

# SportsField

MANAGEMENT

July 2020

Vol. 36 No. 7

The Official Publication of the Sports Turf Managers Association

Creating a Visually Stunning Field 14 | Synthetic Turf Maintenance 20 | Field Painting 30  
Best Management Practices 36

## Gridiron Greatness

College Football Field of the Year: Scott Field at  
Davis Wade Stadium, Mississippi State University





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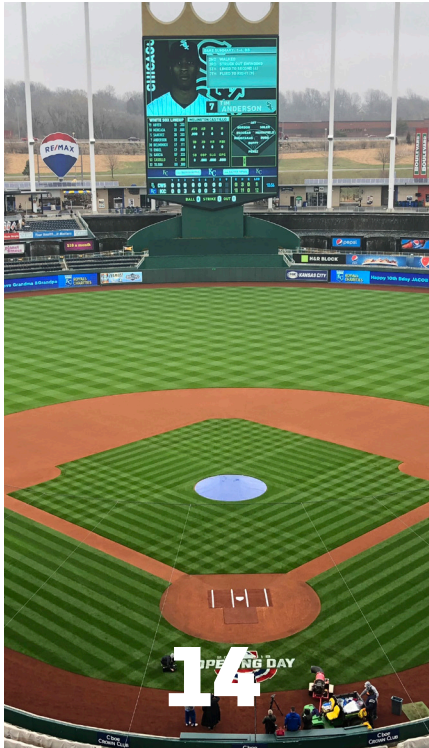
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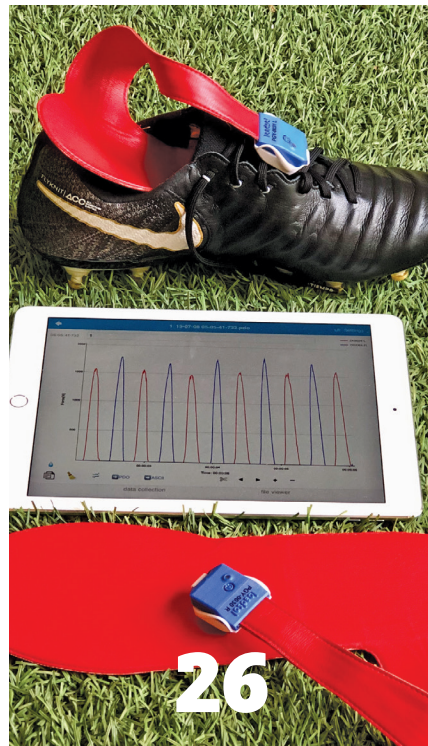
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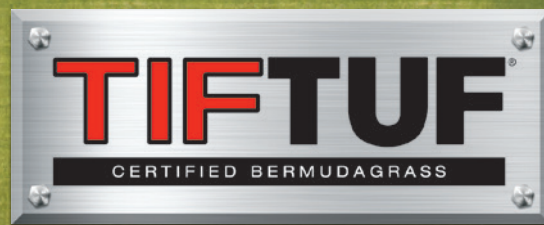


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# Editor's Note



**John Kmitta**  
Associate Publisher/  
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I can't believe I'm saying this, but I find it hard to believe that we are at the mid-point of the year already (although I'm sure we can all agree that 2020 can't go by quickly enough). Through quarantines and sheltering in-place — in a reality devoid of places to go and without much to look forward to — I thought the days would drag by slowly. But, oddly enough, one day has blended with the next in a somewhat indistinguishable blur.

As we roll into the heart of summer this month, the challenges related to life amid a pandemic have evolved. With the easing of stay-at-home orders, the sports field management industry is faced with players returning to practice and, in some cases, returning to play (amid continued concerns regarding the health and well-being of everyone involved). Even more challenging is that members of the general public are outdoors and utilizing public parks, trails and publicly accessible fields and facilities (see the article on managing publicly accessible fields on page 36).

Those ever-changing challenges have also forced us to adapt editorially to address the issues you face. For example, we originally had

scheduled for this issue the topic of "Getting Your Fields Ready for TV." Without most sports being on television right now, that topic seemed a bit out of place. But Trevor Vance, Kansas City Royals senior director of groundskeeping and landscaping, was kind enough to share his insight and advice for dealing with current challenges and presenting safe, visually stunning fields no matter the circumstances (see page 14).

Our focus on planning and preparing for fall sports (page 24) has also taken on a different tone since it has become much more challenging to make any sort of plans in these uncertain and stressful times.

Speaking of stress, we are pleased to be able to share the insight of two mental health experts with this month's Health and Wellness article on the topic on managing stress and anxiety (see page 38). These and other *SportsField Management* and STMA resources are designed to help you during the pandemic and beyond.

Please feel free to reach out and share your story, the challenges you face, questions you have, or innovative ways you and your peers have dealt with this changing environment. **SFM**

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# President's Message

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During the last few months, we have been told to social distance and stay apart, and yet we now find ourselves needing to be closer together. 2020 has been a whirlwind year of major issues that have rocked our world, literally. And the interesting part is that we are only roughly halfway through the year. Where will the rest of this year take us? Who knows at this point? But, wherever it is, I hope it brings us all together.

I would be remiss if I did not address the hard subjects that we have been faced with this last month. We all have been shaken by the disturbing reminder that racism and violence continue to unfairly plague many in our world in 2020. It has started many conversations that have needed to take place for a long time, and hopefully will begin the process of creating a world in which all are treated fairly.

With that said, I understand that what I am writing today are just words; but it takes words to start a dialogue. Words mean things to people, and everyone has a different perspective as to what those words signify to them. We must come together and make certain that the words and dialogue that we have shared with each other during this time are not hollow. We must listen, with empathy, to each other; and



**Jimmy Simpson, CSFM**

STMA President

Jimmy.Simpson@townofcary.org

then, just maybe, we can start to understand each other more, and make this world a better place for everyone.

Issues such as lack of diversity, racism and sexism are not new; and they are not going to be solved in our sports field management industry, or in the world, overnight. However, we as sports field managers can play our part. We can work to achieve a better place of acceptance and dialogue in our daily lives. Our industry today can be the leaders that continue to try to advance that narrative. I trust each of you to hold me and others accountable in making sure that we begin – and then see through to the finish – the process of growing inclusiveness and diversity within our industry and the world around us.

If we can love, listen, learn and support each other every day, the world will continue to grow and be a better place. **SFM**

Collaborating in change together,  
Jimmy Simpson, CSFM





## SCOTT FIELD AT DAVIS WADE STADIUM MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Davis Wade Stadium is the second oldest on campus facility in the United States. Scott Field has always been recognized for its outstanding turf quality and maintenance while withstanding the demands of NCAA athletics. The demands have increased yearly with more events, media exposure, and recruiting importance. We have always taken pride in our ability to “do more with less,” as our staff and budget numbers are at the bottom in comparison with other SEC schools. As of right now, my staff includes myself, four full time employees, and six students to manage approximately 21.75 acres of natural grass athletic fields, one synthetic football practice field, and one indoor multipurpose synthetic field, plus another 10 acres of “common areas.”

Having to utilize student labor brings its own set of challenges. Balancing each student’s time is very important to me — after all, they are here to get an education not work full time. It is very challenging to ensure that everything gets done on the Athletic Department’s requested schedules due to the students being in and out all day. It is imperative that we completely utilize the time that the students are here, and keep the overtime as low as possible while still providing the safest, most aesthetically pleasing fields possible.

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The Field of the Year Awards program is made possible by the support of sponsors Carolina Green Corp., Precision Laboratories, and World Class Athletic Services.





Due to the push in recruiting, Scott Field hosted a plethora of different on field events/visits, including the 2018 New Hope High School Jamboree, which fielded 14 teams plus each JV from the surrounding area. The biggest challenge we face is that the event schedule for Scott Field has increased steadily from year to year, making it very hard to do what we need to do to the field around all the events.

In a time where other schools around us perform “a complete field resodding” on a yearly basis, we still practice sound agronomics, sod the very minimal amount possible, and grow-in the rest.

After seeing the Latitude36 perform so well on our brand new state-of-the-art baseball field (Dudy Noble Field) for the last two years, I decided it was time to transition football over as well. As seen in our pictures, this has been a great agronomic year for us — the methods we used to transition Scott Field from Tifway 419 to Latitude36 were financially advantageous for the University with the entire project totaling less than \$20,000. That is one stat I am extremely proud of!

— Brandon Hardin, superintendent, sports turf



FIELD OF THE YEAR  
COLLEGE FOOTBALL



**Category of submission:** College Football

**Field manager:** Brandon Hardin

**Title:** Superintendent, Sports Turf

**Education:** Bachelor's of Science Agronomy

**Experience:** Sports Turf Student Worker, Mississippi State University (2003-2006); Intern, Roger Dean Stadium Jupiter, Fla. (2005); Horticulturist, Louisiana State University (2007-2008); Assistant Superintendent, Sports Turf, Mississippi State University (2008-2014); Superintendent, Sports Turf, Mississippi State University (2014-Present).

**Full-time staff:** Feliciano Grimaldo

**Original construction:** 1914

**Turfgrass:** Tifway 419 until May 1, 2019 when we sprigged Latitude36

**Rootzone:** Sand

**Overseed:** Our own custom blend of Champion GO 1/2 rate and Pennington Treks for the other 1/2 of the rate not to exceed 15 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

**Drainage system:** Herringbone with Hydraway on 15-foot centers

**SportsField Management (SFM):** What are you most proud of with this win, and/or what do you think stands out most about the winning field?

**Hardin:** I am extremely proud of Feliciano Grimaldo and my entire staff for all their help with the in-house portion of the renovation last year. I believe the cost-effective renovation methods we used stood out the most. Last season saw a very rare schedule where we were tasked with three home games in a row to start the season, as well as to finish the season out. My staff is the reason we were successful, it was a tough fall season.

**SFM:** Scott Field has won Field of the Year in the past (in 2003 and 2015). What sets this win apart?

**Hardin:** While things have definitely changed from 2003, things have changed tremendously from our last award. Scheduling, camps, recruiting visits and field usage have all increased yearly making things tougher on our small staff. With all the changes, we constantly have to adapt to the “new normal” and all the challenges that brings. Making the switch to Latitude36 bermudagrass has helped greatly on Scott Field.

**SFM:** What are the biggest challenges you face?

**Hardin:** For most of my career that answer would have been facility usage and juggling scheduling of the procedures we need to do around all the events, camps, etc. In recent years it has been coaching turnover and learning new coaching staffs, their different styles, wants and needs, as well as them learning us and getting used to us.

**SFM:** What advice do you have for other sports field managers?

**Hardin:** Don't second-guess yourself. If you know it needs to be done, then do it. Be confident in your decisions.

**SFM:** What attracted you to a career in sports field management?

**Hardin:** I owned my own landscape company in high school, and played all high school sports. Mixing the two together made Golf and Sports Turf Management a perfect fit.

**SFM:** Who would say are your mentors in the industry, and/or what is the best piece of advice you have received?

**Hardin:** There are too many to list! That's what I love about this industry.

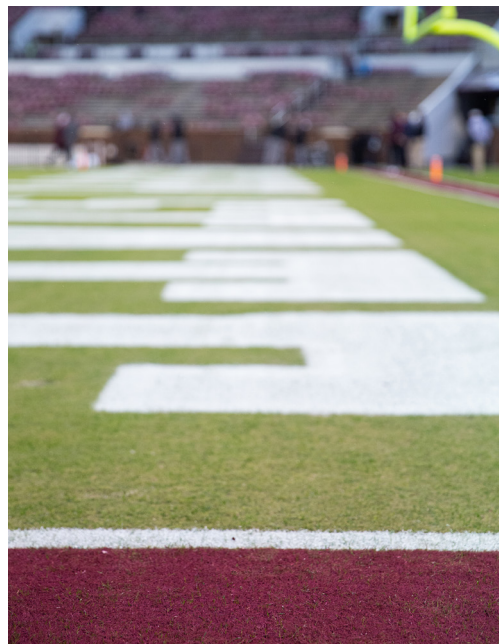
**SFM:** What is the greatest pleasure you derive from your job?

**Hardin:** If I were stuck in an office all day, I would go absolutely crazy. One of the best parts of the job is, at the end of the day when we call it quits, you can see exactly where we have been and exactly what we have done. For example, I love the first week of football season. We start with a blank green canvas, and by the end of the week you

can see everything we have done for the week and, yes, even the mistakes we've made along the way.

**SFM:** How has your career benefited from being a member of STMA?

**Hardin:** The contacts I have made from being a member of STMA have paid huge dividends. The best thing about STMA and our industry is that everyone within the organization, as well as the industry, is so willing to help or share information. Since joining STMA, I have made numerous contacts that I now collaborate with regularly and bounce ideas back and forth.







### Judge's Comments

"The entry for Scott Field at Mississippi State stood out for its professionalism, aptly demonstrating the incredible attention to detail that Brandon and the crew put into the care for the field at Davis Wade Stadium. They employ a well-constructed maintenance plan to address the amount of activity on the field, and do so in spite of aging equipment and a staff that is pulled in many different directions around the MSU campus."

— Jeff Langner, brand manager at Turface Athletics

**Editor's Note:** A panel of 11 judges independently scored Field of the Year entries based on playability, appearance of surfaces, utilization of innovative solutions, effective use of budget and implementation of a comprehensive agronomic program. We have asked the judging panel to provide insight into why each winning field was selected, and we will share those comments with the corresponding field profiles.

## MONTHLY MAINTENANCE AND FERTILITY PROGRAMS

### JANUARY

Apply 0.5 #N/1,000 sq. ft. (UMAXX) 47-0-0 slow release; Solid-tine aerate; Apply second application of lime if needed; Spray out rye 7 days before signing day; Monument 0.44 oz/A; 1% V/V methylated seed oil; Growth tarps on and off according to winter weather 7 days on 3 days off in favorable conditions.

### FEBRUARY

Apply 0.5 #N/1,000 sq. ft. 30-0-10 slow release; Apply 1,000 #/A Milorganite; Second application of Monument (if needed); Growth tarps on and off according to winter weather 7 days on 3 days off in favorable conditions; Apply pre-emerge herbicide for summer weed control.

### MARCH

Once bermuda shows signs of green tissue, we begin our foliar and soils sprays on 7- and 14-day intervals; Foliar sprays include a variety of micronutrients; Soil sprays include organic fertilizers, humic acids, wetting agents, and powder calcium and potassium needed due to straight sand rootzone; Solid-tine aerate; Core aerate if weather allows; Roll with 3-ton roller to ensure surface is smooth; Growth tarps on and off according to winter weather 7 days on 3 days off in favorable conditions.

### APRIL

Continue foliar and soil spray applications on 7- and 14-day intervals as weather permits; Solid-tine aerate following each scrimmage; Roll surface smooth after each aerating; Following the Spring Game, core aerate with 1/2 or 5/8 coring side eject tines 8- to 10-inch depths on 2-inch spacing; Vertical mow two directions at 0.5 inch depth; Apply 0.5 lb. 30-0-10 slow release; Growth tarps on and off according to current weather pattern.

### MAY

Sod minimal areas needed (logos, coaches boxes, cheer area); Deep tine aerify with bayonet tines on 2-inch spacing; Apply Georganite organic fertilizer 1,000 lbs./A; Topdress 24 tons topdressing sand; Continue foliar and soil spray applications on 7- and 14-day intervals, add Primo Maxx 4 oz./A weekly; Vertical mow; Roll with 3-ton roller to ensure surface is smooth; Fungicides applied according to the current weather patterns; Growth tarps only if needed.

### JUNE

Paint using World Class paints as needed for camps; Solid-tine every two weeks around camps with pencil tines on two-inch spacing; Continue foliar and soil spray applications on 7- and 14-day intervals, add

Primo Maxx 4 oz./A weekly; Unirake monthly as needed (at least once); Topdress 24 tons of topdressing; Core aerate using 1-1/4-inch coring tines on 4-inch spacing following the completion of camps; Roll with 3-ton roller; Apply insecticides for control of bermudagrass mites as needed; Fungicides applied according to the current weather patterns.

### JULY

Continue foliar and soil spray applications on 7- and 14-day intervals, add Primo Maxx 4 oz./A weekly; Unirake monthly as needed (at least once); Topdress 24 tons of topdressing; Core aerate using 5/8-inch coring tines on 4- to 6-inch spacing; Apply Acelepryn insecticide for fall armyworm control; Fungicides applied according to the current weather patterns; Solid-tine aerate using pencil tines on 6- to 8-inch spacing; Roll using 3-ton roller.

### AUGUST

Continue foliar and soil spray applications on 7- and 14-day intervals, add Primo Maxx 4 oz./A weekly; Surface hardness numbers will dictate whether we aerate or roll; Topdress with 10 to 12 tons of sand.

### SEPTEMBER

Continue foliar and soil spray applications on 7- and 14-day intervals, add Primo Maxx 4 oz./A weekly; Mow, roll, and repair field immediately following games; Solid-tine aerate with bayonet tines as schedule of games allows; Apply Rimsulfuron pre-emerge at 1 oz./A for POA control 10 days before overseeding.

### OCTOBER

Continue foliar and soil spray applications on 7- and 14-day intervals, add Primo Maxx 4 oz./A weekly; Mow, roll and repair field immediately following games; Solid-tine aerate with bayonet tines as schedule of games allows; Overseed with a 50/50 blend of Champion GQ perennial ryegrass and either chewing red fescue or Pennington's Treks blend both at a 7.5 lbs./1,000 rate not to exceed 18 lbs./1,000 for the year.

### NOVEMBER

Continue soil spray applications on 14-day intervals until bermuda is fully dormant; Mow, roll, and repair field immediately following games; Solid-tine aerate with bayonet tines as schedule of games allows; Fungicide and insecticide applications are made as necessary; Growth tarps on and off according to current weather pattern.

### DECEMBER

Continue soil spray applications on 14-day intervals until bermuda is fully dormant; Growth tarps on and off according to current weather pattern; Continue our mowing through the winter as we try to catch our breath from a long season. **SFM**



# Ready for Prime Time

Kansas City Royals' Trevor Vance shares tips for creating a visually stunning field

By John Kmitta



Photo provided by John Deere

2020 has not been a year for sports field managers to showcase their fields on television — or in front of any fans for that matter. But there is definitely opportunity to get your fields in top condition and game ready. With that in mind, Trevor Vance, Kansas City Royals senior director of groundskeeping and landscaping, shared some advice for dealing with current challenges and presenting safe, visually stunning fields no matter the circumstances.

## ADAPTING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Vance to downsize his crew, and split what remained into two crews with one working Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the other working Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

“One thing I stress to our front office is that the coronavirus does not affect grass,” said Vance. “It continues to grow, and needs main-

tenance and needs attention. These fields are thoroughbreds. It’s not a native soil that can rely on Mother Nature. They are a big investment.”

During the past few years, the Royals have invested \$2 million in a field rebuild, more than \$400,000 in landscaping renovations, and also constructed a new urban youth academy.

“If there is a silver lining, all we do as groundskeepers in March is push our plant and push our plant to





Photo provided by the Kansas City Royals





*Photo provided by John Deere*

get it green and growing for Opening Day,” said Vance.

The lack of field use gave sports field managers the opportunity to do the aerification, verticutting and applications that they normally wouldn't have time for.

“We've never been able to come in here April or May and verticut because not only did we have a Major League schedule, but we also have all our extra events — high school games, corporate events, batting practices, and all these other things. The only thing that has been on that field since March 1st is us. So we've really been able to do some cultural practices that we are not normally used to.

“Everybody's field is probably as strong and healthy as it has ever been going into June, which is great,” he added. “If we do resume baseball, now we're looking at June, July, August — really a three-month window of potential heat — and then you're back into September. And it didn't get beat up March, April and May, and then we have to get through the season. You are probably going to start the most concerning part of your season through the heat with the strongest grass you've ever had.”

Vance added that there is some concern with potentially hosting Spring Training at their

home site and the impact on the field when play resumes. “But I think we can stay on top of it,” he said, and added that the field should look good on television.

“We are all professionals, and we want this thing to shine. It doesn't just represent us, it represents the team and the city. Our goal every game is for this to be the best looking turf in Kansas City and the viewing audience.”

#### **HOSTING EVENTS**

When it comes time to actually host other events on the field — from dog days at the park to campouts on the field to corporate events, concerts,



## CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

**PROBLEM:**

Damaged turf in strange shape

**TURFGRASS AREA:**

Little League field

**LOCATION:**

Knightdale, N.C.

**TURFGRASS VARIETY:**

Tifway 419 bermudagrass

*Answer on page 33*

*John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International*



# Speed-Clean

**SYNTHETIC TURF SWEEPER**

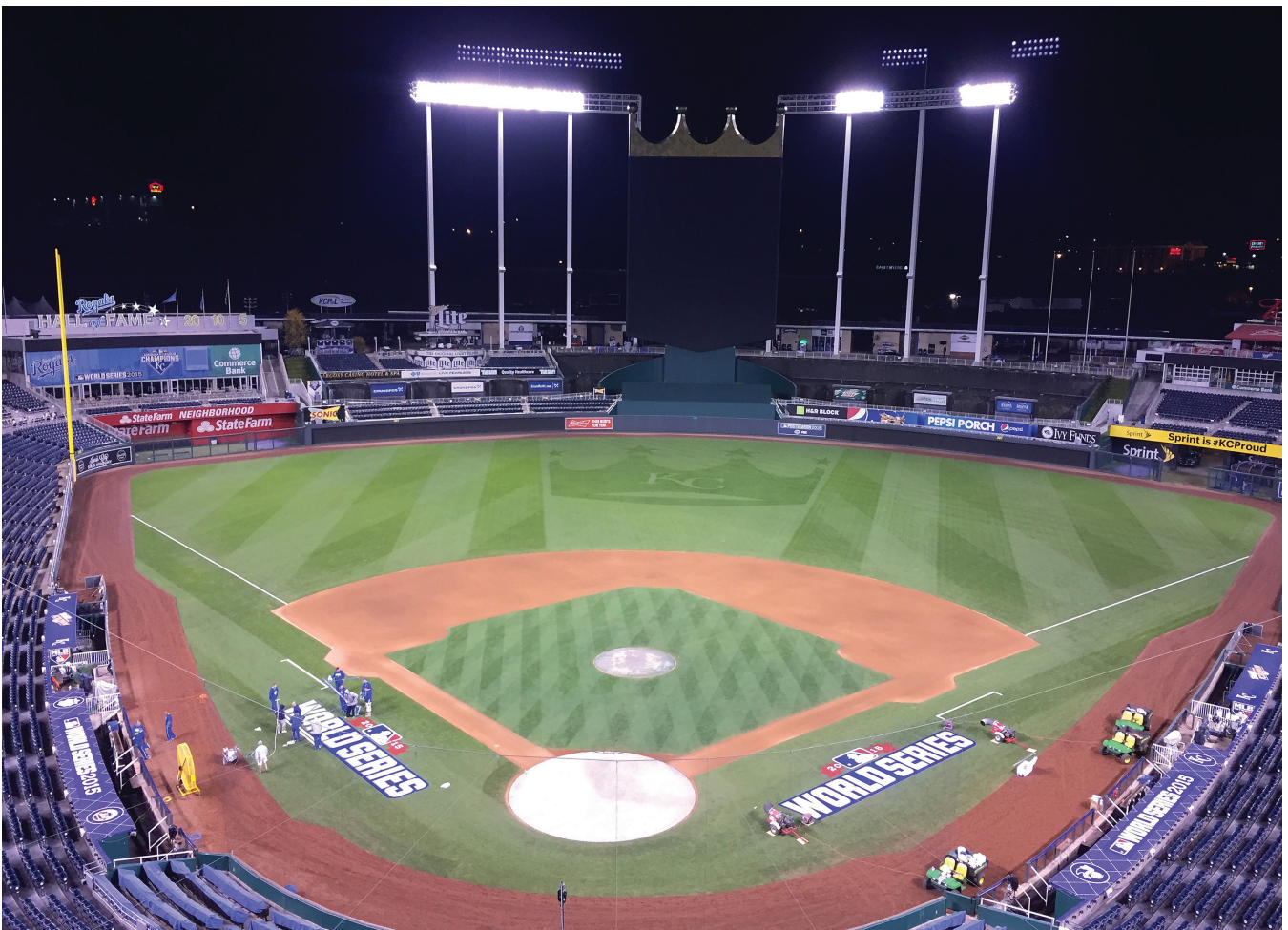


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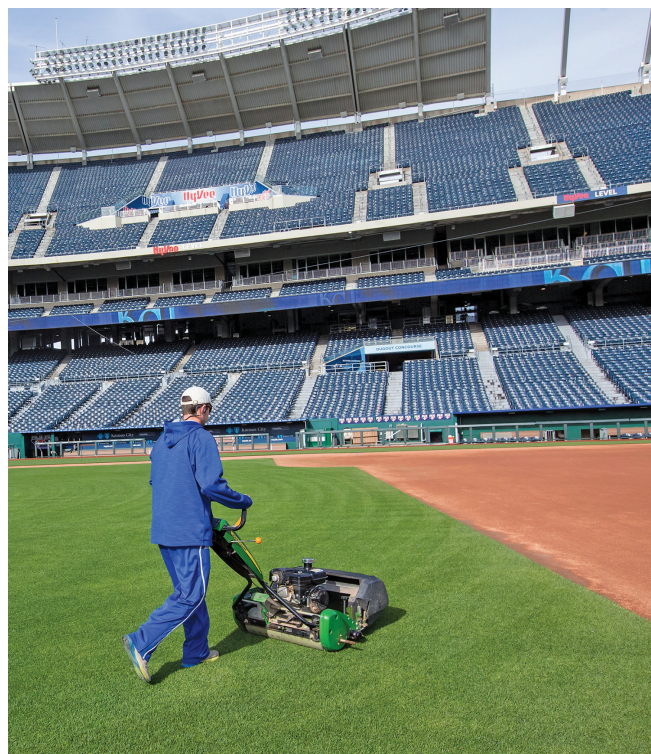
Photos provided by the Kansas City Royals

fairs and more — Vance’s advice to prepare for — and recover from — those types of events is to “plan for the worst.”

“That way, if it happens, we’re ready,” he said. “If it doesn’t, it’s just a lighter day. We have a big Diamond of Dreams event every year where we

bring in 1,500 people, tents, and have a big celebration on the field to raise money for Royals Charities. So we are always trying to stay one to two steps





Photos provided by John Deere

ahead — whether it's fungicides, fertility, or drying out the field prior to a concert. It's not our first rodeo. We have all lived and learned from our mistakes. But it's not bulletproof. Mother Nature is going to decide how that field looks. But we have been blessed to get through most events pretty unscathed."

#### GAME DAY

According to Vance, on game day he and his crew will survey the field.

"There are always high-traffic spots — whether it is in front of the mound, the umpire areas, the on deck areas and maybe a couple outfield positions," he said. "If you know a big game is coming up on TV, you can address that by the pattern you put into the fields and kind of hide some thinner areas, or put a white stripe around your home plate to draw attention to that instead of a thin area around home plate. But, overall, it's the same practice whether we have been playing or not. We always want this field to look good.

"My approach to anything when it comes to the field is that the field is the backdrop to the game," said Vance. "When fans walk in, we want a wife to nudge her husband and say, 'Why doesn't our yard look that great?' But then we want it to be like a good umpire — he's out there, but he never comes into play."

Vance and his crew change their mowing pattern for every home stand to avoid snaking or the grass laying over too much.

"When it comes to painting, it's normally a celebration — it's Opening Day, it's an All-Star Game, it's a playoff game," he said. "You want those things to look like a Super Bowl. You want it to shine. Normally all that painting is done in foul territory, so it doesn't affect the play."

#### SAFETY FIRST

Whether your field will be showcased on TV or not, Vance's advice to field managers of all levels for producing a beautiful, safe playing

surface and having a visually stunning appearance it to take pride in your work.

"That is your signature, so sign it with excellence," said Vance. "But number one is player safety. You give up the aesthetics if necessary for player safety. As long as player safety is where it needs to be, make that baby shine. Take pride in your mowing. Find a pattern that you're good at. But just remember that the player is first. Be concerned about the ball snaking."

Vance also reminds others that, "70 percent of the game is played on the dirt. If your dirt is great, you're not going to hear much feedback about your turf from a ballplayer."

His final piece of advice: "Love what you do. Take great pride in what you do, take your time and do it right." **SFM**

*John Kmitta is associate publisher/editorial brand director of SportsField Management magazine.*



# "Essential" Synthetic Turf Maintenance

By Jeremy Tredway



The word “essential” seems to be thrown around lately when it comes to basic job duties and responsibilities. I’m sure most of you have found yourself in some kind of meeting during the last couple of months trying to justify why certain jobs are essential to your department. If you’re like me, in most cases these essential tasks revolved around mowing and just general cultivation practices for our natural grass surfaces. I’m not sure

how many of us felt the need to throw our synthetic turf fields into the mix of these conversations.

I certainly didn’t go down that road. However, as we start to reopen our fields for play, I encourage you to develop a general maintenance plan for your synthetic surfaces if you don’t already have one. I think the core of this plan should be “scouting.” We were all taught in Turf 101 to scout the grass and look for disease, insect

damage, and moisture issues — just to name a few. This basic concept will translate to synthetic turf as well; but, instead of looking for the issues just mentioned, you’re looking for things such as displaced crumb rubber (divots in the turf) and temperature issues in the heat of the summer. Surface firmness — or in some cases how “soft” the field is — is something that can be diagnosed by just walking the field on a regular basis.





**Although synthetic turf might not require as much maintenance as a natural grass field, it certainly requires some maintenance in order to ensure that it meets — and sometimes exceeds — the turf's life expectancy.**

“Zero maintenance” and “low maintenance” are just a couple of the catchphrases that we often hear mentioned when it comes to synthetic turf maintenance. Most of us just roll our eyes and understand that these terms are misleading and, in most cases, just a flat out lie. Although synthetic turf might not require as much maintenance as a natural grass field, it certainly requires some

maintenance in order to ensure that it meets — and sometimes exceeds — the turf's life expectancy.

As sports field managers we're often creatures of habit. We devise a plan of attack on how to approach the maintenance of our fields. Sometimes these plans will be on a daily, weekly or even monthly basis. These schedules are often based on what we perceive to be “normal”

working operations. The times that we face now as field managers are anything but “normal.” With reductions in employee work hours and just an overall reduction in our maintenance budgets, many of us have had to throw out our usual work schedules, which has led us down an uncomfortable path of uncertainty. Thinking outside the box has become important as we prioritize what maintenance practices to perform on our fields while juggling all of the issues that the global pandemic has thrown our way.

At Indiana University, we manage approximately 10 acres of synthetic turf fields. We operate with three full-time groundskeepers, and, depending on the time of year, we'll add an additional three to four part-time workers. During a typical working week, we'll spend around 20 man-hours on our 10 acres of turf. The basic maintenance practices that we do during this time include sweeping, dragging or decompacting of the turf. We try to walk the fields at least once a week to get a feel for how they are performing, and also scout any issues that might be popping up with the turf. These issues could range from divots in the turf to a loose seam that might need to be addressed. During the summer months, we also scout for weed encroachment in the turf. Just like a natural grass field, our level of attention to each turf field will be dependent on the amount and level of play on each field.

The start of each season brings on an added level of care and maintenance for each field. For example, during football season, we sweep and drag the field before and after each game.

During the last five to 10 years, surface firmness as it relates to concussions and overall player safety has become a hotbed issue in football. We test the field's



firmness with the Clegg hammer before and after each game. We make sure to keep a log of the test results so we can see how the field is performing throughout the season. I also find myself monitoring how “soft” the field is throughout the season. Without getting into specifics, I’ve found that our fields tend to be spongy at times, and we do our best to mitigate this issue as well. Other examples of in-season maintenance practices we might perform include insert repairs at baseball, as well as irrigation repairs at field hockey. This in-season maintenance work will typically fall within the 20 hours a week that we spend on our synthetic turf. As we move into the summer months and what we call “camp” season, our maintenance program will lean more toward preventative measures along the line of monitoring or scouting the playing surfaces. Since the camp season is usually during the hot summer months, we also do our best to monitor the surface temperature of the fields using a basic infrared heat thermometer.

I often get asked what are some of the most important tools for synthetic turf maintenance. If I had to pick one tool that I wouldn’t want to do without, it would be our infill depth gauge. This gauge retails for around \$40, and is pretty invaluable when it comes to scouting and understanding where our fields stand in terms of firmness. We’ve found that infill depth will provide a good idea of how firm or soft the field might



## One area of concern that’s certainly been brought to the forefront of synthetic turf maintenance during the last few months is disinfecting the turf.

be. Instead of sending a couple of employees out to Clegg test each field, I might just have one guy go out and check the infill depths of each field. If we find a field — or, at the very least, an area of a field — having some inconsistent infill depth readings, then we will address that particular area accordingly. We also use a turf sweeper/collector to do most of our vacuuming and decompacting of our fields. We run it over each of our synthetic fields approximately once a month, depending on usage.

One area of concern that’s certainly been brought to the forefront

of synthetic turf maintenance during the last few months is disinfecting the turf. For the last three years, we’ve been disinfecting our indoor field on a regular basis. With the concern over COVID-19 and player safety, we’ve now been disinfecting all of our surfaces on a weekly basis. Once athletes return to campus, we will be looking to make these applications on a daily basis. This will make a huge impact on our maintenance staff as we navigate this “new normal.” I’m planning for one full-time employee to spend at least 40 hours a week disinfecting playing surfaces. This will be a significant increase in our man-hours spent on synthetic turf. This will once again throw our “normal” working operations into limbo as we try and find ways to get fields disinfected on a regular basis — all while doing our regular maintenance.

Synthetic turf maintenance isn’t always a number-one priority for sports field managers. It’s very easy for us to move it to the back burner, and, in some cases, take it off the burner all together. This will only become magnified in these unprecedented times. As we all head back to a more normal work schedule, I would encourage you to establish or reevaluate your current synthetic turf maintenance program in order to define what you feel are “essential” turf maintenance practices for your synthetic fields. **SFM**

*Jeremy Tredway is sports turf manager at Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.*



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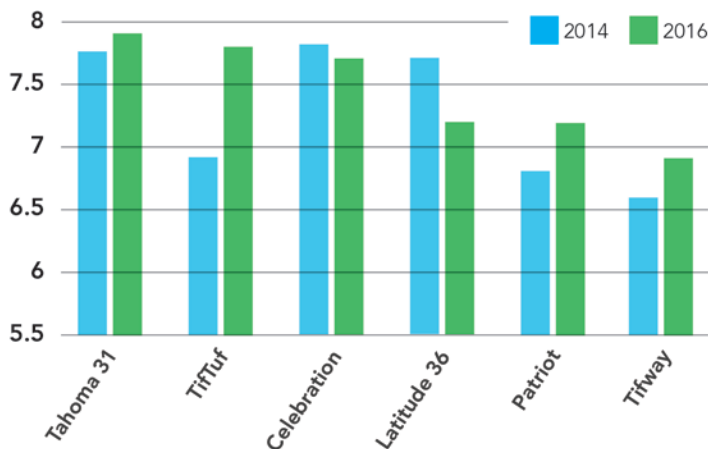
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# Fall Sports?

## Planning ahead during uncertain times

By John Kmitta



As restrictions begin to ease, and sports leagues and schools at all levels work through the issues surrounding a return to play, sports field managers do their best to plan ahead for fall sports in a year where most plans have been upended.

“At this moment in time [early June], the State of Maine’s governing body for high school sports has not come out with anything official yet, but my understanding is that they are working on this since the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS)

has already released phased guidelines for a return to activities for the fall,” said Rick Perruzzi CSFM, CPRP, recreation manager of outdoor athletic facilities, South Portland Department of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront. “There are still a lot of logistics to work out, especially here in Maine where the rural areas are less impacted by the pandemic, but the southern part of the state has had the majority of the cases. One of the talking points has been, ‘Is it going to be safe to allow teams to travel from areas that

have more cases of COVID-19 to areas that have few to zero cases?’”

According to Mark Frever, director of landscape services, Western Michigan University, his crews are ready to adjust to any schedule announcements.

“We are fortunate to have a sports turf manager and crew responding to the current conditions with the best understood cultural practices. They have kept the coaches informed,” he said.

According to Mark Roberts, CSFM, athletic turf and field manag-



er, The Steward School, Richmond, Va., [as of early June] Virginia has no guidelines for return to play as of yet.

“We are trying to figure out fall sports, but it seems the rules keep changing, so there is nothing definite,” said Roberts. “I have been blessed to keep working every day, and with no games I have just moved my summer schedule up a few weeks.”

Perruzzi said that he is of the mindset that there will be a fall season and he and his crew are aggressively managing those areas that get a lot of use — especially the stadium field and practice areas for football.

“Since there was no lacrosse season, it allowed us to get off to an early start and only have to focus on aeration, overseeding and top-dressing to repair damage from the previous fall season, and a lot of deferred maintenance,” said Perruzzi.

“Usually we have to wait until mid to late June to get on the field to start getting it ready for the fall season. This year, we were able to start in late April. It is, as I am sure it is for a lot of field managers around the country, a recipe for success.”

Said Frever, “We are making decisions with the humility that we might make a mistake. As we face different challenges, we learn from our mistakes and make another decision.”

Perruzzi added, “At the end of the day we are all in the same boat. STMA has done a great job with providing resources to help everyone along during this pandemic. The success of the Town Hall meetings I think has been a huge help in allowing folks to have a dialogue on some of the challenges we have and will face in the coming weeks and months. We have to

stay positive and focus on what’s important during these difficult times — family and staying safe — and continue the passion and drive that we, as sports field managers, bring to our facilities each day. We have to continue to do our best with the information provided to us and prepare for a return to sport by providing safe and playable fields for all levels.”

Roberts urges other sports field managers to “keep doing what you do.”

“I believe sports will be back, and with this time off the fields should be better than ever,” he said. **SFM**

*John Kmitta is associate publisher/editorial brand director of SportsField Management magazine.*

**[Editor’s Note:** The interviews for this article were conducted in early June.]

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# Bringing the Lab to the Field

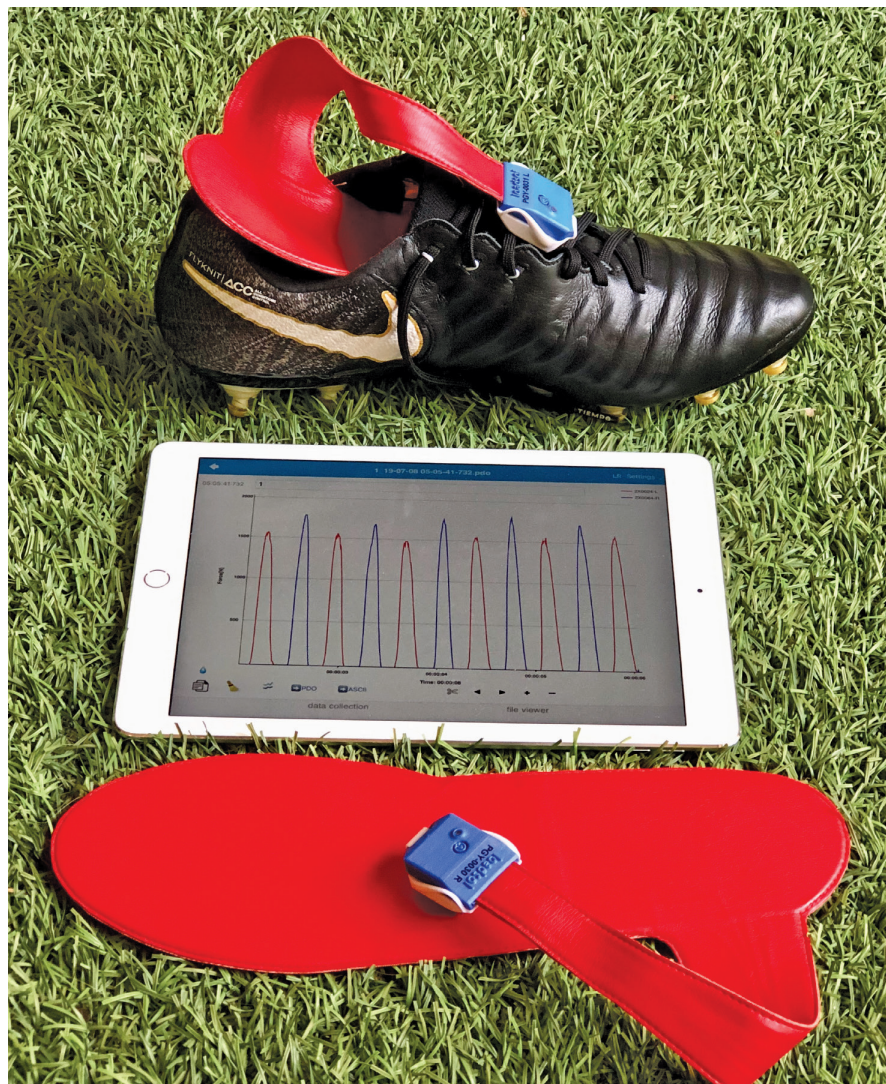
## An introduction to wearable technologies

By Chase Straw, Ph.D., and Athol Thomson, Ph.D.

Several devices are commercially available to quantify surface properties of a sports field (e.g. surface hardness, turfgrass shear strength, infill depth, etc.). These data are useful in creating thresholds for data-driven management decisions, rather than basing them solely on intuition. Once certain surface property thresholds are met, the field is oftentimes deemed as safe and playable; however, safety and playability have another important component: the players themselves.

Players interact with the surface through the shoes on their feet to perform movements on the field. Ensuing player loads during these movements trigger mechanobiological responses in the musculoskeletal system that make those tissues (e.g. bone, tendons, ligaments, etc.) stronger or weaker. Understanding surface properties alongside player biomechanics is important to minimize injury risk, maximize performance, and better grasp what exactly field safety and playability is.

One issue is that the collection of high-quality biomechanical data during athletic movements has historically been limited to laboratory settings with expensive force plates embedded in the floor and 3D motion capture systems. Nevertheless, rapid improvements in the cost, size, weight, and data collection sampling frequency of wearable technologies may be a game-changer. Evaluation of player biomechanics during practices or games across different climatic conditions, surfaces, footwear, and movement strategies opens exciting



**Figure 1.** Wireless force-sensing insoles send data via Bluetooth to an app on a tablet or smartphone (Loadsol, Novel, St. Paul, Minn).

possibilities to improve understanding of complex, on-field interactions between player and playing surface. Of course, context is king, and there are some pitfalls. Here we present a brief introduction to a couple wear-

able technologies, and then consider their use in conjunction with surface property data to advance our knowledge of player-surface interactions and adjust field management strategies accordingly.





Figure 2. Example of an inertial measurement unit (IMU) placed on the lower leg (IMeasureU, Auckland, New Zealand). Data can be streamed in real time or downloaded after practices or games to a dashboard for further analysis. It is important to check the protocols for data security and Cloud storage of personal data, which may differ in each state or country.

### WHAT IS WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY?

Wearable technologies (WT) are devices (usually electronic sensors) worn or attached to a person. Sensor specifications depend on the measurement needs; for example, a force sensor to measure ground reaction forces and an accelerometer to measure leg accelerations. For force or acceleration data it is important to collect a measurement many times per second

(high sampling frequency), as the rate of loading in certain player movements occur across a short timeframe, such as when sprinting or landing from a jump. WT sensor data may be viewed in real-time via WiFi with a computer, phone or tablet. They can also be stored on-board the sensor and downloaded or sent via Bluetooth to an online dashboard after practices and games. Most companies even offer

dashboard solutions to retrospectively analyze and view the data.

### EXAMPLES OF WEARABLE TECHNOLOGIES

#### Wireless insoles

Wireless insoles work essentially like mini force plates inside a shoe or cleat (see Figure 1). Metrics involving the foot-to-surface interaction can include ground reaction forces, accumulation of impact forces, ground contact time, loading rate, regional pressure within the foot, and others. Usually, wireless insoles measure the vertical component of force (not horizontal or mediolateral) and have a lower sampling frequency than an embedded force plate in a laboratory. Caution should be used when interpreting some metrics, such as loading rate, when insoles have low sampling frequency, as a few milliseconds can make a difference to the peak or maximum force measured. The collection of multiple foot impacts across a playing session on the field of play is still a major advantage compared to traditional force plates in a laboratory, since it is difficult to replicate outdoor environmental conditions and player movement during actual competition.

#### Inertial measurement units (IMU)

An IMU is a collection of sensors — which includes a gyroscope, accelerometer and magnetometer — that



Figure 3. Example of an IMU fastened to back of soccer cleats with custom-made strap (PlayerMaker, Tel Aviv, Israel).

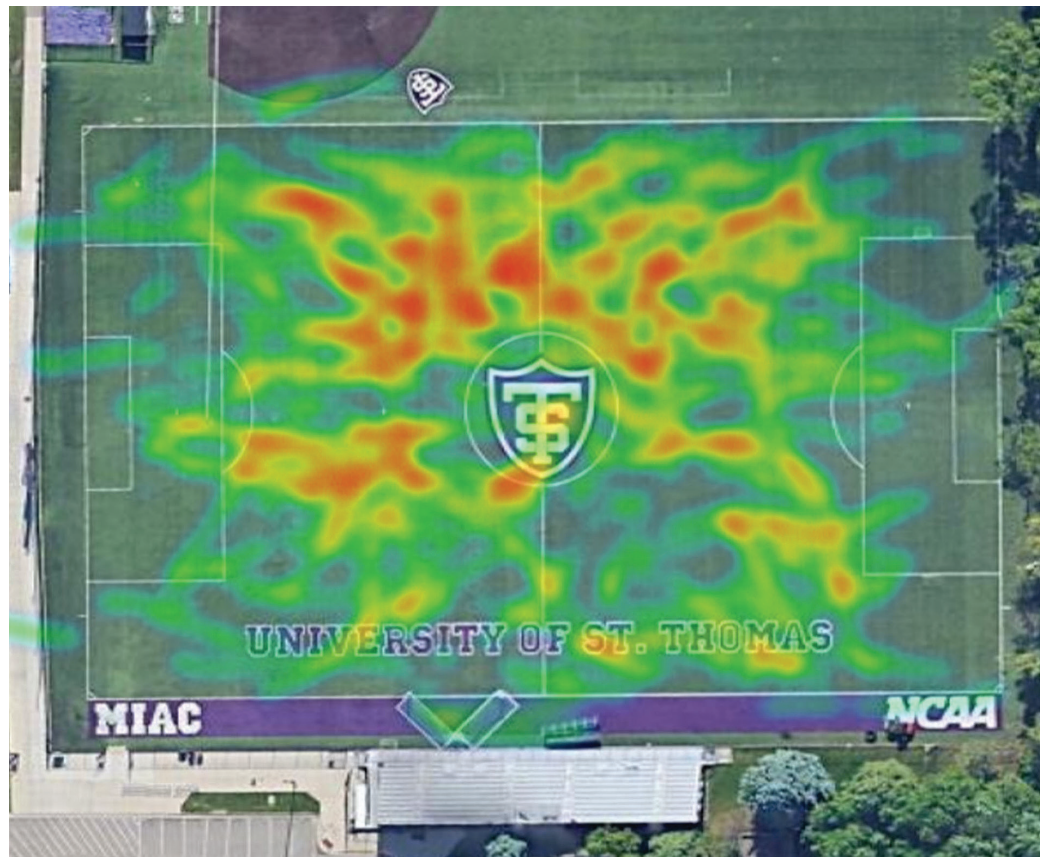


collect data based on movement of the unit. In sports, they are often used to evaluate accelerations and decelerations of the body or segments of the body [e.g. the tibia (leg)], angular rates or movements, and body orientations (see Figure 2). Examples include integration into American football helmets to measure impact decelerations at the head or strapping them to shoes or cleats to measure the timing and magnitude of foot impacts (see Figure 3). Furthermore, IMUs with global positioning system (GPS) technology allow for measuring speed and distance metrics, such as the time spent running above a speed level or distance ran while running within a certain speed range.

Locational data (i.e. latitude and longitude) obtained from the GPS let you know where some of these measurements take place at exact locations within a field (see Figure 4). Good battery life, high sampling frequency for essential measurements (e.g. force, acceleration, GPS location), adequate range of measurement unit for the metric of interest (e.g. +/- 200g for accelerometers covers the majority of sporting movements and collisions), and waterproof housing (for sweat or water off the playing surface) are all important considerations.

### THE FUTURE OF WEARABLE TECHNOLOGIES IN SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT

So, what do these wearable technologies and their data mean for sports



**Figure 4.** Locations within a field where athletes were running  $\geq 11$  mph. Data were collected using Titan 2 GPS player trackers (Integrated Bionics, Houston, Texas). Speed values are on a color scale, where green areas are speeds  $\sim 11$  mph and increase as the color transitions to red.

field management? As an increasing number of teams begin adopting and wearing these technologies, coaches and trainers may begin to express interest in the role of the field and its influence on their players. If you are already testing your field, then this may allow for more open dialogue with the team to compare datasets and adjust management strategies to better meet their expectations. If you are currently not capable of testing your fields, it may provide some justification for purchasing surface testing equipment so that these types of comparisons can be made. Platforms for simple integration of player and surface property data are coming regardless, especially at the collegiate and professional levels. In fact, a company in another country has already

developed software to incorporate data from wearable technologies into their online dashboard to identify relationships with surface property data. This type of software is going to provide a platform that helps us better understand player-surface interactions under a variety of real-world scenarios, which will take data-driven sports field management to a whole new level. **SFM**

*Chase Straw, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in Turfgrass Management and Physiology at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.*

*Athol Thomson, Ph.D. is a podiatrist and research scientist at Aspetar Sports Medicine Hospital in Doha, Qatar.*





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# Creating a Masterpiece

*Photos provided by World Class Athletic Surfaces*





For field paint trends, paint selection advice, application tips and more, *SportsField Management* recently interviewed Greg Narmour, vice president at World Class Athletic Surfaces.

**SPORTSFIELD MANAGEMENT (SFM)** What are the latest trends/innovations in field paint?

**NARMOUR:** Ready to use (RTU) premixed paints. Sports turf managers are being required to do more work with less help. With pre-mixed RTU paints, they are able to get more painting done with less time and labor mixing it themselves. Also, bulk tote mixing systems using the RTU paints take it to another level. You can store more paint in less space and mix with a flip of a switch. If you take the hours that you would normally spend mixing paint, you can spend those same hours working on your fields, and that's the most important aspect of a sports field manager's job. There are also paints out now that will dry and cure faster. They can be useful to get the job done in cold and wet situations.

**SFM:** What recommendations do you have for sports field managers when it comes to selecting the right paint to meet their needs?

**NARMOUR:** Use water-based 100-percent acrylic latex paint. Avoid vinyl acrylics if at all possible. Avoid using a product that has a large amount of calcium carbonate. A small amount is okay and helps with hiding, but too much can build up in areas that are painted a lot. High-quality paints will cost a little more up front, but if it lasts longer, stays brighter longer, then you will use less and paint less. In the long run, using a high-quality paint is a very important part of a sports field manager's arsenal.

**SFM:** What should sports field managers know about painting natural grass playing surfaces versus painting synthetic turf?

**NARMOUR:** Different surfaces require different paints to get the job done. Painting on natural grass and synthetic can be done with the same equipment and doesn't vary as far as the application. When considering what kind of paint to use on a synthetic playing field, consider the amount of time you want the paint to last. If it's a multi-purpose field requiring you to change layouts, use a quality removable paint. You can paint your logo, or field layout, and when you need to change to the next sport, you spray a special remover and wash it off. Remember that nothing will stick permanently to the synthetic surface, but the ease of removal at a specific timeframe is a plus with the special removable paints. One sports field manager told me that the best paint remover for any surface is a halftime show with a lot of feet. *(Continued on page 34)*



## Five Keys to Field Stencils

The top 5 recommendations when creating a field stencil, according to Tim McLarn, CEO of TruMark Athletics, are as follows:

### 1. GET CREATIVE

Think about the different aspects of your school or team's brand identity — your field doesn't have to be limited to decorating with the logo. We can create a stencil for almost anything, including your school or team name; a fun phrase, such as "Go Bulldogs!"; lettering or a mascot.

### 2. SIZE IT RIGHT

When converting a logo that is used digitally to an image suitable to be painted on a field, the image might need tweaks make sure it can be cut, can be easily painted, and, most importantly, can be seen by the fans. If you aren't sure what size you need, we are happy to advise and provide a digital mock-up of the artwork on a field.

### 3. UNDERSTAND THE SURFACE YOU ARE PAINTING

If you paint an image on a hard surface, such as a wall or concrete, you will get very precise lines. When you are painting an image on grass or turf, you need to remember that you are working with a fluid surface. Any logos with a lot of complexity or that are very small will be very difficult to paint, and might blur together as the blades of grass move. This is one of the key reasons we recommend simplifying complex logos so that the detail that is left in is clearly visible.

### 4. TRUST THE PROCESS

The quoting process is critical. It's important to have a vector file of the artwork so that we can get precise measurements, provide a mock-up, and confirm that all details in the logo can be cut. We often get pictures sent in of a logo on a hat or a picture of the logo. These don't work for quoting, because the curvature of the hat, as well as the angle the picture was taken will distort the image.

### 5. EXPLORE THE OPTIONS

Many different types and styles of field stencils are offered, and we can make a recommendation based on what would be easiest to paint and will prolong the life of the stencil based on your unique application.

#### Bonus tip:

During the quoting process, don't forget the paint. Your field art will need maintenance, such as touch-ups, during the season — this is often a cost that is not factored in when the stencil is ordered. **SFM**





# JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

## ANSWER

From page 17

The turf with this strange shape was not created by natural causes, as rarely do natural causes form smiley faces. This well-maintained baseball field is used for recreational league play Monday through Thursday. As with most youth baseball, bored outfielders will probably never see a ball come their way, so they do what bored kids do, dig in the ground with their newly discovered cleats. This sports field manager reports they have found that if someone starts to damage something, they continue to damage it regardless of their repair. They also found that if they add green divot sand to dug out areas in the outfield, it almost always attracts the kids like bees to honey. To facilitate the repair so future kids don't add eyebrows or hair to the smiley face with their cleats, the crew uses a cup cutter to speed the recovery. The sports field manager shared the photo with the park and rec department and asked them to speak to the players. The sports field manager also shared that he assumes the child playing in the outfield was happy to be playing as, "It is a smiley face instead of a frowning face."

Photo submitted by Jason E. Eubanks, grounds maintenance supervisor at the Town of Knightdale, N.C.

*John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International*



If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz please send it to John Mascaro, 1471 Capital Circle NW, Ste #13, Tallahassee, FL 32303 call (850) 580-4026 or email to [john@turf-tec.com](mailto:john@turf-tec.com). If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos submitted will become property of SportsField Management and the Sports Turf Managers Association.

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# SportsField

MANAGEMENT



(Continued from page 31)

**SFM:** What advice/tips do you have regarding application best practices and/or method of application?

**NARMOUR:** Remember that too much of anything is not good for the paint. Even too much water is not good. Restrain from over painting, especially when you see a little grass peeking out (that's a good thing). Ninety-nine percent of the viewers will not see that from their vantage point. Use a quality water-based paint and quality airless sprayers. Use the correct tips and pressure for the job you are doing. Using the same tip you fill an end zone with and hash marks will waste paint. Using too much pressure will waste paint as well. You just want to paint the top parts of the grass; it's a waste to paint the thatch, and will lead to a build-up. Do your best to knock off the dew prior to painting — painting on wet grass just prolongs the drying time and dilutes the paint even more.

Mow prior to painting, not after. You will just mow off the paint too soon. Also, water after mowing and before painting. Remember, the plant is going to want to absorb something after being mowed, and by watering after mowing and before painting you will end up using less paint and get a better look. Manage your time — be finished painting for the day prior to sundown so your paint is dry before dark. If it's not dry before sundown, it will not dry or cure until the next day when the sun comes out. Also, the dew overnight will dilute your paint finish. If you are painting a two-coat project, make sure the first coat is dry prior to application of the second.

Manage your inventory so you don't have paint sitting around too long. Field marking paint is best closest to the time it was made. Store your paint properly so not to be exposed to extreme heat or cold. Strain the paint every time you load your sprayer, if possible. Even a small piece of grass can clog a sprayer and interrupt your painting.

**SFM:** What should sports field managers know regarding the various grades of paint?

**NARMOUR:** There are many different grades and types of field marking paint, too many to list here. Some jobs, such as a practice field, could be done with one grade and the game field can be done with another. Using just one product that can be used at different mixing ratios for different fields may be beneficial. The best way to make sure you get a quality product is to build a relationship with your salesperson and/or paint company. With a good trusting relationship, they will make sure you get the product you need for your particular job.



Whether you use a concentrated paint or a premixed RTU paint, use a quality product that you will use less of. Using more of a lower-grade product for it to look like you want, there will eventually be build-up, which will be harmful to your grass in the long run. Use a product you are comfortable with and have had a good experience with. Reach out to your colleagues and peers on their experiences with different grades. They would be the best source and help you find the grade you are looking for.

**SFM:** What advice do you have regarding the creation of logos and/or the use of stencils?

**NARMOUR:** Using high-quality artwork will turn out the best-looking colorful stencils. Avoid getting too complex with really small details, as they will be hard to see from the vantage point of the viewers. Logos with white and lighter colors show up best on the green grass. Dark colors and black tend to show up better with a white border around them. An outside border will also make your logo pop.

Use a stencil made of quality plastic. If it's too thin, the wind will cause you trouble and won't last very long. Avoid going too small to save a dollar. It may look big to you standing on or near it, but from the viewers' standpoint, it will look too small. For reference, the numbers on the field are usually 6 feet tall. You may think a 6-foot logo would be okay, but it would be a really small logo. When using stencils, do not leave them on the grass for more than an hour if possible. Make sure it is dry before folding or rolling it up. Store covered and out of the sun and elements. I like to fold once in half, then roll up on a PVC or corrugated type pipe and hang on hooks on the shop wall. This method takes up less storage and rolls right out just like you rolled it up. It also decreases the many folds in the stencil. **SFM**



# MAKING AN IMPACT BEYOND SPORTS

## Field paint artistry pays tribute to the Class of 2020

The artistry and impact of field paint extends beyond sporting events, and 2020 has showcased some amazing tributes to the class of 2020. Here are just a few examples:



Lincoln Christian School, Lincoln, Neb. Photo provided by All About Grass.



Clockwise from upper left: James M. Bennett High School, Salisbury, Md.; Mardela Middle & High School, Mardela Springs, Md.; Parkside High School, Salisbury, Md.; Wicomico High School, Salisbury, Md. Photos provided by Mid-Atlantic Turf, Inc.



# Winning with Municipal Fields

By Mary Helen Sprecher

One of the biggest advantages of public facilities such as municipal fields — whether they are diamonds or rectangles — is they are open to the public. However, that is one of the biggest risks they face as well.

And with the pandemic, you can bet a lot of fields saw a lot of parents and kids spending time on the turfgrass — and the artificial turf in some cases — for batting practice, lacrosse drills and other activities. Unfortunately, it is those “other activities” that tend to cause the most problems. Here are a few of the challenges with managing fields open to the public:

**DOG USE:** Dogs got lucky with everyone home and quarantined. They got lots of walks, lots of attention, and lots of trips to the park with their owners. Not so lucky for field managers who have had to deal with the problems of owners who use their facilities as makeshift dog parks without cleaning up. It is bad enough when it happens on natural grass, but it is even more unsavory when it happens on synthetic turf. (Although there are synthetic surface products that are dog park-specific, they are different from those used for sports fields).

**MISUSE:** Another problem with public fields is their ability to be misused. Whether that means malicious vandalism in the form of someone spray painting a synthetic field or driving a vehicle such as an ATV across a turfgrass field, or whether that means someone ripping up a field by wearing cleated shoes where



they shouldn't, it creates an enormous problem.

**LITTER:** A lot of unattended users means nobody was telling people to pick up their trash. That resulted in a collection of empty water and soda bottles, food wrappers and even leftover food abandoned and now attracting ants — and worse. When some users refuse to pack out their trash, it creates a problem for the whole facility.

**TURF WARS:** This particularly became a problem during COVID-19 when families wanted to keep to themselves, but there simply was

not enough space available for multiple families to have their own space in order to adhere to social distancing mandates. As things start to open (and if programming has not rebounded yet), we can prepare ourselves for turf wars among groups of people who want to have activities such as ball games or practices.

**TRACK ISSUES:** Rectangular fields often include a running track around the perimeter, and these often are subject to misuse as well. It is not uncommon for unattended tracks to be damaged by individuals with spiked footwear, skates, skateboards and more. Parents who come to run



on the track will often bring children who have bicycles or tricycles and encourage them to use the track — to the detriment of the surface.

These are just a few of the problems field managers encounter with public facilities, and we can count

## Make sure there is signage posted around your facility, not just at the entrance, but throughout.

on these issues to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 situation. The good news is that, for now, some states are reopening and that may mean field managers are able to work on keeping order in the area. Unfortunately, habits have been formed, which means users are going to have to learn to follow the rules. Some recommended solutions are as follows:

**FENCES:** We are assuming your field is fenced. If not, well, it needs to be — and we mean it really, really needs to be. The higher the fence, the more secure the facility becomes. Having fence mazes (Google it if you are not familiar with the term) at the entrance can help deter people from bringing in bicycles or trikes.

**MOTION-ACTIVATED LIGHTS:** After-hours use, including vandalism, might be less desirable if the facility has lighting on a motion sensor. And now, thanks to apps, someone can be alerted if the field is being used in

an unauthorized fashion after hours (criminals do hate an audience).

**WATERING:** If you are watering the fields, set the timers for after closing; it makes the environment even less hospitable to those with mischief on their minds.

**PUT IT IN WRITING:** Make sure there is signage posted around your facility, not just at the entrance, but throughout. Make sure signs include the following:

- Running shoes only (this means smooth-soled running shoes rather than footwear with spikes or cleats)
- Use garbage cans for any refuse
- No bikes, trikes, wagons or other vehicles (and no skates)
- No dogs in the facility

(including the track, field and stands)

- Paying users have priority for the facility, and reservations are needed (This may or may not be a factor in the area yet, but as youth sports return, along with camps, clinics, leagues and other activities, you'll need to make sure your users understand the field schedule).

- If there is a track, post a sign encouraging walkers/runners to alternate their use of lanes; often, individuals will gravitate toward the inside lane of the track, which leads to premature wear there.

- The hours of the facility should be posted; these may be specific hours (for example, 6 a.m.-9 p.m.) or more general (dawn to dusk). Include a note that any use outside of those hours is considered trespassing and that violators will be arrested.

- Post a number people can call if they see the facility being used in an unsafe manner

Although no sign is foolproof, you should be laying out the rules for

all users to see; this, in turn, provides a framework for enforcement.

Community meetings may or may not be happening in your state, but, fortunately, online meetings using platforms such as Zoom are available. It may become necessary to remind your users in person (or through the magic of online presentations) why the rules exist and the kind of damage the facility has sustained in the interim.

Be prepared to hear arguments about “our tax dollars,” but be ready to point out the tax dollars now have to be spent on repairs (and be ready to provide the price of those repairs, if need be). Tell people how much the field costs to build, and how much it typically costs to maintain. Ask those who insist the field be kept open at all times whether they are personally prepared to foot the bill to repair damage resulting from inappropriate use.

Is there a perfect solution and a really great balance between having a facility open to the public 24/7 and having it stay perfectly manicured, perfectly green and always ready for play? Not in this lifetime; however, by establishing good lines of communication between you and the community, you can set the tone for a good working relationship. **SFM**

*Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA), a non-profit association helping designers, builders, owners, operators and users understand quality construction of many sports facilities, including sports fields. To get up to speed on all the aspects of sports field care, ASBA publishes Sports Fields: A Construction and Maintenance Manual, an excellent resource with extensive (but user-friendly) information on design, construction, maintenance, repair, accessories, amenities and more. The book is available from the ASBA website at [sportsbuilders.org](http://sportsbuilders.org) and can be purchased in either hard copy or as a downloadable pdf.*



# Managing Stress and Anxiety in a Changing Environment

By John Kmitta

Sports field managers are accustomed to stress. However, the areas of anxiety in 2020 have not been related to event loads and field usage, but rather areas of concern such as reduced access to fields, fewer work hours, crew and staff reductions, budget cuts, furloughs, layoffs and much more — all accompanied by the health and wellness concerns of life and work amid a global pandemic.

According to Tammy Jackson-Gill, M.S., M. Div., licensed psychologist, owner of Healing Grace Counseling Center in Lee's Summit, Mo., and wife of STMA Past President Jody Gill, one of the biggest challenges for sports field managers is figuring out how to maintain fields during these challenging times and still feel good about the results, even if the fields may not be up to their typical standards.

When dealing with pressures from others to make fields perfect while struggling to do that with limited staff, limited time, and limited resources, it's important to know that you can't be perfect all the time, and accept that you may have to work with a little less than you are used to, said Jackson-Gill.

Another common stressor right now is worry and anxiety over the unknown, said Lisa Goatley, M.S., a licensed professional counselor in private practice in Blacksburg, Va., and wife of Dr. Mike Goatley, professor and extension turfgrass specialist at Virginia Tech.

"We have so many uncertainties in life currently, and human beings



generally dislike uncertainty," she said. "We have worry over the health and well-being of ourselves and our loved ones. Will we be exposed to COVID-19? Will my loved ones get sick? Will any of my family die from the virus? We also have worry over our livelihoods and the state of the economy. Many of us have been furloughed or laid off, and members of our families have experienced the same. We worry about making our mortgages and monthly bills. We worry about our family's financial health in the future."

According to Goatley, in order to manage worry and anxiety, be mindful of your cognitive narrative — the ongoing commentary in your head about the world and what is happening. Be aware of what you are saying to yourself and focus on rational, here-and-now thoughts.

## COMMUNICATION

"Turning to a trusted friend or mentor can help us remain calm and rational in times of stress," said Goatley.

Jackson-Gill added that during this time of social distancing, it is extremely important to communicate with supervisors, crew members, other sports field managers, family and friends.

"It would be easy to have a bootstraps-type of mentality and say, 'I can take care of myself, I don't need anybody else,'" she said. "But we do — even if it is just to check in and say, 'I've had a hard day,' or 'I've had a great day.'"

Added Goatley, "As humans, we are social beings. Even those of us who generally identify as loners were not made to live in isolation. Quarantine, and the loss of normal social interaction, has been extremely difficult."



Goatley recommends reaching out in wise ways, especially via modern technology that makes it possible for us to communicate in real time and “gather” virtually. “Some of us are heading back out into the world — some cautiously and some with abandon — and some of us are still living in full quarantine,” Goatley added. “Whatever your risk tolerance,

“If you care about your employees, you are going to have some concern,” she said. “If you are a loving person, you are going to care. It’s a matter of knowing what the boundary is and what you can do for them.”

Jackson-Gill said part of that balance is believing in that other person and helping them realize that they have it within themselves to

solve their problems. She recommends checking on others, offering help, letting them know you care, and sharing resources to support their needs, while at the same time realizing that you are limited in how much you can carry someone else’s emotion for them.

“Be a listening ear, but not to take it upon yourself that you are responsible for solving that other person’s problem,” she added.

#### **COVID-19 MESSAGING**

During the past few months, it has also been a challenge for many when it comes to processing COVID-19 messaging, being aware of what is going on and how it is impacting the world, while at the same time not being

overwhelmed, paralyzed or depressed by the information.

“It can be overload,” said Jackson-Gill. “You can get obsessed with it and want to read every article. But that doesn’t always help.”

According to Goatley, try to remain informed about what is going on in the world with COVID-19, but avoid consuming information 24 hours a day.

“Find a reputable source of information and get an update once a day,” she said. “There are plenty of news outlets that have been broadcasting 24 hours a day, and it has been tempting to keep this on in the background — but try to avoid doing so.”

Jackson-Gill said that it is important to stay focused on your tasks for the day. She added that everyone is different in how much news/information they can handle, so be aware if it interferes with your functioning, thinking, relationships, sleep or self care. If so, then you need to back off. Information overload can increase anxiety, so be tuned into your body and your mind, and take good care of yourself.

“Likewise, limit social media time and consumption of sensationalistic and alarmist postings,” said Goatley. “Be mindful of what is on TV and the conversations you have around children. They see and hear more than we think, and can easily become frightened. Answer their questions in a matter-of-fact manner based on reputable information and their stage of development”

#### **MIND AND BODY**

“Worry and anxiety can interfere with sleep,” said Goatley. “It can be difficult to shut off our mind in order to relax and fall asleep.”

Goatley’s advice for good sleep hygiene includes keeping a regular sleep/wake schedule, avoiding caffeine after 2 p.m., avoiding screen time within several hours of sleep, avoiding the news just before bed, lowering the temperature in the room, avoiding sleeping during the day, and getting regular exercise.

“If you have difficulty turning off your mind, try using a progressive relaxation or guided imagery exercise,” she added.

Goatley added that general stress management practices are now more important than ever. “Remember the basics of taking care of your body and brain,” she said. “Get regular exercise, good nutrition, adequate rest, and stay hydrated. Limit your use of alcohol, caffeine and nicotine.”

Said Jackson-Gill, “We teach managing anxiety and stress from a whole-person approach — the body, the mind, the spirit and the relational piece.”

## Try to remain informed about what is going on in the world with COVID-19, but avoid consuming information 24 hours a day.

remember to connect regularly to both seek out and provide support.”

Added Jackson-Gill, “Reach out. Connect. You’re not alone.”

#### **HELPING OTHERS, AND HELPING YOURSELF**

Speaking of not being alone, throughout the pandemic we have heard from sports field managers who say that they are not worried about themselves, but that they are worried about crew members or staff who have been furloughed or who face other challenges during these times. Jackson-Gill said it is important to be compassionate and caring, but also to be careful not to feel compelled to carry the burden of others.



As for the body, According to Jackson-Gill, research shows how stress is stored in our bodies, so make sure you move, every day. Moving in mindful ways, such as yoga and other types of exercise, is important to managing stress and worry. Tuning into your body and letting yourself breathe deeply and relax will help release anxiety from the body.

From the mind, take notice of your thinking habits — are you thinking rationally or do you have unrealistic or unlikely fears? Challenge those negative thoughts, and allow yourself to work through things using rational information.

Then add the spiritual component as well, said Jackson-Gill. “Studies show that people who pray or even practice meditation are better equipped to deal with stress,” she said. “So, include that in your practice and take care of yourself in all ways.”

With regard to relationships, “Make sure that you have somebody who cares about you, and that you care about, with whom you are sharing your thoughts and feelings.”

#### **NEW CHALLENGES MEET THE OLD**

When play resumes, sports field managers will not only be faced with their traditional areas of stress such as event loads, pressure from administration or management, and the desire for perfection, but also new challenges such as social distancing and player and spectator health and safety — in many cases while dealing with reduced crews and/or reduced budgets.

According to Jackson-Gill, it is important to be aware of those challenges ahead of time and not be afraid to ask for help.

“Let your supervisors or employers know that we are all limited in what we can do,” she said. “Be prepared to communicate, in a fair fashion, with your employer and supervisor about what is realistic.”

## Letting yourself breathe deeply and relax will help release anxiety from the body.

Jackson-Gill advises communicating timelines for when you can have specific tasks accomplished, and managing overall expectations.

“Set good boundaries around work and communicate actively with your administration,” said Goatley. “Guidelines around COVID-19 are continuously evolving, and concerns around the pandemic create additional stress. Again, active communication across all domains with your administration, staff and colleagues can reduce misunderstandings and difficult feelings.”

Goatley added that it is vital to remember the importance of downtime and leisure activities in managing stress.

“Set boundaries around checking e-mail, text messages, and phone messages,” she said. “It can be tempting to respond at all hours of the day or night; but time away from the stressors of work is critically important. If you find that you are more irritable or quick to anger, feeling more down than usual, and feel that you are not coping well, reach out to your physician or a therapist for help.”

#### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

According to Jackson-Gill, there are some silver linings in all this that can serve as key takeaways moving forward. Many people have found joy in having family time during the past few months, having dinner together rather than on the run, slowing down and reconnecting, so it is important

to be mindful of that in the future.

“Finding a work/life balance moving forward could be a very good thing we learn from this,” she said. “We are all human beings, and we all want to have a family life, too. So, how can we take aspects of this moving forward and have a more balanced life where we value the family life as much as the

field’s perfection?”

“I know how many hours people who do this job are away from family,” she added. “Finding the balance in that is so important. Don’t overdo it in getting the fields ready to the point that you have lost touch with your families and the relationships that matter.”

According to Goatley, it is important to remember that these are difficult times for everyone, and it is useful to give everyone the benefit of the doubt.

“Look for the good,” she added. “While there are plenty of negative stories out there, we have also seen many examples of people caring, helping and sharing. Adjust your expectations. We are all trying to maintain a sterile home, educate children, telework, and live in close quarters under extremely stressful conditions. Try to move with compassion and grace through these difficult times.”

Jackson-Gill added that, moving forward, it will be important to find ways to be more calm and peaceful, and also grow in our awareness to care for one another.

“Let’s look out for one another a little more, be mindful of one another’s whole person,” she said. “We’re human beings. So to take that with us and have more compassion would be really good.” **SFM**

*John Kmitta is associate publisher and editorial brand director of SportsField Management magazine.*



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The following are some industry Tweets from the past month:



**@FieldExperts**

The team at Wake Forest with an incredible design to recognize the class of 2020.

**MAY 22**



**@W\_Jeff\_Jackson**

As we begin to ramp up our special events, I had to get a picture in case this is the best the field will look all year. Thankful to still be able to come into work everyday to do my job. With the many unknowns, the one thing I have to tell myself is to control what I can control

**JUNE 1**



**@Marcus\_Gignac24**

Nothing better than a clean edge! #StayingReady

**MAY 26**



**@VMACTurf**

Football guys don't get the opportunity to mow in multiple directions very often. I'd say our guys are getting some good practice.

**JUNE 1**





**@KieronJennings**

Light verticut then a Hoover!!

**JUNE 5**



**@BPolimer**

My guys did a great job preparing field 3 +4 for our drive-in graduation on Sunday. Also mowed and trimmed all lawns around the parade route. Turf is stressed from lack of rainfall. Irrigation can only help so much.

**JUNE 5**



**@mark\_mrocz**

Painted our new football practice fields today. Workouts starting Monday.

**JUNE 5**



**@VTturfgrass**

@tylerm047 is a senior in our program and an important member of the @VT\_groundscrew. Tyler is the head turf manager for @HokiesBaseball & @HokiesTFXC, and serves as the asst. turf mgr. for @HokiesFB... he's also the treasurer of our Turf Club! #ManyHats

**JUNE 8**





**TORO LEAN-TO-STEER SPRAY MASTER**

Uneven applications cost time and money. That’s a thing of the past with precise spreads, consistent liquid flows and easy lean-to-steer control with Toro’s Spray Master.

Eliminate the need for a manual pressure regulator and get precise liquid and granular spreads with Toro’s industry-first electronic smart controls. With the ability to check fluid levels with just a glance with transparent white tanks, users can maximize uptime in the field.

With clog-free, consistent liquid flow rates with an auxiliary pump that delivers 2 gal./min. and up to 10 psi for constant tank agitation, this unit is highly productive. The sprayer also offers stall protection and maintains a constant speed during dry spread applications.

Operators can easily make adjustments on the fly with one hand thanks to control forward/reverse and left/right steering and will ride in comfort and style with a custom-stitched operator seat pad.

sand, and topdressing blends. The unit is available with two types of tongue — one to fit the drawbars of conventional, 4-wheel compact tractors and one to fit 2-wheel, walk-behind tractors.

The Model 65PT is a ground-drive unit which takes power from the left of its two wheels. This will ensure the overall drive efficiency of the unit. Material is carried toward the front of the machine by means of an apron belt, where it is forced under an adjustable endgate to control the depth of spread. Operation is simple. To begin spreading, adjust the endgate opening using the convenient handle, so that it is open the right width for the spread depth desired. Then, engage the clutch pin on the left side of the machine.

The Earth & Turf Model 65PT capacity is 6.5 cubic feet; spread width is machine width — 30 inches.



**RYAN JR. SOD CUTTER - HYDRO**

The new Ryan Jr. Sod Cutter – Hydro provides additional productivity, precision, and control to handle tough turf renovation jobs.

It features an exclusive Ryan-designed hydraulic cooling system and Hydro-Gear BDU transmission that delivers durability and reliability for a productive effort every time. Independent of the cutting blade, the variable-speed hydrostatic transmission has both forward and reverse drive for added versatility.

Plus, the Jr. Sod Cutter – Hydro goes easy on the operator’s arms by offering a vibration reduction of 75 percent thanks to the Ultra-Low Vibration Technology. It comes in both 18-inch and 24-inch models to fit the size of the job.



**EARTH & TURF MODEL 65PT MULTISPREAD**

Earth & Turf, LLC offers the Model 65PT MultiSpread pull-type topdresser spreader. The Model 65PT is designed to spread a wide variety of materials, including compost,





### FERRIS INTRODUCES NEW ISX3300 ZERO-TURN MOWER

Briggs & Stratton Corporation's Ferris brand introduced two all-new models in the Ferris ISX3300 platform powered exclusively by the Vanguard Big Block 40.0-gross-hp. EFI ETC engine, the first in the lineup to feature Vanguard's all-new electronic throttle control (ETC) technology. The ETC technology reacts instantaneously to any applied load from its environment to maintain power when the application demands. Equipping the premier zero-turn mower in the Ferris line with the most powerful engine in the Vanguard lineup creates the ultimate mowing solution.

"The all-new ISX3300 models — equipped with Vanguard's most powerful engine yet — allow the mower to harness and put to work more of the power created by the engine," said Jennifer Walth, senior marketing manager, Ferris. "This allows the mower to make quick work of long, dense, wet grass for added productivity so our operators can go home feeling good at the end of a long day."

The new ISX3300 models benefit from Vanguard's all-new ETC technology. A flywheel speed sensor detects any change in speed and sends a signal to the throttle body, ensuring consistent engine speed and quality of cut, no matter the environment or load. Also equipped with EFI, this engine has improved starting at all temperatures, smooth performance at all elevations, quick load acceptance and reduced fuel consumption.

### HUSQVARNA LAUNCHES NEW APP TO CONNECT USERS WITH THEIR POWER EQUIPMENT

Husqvarna announced the launch of its new Husqvarna Connect application. This new app connects users to their Husqvarna power equipment and provides immediate access to information about their tools, such as technical specifications, parts and accessories lists, maintenance history, and operator's manuals and more. Husqvarna Connect helps make outdoor projects more productive and easier to manage by keeping users updated on their power equipment from the convenience of their mobile devices.

Once users download the app, they will have access to:

- A digital service book to create a log of maintenance activities to keep track of their maintenance history and ensure equipment is running at its best.
- Product overviews that provide technical specifications for products all in one place.
- Various parts and accessories lists, including part numbers and descriptions to ensure parts and products always match.
- Dealer information, including store hours and contact information.
- Operator's manuals and troubleshooting guides to reduce product downtime and keep productivity levels tracking.
- Monthly releases of new product connectivity options, which is currently only available for zero-turn mowers and tractors.

"Dedicated to leading through innovation, we are rightly expected to deliver products that are at the forefront of today's technology trends. Husqvarna Connect achieves this and more by connecting customers with their equipment in the most convenient and all-inclusive way possible," said Tyranika Abrams, product manager digital experience. "Husqvarna Connect provides a personalized user experience that allows homeowners to utilize modern-day technology to access the information needed to prolong equipment lifespan and allow products to work at full capacity."

Additional features coming to the app will include:

- "Buy Now" option where users will be able to purchase parts and accessories directly.
- "How-To" videos with step-by-step information for performing maintenance tasks.
- Push notification reminders for service activities.

Husqvarna Connect is coming soon to Canada and is now available for download in the U.S. through the App Store and the Google Play Store.



## SAFE's Research Initiative

The Foundation for Safer Athletic Fields for Everyone (SAFE) is executing its second cycle of funding for research projects. Due to a generous donation from the North Carolina STMA, SAFE has met its goal of accumulating \$30,000 in its research fund to award to one or more deserving recipients later this year.

Research that can be funded through SAFE must benefit the sports field management industry in the following area: *Field performance as it relates to the safety of the playing surface for athletes.*

SAFE began funding research with a pilot grant of \$2,500 in late summer of 2018 for a study to determine if there is a correlation between management practices and field safety. Three universities participated: Texas Tech University, Iowa State University and the University of Tennessee at Martin.

In late 2019, SAFE awarded nearly \$20,000 to two projects that will be completed this year:

1) Penn State University's novel methods for testing baseball infield soil. This study seeks to understand the safety of an infield mix by its performance as its water content changes. The project will develop lab methods to measure the "cleat-in, cleat-out" effect, as well as shear strength under wet playing conditions.

2) Joint project by the University of Tennessee and Iowa State University to evaluate turfgrass mowing height and lower leg forces. The objective of this study is to determine how athletes are impacted by different mowing heights and its impact on athletic field performance.

The SAFE Research Grant process is now open. The application has three components: Executive Summary, Plan Methodology and Budget. The fillable PDF can be found online at [STMA.org](http://STMA.org). The deadline for submittal is Oct. 31, and the award(s) will be announced on Dec. 8.

To help SAFE sustain its field safety research funding, it has hired a consulting firm, Hartsook, to develop a fundraising plan. The first phase of the plan, a pre-campaign study, will be delivered in August. SAFE's current fundraising takes place primarily at the STMA conference with a golf tournament, bowling event, live and silent auctions and a raffle. STMA members can also donate to SAFE when they renew their membership.

In addition to funding research, SAFE annually awards \$21,000 in scholarships, \$2,000 in grants and \$10,000 to the winners of the Student Challenge, which is conducted during the STMA conference.

The board of trustees ensures that the Foundation stays true to its mission of enriching communities through championing safe, sustainable sports and recreation fields for all athletes. Board members include Chad Price, CSFM, CFB, Chair; Matt Anderson, CSFM; Mike Andresen, CSFM; James Bergdoll, CSFM; Scott Bills, CSFM; Marcus Dean, CSFM; Jeff Fowler; Nick McKenna, CSFM; Craig Potts, CSFM; John Sorochan, Ph.D.; Vickie Wallace; and permanent member of the board, Kim Heck, CAE, Executive Director.



## STMA 2021 election slate is underway

STMA members are receiving a link to the form to indicate interest in board service for 2021. The Nominating Committee encourages all STMA members to consider board service. The requirements are few, but candidates must have a passion for the industry and be dedicated to serving STMA. Prior committee service or serving on other organizations' boards is highly recommended.

Board service usually involves four in-person board meetings yearly, participation in the annual STMA conference and chairing one or more committees. This year STMA has held two of its board meetings virtually.

The 2021 slate of candidates will be presented to the membership in November with electronic voting closing in mid-December.

The positions that are open include:

- Secretary/Treasurer
- Schools K-12 Director
- Director At Large (elected)
- Director representing Professional Facilities
- Commercial Director

## STMA Town Hall Meetings

STMA has been hosting interactive Town Hall meetings via Zoom to share how sports field managers are setting their fields up for success in the future. These sessions offer brief presentations from the panelists, and the moderator poses questions for the audience. The goal is to share information and learn in real time how everyone is adapting to this changing environment. All categories of sports field professionals are welcome to join.

Visit [https://www.stma.org/knowledge\\_center/route-to-recovery-2/](https://www.stma.org/knowledge_center/route-to-recovery-2/) to view archived video from previous Town Hall meetings or to register for STMA's next Town Hall meeting. Archived Town Hall meetings include the following:

**Parks and Recreation and K-12** – Panelists: Abby McNeal, CSFM, Jody Gill, CSFM, Jimmy Simpson, CSFM; Moderator: Ryan DeMay

**Baseball/Professional** – Panelists: Matt Parrott, Charlotte Knights (N.C.), Steve Lord, CSFM, Cincinnati Reds (Ohio), Andy Ommen, McLean County PONY Baseball (Ill.); Moderator: Keith Winter, Fort Wayne Tincaps (Ind.)

**Agronomics** – Panelists: Dr. Grady Miller (North Carolina State University), Pam Sherratt (The Ohio State University), Dr. John Sorochan (University of Tennessee – Knoxville), Dr. Chase Straw (Texas A&M University); Moderator: Ryan DeMay (Columbus Recreation and Parks Dept., Ohio)

**College and University** – Panelists: Jason Smith (University of Florida), Chris May (Georgia Tech), Thomas Goyne (Penn State University), Chris Webb, CSFM (Christopher Newport University); Moderator: Zachary Willard (Auburn University)

**Professional/Rectangle Sports** – Panelists: Dan Shemesh (New York Red Bulls), Nick Fedewa (Jacksonville Jaguars), Sun Roesslein, CSFM (North Area Athletic Complex); Moderator: Jeff Salmond, CSFM (United Turf and Track)

**Parks and Recreation** – Panelists: Trevor Odders, CSFM, City of Las Vegas – Parks (NV), Travis Sales, City of Rockwall (TX) and John Wagnon, CSFM, City of Franklin, TN Parks (TN); Moderator: Ryan DeMay, Columbus Recreation and Parks Dept. (OH)







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## STMA Affiliated Chapters Contact Information

**Sports Turf Managers Association of Arizona:** [www.azstma.org](http://www.azstma.org)

**Colorado Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.cstma.org](http://www.cstma.org)

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

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

**Florida #3 Chapter (Central):**  
407-518-2347, Dale Croft,  
[dale.croft@ocps.net](mailto:dale.croft@ocps.net)

**Gateway Chapter Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
[www.gatewaystma.org](http://www.gatewaystma.org)

**Georgia Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.gstma.org](http://www.gstma.org)

**Greater L.A. Basin Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
[www.stmalabasin.com](http://www.stmalabasin.com)

**Illinois Chapter STMA:** [www.ILSTMA.org](http://www.ILSTMA.org)

**Intermountain Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
<http://imstma.blogspot.com>

**Indiana:** Contact Clayton Dame,  
[Claytondame@hotmail.com](mailto:Claytondame@hotmail.com) or  
Brian Bornino, [bornino@purdue.edu](mailto:bornino@purdue.edu)  
or Contact Joey Stevenson,  
[jstevenson@indyindians.com](mailto:jstevenson@indyindians.com)

**Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
[www.iowaturfgrass.org](http://www.iowaturfgrass.org)

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

**Mid-Atlantic STMA:** [www.mastma.org](http://www.mastma.org)

**Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association (MiSTMA):** [www.mistma.org](http://www.mistma.org)

**Minnesota Park and Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.mpstma.org](http://www.mpstma.org)

**MO-KAN Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.mokanstma.com](http://www.mokanstma.com)

**New England STMA (NESTMA):**  
[www.nestma.org](http://www.nestma.org)

**Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey:** [www.sfmanj.org](http://www.sfmanj.org)

**North Carolina Chapter of STMA:**  
[www.ncsportsturf.org](http://www.ncsportsturf.org)

**Northern California STMA:**  
[www.norcalstma.org](http://www.norcalstma.org)

**Ohio Sports Turf Managers Association (OSTMA):** [www.ostma.org](http://www.ostma.org)

**Oklahoma Chapter STMA:**  
405-744-5729; Contact:  
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**Oregon STMA Chapter:**  
[www.oregonsportsturfmanagers.org](http://www.oregonsportsturfmanagers.org)  
[oregonstma@gmail.com](mailto:oregonstma@gmail.com)

**Ozarks STMA:** [www.ozarksstma.org](http://www.ozarksstma.org)

**Pacific Northwest Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.pnwstma.org](http://www.pnwstma.org)

**Southern California Chapter:**  
[www.socalstma.com](http://www.socalstma.com)

**South Carolina Chapter of STMA:**  
[www.scstma.org](http://www.scstma.org)

**Tennessee Valley Sports Turf Managers Association (TVSTMA):** [www.tvstma.com](http://www.tvstma.com)

**Texas Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
[www.txstma.org](http://www.txstma.org)

**Virginia Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
[www.vstma.org](http://www.vstma.org)

**Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.wstma.org](http://www.wstma.org)

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## Q&A WITH DR. GRADY MILLER

**Q:** What do science, politics, minimum maintenance, labor shortage, budget cutting, and alternative field uses all have in common?

**A:** A pandemic. With regular STMA-hosted Town Halls and industry webinars being broadcast, there has been no shortage of questions coming in from throughout the nation. The nature of these questions is currently centered on the changes that resulted from the pandemic. There is still a lot of uncertainty in how field managers will need to alter their job schedule, tasks and functions when they return to work. A common expression that I have been hearing during this pandemic is to “plan for the worst, hope for the best.”

This storyline reminds me of the riddle, “What is always in front of you but can never be seen?” Answer: The future. At the STMA Town Hall meeting on May 26, the moderator, Jeff Salmond, CSFM, asked each panelist what he or she would have done differently if they would have known in advance how the pandemic would influence their work situation. They each gave very insightful answers, but we still do not know how this situation will play out going forward from today.

The reality is that our entire society is following guidelines— some of which are based on science and some on politics — that are rapidly developed in response to ever-changing conditions and opinions. We often like to use the catchphrase “new normal,” but it is increasingly difficult to determine what that really describes. I know within my own university, our COVID-19-related policies change so frequently that it is difficult to even read all the e-mails.

What seems certain is that budgets will be reduced with the next budget cycle, if not before. This will translate to fewer workers and fewer resources to put into our fields. In this column, Pam and I have written articles on prioritizing maintenance practices. We have written about a good mowing program as being the primary maintenance practice, the importance of a weed control program, and the necessity of a good fungicide program if you have the likelihood of getting a “devastating, death-causing-disease” (e.g., gray leaf spot or Pythium in ryegrass or summer patch in Kentucky

bluegrass). After these programs, it may be a greater challenge to accomplish some of the other best management practices. But it is extremely important to “do what needs to be done” for maintaining a safe playing surface.

Your knowledge and talent will be very important to get you through these times. Take a good assessment of what you have to work with, and decide how to best utilize those resources to provide the highest quality field possible. In many cases, field managers may not have the capacity to maintain fields to the same level as they were before the pandemic. It may mean lower standards of maintenance. It will be very important for you to have that conversation with your supervisors, town managers, owners or whomever you answer to as the sports field manager.

There has been some speculation that there will be fewer users of our fields. I think there is potential to have the opposite outcome. In many cases, sports fields are an extension of our parks and other green spaces. With social distancing being a cornerstone to fighting the spread of the pandemic, many people have begun flocking to any green space they can find once the stay-at-home orders were lifted. Some parks have opened up their athletic fields to provide more casual green space for visitors. While this may require more work to get the fields back in shape when competitive sports return, it does help provide green space for people's well-being. There has been a lot of creativity related to field use mentioned in Town Hall meetings — another opportunity for you all to showcase your talents.

The leadership at the national STMA has published written information and hosted webinars to help sports field managers deal with the many situations and stresses this pandemic has caused. Be sure to visit [www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org) for more information. **SFM**



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**Questions?**

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Or, send your question to Pamela Sherratt at 202 Kottman Hall, 2001 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210 or [sherratt.1@osu.edu](mailto:sherratt.1@osu.edu)



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