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# SportsTurf

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## Blanton is MVP for Forest City (NC) Parks & Rec

It couldn't have been easy but McNair Field in Forest City, NC won the 2009 STMA Schools/Parks Baseball Field of the Year without the benefit of even one full-time employee dedicated to its maintenance.



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**Happy graduation seeding**

### On the cover



Brian Blanton of Forest City, NC maintains McNair Field, 2009 STMA Schools/Parks Baseball Field of the Year.



## Ask a CSFM

Brian Winka, CSFM,  
City of Chesterfield, MO  
Benefits of certification verified

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## Soccer-specific stadium is no bull

**F**ields and stadiums built specifically for soccer have been opening at a faster rate every year since the first one in the US, Columbus Crew Stadium in Ohio, opened 11 years ago last month. These stadiums typically have what you would expect from American facilities—scoreboards, video screens, luxury suites and increasingly, roofs that cover every fan's seat. The latest to open was Red Bull Arena in Harrison, NJ; we asked assistant groundskeeper Neal Sitzman for a report:

"The stadium was completed in March 2010 and holds 25,000 fans. The field has a state of the art irrigation and drainage system underneath the 90% sand, 10% peat rootzone," he said. "It has a SubAir unit used for blowing hot or cool air, and for pulling water through the profile. The blower system works well to move water off the rain tarps as well.

"Eight sensors are located throughout the field to relay information about temperature, moisture, amount of salt, and oxygen levels in the rootzone. (See page 22 for a story on Red Bull's soil profile.) The Kentucky bluegrass sod, from Tuckahoe Farms, was grown on soil similar to the rootzone mix," Sitzman said. "Part of the stadium roof is made out of Teflon-coated fiberglass designed to allow some light through, while protecting the fans from inclement weather.

"As of the middle of May, the area south of the 6-yard box has seen only light that passed through the roof. With the roof on all sides of the stadium, the field gets slightly more than 4 hours of sunlight a day [in mid-May]. We do have air movement over the field from the four tunnels under the stands and through the concourse.

"We laid the 1/2-inch sod last October 15, then put on growth blankets and turned on the heat in mid-January and kept it on until March, as the scheduled grand opening was March 13," Sitzman said. "The desired root growth happened on the north half of the field that saw sunlight, but from south of midfield, rooting diminished and the sod was less established. At the end of February the decision was made to resod the south half of the field; on March 1, after 20 inches of snow was removed from that half, the existing sod was stripped out and March 4-5 1 1/2-inch thick cut sod was installed.

"On March 8 we solid-tined the entire field with 3/8-inch tines, seeded with Kentucky bluegrass, and topdressed with 50 tons of sand," Sitzman said.

Five inches of rain forced postponement of the Grand Opening until March 20, when the MLS Red Bull New York hosted Brazil's Santos FC. Sitzman reported that the south half of the field was core aerified and swept March 28 and April 1 the north half received a DryJect treatment that included 25 tons of topdressing. On April 29 the field was seeded with perennial ryegrass at 5 lbs./1,000 sq. ft. and another 25 tons of topdressing added.

P.S. We published a draft version last month of irrigation system designer Michael Prevost's article, "Alternate water supplies for sports turf irrigation" (p. 34). Our apologies to Michael; his website is [www.designpsi.com](http://www.designpsi.com). You can see the correct version on [www.sportsturfonline.com](http://www.sportsturfonline.com).

# SportsTurf

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## Volunteers working on multiple initiatives

It is so gratifying to observe our committee process at work. STMA's 20 standing committees, sub-committees and task groups are completely engaged in their work for this year. To date, more than 200 members are involved in service.

Committees began in March with the appointment of members who indicated interest in volunteering, and many committees will work through the STMA Conference in January. Usually more subcommittees are appointed throughout the year to help facilitate special projects. This year is no exception; I've added four Task Groups to focus on specific initiatives: the environment, our international outreach, future conference planning, and one to delve into our committee process and structure to be certain that we are using our volunteers effectively.

Because of various committees' work, I activated the Bylaws Committee. There are issues dominating committee discussions that may need to be more clearly defined by the bylaws. Although our bylaws were recently updated, it is a dynamic document—to be revised as necessary—and viewed as a valuable resource for STMA to promote sound decision-making.

Using the bylaws as a guide, your Board of Directors governs the STMA through its quarterly board meetings. I invite each of you to contact your board representative if you have topics you would like your board to discuss.

The Conference Committee and its four subcommittees (Conference Education, Tours, Exhibition, and Student Challenge) will be finalizing much of their work by next month so that you will have the conference program in ample time to make your case to attend. One element that they added to the brochure that you will find helpful is the "takeaway" of how each session will provide value to your facility. I encourage you to go online to the 2010 conference page where you will find ideas and resources to help with your attending.

Another task group, the Northwest Regional Conference Steering Committee, will have completed its work by late July. These volunteers represent four chapters: Intermountain, Northern California, Oregon and Pacific Northwest, and they have helped to develop the STMA Northwest Regional Conference and Exhibition. The conference is being held in Seattle, July 21-22 at Safeco and Qwest fields, Virginia Mason Athletic Center and Starfire Sports. Fourteen top educators and practitioners will conduct classroom and on-field education. Attendees will view the latest products and equipment at an outdoor exhibition, and will be treated to a Mariners vs. White Sox game at Safeco. For a complete schedule, go to [www.STMA.org](http://www.STMA.org).

STMA plans to host more of these events within its chapter network each summer. Learning together and from each other connects us as sports turf managers and that linkage builds a strong foundation for the profession. STMA realizes that the national conference is not always affordable for multiple attendees from your facility. These regional conferences provide a high-end learning experience for great value for your entire crew. I hope many chapters are able to come together in the future for education and fun under the STMA regional umbrella.

# Managing a large soccer facility

**T**HE ST. LOUIS YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION (SLYSA) LEAGUE owns and operates a 104-acre, all-soccer facility, consisting of 16 11 v 11 full-sized fields and one small-sided 8 v 8 field. We also lease 24 acres next to our complex and have three 11 v 11 and four 8 v 8 fields at this location. Along with these fields we still rent a number of fields from eight other facilities in the St. Louis area.



**>> ABOVE:** Mark Vessell, Sr., executive director of the St. Louis Youth Soccer Association and STMA member.  
**BELOW:** Larry Hull, working with a smile.

Our organization structure is composed of teams that play in our league, each of which has a vote that are reported by the Club Director for whom they play. The Club Directors then elect a group of five volunteer Board Members, and as a group the directors and Board give us the direction for the organization. We have eight full time staff members. These positions include: an Accounts Payable/Receivable, Secretary, Scheduler, Referee Assigner, Complex Superintendent, Complex Security/Maintenance Manager, Concessions Manager, and Executive Director. We hire two seasonal employees at the complex as needed. As with any position at any company, it is only work if you do not enjoy what you do. I am blessed to do something I enjoy every day; solving problems for the most part and getting others on board to help with the rest.

Managing sports facilities is never dull and is quite an interesting challenge. The reward is seeing the excitement of children of all ages just having fun on a quality, safe sports field. It is more than just about wins and losses; it's about the child's development and safety. With a quality field, you can see their skills develop both on and off the field that contribute to the child's self confidence, teamwork, and socialization. These skills develop tomorrow's leaders. High quality, safe fields is where SLYSA comes into play.

SLYSA provides a competitive soccer league. We are self-funded through league fees and a small amount of advertising dollars. The key to any business is knowing your target audience



Managing sports facilities is never dull and is quite an interesting challenge. The reward is seeing the excitement of children of all ages just having fun on a quality, safe sports field.

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and providing the best products and tools possible for that audience. Our constituents value quality fields, competitive age brackets, schedules at the start of the season, education, and communications so they know where and at what times games will take place. On average we schedule 250 to

300 games a week. To make this all happen I have a great staff of key people who care about what they do to and how it relates to make the total picture of success.

## FULL PLATE AT WORK

My responsibilities include communica-

We explain the reasons why we cancel for rainouts and show the cost savings of what it would take to repair a damaged field, plus the time the field is out of service to heal.

» The complex underwater in June 2008.



» **ABOVE:** Sign of the future: 1st solar-paneled scoreboard in the USA. **BELOW:** Being proactive to protect the complex's turf.



tions, turf equipment, budget management, medical staff, concessions, irrigation controls, security, referees, radar monitoring, lighting detectors, net checks, painting lines, trash pick up, rescheduling, notification when rain outs occur, dust control of parking lots when to dry, computers, website support, phone hotlines—every week. Of course I rely on dedicated people who care and make it all happen every week. This list can be endless, and much more that one person can do himself, however with a great support staff and the “and then some” attitude espoused by George Toma, we get it done and make it happen, even when Mother Nature requires that we need to do 4 days of work in 2 days.

You must look at your facility from all perspectives. If you look at your facility through the eyes of a coach, parent, player, first-time visitor (who may have never played soccer), turf manager, security, insurance adjuster, an emergency personal responder, etc, it will make for a better facility. Make

