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SportsTurf

»» In this issue

JANUARY 2010 | VOLUME 26 / NUMBER 1

»» FEATURES

Facilities & Operations



8 Jumping right in best way to start new job

12 Replacing a synthetic turf field —one manager's experience

16 Blog can be tool of success

20 Post-storm, Cowboy practice fields back in shape

Irrigation & Drainage

24 Year One at Citi Field

Field Science

30 Rescuing a high school multi-use field

38 Understanding turfgrass species for athletic fields and rec areas

Tools & Equipment

45 New products being introduced at STMA Conference & Exhibition Departments

»» DEPARTMENTS

6 From the Sidelines

7 STMA President's Message

17 John Mascaro's Photo Quiz

49 STMA In Action

51 STMA Chapter Contacts

52 Marketplace

53 Advertisers' Index



54 Q&A

We lost our field, what next?

»» on the cover



Ready to kick it off at the University of Central Florida's Bright House Networks Stadium in Orlando, site of the 2010 Sports Turf Managers Association Conference and Exhibition.

24 Year One at Citi Field

The only major change we plan on making is pulling cores more often but again that will depend on the schedule of outside events.

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Top 10 Great Things about a New Year

WITH A NOD to that member of the way-too-large Sleazebag Class 2009 (say it ain't so, Tiger!), David Letterman, here are my Top 10 Great Things about a New Year:

10. New Year's Day bowl games. Great excuse to ignore any resolutions one more day.
9. Fresh desk blotter calendar and monthly planner. I prefer pencil and paper to keep track of life rather than digital devices, so mine is a lonely march. Pity today's youngsters whose arthritic thumbs may be useless by midlife.
8. Technically it is a brand new golf season. This means hope, hope that Yes! this will be the year that I improve my game demonstrably and consistently to the amazement of my competitors. Here's where I tell the world I shot 77 last August—then posted scores in the 90's the rest of the year . . .
7. Good books and movies just keep coming. Never enough time to read or see 'em all but the choices we lucky Americans have to entertain ourselves is staggering. Who could be bored?
6. A chance more citizens will begin to think of themselves as "Americans" first rather than "fill in the blank'-Americans." I won't be holding my breath on this one but a guy can dream, can't he?
5. Twenty-five to 30% of winter weather is over. The more winters I live through the more I wonder why the heck does anyone stay north of the Mason-Dixon Line December through March? I'm a four-season guy but Old Man Winter's mug is at the bottom of my totem pole.
4. New seasons for favorite teams. Whether it's Bob Ruth Ford in the Pony League or the New York Yankees, most everyone fervently follows at least one team in some sport. This could be your side's year to go all the way!
3. The kids keep growing. Ours are 10, 8 and 3 and while I am doing my best to enjoy them while they are young it is also exciting to watch them develop. Plus the older they are the better they get my jokes.
2. Resolutions. Admit it—you might not make any but don't tell me you didn't THINK about making changes. The calendar's turning prompts many of us to take stock of our lives and, hopefully, vow to try harder to do some good more often.
1. Bill Gates and Steve Apple might decide to download for free the song "(What's So Funny 'bout) Peace, Love And Understanding?" onto everyone in the world's computers.

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Passing the gavel

A YEAR IN REVIEW is all about how our association has weathered the economy and continued to provide educational opportunities to our members. The year focused on providing strong education to our members through another Regional Conference, as well through our monthly newsletter that has provided helpful tips on budgeting, cost savings, and surviving the economy.

It is time to reflect and say "thank you" to so many. First, I would like to send a special thank you to all of our Commercial members who have supported STMA throughout this economical-challenging year. We all know of the effects of the economy on businesses, and the Board and I appreciate how supportive our Commercial partners have been throughout this year. These partnerships on a national and local level have allowed STMA to provide supportive services to our members with reduced costs to the association. Without the generous support of our commercial members, our regional and national Conferences would not be as successful. We truly appreciate the continued support.

Second, a sincere thank you goes to the STMA Committees and Task Groups. The work that has been accomplished by these volunteers shows their true commitment to advancing the sports turf manager. Throughout the year their focus has been on continuing to provide services to members that are important and will assist in furthering their professionalism. Our Committee and Task Group members often comment that as they serve the association, they also benefit personally and professionally from their volunteer service.

I would like to extend a huge "thank you" to our Board of Directors and to our Headquarters staff for their diligent efforts in seeking ways to provide more value to our members, despite the economy. Our focus has been on offering accessible and relevant education to our members, at little or no cost, knowing that our members have restrictions on budgets for training and professional development. I cannot thank our headquarters staff, especially CEO Kim Heck for helping to advance our association and grow membership. Headquarters provides exceptional services daily to our members.

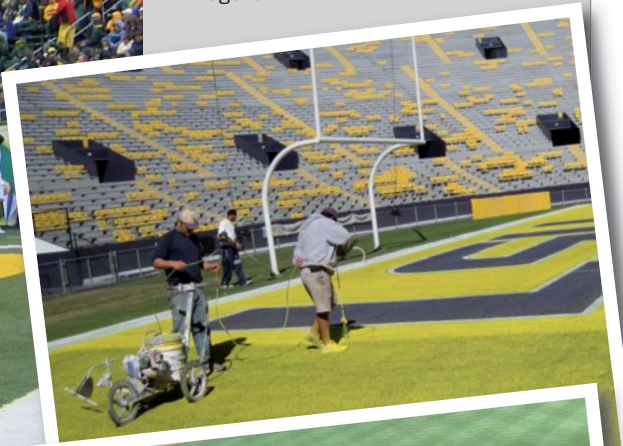
As the Presidential baton is passed to Chris Calcaterra, CSFM, I extend my best wishes to him, along with the rest of the Board. We are still facing economic challenges; however, we need to remain focused on providing member services. I would also like to say thank you to Past President Mike Andresen, CSFM, for his leadership guidance that assisted me in taking on the responsibilities of the Presidency. Past Presidents Mike Trigg, CSFM and Bob Campbell, CSFM, inspired me to pursue the leadership of STMA. From them I learned about real leadership as I watched how they steered the association through some challenging times. And lastly and most importantly, a thank you to all members for allowing me to serve this organization. I am proud to be a member and represent the association.



» **Left: ERIC FASBENDER**, CSFM at the University of Oregon

» **Below: PAINTING THE ENDZONE** at Tiger Field in Baton Rouge.

» **Bottom image: FASBENDER** met with the baseball and softball coaches at LSU the same day he flew out of Eugene.



Jumping right in best way to start new job

IN DECEMBER 2008 I was presented with the opportunity to leave the University of Oregon and take a new position and new challenges with Louisiana State University Athletics. My last day on the job at Oregon was Friday, January 31 and the next day my wife and I were on a plane with our 2-month-old daughter, headed to Baton Rouge where I had a meeting with the Baseball and Softball coaches scheduled for later that afternoon.

I have been looking back and wondering how I managed to get myself in this position in the first place. How does a guy from the suburbs of Chicago end up working in the Pacific Northwest and the Deep South for programs like Oregon and LSU? I consider myself pretty lucky

to be in this position. *SportsTurf* asked me to share some of my experiences about moving and working in two such distinct regions of the country for two high-profile programs.

Turf management

There are obviously differences in managing warm season and cool season turf, but the anxiety I had going into the position at LSU never seemed to materialize in the way I thought it might. I had experience and education with bermudagrass from my time at the University of Tennessee but that was as a student, not the one responsible at the end of the day when the chips fall.

As I have heard several people in this industry say, "You can make all the

bright ideas you want, but when your butt is on the line, you think twice." I have been fortunate because I am blessed with knowledgeable, hard working people around me and they have been the foundation for our success thus far.

My lack of anxiety was also compounded by the fact that I literally got off the plane and went right to work and my new assistant, staff and I had no time to worry, as we were soon thrust into the baseball and softball seasons. By the time both sports came to an end, we had experienced the successful opening of two brand new facilities, a successful spring

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ryegrass transition, and several IPM applications for weeds and insects and it was all highlighted by a baseball National Championship. What more could you want? Well, it turned out we got a lot more than we bargained for.

Transitioning the playing surface at Tiger Stadium after the Spring Game in late April became our new focus and proved to be a bit nerve racking. The stadium surface had been sprigged in June before the 2008 football season and saw five games in a row to finish off the season. What that meant for us was once the ryegrass was gone; we were left with pretty much bare sand.

Our initial survey of the field saw a small stem of green bermudagrass every 18 to 24 inches but our stolons and rhizomes were healthy. We consulted with several

knew it, Tiger Stadium was fully covered and we found ourselves preparing for fall football practice and soccer practice. Aside from several irrigation malfunctions, the summer seemed to fly by and we were soon painting Tiger Stadium for the home opener against Vanderbilt.

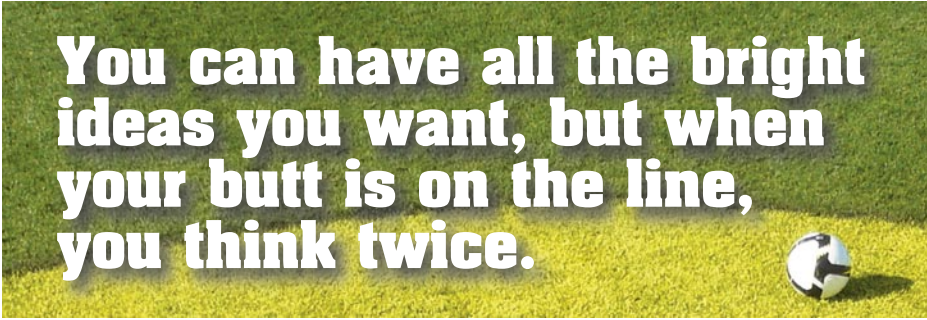
This past fall's season went by even quicker than the previous months. There was a lot of rain, in fact it seemed to rain every week that we had a home game. September's rainfall was 10 inches above average, October was 13 inches above; finally in November it began to level off. With that type of weather, we seemed to have to paint the field twice before every game. Once on Wednesday to make sure we had some markings down in case it rained right up to game time, and again if the weather broke on Thursday, Friday,

and radar became a daily vigil at the computer. We needed to check to see if what we had planned for the day could be accommodated by the weather event occurring outside. The rain was never very hard, more between a mist and a drizzle, but it made mowing, topdressing, spray applications and infield skin maintenance difficult. Our staff was more like firemen than groundskeepers, dressed in rain gear and ready to spring into action as soon as the weather conditions became optimal to achieve what we had planned. One way or another, the work was done, and we were able to be pretty successful with our practices. [Editor's note: Oregon won two STMA Field of the Year Awards under Fasbender.]

The weather in Baton Rouge on the other hand is observed regularly for an entirely different reason, worker safety. This was a big adjustment I had to make coming from Eugene where the weather was fairly mild compared to Baton Rouge where you have weather extremes. Temperatures can reach 90 degrees in mid-April, summertime temperatures are registered in the high 90s with 80-90% humidity and thunderstorms can appear out of nowhere. In the fall, when we start the day, it might be 45 degrees outside at 7 am and by 11 am it is 75 degrees. Keeping our staff cool, hydrated and healthy is in the forefront of our mind all the time. I have also found myself looking at the radar in the summer and fall, not over the state of Louisiana, but over the Atlantic Ocean and worrying about the temperature of the water in the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricanes were something that I had in the back of my mind when we moved here, but when hurricane season arrived June 1, it garnered a bit more attention. Fortunately, there were no close calls and only one hurricane entered the Gulf this year.

Staff

Both staffs I worked with have characters and misfits, but who among us doesn't have that? What success in this industry really boils down to is can you manage your people effectively to get the most out of their abilities and educate them so they



You can have all the bright ideas you want, but when your butt is on the line, you think twice.

people, including Dr. Jeff Beasley, Ron Strahan and Steven Borst in the LSU College of Agriculture, Jeremy Menna with the University of Maryland and Jesse Pritchard, CSFM with the University of Virginia as well as LSU Assistant Athletics Director for Facilities and Grounds, Todd Jeansonne. The plan was to fertilize weekly and irrigate daily. Once there was enough grass to mow, we started to mow every other day at 1/2-inch and when the profile was stable enough, we aerated or verticut every other week.

The process was slow going at first but the summer heat helped immensely. Our Bulls-eye" bermuda loves hot weather and once the middle of May rolled around and the temperatures were regularly in the 90's we began to see stolons running everywhere. The field went from an estimated 5% coverage at the end of April to an estimated 75% at the end of May. Before we

Friday night, or even Saturday morning a few times. Thank goodness we play night games at LSU! With all that said, we were able to get through with flying colors. In fact, Coach Miles said that this season was the best that Tiger Stadium and the Practice Fields performed since he arrived in 2005.

Weather

Weather has always been a favorite topic of mine. It can serve as a conversation icebreaker, an information tool or as a source of debate and anxiety. And believe me, there has been no shortage of weather in the sources of work for this article. There is an old saying in Eugene, "It only rains once a year, it's just November to May" that sums up my time in the Pacific Northwest. This constant rain forced us to work with the weather and not necessarily against it. Checking the 10-day outlook