Soccer Field of the Year Award winners, from the Kansas City Wizards (L to R): Ryan Lock, Jay Griggs, Justin Bland and Mike Moyer.

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# From the Sidelines



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## Soccer in USA —did World Cup help or hurt?

**D**ebating the merits of soccer with diehard fans is the same as with hockey fans about fighting: their attitude is, if you don't get it that's your problem. I wonder if the heavy TV coverage of the World Cup (see p. 14) this summer made or lost more soccer fans.

The USA-England match June 10 was the fifth most-viewed soccer telecast in ABC history. The 2-hour match averaged 12.9 million viewers; by contrast, the average number of viewers for regular season NFL games is 16.6 million viewers.

So with all these eyeballs watching, does a 1-1 final score help or hurt soccer's popularity? I love a 0-0 baseball game; you never know exactly what one play might turn the game in one team's favor. How is a scoreless soccer match any different? One misplay, one lack of hustle, or one terrific individual (or team) effort can decide a match.

I see the other side's argument. There's a lot of time spent NOT attacking. There doesn't seem to be enough rules, or at least enforcement of what rules there are seems inconsistent to say the least. Really, what the hell constitutes offsides?

The World Cup is truly global (North Korea?!), so I enjoyed watching some matches in the name of research since they played during work hours (honest, Boss). The stamina and athleticism displayed by the players is impressive though I worry about brain damage with all those headers. And I love the drama—the diving after a phantom foul, the indignant arguments with the referee, the penalty kicks. I am a soccer fan, World Cup division except for one thing: those vuvuzelas need to be banned or at least “stuck” somewhere.

### Dog day thoughts

Yes, I'm old school but that doesn't make me wrong:

- When did synchronized cheering become accepted in baseball? My son's team has played several teams around the area who sound like softball players. If there's no crying in baseball neither should there be coordinated chants in the dugout.
- Is it just me or is pounding home plate with your \$200 composite bat as you await a pitch not only meaningless as far as hitting the ball but also brainless?
- I maintain still that any man over the age of 25 looks half-witted wearing a baseball cap on backward. What, you're a catcher? You don't think we can see your chins well enough? It's like wearing a cowboy hat sideways, you clowns.

While I'm at it:

- Note to world: If it's raining, turn on your headlights while driving.
- Who litters? Is there any chance at all that a person who tosses his fast-food bag out the car window is a contributing member of society? No? That's what I thought.
- If you want your children to be wealthy adults, tell them to layoff the keypads and become hand surgeons. As much “digitizing” as goes on with video games, texting, etc., a lot of their peers won't be able use their thumbs at all by the time they consider themselves old school.

# SportsTurf

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## What's in a name?

I am often asked by those outside of our industry what exactly "Sports Turf Manager" really means. And while the name most obviously implies "growing grass," we know that sports turf management encompasses diverse specialties, administration, education, collaboration, professionalism and stewardship to our communities. A recent query of membership demographics found that of the more than 2,500 members of STMA, there were actually 746 different working titles! Even the title of the publication in your hand incorporates the subtitle "Sports Field and Facilities Management." As you can see, the definition of a Sports Turf Manager really involves many layers.

Each year we recognize the countless responsibilities of the Sports Turf Manager and highlight facilities that have demonstrated excellence in our industry, with the STMA Field of the Year Awards. By just applying for the award, members gain recognition from their employers and community. Community athletic facilities are a point of local pride. By applying for this program and showcasing your expertise in this process, you can draw media attention and gain respect throughout the community for the hard work you, your crew and volunteers undertake to make your field look and play its best. The application is up on the website and under the "Professionalism" tab and the deadline is October 15. Get started on your application today.

Our facilities are more than just well managed and maintained sports fields; they are a partner to our communities. Whether it is childhood play, organized sports or retreat from urban chaos, we all have memories that were created in the STMA arena. As Sports Turf Managers, we foster the creation of these memories for members of our community through the successful operation and management of our facilities. This in turn reflected in the level of community pride and participation at our parks and sports fields.

To enhance this feeling of community, STMA has extended its educational reach by offering Regional Conferences. Last month, the Northwest Regional Conference was attended by more than 150 Sports Turf Managers eager to continue their education in the industry. More than 30 exhibitors helped in that effort by showing attendees their most innovative products and services. While the National event each year, coming up in January 2011 in Austin, TX remains the association's educational highlight, the Board and I are committed to continuing the educational reach of STMA through regional offerings for the foreseeable future. Look for upcoming locations in future editions of *SportsTurf* and in STMA's electronic news each month.

Our annual shows support this sense of community, family and networking and offer educational programs to strengthen the ties to your community. Start making plans with your peers and employers to attend the 2011 show in Austin. The Austin Hilton is already taking reservations at the STMA rate. Go to [www.STMA.org](http://www.STMA.org) to reserve your room and learn more about what's sure to again raise the bar in continuing education.

As we head back into a busy end of summer and fall school season, let's not forget that we are *all* leaders in our industry. Furthering your skills as an expert Sports Turf Manager, whose responsibilities extend far beyond the sidelines, baselines and foul lines, only promotes you, your peers and the profession about which we are all so passionate.

# Organic matter accumulation in sand-based rootzones

**I** STUDIED SOIL ORGANIC MATTER (OM) ACCUMULATION for my Master's research project at Michigan State, and now I'm putting to use some tools based on what I learned to manage the sand-based athletic fields at Iowa State.

OM accumulation in a sand-based rootzone can lead to some serious issues when it comes to playability and water movement within the rootzone. As soil organic matter accumulates within macropores of the soil, a stratified profile is pro-

duced (small pores over larger pores) and the upper portion of the surface holds much water. Little oxygen exists in these water-filled pores and plant roots are not able to survive. This can produce relatively shallow root systems that create many problems. OM can increase nutrient and water-holding capacities, but pore stratification generally leads to shallow root systems that hinder playability. Unmanaged OM in sand-based rootzones will lead to a decrease in both drainage and playability.

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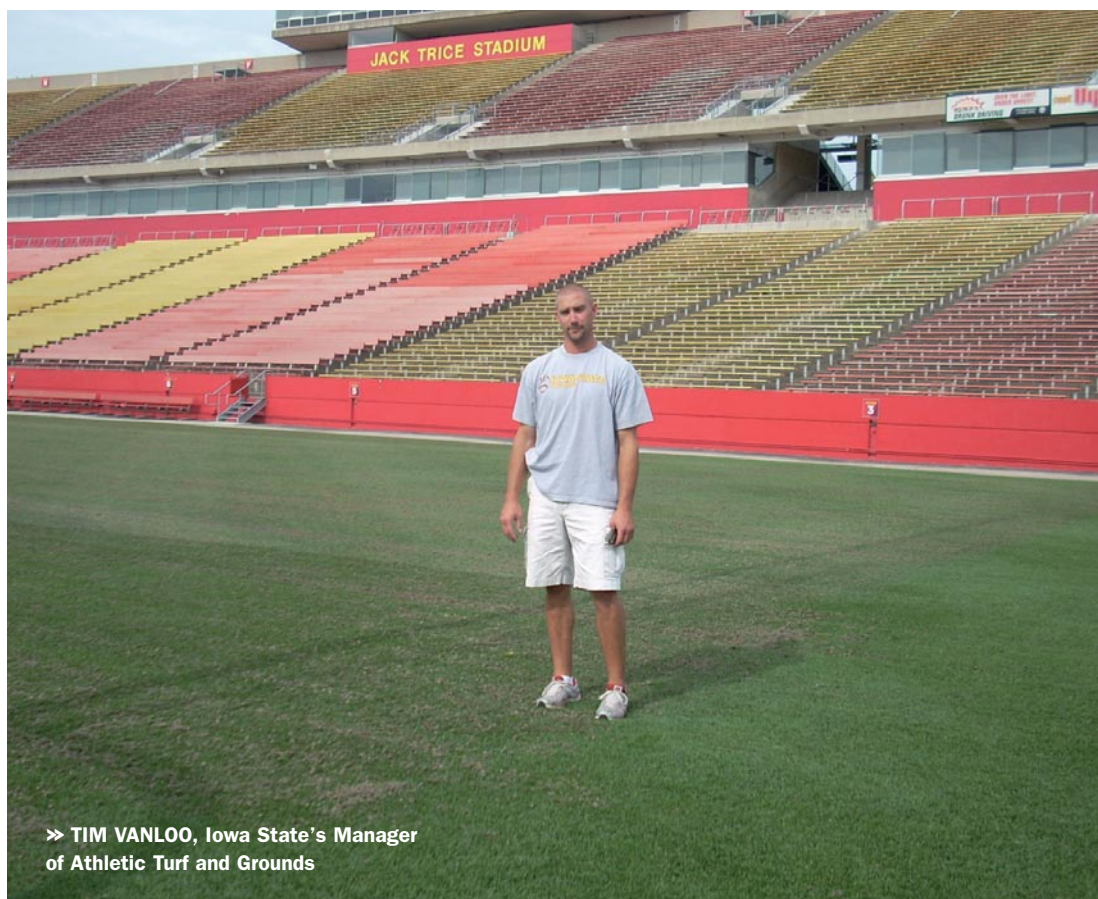
OM can increase nutrient and water-holding capacities, but pore stratification generally leads to shallow root systems that hinder playability. Unmanaged OM in sand-based rootzones will lead to a decrease in both drainage and playability.

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From spring 2004 through fall 2006 I studied the OM accumulation in two rootzones with Kentucky bluegrass growing on them. The first rootzone was USGA specification sand; the second was a blend of 75% USGA sand and 25% native soil producing a rootzone with 90% sand and 10% silt+clay.

To determine where the OM would accumulate in the soil profile of the two different rootzones, we took soil samples from the depths of 0-1 in., 1-2 in., and 2-4 in. in fall 2004, fall 2005, fall 2006, and spring 2006. To measure the OM in the soil three procedures were used: Loss on Ignition, Walkley-Black Method, and Carbon/Nitrogen analyzer. Loss on Ignition and Walkley-Black are commonly used procedures in Soil Testing laboratories and the Carbon/Nitrogen analyzer was used to represent relatively new instrumentation becoming more available. The different testing methods were used to compare the results by each procedure and see if one method made more sense for sand-based rootzones.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between soil depth and percent OM with an average of all three testing methods and both types of rootzones. Please notice the organic matter contents are relatively low since these are newly blended materials. We consider the baseline OM content to be somewhere between 0.2 and 0.3 percent as represented as the OM contents



» **TIM VANLOO**, Iowa State's Manager of Athletic Turf and Grounds

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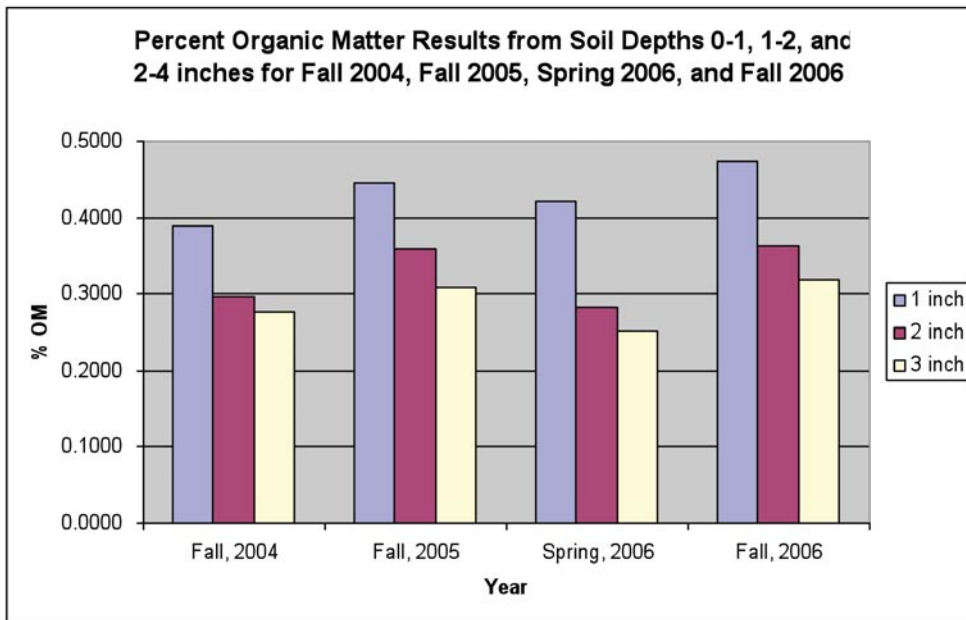


Figure 1

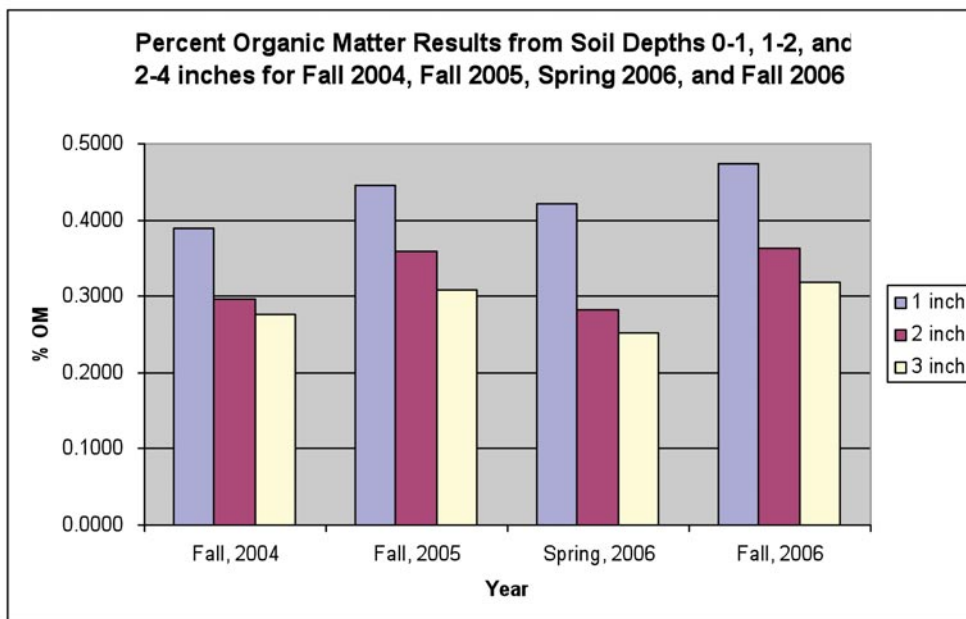


Figure 2

in the 2-4 in. depths. Values above that in the 0-1 in. and 1-2 in. depths we believe indicate OM accumulation.

Organic matter was higher near the soil surface. This makes sense because most of the plant roots are in the top part of the soil profile along with any grass clippings or dead leaf tissue. This is important information when dealing with OM in the soil profile and trying to manage it. If OM management is your cultivation purpose, than deep

tine or solid tine aerification may not be the tool of choice. Core aerification followed by core harvesting will mechanically remove OM from the soil.

As I manage the sand based fields at Iowa State, I think about these results. Most of our cultural practices are geared toward managing the soil organic matter and consistency throughout the soil profile. We do this by aerating often in the top 3-4 inches. We always harvest the cores and topdress after.

We do this to ensure that OM does not build up near the soil surface. By harvesting the cores we can gather some of the OM that has formed in the top layers of the soil. Sand topdressing afterwards will fill some of the aeration holes with new sand. Doing this often enough will maintain the initial root-zone properties. If you're able to this for the life of the field it should not fail due to OM build up.

Figure 1 also shows that over time OM is accumulating. Compare the fall test dates and you can see a small increase every year. The spring testing date does not follow that trend. It actually decreased from the previous fall. Without other testing dates of a similar time period it is hard to tell if this would be a consistent trend.

We can however come up with one piece of advice from that information. If you are to test for OM accumulation from year to year do so by testing during the same time every year to help produce a consistent data set.

Figure 2 shows the percent OM for the four testing dates with all three testing procedures. The methods were consistent throughout the duration of the study when compared over time. Loss on Ignition consistently tested higher on all sample dates. That doesn't necessarily mean it's not as good as the others, it just means you should stick to one testing method every year. Make sure you ask how your OM was tested and maintain that testing method over time.

I have had soil samples done at Iowa State and also when I was at Northwestern University. When each sample came back the first thing I looked at was OM percent. The very next thing I did was made a call to see how it was tested (neither had that information on the test). I have experienced Walkley Black and Loss on Ignition so far in my career. Understand that testing methods can give different results. Make sure you know what method your lab uses and make sure to stay consistent. ■

*Tim VanLoo is Manager of Athletic Turf and Grounds at Iowa State University. He can be reached at [vanlooti@iastate.edu](mailto:vanlooti@iastate.edu).*