

during construction to meet this need.

“Like everyone else in America except the Yankees, we found ourselves up against budget cuts this season. Off the top, all game-day staff took a \$.50 an hour pay cut. Because they are awesome and love what they do, all who were eligible chose to return. Also facilitating operational change for us this season was the elimination of a day crew at the stadium. In addition to the field, we also have landscape duties throughout the facility; we don't have huge plots but labor hours-intensive none the less. We worked hard and developed an effective rotation allowing us to be much more efficient with our time in this area.

“The last of our challenges, which we overcame as a staff, was to provide a quality product. Kaleb Reynolds, my full time man, started at the stadium on the day crew and then came to work for me halfway through our first season 3 years ago. I have a bachelor's degree in an unrelated field and Kaleb has a high school diploma and some JuCo courses completed. I have been learning how to manager turf on the fly with the help of more seasoned professionals in our field, and Kaleb has been learning from and with me. Sometimes I wish we possessed more technical and book knowledge, but we have found what works best for us though we continue on our quest for knowledge.”

“Our biggest challenge this year became apparent in the off season. I went for a surgical procedure in February and ended up with e coli in my knee, and spent 60 days bed-ridden with no movement in my right knee, and of course unable to get to the ballpark. At that point, Kaleb, with the assistance of our new operations manager, George Sis-

son (whose turf management credentials include being a Class A general manager and growing up on a farm), along with spot duty by our crew, proceeded to finish pre-season preparations, host high school



baseball, and open the season while I was on the physically unable to perform list. Kaleb and the crew did an awesome job, the field looked great, played well, and their on-field dance became a fan favorite. No matter what situation they faced, they met it head on and excelled.

“While sitting in the dugout waiting for batting practice to end, I heard this exchange: ‘That's groundskeeping there; all the other stuff we do is just maintenance.’

“A young staff member chimes in, ‘I never thought we'd make it.’”

“And with that batting practice ended; as bodies scattered to begin field prep, the longest-tenured member of the crew said, ‘We always do, we always do.’”

SportsTurf: What changes are you planning to make to your maintenance plan for 2011, if any?

Sowell: Our current maintenance plan is one we have developed in the first 3 years of our field. It is a combination of what we have

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found works best in extremely wet conditions, which we had our first two seasons, followed by last season's record high temperatures and little rainfall. So basically, the only changes I would anticipate our making will be dictated by weather challenges presented by the "Head Groundskeeper Upstairs."

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

Sowell: Two things come immediately to mind; my father always saying, "There's never time to do it right, but always time to do it over," and an old coaching companion preaching, "Work smarter not harder." These are the principals that we use daily. We always work tirelessly and analytically to come up with an action plan, and attempt to execute it by finding the logical order of sequence which helps us be more productive, efficient and ultimately, successful turf managers.

ST: How do you balance your work and personal time?

Sowell: I have two factors working in my favor in this area. First, I am so fortunate to have a job that I love so that I rarely consider anything we do at the ballpark as work. Secondly, I am single and every day for me is Bring Your Child to Work Day as my most constant companion is a 10-year-old black lab named Ruby, who accompanies me to the park every day, as she has done for the past 9 years.

So, basically we manage our work and personal time just like we do our ballpark by running wide open during the season, catching an occasional weekend break when we can, and making it a priority to find time to kick back and catch our breath in the off season.



ST: What's your most valued piece of equipment and why?

Sowell: My most valued piece of equipment is not equipment at all, but rather the people that I am professionally associated with, most notably my assistant, Kaleb Reynolds, and my crew the "Drag Diggities." Equipment is expendable in that if a mower goes down and you

Arvest Ballpark maintenance facts

Fertilization (granular)

20-0-0	March
13-13-13	April (smaller biweekly apps)
46-0-0	May through September, urea-based
13-2-13	May through September, ammonium sulfate-based (these products are rotated so as to give the turf a variety of food sources)

Fertilization (foliar)

12-0-0-6 April through September, biweekly apps as needed to enhance color

Irrigation

Hunter Industries control panel with 120 and 140 heads
Hand-watering with Tricure pellets as needed

Mowing

TriPlex reel for outfield and aprons
Walk-behind greens mower for infield and bullpens
Height of cut: 1 1/8-in for OF, 1 inch for infield

Aerifications

Solid tine in spring and summer, as needed to help eliminate compaction
Hollow tine in July or August to help the bermudagrass to reach optimum performance level

Topdressing

Sand applications that accompany aerification and overseeding

Nail drags

Pre-fabed 6 x 4-foot
Spring tines on infield groomer

Screen drags

4 x 6-foot	For infield
3 x 5-foot	For warning track
2 x 5-foot with leveling board	For basepaths and edges
3 x 12-foot	For special situations

Miscellaneous

Edging is done every week during the season
Sod rotation All sod for field is pulled from bullpens and new turf is replanted in bullpens

Equipment used

John Deere
Field vacuum TC 125
TriPlex trim & surrounds mower 265313
Tractor 4320
Gator XUV 620i
Sand Pro 1200 Hydro
Rotary push mower 2500B
TriPlex greens mower 2500B
Walk-behind reel mower 260C
Pro Gator 2030A
Gator Tx Turf
Aercore 800

Toro topdresser 2500
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STMA Affiliated Chapters Contact Information

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Chris Walsh cwals@scottsdaleaz.gov

Colorado Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.cstma.org.

Florida #1 Chapter (South): 305-235-5101
(Bruce Bates) or Tom Curran CTomSell@aol.com

Florida #2 Chapter (North): 850/580-4026,
John Mascaro, john@turf-tec.com

Florida #3 Chapter (Central): 407-518-2347,
Randy Fisher, rfisher@kissimmee.org

Gateway Chapter Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.gatewaystma.org.

Georgia Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.gstma.org.

**Greater L.A. Basin Chapter of the Sports Turf
Managers Association:** www.stmalabasin.com.

Illinois Chapter STMA: www.ILSTMA.org.

**Intermountain Chapter of the Sports Turf
Managers Association:** www.imstma.org.

Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.iowaturfgrass.org.

Kentucky Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.kystma.org.

**Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org.
(KAFMO/STMA):** www.kafmo.org.

**Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association
(MISTMA):** www.mistma.org.

**Mid Atlantic Sports Turf Managers Association
(MASTMA) (formerly the Chesapeake Chapter STMA)**
Ph. 410-704-2197 www.mastma.org

**Minnesota Park and Sports Turf Managers Associa-
tion Chapter STMA:** www.mpstma.org

MO-KAN Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.mokanstma.com.

Nebraska Sports Turf Managers Association:
402/441-4425.

New England STMA (NESTMA): www.nestma.org.

Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey:
www.sfmanj.org.

Sports Turf Managers of New York: www.stmony.org.

North Carolina Chapter of STMA:
www.ncsportsturf.org.

Northern California STMA: www.norcalstma.org.

Ohio Sports Turf Managers Association (OSTMA):
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Ozarks STMA: www.ozarksstma.org.

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Southern California Chapter: www.socalstma.com.

South Carolina Chapter of STMA: www.scstma.org.

**Tennessee Valley Sports Turf Managers Association
(TVSTMA):** www.tvstma.com.

Texas Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.txstma.org

Virginia Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.vstma.org.

Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.wstma.org.

don't have another option you can skip mowing. If your airless painter malfunctions you can grab a can of aerosol and finish the job. This is definitely not the case if you don't have a quality staff because "You are only as good as your people." I will put my staff up against any in America as they have proved themselves time and again, including this season when they successfully opened the ballpark while I missed the first month due to a medical disaster. They ARE the reason that we excel here at Arvest Ballpark, and I am very blessed to have these guys as well as a front office staff who pitches in to help with late night tarp pulls and extracurricular event logistics, which makes our lives easier and our team more successful.

ST: Are you yet involved in "sustainable" management practices? If so, what are you doing?

Sowell: We are not currently involved in organic fertilizers and such, but we do run a recycle program throughout our ballpark separating trash and waste, we also recycle used field material by donating them to local high schools. We also have spent much of the last season improving our irrigation system to make it more effective and cost efficient. ■

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STMA Regional Conference heads to Volunteer country

THE 2011 STMA REGIONAL CONFERENCE will be hosted by The University of Tennessee-Knoxville, June 15-16, 2011. University of Tennessee professors Dr. Jim Brosnan and Dr. John Sorochan, with the 2011 Regional Conference Steering Committee, are putting together a rich program that encompasses both sports turf research updates, tours of the varsity athletics facilities and a tour of the new state-of-the-art UT Center for Safer Athletic Fields. The Tennessee Valley (host), Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia Chapters will be participating, and will be sending mem-

bers from all over the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic states.

While focusing on sports turf managers, STMA encourages attendance by members, crew, coaches, parks and recreation professionals, athletic directors, school business officials, and others, and will be providing education for all levels of sports turf experience. Education will be provided by local professional sports turf managers, academics, builders and architects, all with significant sports field experience. According to Pam Sherratt, STMA Director-Academic, "You will not find a better sports turf specific educational experience out-

side of the STMA Conference and Exposition held every January."

As a special treat, after touring Smokies Park, attendees will get a night at the ballpark and watch the Tennessee Smokies, the Double-A affiliate of the Chicago Cubs, take on the Chattanooga Lookouts.

Registration and Exhibition costs for the 2-day event are still being determined, and online registration will be available for STMA members, so keep checking your inbox and at www.STMA.org for the most up to date information regarding the event.

Five educational resources now available en Espanol

STMA HAS THREE OF ITS MOST POPULAR educational bulletins and two DVDs translated into Spanish. The educational bulletins now in Spanish include *Strategies for Managing Heavily Used Fields*, *Football/Soccer Field Safety and Maintenance Checklist* and *Field Management During a Drought*. These are accessible from the STMA home page of its website, www.STMA.org. Also on the homepage is a link to *Baseball Field Management in Spanish*, funded by Baseball's Tomorrow Fund, an initiative of Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association.

Two STMA DVDs have also been translated into Spanish and the viewer can select to watch them in Spanish or in English. *Baseball Mound Reconstruction: A Professional Approach* with a bonus track, *Home Plate Maintenance*, and its companion DVD, *Baseball Infield Maintenance* are available for a special purchase price of \$25 for the set from STMA.

For more information contact STMA headquarters at 1-800-323-3875; to order DVDs, see the form on the association website, www.stma.org and fax or mail it to STMA.

Future Regional Conference Locations

STMA HAS ALREADY secured locations for the 2012-2014 Regional Conferences. In the summer of 2012, the Association comes back to the Midwest in Columbus, OH; the 2013 event travels west to Provo, UT; and the Baltimore, MD area will be the site of the 2014 STMA Regional Conference. This allows those who may not be able to make it the national conference each year to take advantage of the national level education put on by fellow members at these yearly events. The actual dates of these events will be announced in 2011.

Companies announce winners of STMA Conference incentive programs

PIONEER ATHLETICS and Smithco each conducted separate incentive programs during the STMA 22nd Annual Conference and Exhibition; what they have in common is that STMA and its members benefit.

Pioneer Athletics conducted a drawing for five 2011 STMA memberships (or 2012 if the winners had already renewed their memberships). The five who will receive Pioneer-paid STMA memberships are: Rick Covert, San Diego Community College; John Barta, Billings Mustangs; Sam Jones, University of Delaware; Patrick Jonas, St. Andrew's Parish Parks & Playground (SC); and Peter Thibeault, Noble & Greenough School (MA).

Smithco held a drawing for an STMA member's trip to the 2012 Conference in Long Beach next January and the winner was Paige Cruse, athletic foreman for the City of Franklin, TN.

SAFE, Turface Athletics again sent lucky winner to Conference

AGAIN THIS YEAR, STMA presented the Terry Mellor Continuing Education Grant, presented by Turface Athletics. This year's winner of the \$1,000 grant, named in honor of the late brother of STMA member Dave Mellor, was Kevin Fernandez from White Bear Lake ISD #624 in White Bear Lake, MN.

New Jersey sports turf managers oppose pesticide ban proposal

THE SPORTS FIELD MANAGERS OF NEW JERSEY (SFMANJ) is officially opposing the proposed New Jersey Senate Bill 2610, dubbed the “Safe Playing Fields Act,” calling it “reckless and ill advised.” In a news release, SFMANJ said “The goal of this Bill is to ban the use of most lawn care pesticides at certain child care centers, schools and recreational fields. As sports field managers, we would like to point out how this Bill will cause presently safe sports fields to eventually become unplayable and treacherous.”

The news release continues:

“Unlike a home lawn where the aesthetic is prized, the goal of sports field management is to provide a safe and playable surface. Dense turfgrass provides dependable traction for young athletes’ feet. Strong healthy turfgrass roots won’t blow out when a player stops fast or changes direction in an instant. Soccer balls roll best on a smooth, uniform turfgrass surface, baseballs take fewer bad hops, and kids don’t get hurt. Games are better.

“Sports fields are subjected to considerable amounts of use, abuse and overuse throughout the year. Man-made and natural environmental stresses can cause sports field quality and health to diminish. Drought and other weather extremes, as well as cyclical insect and plant disease pressures weaken even the best sports fields. When a stand of turfgrass established on a sports field begins to thin out, as sports fields are highly prone to, weeds move-in and the sports field begins to go into a state of decline. These problems often occur during the height of the playing season when the field is most needed.

“For example, invasive, summer annual weeds such as crabgrass, goosegrass, and prostrate knotweed are very problematic on intensely used sports fields. Left uncontrolled, the lifecycle of these weeds results in a persistent condition of bare soil during spring and fall, when many sports fields are in full use. Bare soil during wet field conditions constitutes dangerous footing and dry, bare soil is an extremely hard surface. Lawn care pesticides are tools that can be used to manage the encroachment of these weeds and thereby promote a more uniform turfgrass surface—in lieu of the hazardous conditions associated with bare soil.

“White grubs are another detrimental pest to sports fields and severe damage to turfgrass can result in unsafe playing conditions and costly renovation and repair procedures. Turfgrass damage, resulting from both white grub feeding on roots and the activity of raccoons and skunks foraging for the white grubs, can completely destroy a sports field, rendering the surface unsafe and unplayable. A properly timed pesticide application, best applied in the summer when most school fields are not in use, can provide effective, preventative control of these potentially devastating white grub pests.

“Another name for lawn care pesticides is ‘plant healthcare products’. As good stewards of the environment, we need to be able to responsibly use all of the tools available to us to prevent and treat turfgrass problems in a conscientious manner. Low-impact pesticides, while useful in some situations, are not as effective as non-low-impact pesticides when there is a need to control severe weed, insect and disease outbreaks on sports fields. Not all sports field sites are the same. Pest populations fluctuate. Soil conditions and types are different. Field usage varies. Non-low-impact pesticides are generally effective across varying sport field conditions.

“Many sports fields do not have access to irrigation and some low-impact pesticides, particularly nematodes for white grub control, require irrigation to be effective. Certain lawn care pesticides, timed according with irrigation, can be used to quickly respond to pest problems to keep a field safe and open for play—as opposed to forcing field closure and performing costly repair and renovation measures. Having the option of using US EPA-registered products in accordance with their labels allows us, in part, to achieve our goal of keeping sports fields safe and playable.

“New Jersey has a stringent School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) law. In order to use lawn care pesticides on the grounds of a K-12 school campus, one must adhere to many regulations in the NJ School IPM Law. These regulations include (but are not limited to):

- Appoint a school IPM coordinator, develop an IPM policy, and adopt a plan.

- Use low-impact pesticides.
- Attain a NJ DEP Pesticide License in Category 13 to apply non-low-impact pesticides in a school environment.
- Provide annual notification of the School’s IPM policy and 72 hour notice and posting prior to and after a non-low-impact pesticide application to parents and guardians, students and staff, using mail, email, telephone and signage.
- Enforce a 7 hour minimum re-entry period even if the label does not specifically state reentry time.
- Keep detailed records of pesticide applications and manage Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), respond to inquiries, and provide information to parents, guardians, students and staff about IPM.

“The application of a lawn care pesticide takes a considerable amount of forethought, logistics and preparation. In addition, to rigorous planning, lawn care pesticides require monetary resources to purchase and human resources to apply. As sports field managers, we have to provide cost benefit information to our business administrators in order to receive the funding to purchase the materials. If we don’t protect the field from natural or manmade damage, we risk having to spend considerable taxpayer money to replace or repair a sports field damaged by pests. Currently, many New Jersey Schools and municipalities are cutting expenses by eliminating positions and programs. A carefully planned lawn care pesticide application, in full compliance with US EPA registered pesticide label recommendations and NJ School IPM policies, can provide maximum cost benefits by solving a turf health problem quickly and effectively rather than a costly field replacement later and a substantial loss of field space for use by children and parents.

“In the end, our endeavor is to create the safest playing conditions for all of New Jersey’s sports field users.

“We respectfully request that passage of S.2610 be delayed pending the introduction and discussion of additional facts.

“We invite the opportunity to discuss our position with Members of the New Jersey State Senate and Assembly as well as others concerned with the impact of this legislation.”

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BY DR. GRADY MILLER

Professor, North Carolina State University

Questions?

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7620, or email
grady_miller@ncsu.edu

Or, send your
question to

David Minner at
Iowa State University, 106 Horti-
culture Hall, Ames, IA 50011
or email
dminner@iastate.edu.

We expect to have our field budgets reduced this year. How would you prioritize necessary practices and spending on turf product? I'm also not sure if we'll be allowed to keep a full crew, so labor may also be an issue. Thanks for your comments.

Fort Worth, TX

Well I am glad you are starting to plan before your budget is reduced. No person knows more about fields than the field manager that manages them, so you are the perfect person to prioritize practices and purchases needed to keep the field safe and useable.

If your fields were properly designed and constructed, received good maintenance in the past, and had controlled use during the season, you should be good shape this spring. Remember the ultimate goal of a good sports field is a field. Keep this in mind as you make management decisions, and keep reminding your supervisors that this is your priority when you are considering management and purchasing decisions.

Most field managers only have several variable expenses under their control. These generally include: labor, equipment purchases, equipment maintenance, fertilizer products, pesticides, paint, top-dressing sand, and sod/seed expenses. Energy (fuel, electricity, etc.) expenses are often not as easily controlled.

I believe the number one item that must stay in a management program in terms of field impact is nitrogen fertilization. Use your soil test to modify your non-nitrogen nutrient needs (e.g., phosphorus, potassium, calcium, etc.) so you do not buy something you do not need. Your field will need nitrogen fertilizer. It will maximize turf density and a denser field is a safer field. Plus it will recover from damage faster and density

discourages weeds encroachment. The rule of thumb is one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per growing month.

Price out your fertilizer products per pound of nutrient rather than per pound of product. And if you have available labor, you can often get better results by splitting the fertilizer applications and going out more frequently (e.g., half pound rates twice a month).

After fertilizer, keep a good mowing program. The more frequent you mow bermudagrass when it is actively growing the better the turf density. For bermudagrass keep the height of cut below 2 inches. For hybrid bermudagrass closer to 1 inch is much better. Too high and it will shade itself and density will begin to thin. Regular mowing also discourages broadleaf weeds from getting a foothold. And if you do have some weeds, the mowing makes them less noticeable.

The next most important item on the list should be weed control. You want to hear complaints about your field condition, have a weedy field. With the loss of MSMA herbicides, our inexpensive post-emergence grassy weed control options are now more limited. I think this swings the pendulum toward more emphasis on pre-emergence programs. Using a good pre-emergence program combined with a post-emergence broadleaf herbicide as needed, will maximize your maintenance dollars and will help ensure you have an attractive, safe field.

Do not forget aerification. A playable field is not rock-hard. An aerification can also reduce some weeds, discourage spring dead spot, reduce thatch, increase water infiltration, and improve plant stress tolerance. So, use whatever you have available for core aerification and do it as often as possi-

ble. I do not believe you can core aerify too often.

I think all the other management practices and products are secondary after these three. So be sure the resources are available and then schedule the above practices as priorities.

Of course all these practices require labor. If your labor force is reduced, there are a few management other practices you may want to consider. One idea is to use a plant growth regulator such as trinexapac ethyl (e.g., Primo Maxx, Governor, T-Nex) to suppress turf growth so less frequent mowing is needed. There is a product cost, but it is offset with reduced mowing and reduced equipment wear. It also will provide you with a denser, more wear tolerant turf. Along those same lines, there is a label rate for putting Primo Maxx in turf paint. This can dramatically reduce the need for re-painting your athletic field lines resulting in more labor savings.

Always be looking for inexpensive ways to save money. For instance, with soccer fields, move the sidelines and goals in or out to redistribute wear areas. Have open communication with the field user groups so they understand how they can improve the fields by moving their drills around the field. Look at leasing equipment. This can reduce downtime and allow you to use newer equipment with less capital outlay.

My last piece of advice is to go to meetings and learn how others are dealing with reduced budgets. Local, state, and national STMA meetings may be your greatest resource in solving your problems. I believe attending them is time and money well spent. ■



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