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SportsField

MANAGEMENT

February 2021

Vol. 37 No. 2

The Official Publication of the Sports Turf Managers Association

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The Sky's the Limit

STMA President Nick McKenna, CSFM, on challenges turned opportunities and his vision for shaping the association's future



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Editor's Note



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As I write this, the STMA virtual Conference and Exhibition has just concluded (see recap beginning on page 8). And although we all wish we could have been in Southern California in January, the conference still brought the industry together (virtually).

Attendees were able to view top-notch education, live chat, network with each other in breakout rooms, visit exhibitors in the virtual exhibit hall, and much more. It was great to see the level of attendance and participation. Kudos to STMA staff, board members, committee members, sponsors and others who made this event possible.

A recurring message throughout the conference was that sports field managers are accustomed to challenges, and pride themselves on being adaptable. In these most challenging of times, that ability innovate, collaborate and communicate is what will help sports field managers achieve success moving forward.

That message is echoed by the man leading STMA in its future initiatives: new STMA President Nick McKenna, CSFM.

In this issue of *SportsField Management* I'm proud to present the cover story I wrote profiling President McKenna. I think you will see that STMA is in good hands. I want to thank President McKenna for being so generous with his time. I hope the article not only serves as an introduction to President McKenna, but conveys his optimism for the future and the importance of industry involvement.

With that in mind, I think it is important to point out that this magazine reaches many readers beyond current STMA members. For those of you who are reading this, but who are not STMA members, I think the messages in this issue are more important ever. From the conference recap to the profile of President McKenna to our special focus on the future of the industry, this issue highlights the benefits of being involved, giving back to the industry, taking ownership of one's career, and also helping to shape the future of sports field management. For more information about STMA membership, visit <https://www.stma.org/why-join-stma/> **SFM**

SportsField MANAGEMENT

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The Official Publication Of The Sports Turf Managers Association

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Publisher's Notice: We Assume No Responsibility For The Validity Of Claims In Connection With Items Appearing In *SportsField Management*.

SportsField Management (ISSN PENDING) (USPS 000-292) (Reg. U.S. Pat. & T.M. Off.) is published monthly by EPG Media & Specialty Information at PO Box 96, Port Jervis, NY 12771.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *SportsField Management*, PO Box 2123, Skokie, IL 60076-7823. For subscription information and requests, call Subscription Services at (763) 383-4492. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$40 US & Poss.; 2 years, \$65 US & Poss.; 1 year, \$65 Canada/Foreign Surface, 1 year, \$130 Airmail. All subscriptions are payable in advance in US funds.

Send payments to *SportsField Management*, PO Box 2123, Skokie, IL 60076-7823. Phone: (847) 763-9565. Fax: (847) 763-9569. Single copies or back issues, \$8 each US/Canada; \$12 Foreign. Periodicals postage paid at Port Jervis, NY and additional mailing offices. COPYRIGHT 2020, *SportsField Management*. Material may not be reproduced or photocopied in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

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Brad Thedens, CSFM

Schools K-12: Jeremy Driscoll**Commercial:** Paula Sliefert**At-Large Elected:**

Scott Thompson, CSFM

At-Large Appointed:

Alpha Jones, CSFM

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and Steve Ware

Howdy STMA members!

Sorry, at Texas A&M, that is our traditional greeting (seriously, it is a school tradition, and not just a Texas thing).

Let me begin by saying what an honor and privilege it is for me to serve as your president for the next year. I want to

take a moment to thank Immediate Past President Simpson for his outstanding leadership this past year, as well as our other board members, headquarters staff, and everyone who volunteered to serve our association. The strength of the STMA has always been our members, and the new board is excited to serve you all.

Ordinarily, many of us would have recently returned from the annual STMA Conference and Exhibition – but 2020 was anything but ordinary. I was disappointed we couldn't be together in person this year, as the conference always has a way of reenergizing me. It provides the opportunity to share ideas, see new products, network with peers, and celebrate successes. I believe Alexander Graham Bell said it best when he said, "When one door closes, another opens." I am so thankful that when the door for an in-person conference closed, STMA quickly pivoted and walked straight through the open door of hosting a virtual conference. While no substitute for the in-person event, the virtual conference gave us the



Nick McKenna, CSFM

STMA President

nmckenna@athletics.tamu.edu

opportunity to do many of the things that we have come to enjoy.

One advantage of our virtual conference is that it's not over. We have a fantastic schedule of educational topics that will continue to be presented every Tuesday through March 2. I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities to hear from our peers and continue your education.

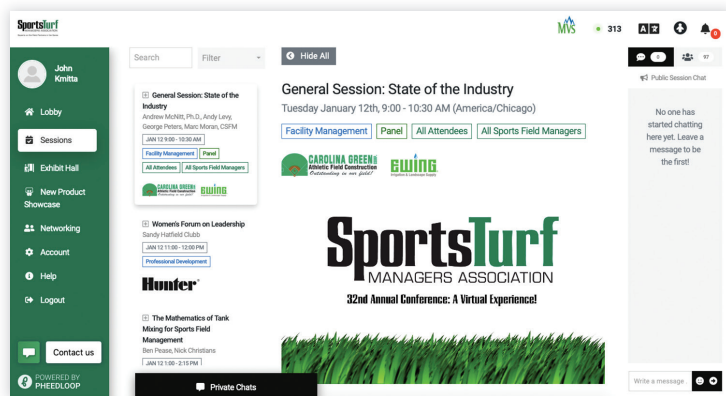
I recently read the book, *The Coffee Bean* by Jon Gordon and Damon West, and it reminded me of this past year. The book compares how life can be like a pot of boiling water, and how the environment we are in can weaken, harden or change us. We can be like a carrot that weakens in the water, an egg that hardens, or we can be a coffee bean, and take what's inside of ourselves and transform our environment. For many, 2020 was full of frustrations, disappointments and challenges. As we move forward in 2021, I hope that you will choose to be like the coffee bean – work to change your environment, and utilize the opportunities in front of you! **SFM**

Nick McKenna, CSFM

2021 STMA Conference and Exhibition

The Sports Turf Managers Association's (STMA's) first-ever virtual conference and exhibition was held virtually January 12-13, 2021 (with bonus conference continuing education on Jan. 19, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, Feb. 9, Feb. 16, Feb. 23 and March 2).

The STMA Conference brought together the top academics, practitioners and professional speakers for industry education, networking and a virtual exposition hall.



The afternoon of January 13 featured a keynote from Pete Smith, leadership trainer for SmithImpact, titled "Dare to Matter: How Sports Field Professionals Rise to Significance." The keynote addressed the question of "Where do I go from here?" and Smith shared tips to increase ownership and accountability, implement a behavioral model that builds trust, and much more.

The STMA Conference and Exhibition also featured networking, including special chat rooms for the Women's Forum, international attendees, CSFMs, first timers, students, and more.

Throughout both days of the event, attendees were able to visit the virtual exhibit hall, view products and equipment, meet with booth staff, and get their questions answered.

Conference programming on January 13 wrapped up with the Annual Meeting and Awards. The new STMA Board of Directors was introduced and award winners were announced.

Some highlights of the 2021 STMA Conference and Exhibition are as follows:

On Tuesday, January 12, the Conference kicked off with the General Session Town Hall addressing the state of the industry. A panel of experts, moderated by Andrew McNitt, Ph.D., Penn State University, discussed the current climate of the sports field industry and how to best prepare to move forward successfully in 2021.

Afternoon concurrent sessions on January 12 covered topics such as labor and budget, establishing cool-season turfgrasses from seed, turfgrass math, and MLB field operations.

The welcome reception began with a presentation featuring trivia, surprise guests and more, before transitioning over to the small group area to continue with the networking. The welcome reception was sponsored by Toro and Covermaster.

On Wednesday, January 13, morning concurrent sessions covered topics such as soil tests, after-cut appearance, pest management and communication within an organization.

STMA STUDENT CHALLENGE WINNERS

STMA Student Challenge winners were as follows:

2-year teams

1st Place: University of Maryland Team 2
Brandon Carbary, Ryan Geils

2nd Place: University of Maryland Team 3
Jarrett Maynor, Mason Hofmeister, Payton O'Connor

4-year teams

1st Place: University of Maryland Team 1
Tyler Johnson, Jacob Hess, Ben Word

2nd Place: Penn State University Team 1
William Covert, Kyle Masters, Ryan Thornton, Ben Rita

3rd Place: Iowa State University Team 2
William Stipanovich, Trevor Clawson, Bryce Hoyle

2020 PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP WINNERS

Typically, the STMA President awards one President's Award winner. For 2020, President Simpson chose 10 people deserving of the President's Award for their, "Extra effort to bring relevant resources to our membership during this pandemic," said Simpson. "The Technology Committee's brainchild was the informative Town Hall meetings and the Recovery Task Group developed the *Route to Recovery* guides." The awardees are as follows:

- John Clintsman
- Trevor Odders, CSFM
- Wes Ganobcik
- Ryan DeMay, CSFM
- Ben Polimer
- Sun Roesslein, CSFM
- Doug Schattinger
- Kyle Slaton, CSFM
- Jim Stamps, CSFM
- Zach Willard

2020 FOUNDERS AWARD WINNERS

The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) named recipients of its 2020 Founders Awards, recognizing those members who have made significant contributions to STMA and to the profession.

The association's highest honor, the four Founders Awards are named after pioneers and innovators who had a major impact on the industry. The 2020 honorees are:

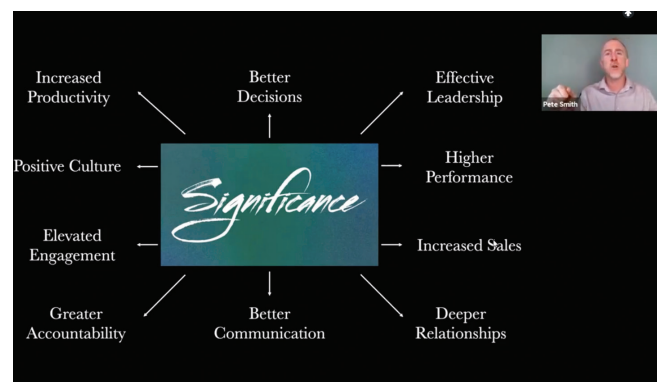
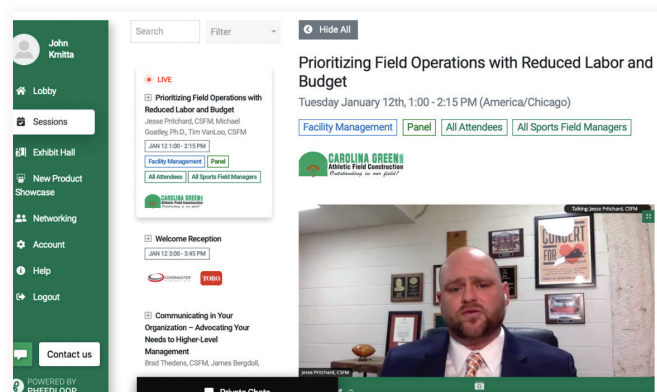
Marcus Dean, CSFM, Advanced Turf Solutions – Dick Ericson Award

Bradley Jakubowski, Instructor of Plant Sciences, Penn State – William H. Daniel Award

Tim VanLoo, CSFM, D&K Products – George Toma Golden Rake Award

Abby McNeal, CSFM, CPRP, City and County of Denver Parks – Harry C. Gill Award

"These talented individuals exemplify excellence in our field and display a commitment to the profession that is worthy of the four men the awards are named after," said STMA Immediate Past President Jimmy Simpson, CSFM. "Our association and members are stronger for the exam-



ples they have set and the enthusiasm, professionalism and dedication they exude."

Winners were honored during the 2021 STMA Conference and Exhibition. Videos of the winners being surprised with the announcement of being chosen as a Founders Award winner were shared with attendees during the Awards portion of the event.

About the awards:

Dick Ericson Award – Recognizes a member who effectively manages sports fields and their facility and exhibits the qualities of a true team leader.

William H. Daniel Award – Recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the industry through research, teaching or extension outreach.

George Toma Golden Rake Award – Validates the 'and then some' attitude of a sports field member in "on the job" activities and in community service.

Harry C. Gill Memorial Award – Established to honor an individual for their hard work in the sports field industry and to acknowledge their dedication to STMA.

STMA MEMBERSHIP ELECTS BOARD FOR 2021

In late November and early December, the STMA membership voted for its 2021 leadership. The results were announced during the STMA virtual conference at the Annual Meeting/Awards banquet on January 13. Nine members were elected to the board, two board members are returning to fulfill the second year of their two-year terms, and 2021 President Nick McKenna, CSFM, made two appointments. One is to fill the Director At-Large Appointed position and the other is to fill the Parks and Rec Director position vacated by Brad Thedens, CSFM, when he ran for Secretary/Treasurer.

The 13-person board has representation from all voting categories of membership: schools K-12, parks and recreation, professional stadiums, academia, higher education and commercial. Those elected include:



President

Nick McKenna, CSFM
Asst. Athletic Field Maintenance Mgr.
Texas A&M Athletics
College Station, TX



President-Elect

James Bergdoll, CSFM
Director of Parks Maintenance
City of Chattanooga Public Works
Chattanooga, TN



Immediate Past President

Jimmy Simpson, CSFM
Facilities Coordinator
Town of Cary
Cary, NC



Secretary/Treasurer

Sun Roesslein, CSFM
Sports Stadium Manager, North Area
Athletic Complex - Jeffco Schools
Golden, CO



Vice President - Commercial

Jeremy Bohonko
Regional Manager
Ewing Irrigation and Landscape Supply
Charlotte, NC



Director - Schools K-12

Jeremy Driscoll
Grounds Supervisor
St. Mark's High School
Wilmington, DE


Director – Professional Facilities

Nicole Sherry
Head Groundskeeper
Baltimore Orioles
Baltimore, MD


Director – Commercial

Paula Sliefert
Sr. Marketing Manager
The Toro Company
Bloomington, MN


Director - At Large Elected

Scott Thompson, CSFM
Superintendent of Sports Fields
and Grounds
Duke University
Durham, NC

During the STMA Annual Meeting, President McKenna made the following appointments that included appointing Brad Thedens back to Director – Parks and Recreation to finish out the term.


Director - At Large Appointed

Alpha Jones, CSFM
Director of Field Operations
Fayetteville Woodpeckers
Fayetteville, NC


Director – Parks and Recreation

Brad Thedens, CSFM
Park Caretaker
City of Sioux Falls Parks and Rec
Sioux Falls, SD

Two board members are serving the second year of their two-year term and were not up for election. They are:


Director - Higher Education

Clark Cox, CSFM
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC


Director – Academic

Adam Thoms, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Iowa State University
Ames, IA

SFM

The Sky's the Limit

STMA President Nick McKenna, CSFM, on challenges turned opportunities and his vision for shaping the association's future

By John Kmitta

As STMA President Nick McKenna, CSFM, takes the helm of the association, he is well aware that the past year will have a lingering effect on the sports field management industry.

"2020 is going to carry into 2021," said McKenna, who serves as assistant athletic field maintenance manager at Texas A&M University. "Worst case, we could be looking at five years before we get into a true semblance of normal. But I try not to look at challenges as challenges; I try to look at challenges as opportunities. I look at how we, as an association, were able to pivot, what we were able to do, and the ways we found that we could assist our members."

Specifically, McKenna points to STMA's letter of support stating that sports field managers should be considered essential personnel, the Route to Recovery Task Force, the *Route to Recovery* guides STMA produced in conjunction with *SportsField Management*, and the virtual Town Hall meetings STMA hosted throughout the year to help members deal with COVID-19-related challenges.

"As much of a challenge as this was, we turned it into an opportunity to come up with new ways to connect with our members, to bring new value to them, to further evolve our association," said McKenna. "And I hope those are things that we continue down the line."

McKenna added that STMA is now presented with a unique opportunity to evaluate where it is at as an association, what it wants to be, and where it goes from here.

"This year has provided us an opportunity to really look under a microscope at how we serve our members, and what we are doing for them," he said. "The sky's the limit now. We can make it become what we want."

According to McKenna, some of the greatest strengths of STMA and its members are adaptability,

versatility, and the ability to succeed despite any challenges they face.

"I think that is going to show itself in the years to come," he said. "Regardless of where we are at now – regardless of what has happened to us as individuals, as an industry, as an association – we will adapt and move forward. We will survive, and we will become stronger. We might look back and say that 2020 was the year that STMA took the next step toward enhancing our professional image, and toward having safe playing surfaces for all athletes. I'm confident that our association and our members will come through this stronger than ever. I think we do that by working together, by working collaboratively like we have done throughout this past year."

BORN IN A SMALL TOWN

Born and raised in rural Iowa, McKenna grew up in an agricultural setting. His father managed a local swine operation, and would take Nick to work with him on the weekends. By the time McKenna was 10 years old, his family had purchased its own hog farm.

"That's how I fell in love with the agricultural industry, working with my hands and being outside," said McKenna. "That's where I owned my work ethic and picked up a lot from my parents about how to go about life, be a good hardworking person and a contributing member to society."

The family farm was located outside a town of approximately 300 people, and the town where McKenna attended school – Vinton, Iowa – was home to fewer than 6,000. The community was surrounded by agriculture.

In addition to working on the family farm, McKenna earned money as a youth by mowing lawns – a job that was passed down to him. McKenna has an older sister, an older brother, and a younger sister; and as the older siblings moved on from the lawn care duties and went to college, that role got passed on to him.

All photos provided by Nick McKenna, CSFM, and Texas A&M University





McKenna's father would give him money to help with mowing for the local church, area cemeteries and neighbors – in addition to nine acres on the family farm.

"I don't know a man that works harder," McKenna said of his father. "From a very early age, I learned about hard work, about doing a good job, giving my very best effort to anything I did."

McKenna added that, to this day, he tries to be the hardest-working person out there.

"I might not be the best sports field manager, or the smartest sports field manager, but, by God, I will outwork you," he said.

As a youth, McKenna competed in soccer, football, baseball and wrestling. But as he got older and more involved with farming, he began to phase out of everything except wrestling – a sport that remains near and dear to him.

"A lot of the characteristics and the things it teaches you as a person I have carried on into my personal life as far as hard work and discipline – because it is an

individual sport where you are accountable for your own actions," he said. "I think that has defined a lot of who I have developed into as an individual."

Throughout high school and into college, McKenna was also involved with Future Farmers of America (now known as just "FFA"), a youth organization that uses agriculture as an avenue to teach leadership, career development and personal growth. During his early college years, McKenna served as a state FFA officer for two years (one year as secretary and the next as state president). McKenna credits his work with FFA for much of his development as an individual, and said that he still uses a lot of the skills he developed through FFA.

When it came to college, McKenna knew he wanted to attend Iowa State because he wanted to pursue a career in agriculture. He originally majored in Agricultural Biochemistry, because it was a growing, high-paying field. But three quarters of the way through his freshman year, McKenna realized that he was on the wrong career path, and that he didn't want to work in a



lab. At that point, he switched to a double major of Ag Education and Animal Science.

"I wound up in that major for most of my sophomore year," said McKenna. "That was when I was finishing up my term as FFA president. I think I was getting a bit burned out on the Ag Ed side of things."

McKenna reevaluated once again and decided to focus on the things he had really enjoyed – growing up on a farm raising hogs, and the lawn mowing work he had done with his father. At that time (in early 2000s), McKenna did not see a viable future for himself in the hog industry, so his focus shifted to the turfgrass industry.

According to McKenna, Barb Clawson, program coordinator for the turfgrass program at Iowa State, introduced him to potential career opportunities in the turfgrass industry. While most of the other students in the Iowa State turfgrass program were focused on golf

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"This year has provided us an opportunity to really look under a microscope at how we serve our members, and what we are doing for them. The sky's the limit now. We can make it become what we want."

– Nick McKenna, CSFM

course management, McKenna – a self-described college sports junkie – saw a better fit for himself in sports field management.

"From that point on, I really just put blinders on, dove right in, and my focus was tunnel vision on the sports field industry and creating a career for myself in this industry," said McKenna.

McKenna knew he needed experience, so he began to regularly reach out to Mike Andresen, CSFM, in the Iowa State athletics department regarding potential opportunities at Iowa State.

"Unfortunately, Mike didn't have any openings for my first year and a half," said McKenna. "Then, the summer before my last semester at Iowa State (with the two major changes it took me an extra semester to get done), Mike called me and said he had an opening on the crew as one of his intern positions. So, I jumped at that chance. I got to do my last fall semester at Iowa State working under Mike Andresen, who is one of the greatest people in our

industry. From there, I was going to do whatever I could to impress him, work hard, try to make a positive image for myself in his mind, and see where it would lead me."

INSPIRED BY A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

"My path to Texas A&M from there is kind of weird," said McKenna.

While McKenna was at Iowa State, his brother was pursuing a Ph.D. at Texas A&M. So McKenna decided to travel to Texas A&M for Thanksgiving break to visit his brother and sister-in-law.

The first Thanksgiving McKenna visited Texas A&M was in the fall of 1999. McKenna drove through the night, and arrived in College Station, Texas, around 6 a.m. on November 18. He got some sleep from driving through the night, and later awoke to news of tragedy on campus.

Dating back to the early 1900s, Texas A&M had an annual fall tradition of building a bonfire as a symbol of

Continued on page 18

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Extra-thick center line

TURFGRASS AREA:

Recreational soccer field

LOCATION:

Eaton, Colo.

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

Ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass blend

Answer on page 33

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International



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Continued from page 16

its burning desire to beat the University of Texas football team. Through the years, the bonfire grew in terms of both symbolism and sheer size. By the late 1990s, the bonfire was a complex, wedding-cake-style construction consisting of more than 8,000 logs upon completion that took more than 100,000 man-hours to complete (often with as many as 5,000 students taking part in some aspect of the project).

But in the early hours of November 18, 1999, while McKenna was still en route to College Station, 58 Texas A&M students and former students were working on the construction of that year's bonfire. Shortly after 2:30 a.m., the nearly 60-foot-tall stack, consisting of nearly 5,000 logs, collapsed.

The collapse left 12 dead and 27 injured.

"As an outsider, I had no understanding of what that meant and how important it was to the university and community," said McKenna. "But by being there that week, I got to experience that, and quickly learned what a special and unique place Texas A&M is. How the community and the university came together around that tragedy. So, from that point, it was hard not to realize

how special A&M was, and fall in love with it."

In the years that followed, McKenna's girlfriend (now wife), Holly, made the journey to Texas A&M with him. She, too, fell in love with the university, and decided to pursue her master's degree there.

McKenna told Mike Andresen that Holly was looking to get her master's degree from Texas A&M, and asked Andresen if he knew of any career opportunities in Texas.

Andresen had longtime friendships with Leo Goertz (at that time head athletic field maintenance manager) and Craig Potts, CSFM, (then assistant athletic field maintenance manager) at Texas A&M. Andresen put in a call to Goertz.

"The timing worked out perfectly, because Leo had a job that was coming open," said McKenna. "He asked Mike if he would vouch for me. Mike said he would recommend me. Leo said, 'He's hired.' I didn't have to interview. He just hired me off the word of Mike Andresen."

So McKenna moved to College Station, Texas, straight out of college, and started working for Goertz and Potts.

"I had no warm-season grass experience, no baseball experience, and limited softball experience," said

McKenna. “So I spent the next two-and-a-half years just working for the athletic department as a general groundskeeper. I worked anything and everything I could, because a) I needed the money, and b) I needed the experience. So, I was just trying to soak it all in like a sponge.”

According to McKenna, the dynamic between Goertz and Potts was great. “Leo always joked that he was the hand shaker and back slapper, and Craig was the nuts-and-bolts guy. I consider myself somewhere between the two. I related well with Leo on the general management side and the people management, and Craig and I made a strong connection with the agronomics and the science behind everything.”

McKenna said that some of his favorite times with Goertz and Potts didn’t even revolve around work.

“Leo and I would sit around for an extra hour or hour and a half at the end of the day and just talk,” said McKenna. “The things I learned from him beyond growing grass were the things that really stuck with me.”

NEW CHAPTERS IN LIFE

After two and a half years at Texas A&M, McKenna’s wife got a teaching job back in Iowa, and McKenna ended up taking a job in Iowa with a nursery landscape company for a year. He then moved on to a job selling commercial groundskeeping equipment for a local Toro distributor.

“I quickly figured out that I wasn’t ready for sales yet,” said McKenna. “I missed being on the fields too much. I started to explore how to get back into the sports field management industry.”

From there, McKenna headed to Virginia Tech for a graduate assistantship position funded by the Virginia Tech athletic department. It allowed McKenna to work for the athletic department when he wasn’t busy with his graduate school obligations.

McKenna was familiar with Michael Goatley, Ph.D., at Virginia Tech, and felt that Virginia Tech presented him with a unique opportunity to work with new people in a new environment. Having already grown grass in both cool-season and warm-season climates, McKenna felt that working in the transition zone would allow him to confidently go anywhere in the country and take on any challenges.

“So we made the decision to go to Virginia Tech, and it was a blind leap,” said McKenna. “I had never been to Blacksburg, I hadn’t gotten the chance to visit. I had just had a couple phone calls with Dr. Goatley and with Jason Bowers [CSFM], who was the sports field manager for Virginia Tech athletics at that time. We found an apartment online – didn’t see it until the day we moved in.

“Everything I needed to know about Dr. Goatley I knew the day we moved in,” McKenna added. “He showed up with Dr. Askew and two of their graduate students on a 110-degree day, and helped me unload our truck and trailer and helped us get moved in.”

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According to McKenna, his time at Virginia Tech was a good learning experience because he got to see the frustrations of growing both bermudagrass and bluegrass fields in the transition zone, and, thanks to Bowers, he was able to develop as a sports field manager and decision maker.

“He was trusting and willing enough where he basically put me in control of the soccer and lacrosse facilities as his graduate assistant,” said McKenna. “He gave me my first opportunity to have full control of the field, and develop my skillset where I was making the everyday decisions about what I was mowing, how often I was mowing, when I was going to fertilize, what I was going to use, how much water I was going to use, coordinating schedules with the teams. He really gave me the freedom that I hadn’t had to that point in my career to really run my own show. I can’t thank him enough for giving me that responsibility.”

After two years as graduate assistant, just as McKenna’s assistantship funding was about to run out, Bowers left the Virginia Tech athletic department, and a full-time position opened up for McKenna in a role that allowed him to oversee the baseball facilities.

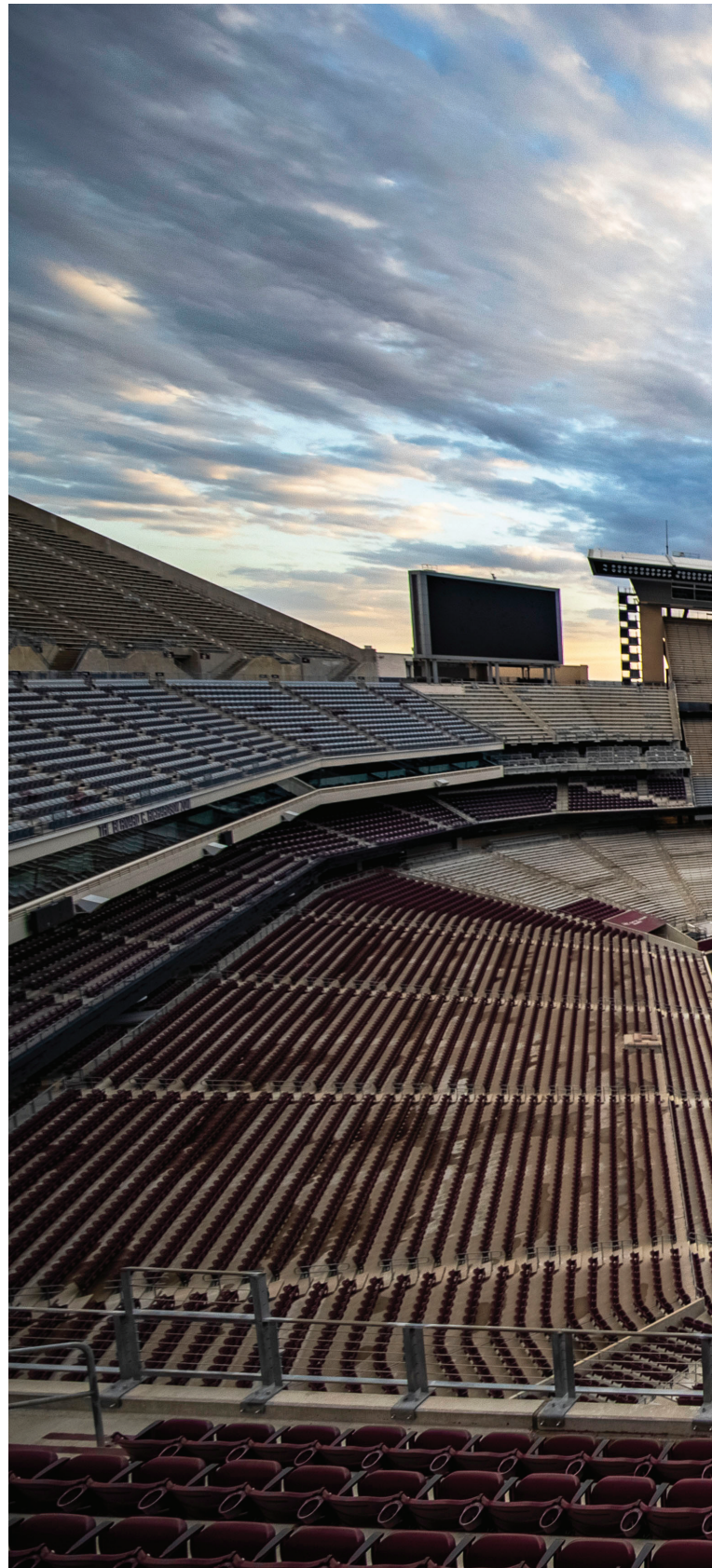
“Going to Virginia Tech and working with Dr. Goatley is one of the best decisions I have ever made in my career,” said McKenna. “I pull so much from what I observed from him. To this day, the greatest thing is that we developed a close friendship. He wasn’t just my advisor, he wasn’t just a person on my graduate committee, he became a close friend, and that continues to this day.”

RETURNING TO COLLEGE STATION

In the summer of 2011, Goertz reached out to McKenna to let him know that Texas A&M was beginning a \$27 million renovation to its baseball stadium, the grounds manager for baseball had just left, and Goertz himself was beginning to think about retirement and a succession plan for the Texas A&M program.

“The idea was, if I was interested, to come back and take over the baseball facilities,” said McKenna. “Baseball was Leo’s love, so, for him to be willing to hand that off to somebody, that meant a lot to me.”

The long-term plan Goertz laid out for McKenna would be that Potts would – upon Goertz’s retirement – move into the lead role and McKenna would move into the role as assistant athletic field maintenance manager.







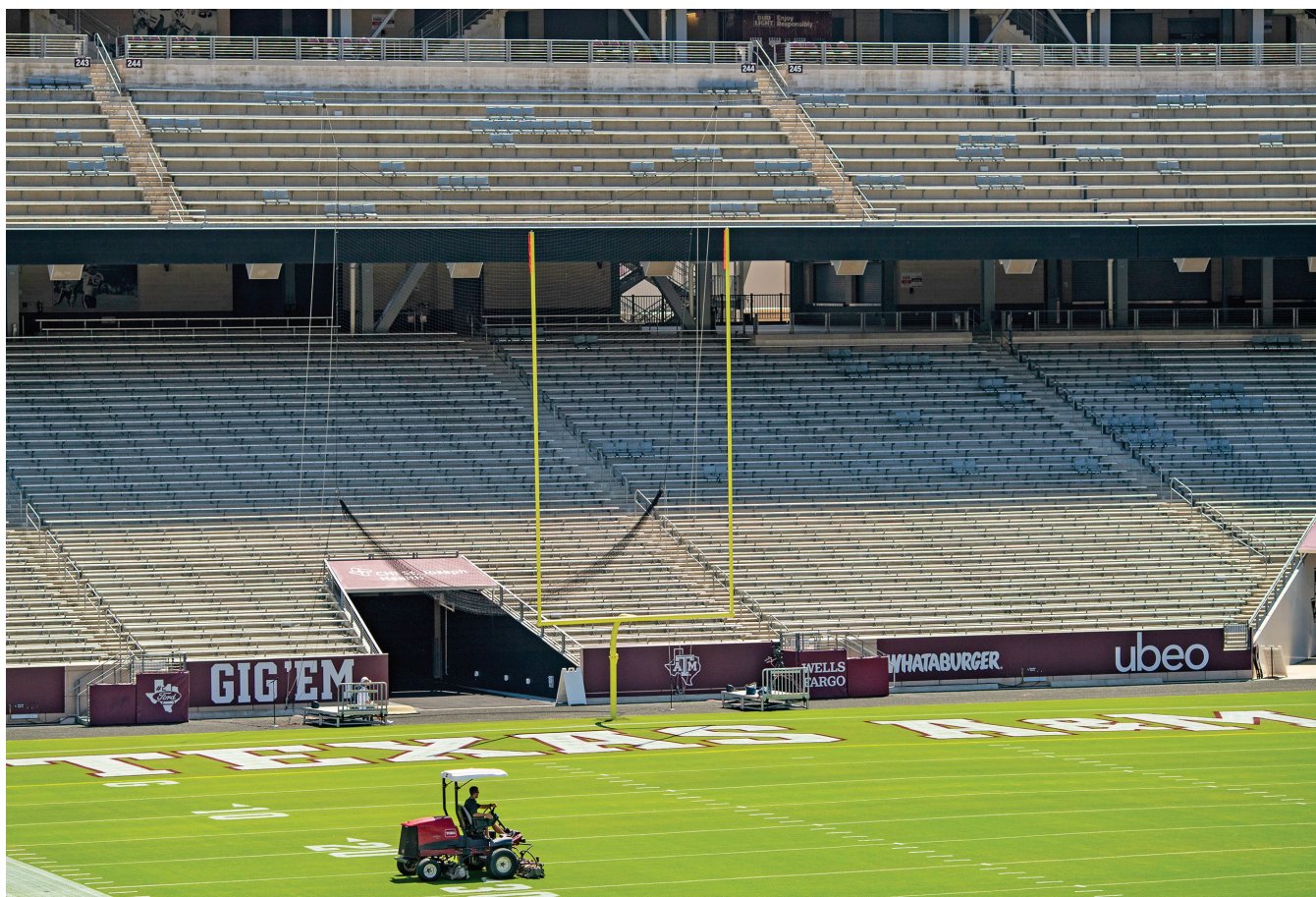
"The first three or four years back, my primary responsibilities were overseeing the baseball facilities," said McKenna. "The first day on the job, we were at the stage of construction that I pulled into the parking lot and I could literally see through the stadium. We were standing in the parking lot and could see the field."

"That presented all its own unique challenges," McKenna added. "There were days when they were like, 'We have to park a crane on home plate.' There was a construction fence wrapped from the foul pole around home plate back up to the other foul pole. That was how we played that entire fall, and the field got put back together in December and January. It was a good experience

to go through to learn how to balance all those different dynamics."

McKenna continued in his role overseeing the baseball facilities until Goertz's untimely death – at the age of 55 – in December 2015. As a result, the timeline of Potts moving into the head role and McKenna transitioning to the role of assistant athletic field maintenance manager started not because Goertz retired, but because he unexpectedly passed away.

"Craig and I had to develop our own dynamic," said McKenna. "It took us a year or two just to figure out how he and I would work together, and how those responsibilities would balance out. We've reached a really neat, fun dynamic



ic that makes it a really enjoyable place where I can continue to have the additional responsibility I'm looking to have, and continue to grow as a manager and as a person."

ON THE JOB

McKenna's crew at Texas A&M is part of the athletic department, so its focus is on all Texas A&M intercollegiate and athletic playing surfaces.

"We don't have to deal with the rec sports fields, we don't have to deal with campus grounds," he said. "We get to solely focus on the athletic department fields and facilities. We are responsible for football, baseball, softball, soccer, track and tennis."

The crew manages Kyle Field, Texas A&M's natural grass football field; two full-size natural grass practice fields for football; an indoor synthetic field for football; Olsen Field at Blue Bell Park for baseball (which serves as both the practice field and playing surface); Ellis Field for soccer (practices and games); two softball fields — Aggie

Softball Complex, and Davis Diamond, which is a new \$29 million softball complex; and a new track facility, as well as an older track complex.

"It's roughly 16 to 18 acres of highly maintained athletic playing surfaces," said McKenna.

The crew is also responsible for the landscaped areas inside and around the facilities, which is another 22 to 24 acres of general turfgrass areas.

The full-time crew consists of Craig Potts, CSFM, head athletic field maintenance manager, McKenna, and four full-time groundskeeper assistants — with one groundskeeper assistant assigned to each major facility (football, baseball, soccer and softball). The groundskeeper assistants are the eyes on the ground every day handling the day-to-day prep, which has freed McKenna up to be an umbrella over everything. Depending on the time of year and the season, personnel can be moved as needed to whatever the primary focus is for that day.



Beyond the full-time crew, much of the labor force comes through college students, with 7 to 12 students working (during a typical year).

“Obviously, if we can get students that are in the turfgrass program at A&M, we love to give them opportunities to expand their skillset, come in and experience things in their fields of study,” said McKenna.

McKenna and Potts work collaboratively to oversee everything. “We will figure out what we need to get done, what are the pressing issues, and formulate our plan on a daily basis, then distribute that to our crew,” he said. “What’s important now? What do we need to get accomplished today? What would we like to get accomplished if we have time? And what are the things that can wait until tomorrow or next week?”

According to McKenna, that cycle perpetually evolves, and the bulk of the work revolves around coordinating the crew and making sure the daily practice preparations get done for each team.

He added that one of the things he loves about the college atmosphere is that everything is variable, no two days are the same, and it isn’t the exact same field and sport day after day after day.

With regard to COVID-19, and its impact, McKenna said that he is blessed that he and his crew were minimally impacted.

“We were fortunate that the athletic department was able to maintain all of our staff from the time everything got shut down in March,” he said. “We were right in the middle of the college baseball and softball seasons when everything started to get shut down. We did lose our student help. Obviously, with events and activities ceasing on our fields, the wear and tear on them was a lot less, so the maintenance wasn’t quite as intensive.”

McKenna added that the silver lining of the past year for him was shifting to 40-hour workweeks.

“It brought a sense of balance back to my life and allowed me to get back to the roots when I first started,



and the job was about growing grass and maintaining the fields,” he said. “It was kind of a nice reset and re-charge my battery.”

Outside of work, McKenna and his wife, Holly, are devoted to their dogs. They have three dogs – all rescues – but also foster pit pulls or pit bull mix breeds, and are passionate about advocating for the breed. During 2020 alone, the McKennas provided a foster home to 21 rescues.

“It was refreshing to be able to spend weekends at home with my wife and the dogs. But I’m fortunate in that I was minimally impacted, and I didn’t have to worry about income loss or job loss.”

Aside from any COVID-related challenges, McKenna said the biggest challenges he and his crew face are the things they can’t control, namely weather and scheduling.

“We are at the mercy of Mother Nature with what we do. We just have to be adaptive and responsive to it,” he said. “We have very little to no control of the scheduling

of what happens on our fields and in our facilities. As we are seeing the dynamic of college athletics trending more toward the professional model where you have these multi-million-dollar facilities that have to be used for more than just seven football games per year, you’re looking for ways to bring in additional revenue. So you don’t have control of the practice schedules, the game schedules, and then you combine that with what Mother Nature is going to do to you, there are so many things that are beyond your control.”

McKenna said he makes a conscious effort to control what he can control, and tries to make the best of every situation. He added that adaptability is one of the biggest keys to success as a sports field manager.

“When you look at all the things we have to deal with, all the things that are beyond our control, and the challenges that we face, you have to be versatile, you have to be flexible, you have to be able to adapt and overcome different situations,” he said. “It’s a rewarding experience

to go through these challenges and come out on the other side. We found a way through it. What's the next challenge? What's the next opportunity?"

A SENSE OF PRIDE

McKenna has made the most of his opportunities, and is proud of several career achievements.

First is winning STMA College Football Field of the Year in 2005 during his first stint at Texas A&M.

"It was a big point of pride for our university, for our crew," he said. "I thought it was neat to be recognized for the work we did and be recognized as the best college football field in the country that year."

Second on his list of accomplishments was getting his CSFM designation (in 2011 while at Virginia Tech).

"Mike Andresen set that precedent for me, and I set that goal," said McKenna. He added that Andresen introduced him to STMA, professionalism beyond one's own career, being involved in the industry, being a professional at the next level, getting involved and giving back.

"Mike was the first CSFM I knew," said McKenna. "So, very early on, that was one of the things I put up there as a goal. That was a big enough priority to him to attain, then that is important for me. As a 22-year-old college student, you look at that and think that is a long way away. So, when I finally got to the point where I got to test and attained that, it was a big deal. It's a huge sense of accomplishment to do so."

According to McKenna, the CSFM program is important to STMA and the industry.

"We are always trying to enhance and establish our image as professionals in our industry," he said. "I think that the CSFM designation is a way to help steer that."

McKenna added that it would be ideal if the program would get to the point where the designation is respected and recognized throughout the industry, and employers include "CSFM preferred" or "CSFM required" in job descriptions so that those with their CSFM designation are recognized as the best of the best.

He added, "I know hundreds of guys who are equally or more skilled as field managers than me who don't have [the CSFM designation], and have no desire or need for it. But I think, as an association, it is an important program for the future of our industry."



McKenna also points to his role as a teacher and mentor to the next generation as a career achievement.

"Part of my role as a sports field manager, especially when working with students, is that I'm an educator," said McKenna. "I'm helping develop that next generation of sports field managers – I hope. I enjoy seeing the successes of these young adults after they leave us. To me, that is so rewarding. I hope that I had at least a small role in that path for them."

GIVING BACK TO THE INDUSTRY

McKenna has also made it a point to be involved and give back to the industry, including serving on the Virginia Sports Turf Board, in Texas at the state level, at the national level on various committees, and eventually on the national board.

"I just made it a priority that I want to keep being involved and I want to keep trying to give back," said McKenna.

He added that being involved with FFA taught him about serving beyond himself.

"When we are young, we think about ourselves," he said. "But as we continue to develop as people, as we mature and grow, we start to think outside ourselves."

As for involvement in the industry at the state/chapter level or at the national level, or both, McKenna said, "If you have a vision for what your career should be, for what your job should be, for what your industry should be, you have to become actively involved to help steer it. You can't score in the game if you are not on the team. If you see something you don't like, the only way things get



steered and controlled is if people get involved and take a vested interest in it.”

He added that the strength of STMA is its members.

“If they are not actively involved and help drive us where we need to go, then we are going to fall flat and fail,” he said. “We have to find a way to get them engaged, get them to take a vested interest and keep the association moving forward.”

McKenna hopes members will continue to reach out to STMA for help and guidance.

“At the root of it, our association is here for our members,” he said. “I think our role is to help them however we can.”

McKenna wants to continue to work to improve the professional image of sports field managers, and also develop future sports field managers.

“I’m always going to have a focus on the teaching side and developing the next generation,” he said. “As you look across the industry, that is one of the major problems. I think we need to figure out where we go and how we get people involved in our industry so that

we can continue to develop these well-trained sports field managers.”

McKenna added that the top goal during his upcoming year as STMA president is to develop a long-term strategic plan. Due to COVID-19, and the inability to meet in person as a board, STMA developed a one-year bridge strategic plan. According to McKenna, the board now needs to have a strategic plan session to develop its vision for where the association is headed the next two to three years and how to get there.

As STMA president, he plans to rely on his fellow board members to steer the association and determine priorities.

“It’s not just my vision. I just happen to be the person that they put at the rudder for the year. There are 12 other amazing professionals I get to work with. I’m going to rely on them to help me know what our priorities are going to be. My job is to orchestrate the symphony.” **SFM**

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

Where Is the Future of Our Industry?

By Drew Miller

[Editor's Note: As part of STMA's Weekly Conference Education Program, the author, along with Dan Sandor, Ph.D., Virginia Tech University, will present an education session on this topic on Tuesday, Feb. 16, from 3:15-4:15 p.m. EST. For more information, visit <https://www.stma.org/conference/>]

Sports field management is spread far and wide from different local recreation levels to the professional stage. But who are the individuals that will continue all of the incredible work sports field managers do every day? And where will they come from?

Dr. Sandor and I have seen collegiate and high school turfgrass management programs full of prospective future industry leaders. As educators, we have learned and discovered new and creative ways to promote the sports field management industry to America's younger generation. It is critical for sports field managers and STMA members to promote this incredible industry to the youth in their communities.

Sports field managers play such a significant role in their communities, as they are maintaining multiple playing surfaces on which millions of athletes play the sports they love. As an industry, we help create memories for athletes and fans throughout the country – from watching or playing Little League baseball games to attending or playing professional sports. We have the opportunity to bring our life's work to light through outreach in our local communities. As STMA members – and especially Certified Sports Field Managers and those working toward certification – we also have the opportunity to provide athletes, coaches, administrators and parents the assurance and peace of mind that we are trained and educated professionals who work to ensure the playing fields are not solely picturesque, but, most importantly, playable and safe for all involved. In the past, our industry has had trouble finding young, experienced and passionate workers who can join the next generation of sports field managers. Some issues we have seen throughout the years relate to the recruitment and retention of young industry workers. We must all take seriously the importance of finding the next generation of industry leaders to ensure and maintain a positive outlook on the sports field management industry's future.

Growing up, many individuals play sports and dream of a professional career as a player. Because their focus is on



playing, they never notice the things that add to their love of the game – the field kept in shape so they are not injured, mowed-in patterns that are pleasing to the eye, etc. It is our job to have them take notice of the things around them. Let them see that they can have a professional career in baseball as a groundskeeper rather than as a player. When I went to see the Mets play as a child, I was far more excited by Mike Piazza than the New York cityscape striped into the field. In my youth, I noticed the work of the Hall of Fame catcher. Our job is to make the youth notice the work of the Hall of Fame groundskeeper, Pete Flynn!

Look back on your career and think about what brought you to the sports field management industry. What was that experience? Did you hear from a friend? Why did



you choose this career path, and how did your passion for the industry grow? As industry professionals, we must provide the young individuals in our communities the opportunities to find us and become the next generation that will carry on the work. We have all had mentors who gave us the chance to become a part of the sports field management industry. I was never the most qualified or most skilled

worker, but industry leaders provided me the opportunity to pursue what I was passionate about. We must all have the patience to give that chance to young individuals so that they may discover their interests, and allow them to grow.

There are various strategies to promote the sports field management industry, beginning with the visibility of the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) through signage, banners, branded apparel and other tools and accessories at and around facilities that advertise and exemplify the industry to untrained eyes. How many athletes, parents, coaches and administrators do you think even know there is a Sports Turf Managers Association? Another strategy of exposure and building awareness can be to place relevant information and job postings in different spaces, such as at community centers and local high schools. High schools throughout America can have the most considerable influence, because, through education, students' eyes are opened to different career pathways and opportunities.

As sports field managers, we can connect with local high school athletic directors and department heads to discuss aspects of the industry. By simply talking with administrators and coaches, and providing information about the STMA and opportunities for summer internships at your local fields, you create a relationship with individuals



who will advocate for you and the rest of our industry. They will talk with their students and share the opportunities that this industry can provide – a future career path where their office is a sports field, and they can spend their days in the great outdoors. Making connections with local athletic directors and offering a helping hand with guidance or labor, you now have another leader in your community who can advocate to student-athletes the opportunities to continue with the passion for their favorite sport in a different way. There are hundreds of thousands of kids out there who aspire to make it as a professional athlete someday. But it is doubtful that many these young individuals will even have the opportunity to play in college. We want the young men and women who have that passion channel it into producing professional and safe playing surfaces.

Sports field managers and STMA members can also coordinate with high school teachers and college professors to host field trips or even virtual field trips at their facilities to put sports field management in front of these impressionable young men and women. Sports field managers could work with teachers and professors to host hands-on living labs where students can experientially learn that sports field management is an art *and* a science. We can create and demonstrate the various STEM-related activities that a sports field manager utilizes on an everyday basis. Sports field managers can also provide guest lectures emphasizing the importance of students broadening their horizons to discover more about other topics, such as weather and climate, horticulture and soils, and business, human resources and finance – all critically important topics to the sports field manager (and courses commonly offered across the collegiate landscape). Creating different encounters such as these can significantly change the outlook of our industry.

There are also ways to make a lasting impact on the industry for years to come by developing a high school specialty program tailor made to develop high school students as turfgrass managers. In the Brentsville Turfgrass Management Program, our students have the opportunity to learn firsthand, through hands-on learning, the different options the turfgrass industry as a whole has to offer. When we first started our program, we had approximately 75 students. We have seen exponential growth in three years to the point where we are projected to have more than 250 students in the program at the start of the 2021-2022 school year (beginning August 2021).

We have seen not only the development of our program, but have also seen these students explore the industry and become industry professionals or further their education in 2-year and 4-year turfgrass science programs throughout the country.

There are different opportunities to get involved with programs like this, whether it is through support or by

making connections with the young individuals through your work. A prime example of this is when Orioles Head Groundskeeper Nicole Sherry, at the height of COVID-19, took time out of her day to give a virtual tour of Camden Yards to our students. This led to our first female graduate attending a college turfgrass program with aspirations to become the first female head groundskeeper in the National Football League. Small actions such as these can have a lasting impact on the outlook of our industry.

If you are interested in starting a high school program, it is essential to approach your local school board with the support of your community and the high school's administrative team. You would then propose the plan of developing your turfgrass management program in that high school. They would then vote on whether or not they will develop this program. If they approve the program, there is national funding for all career and technical education programs in all school districts throughout the country to support equipment and materials. It is also critical to work with your athletic director, as he or she is the individual in charge of the athletic facilities you will be maintaining with your students. The athletic director funds your annual budget for materials such as paint and fuel, and without his or her support, the program will fail. These programs can change our industry's outlook by having a long-lasting influence on teenagers becoming passionate about the maintenance of sports fields.

The final way you can create a positive impact on our industry's outlook is to get involved with your high school and collegiate programs by connecting their students to the industry and the overall possibilities of their future. Please get involved by supporting their education, whether it is discussing your experiences or hosting them in a professional setting. Get involved with your local STMA chapters and present at the university field days and symposiums where college students can meet and network with you – the industry professional.

There are so many great students out there who have made that significant step to becoming the next generation of industry leaders. And they have the need and desire for your guidance on how to become the best turfgrass managers they can. **SFM**

Drew Miller is director of the Brentsville Turfgrass Management Program, located in Nokesville, Va. Miller is a graduate of Virginia Tech with a bachelor's degree in Crops and Soil Sciences, focusing in Turfgrass Management, and a master's degree in Career and Technical Education with a focus in Ag Education. Miller has spent the last four years developing a high school program and curriculum that prepares students for jobs in all areas of the turfgrass industry. Prior to that, he spent the majority of his career in professional baseball, football and collegiate athletics.

State of the Industry

For insight into the state of the sports field management industry, *SportsField Management* recently interviewed STMA Immediate Past President Jimmy Simpson, CSFM, facilities coordinator, Town of Cary (N.C.).

SportsField Management (SFM):

What is the lasting impact of 2020 on the industry, and how should sports field managers approach 2021 and beyond?

Simpson: The lasting impact of 2020 for me is the connection to others, both inside and outside of our industry. Connectivity has always been there in some form or fashion, but I think 2020 emphasized the need for our industry to continue growing and changing. This change is not only necessary to stay relevant to our peers, but to remain relevant and essential to our employers, decision makers and politicians. STMA worked hard in 2020 to use connections outside of our industry to share the message that sports field managers are resilient and here to help provide safe, playable athletic fields in all situations, including a pandemic.

SFM: Beyond COVID-19 and recovering from the year that has been, what are the other key issues facing the industry, and what is your advice for facing those issues?

Simpson: I think we have three major issues that face us as an association and an industry. While these issues are not new, they need to be addressed to continue our forward movement. The issues as I see them are the lack of diversity within our industry, the declining labor pool, and lack of industry promotion.



Jimmy Simpson, CSFM

I think part of the solution to all of these issues lies in increasing awareness of our profession and its many employment opportunities. There are millions of athletes across the world, from all walks of life, who would love to work in the sport that they play in high school. Sports field management is a great way to “stay in the game” beyond just being an athlete. I think that is an untapped market of students for our industry to reach out to and expose them to all the sports field industry has to offer. If we can effectively reach that audience, then we can make strides working on these three major issues as I see them today.

SFM: What is your message to the next generation of sports field managers?

Simpson: My message to the next generation is very simple, and it comes from my own personal reflections on my career. We learn from our mistakes and then call that

experience. Throughout my career, I always felt that if I went unnoticed, then I was doing my job. The problem that I have later learned is that if you go unnoticed, then you run the risk of not having a voice when it matters. The advice I would give to the next generation is to stay humble, but do not be afraid to share the great work that you and your team do to help your organization. Positive communication with not only your sports field team, but with the administration about what you and your team are doing, can be very effective at helping you find your seat at the table.

SFM: Through virtual meetings and other avenues of information sharing, STMA and its members have helped each other deal with many new challenges during the past year. What have been the biggest positives to come out of 2020, and how can the lessons learned help everyone moving forward?

Simpson: The biggest positive is the increased recognition of resilience and dedication that all sports field managers exhibit. I have seen more social and traditional media placements on the efforts of field managers around the world this year than ever before. These articles have highlighted not only the regular field work that is completed, but the “other duties as assigned” work that field managers handle every day. Ultimately, this year proved outside of the industry what we already knew inside the industry — sports field managers are resilient and essential to the operations of their teams, facilities, municipalities, schools and businesses all over the world. **SFM**

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

ANSWER

From page 17

This extra-thick center line on this field is the result of correcting a mistake. As many sports field managers know, field painting is a skill that takes years to perfect. This sports field manager had a seasonal employee in his third week of training, and they had just completed restriping their sixth field of the day with a powered paint machine. As they approached this field, the sports field manager got called into the building to repair a pool pump, so he asked the employee if he was comfortable finishing and to make use of the string. The employee assured him that he had the painting process down to a science by now. When the sports field manager returned 30 minutes later, this is what he found for the center line. When asked if he used a string, he said yes but he forgot to use stakes to hold the string tight and just laid the string out and painted. To correct the issue, they pulled the string down the center where the line should have been and lifted the head of the paint machine to paint a little wider, making two passes, one each side of the line. Luckily, the extra thick line was not noticeable and did not affect play.

Photo submitted by Josh DeJong, CFSM, facilities supervisor at Eaton Area Parks & Rec in Eaton, Colo.

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 e-mail to 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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MANAGEMENT

Podcast

The new *SportsField Management Podcast* will be bringing you content from STMA Conference education sessions, round-table discussions and presentations, as well as original interviews with industry insiders.

For more information, visit <https://sportsfieldmanagementonline.com/podcast/>

Playing the Field, Safely

By Mary Helen Sprecher

While the year we've just said goodbye to (with no great regrets) has been all about safety, it's time to look to the future. Sports are returning to fields, spectators are returning to the stands, and field owners and managers are returning to their responsibilities.

But safety remains important. And while there are certainly plenty of health protocols that will be essential in the months to come, it is imperative not to lose sight of safety on the field itself. In particular, it is essential to control physical risks to players.

According to the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA), for designers, builders and suppliers of materials for athletic facilities, observing important safety requirements is going to be as important this year as any. Many teams are returning to the field for the first time in more than a year, and unfortunately, fields may have been neglected in the interim.

John Schedler, CFB, CTB, an athletic facility consultant with Bakara Sport, noted that the first consideration should be the surface of the field itself. For synthetic fields, regular maintenance protocols should be observed, such as field grooming and decompaction of the infill.

"The owner should look at the small things and details like on baseball and softball fields, including the high-wear areas that often need spot maintenance after each event or at least on a regular basis so that the infill doesn't migrate out of the area and lead to irreparable turf damage," he said.

Surface testing can help verify they are having the desired effect.

"It is essential to have proper maintenance and regular testing of the field surface itself," said Schedler. "Gmax or HIC testing for player safety, as well as owner due diligence should include attention to force reduction, vertical deformation, rotational resistance, ball roll etc." These, he added, are already required by FIFA but are applicable to field performance in general.

Lee Narozanick, CTB, CFB, of American Athletic Courts, Inc. and Florida Turf and Track, said that grass fields merit attention as well.

"Both synthetic and natural fields need to be inspected daily before each event. Different types of fields will require different attention," said Narozanick.



In addition to ascertaining the field surface is acceptable for play, field managers should turn their attention to the structures on the field itself. In high-wind areas, fastening down moveable objects such as goal nets or other objects can enhance area safety.

But just as important are the design considerations.

"One of the most common safety issues I see is in the 'runout' areas for fields," said Todd Smith, Ph.D., PE, LEED AP, CFB, of R&R Engineers-Surveyors, Inc. "While the industry has improved its knowledge and design around the minimum areas outside the play field's formal end or sidelines, there seems to now be an increase in

All photos courtesy of the American Sports Builders Association



surface type changes just outside these perimeter game lines. It appears most 'runout' or safety zones are defined or believe to be defined as no vertical obstructions like walls, carts, poles, team benches, tables, etc. This is true, but we're seeing too many changes of surface like an electrical box, irrigation box, wood timbers, or metal cap for sleeves. These are extremely dangerous for athletes running out of bounds and trying to slow down or stop. Their shoes or cleats slip or get caught in the changed materials and cause injuries."

The fact that many sports fields are encircled by running tracks has contributed to an additional risk, he added.

"Not as prevalent in our experience, but just as important are how close the soccer corner kicks have become to a running track. In the attempt to make the soccer field as wide as possible, the corner kicks are pushed right up to the running track edge," said Smith. "In some cases, the corner kick approach is all on the running track and the last foot-plant for kicking is suddenly on turf instead of the track surface, or worse...on the concrete or metal-grated slot drain on the inside of the track."



Unfortunately, there is no one easy answer, Smith added.

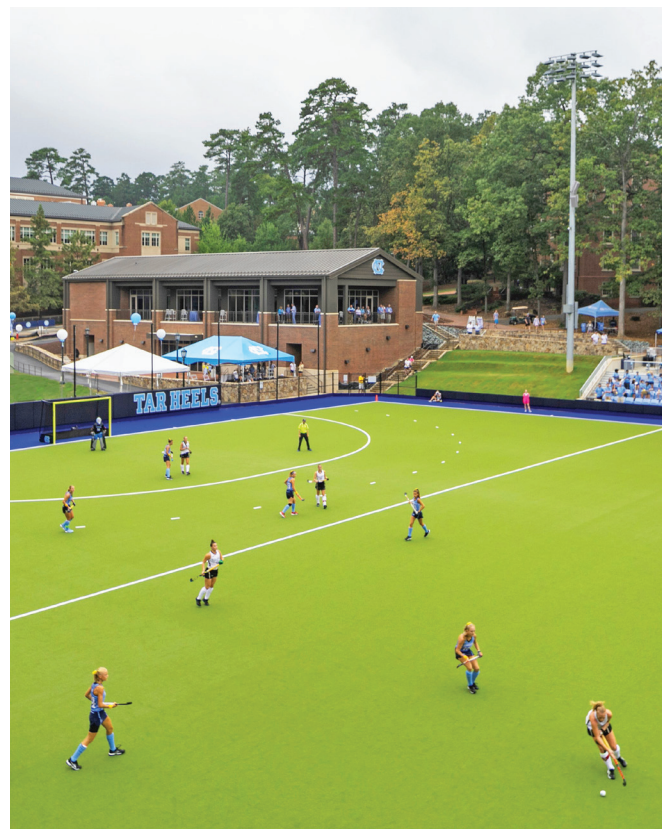
“Solving these issues is obviously a facility-specific question. There are many options, like making a soccer field a little shorter — like 330 feet — so you can keep the width but pull the corner kick away from the track a few feet, moving irrigation or other boxes a few more feet away from the field edge, or providing reasonable turf caps on these other materials.”

While attention is often paid to the fencing around a baseball or softball field, with soft capping added to the fence tops so that fielders can safely attempt more challenging plays, other structures may not get the same attention.

“Fields in the middle of running tracks require padding on field events if field events are too close,” Narozanick cautioned.

Because many athletes are trying to make up for lost time, and, particularly at the high school level when attempting to create a lasting impression for potential college coaches, it is likely they will be attempting more aggressive plays and trying to get as much field time as possible.

According to Schedler, it is incumbent upon field managers to consider any immovable object that might pose a potential risk to a player, and try to low-





er the problem factor. Proper padding on goals, posts, fences and any other structure is necessary.

Something many field builders have noted is the need to keep back parents and spectators, who often want to be on the sidelines. Unfortunately, the sidelines are an overrun area and unprepared spectators could cause injury to players who are chasing a ball and not looking.

“Something that is really helpful is having a security crew that can monitor where people are going in order to keep them in the safety zones,” said Narozanick.

Ascertain in advance who has permission to be on the sidelines. This might include the following:

- Athletes
- Coaches, trainers and authorized team personnel
- Spirit squads or dance teams
- Official media representatives with cameras

(this does not include parents with smartphones and iPads or those claiming to be scouts for colleges – make sure official credentials are provided)

- Security personnel

If the band is scheduled to perform, members should only take the field or be on the sidelines during times when there is no active play, such as halftime. Coaches and band directors should discuss in advance what types of performances are planned and when

they should take place, as well as where band members should be when they are not performing.

Make sure a list is provided. Have signage plainly stating that no unauthorized persons are permitted beyond the bleachers and that unauthorized trespassers will be removed from the game.

ASBA offers comprehensive publications containing design and construction guidelines to help field owners and managers; these include *Sports Fields: A Construction and Maintenance Manual* and *Running Tracks: A Construction and Maintenance Manual*. In addition, ASBA offers a free “Design Showcase” app, available in the App Store, with layouts for fields and courts. **SFM**

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA).

Available at no charge is a listing of all publications offered by ASBA, as well as ASBA’s membership directory. For information on ASBA, as well as on its publications, activities and upcoming meetings, contact ASBA at 2331 Rock Spring Road, Forest Hill, MD 21050. The toll-free phone number is 866-501-ASBA. The ASBA also may be reached electronically via its website, www.sportsbuilders.org, or via e-mail at info@sportsbuilders.org.

Elevate Your Resume to the Next Level to Land an Interview

By Erin Wolfram, M.S.



What do you think is the purpose of a resume? Most people think the purpose is to get you a job. However, there is a very important step in between: to introduce yourself to the hiring committee, and ultimately to secure an interview. However, securing the interview can be much harder than it may seem, especially if you do not know someone within the organization who can put in a

good word for you. Unfortunately, all too often, the old saying, “It’s not WHAT you know, it’s WHO you know,” holds true. Therefore, it is important to make sure your resume quickly grabs the attention of the reader(s) and compels them to invite you to interview.

So, how do you ensure your resume represents you in the best way possible? Your resume needs to clearly and concisely demonstrate

that you meet or exceed the qualifications of the position and prove your value. To achieve this, and take your application to the next level, take a moment to review your resume, and check for the following:

- Does your resume effectively demonstrate how your skills and strengths meet or exceed the qualifications listed in the job description?

- Do you have action-oriented bullet statements for each of your

experiences, and if so, do they adequately reflect the accomplishments and outcomes of your actions?

■ Is your resume error free, easy to read, and have consistent formatting throughout the document?

If the answer is “no” to any of these questions, below are a few tips to help you update your resume and transform it from a generic, duty-based document to a more personalized, achievement-based reflection of your unique qualifications and characteristics.

1. Consider adding a “Career Profile” or “Summary of Qualifications” section at the top of your resume that includes five to seven bullets highlighting your skills and strengths that align with the position for which you are applying. Make sure to include information about your technical, sports field management, and leadership qualities. Many candidates forget to include leadership capabilities; however, these are the unique characteristics you possess that can really set you apart from your competitors. Use these examples to start generating ideas:

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

■ Sports field management professional with more than 10 years of experience maintaining outdoor athletic fields on college campuses and for city recreational facilities with a track record of producing high-quality conditions in challenging climates.

■ Strong leader who has managed crews of 8 – 24 with a hands-on approach; ability to develop relationships and capitalize on individual strengths to effectively delegate tasks and motivate employees to deliver quality results.

■ Extensive experience developing and implementing equipment maintenance plans that optimize equipment use and encourage fiscal responsibility.

■ Exceptional ability to identify and eradicate plant disease and pests to maximize turf health and aesthetics.

2. List your relevant areas of expertise in a separate “Skills” section so the hiring committee can easily see how you meet the required and/or preferred qualifications. The rest of the information within your resume should provide evidence that you have these skills. You may also want to elaborate more on these areas of expertise in a cover letter.

SKILLS

- Budget oversight
- Landscape design
- Fertilizer and pesticide application
- Pest and disease identification
- Cultural practices
- Irrigation management
- Crew management
- Strategic planning
- Drainage management
- Communication

3. Include three to five bulleted impact statements for each of your experiences.

These statements should not be a list of your duties or responsibilities. Rather, they should be achievement-based. A person’s duties, typically, are not unique and do not demonstrate proof of

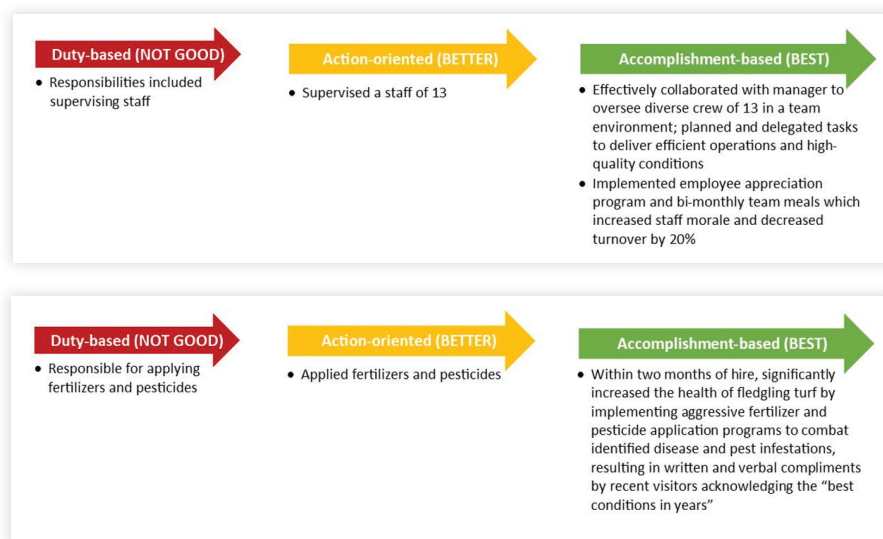
skills, strengths or contributions. Aim for each statement to be specific, include measurable outcomes of your contributions, and start with a strong action verb. The graphic below shows examples of how to effectively describe your experience.

4. Proofread, proofread, proofread! Read through your resume several times before submitting your application to make sure it is free of any errors. It is a good idea to have a friend, family member or colleague read through it as well, just in case you overlooked anything. Additionally, consider these formatting tips to ensure your resume follows some basic standards and is easy to read.

■ **Font:** Use a generic font such as Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial or Helvetica with a size between 10 and 12-point for the main text. The font in your header that includes your name and contact information should be slightly larger.

■ **Margins:** Aim for .5 to 1-inch margins on all sides. This will allow plenty of white space so your document doesn’t appear too crowded.

■ **Consistency:** Make sure you are consistent with how information is formatted throughout your



document. If your first section heading is in bold and has all capital letters, each section heading that follows should have the same format. Use bold, italics and underling sparingly so they do not distract from your content.

■ **Bullets:** Hiring committee members are often very busy and do not have much time to read every detail on a resume. Make it easy for them to skim. Avoid complete sentences and include bullet statements in action-verb form.

■ **Length:** Entry-level and early-career resumes should be one-page long. However, as you progress in the industry and gain more relevant experience and skills you may need to extend your resume to two pages. The key-word here is “relevant.” You should not include information on your resume to simply add more content, but rather include relevant information that supports your qualifications. Remember, you will often be submitting a cover letter with your application, so you can always include additional details in your letter that can help reduce the need for some information on the resume itself.

5. Always follow the application instructions carefully.

Some position descriptions are very particular in how they want to receive application materials. Check to see if they requested any of the following:

- A certain file format such as .doc or .pdf
- A specific way to name your file(s)
- Multiple documents such as a resume, cover letter and reference page
- If multiple documents are requested, are multiple files requested or should they be in one file?
- Salary history or requirements or any additional information

BONUS TIP: If a cover letter is requested, always include one, and find out to whom the letter should be addressed. The cover letter provides you the opportunity to explain why you are interested in the particular position and organization, and how you are uniquely qualified. Each cover letter you write should be tailored to the specific position and not extend beyond one page. Draw the reader in from the very beginning by expressing your interest and

providing highlights of your skills, strengths and accomplishments that directly align with what they are seeking in a top candidate. The letter should be in block format with three to four paragraphs, including an introduction, two body paragraphs, and a closing. Use the same header from your resume, as well as the same font style. As with your resume, proofread to make sure there are not any errors, and remember to provide specific details and examples that prove your value.

By adding more relevant skills, strengths and impact statements, your resume will quickly transform from a generic document that is easily overlooked to a compelling representation of your unique qualifications that will guarantee to impress any hiring committee. Always remember to match your skills, strengths and experiences as much as possible to the qualifications listed on the job description and go beyond your duties and responsibilities. By demonstrating your value to a potential employer, you will elevate your resume to the next level and land that interview. **SFM**



Erin Wolfram, M.S., is a career services professional with more than 15 years of experience. She has a specialization in assisting those in the turfgrass management industry, and works with clients to help them recognize their strengths and unique qualities to rise above the competition. She works alongside individuals to make sure they are confident throughout their job search and professional growth, and believes in getting to know clients and their stories to help them reflect their best selves in their application materials and portfolios. She owns and operates Career Advantage and Career Advantage Golf (<http://careeradvantagegolf.com>), and helps professionals throughout the world. Additionally, Wolfram is an ISSA certified trainer, and runs an online personal training and nutrition consulting business, The Fit Advantage.

Wolfram received a Bachelor of Science in Secondary English Education from Kansas State University, as well as both a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology and a Master of Science in Educational Technology from The University of Kansas. She also earned a professional etiquette certificate in 2012 from The Etiquette Institute in St. Louis, Mo. She can be reached at erin@careeradvantageresumes.com.

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Trimmers and Edgers



■ WT-1610HSP: Self-propelled model with 160cc Honda engine and 3-speed transmission. MSRP \$999.99



ECHO WHEELED TRIMMERS

Echo wheeled trimmers are built to be durable, powerful and reliable. Key applications for the walk-behind wheel trimmers include cutting dense weeds and mowing tall grass, with five times more power than a handheld trimmer. The heavy-duty, commercial design allows for easy and convenient trimming along retaining walls, fences and other tight areas. Sixteen-inch-diameter wheels are designed for smooth maneuverability over rough terrain, while a 24-inch cutting swath, coupled with ultra-heavy duty .155" Cross-Fire trimmer line, increases cutting performance and efficiency.

Echo has three wheeled trimmer models from which to choose:

■ WT-1610: 163cc Briggs & Stratton engine. MSRP \$559.99

■ WT-1610T: 163cc Briggs & Stratton engine with the ability to tilt the deck, allowing the operator to efficiently cut hard-to-reach areas. MSRP \$699.99

GRASSHOPPER EDGE-EZE EDGER

Improve productivity, reduce time-consuming hand edging and eliminate the need for two-cycle edgers with Edge-EZE. Electric and manual models deliver a clean edge up to 2.5 inches deep up to 500 feet/minute along sidewalks, driveways and roadways; and vertical adjustment up to 12 inches allows edging from the sidewalk, turf or curb. An optional electric actuator increases downward pressure in tough conditions and raises the disc to cross sidewalks. By increasing productivity and decreasing labor, Edge-EZE can have significant impact on the bottom line.

HONDA HHT35S TRIMMERS

Honda HHT35S trimmers are available in two configurations: the HHT35SL-TAT with a traditional loop handle and the HHT35SUKAT with a U-shaped, bicycle-style handle for increased leverage and precise control. HHT35S trimmers also include the Honda flex shaft system that provides increased durability and superior shock absorp-



tion. Both Honda HHT35S trimmers effectively bridge the weight gap with the two-stroke competition while delivering all of the advantages of a four-stroke engine. Honda HHT35S models are powered by the Honda 360-degree inclinable GX35 mini four-stroke engine known for its low noise level, low vibration level and ease of starting. The engine's oil-immersed timing belt and overhead-cam architecture make it possible to incorporate the valve train into the oil reservoir, ensuring complete oil distribution throughout the engine. This design configuration reduces the size and weight of HHT35S trimmers, making both models ideal additions to Honda handheld power equipment models.

MILWAUKEE TOOL M18

BRUSHLESS STRING TRIMMER

Milwaukee Tool is growing its line-up of outdoor power equipment solutions with the introduction of the M18 brushless string trimmer;



delivering more clearing power and a larger cutting swath than competitive battery-powered trimmer solutions. For maximum productivity, the new trimmer provides up to 6,200 rpm and features a brushless motor built specifically for trimming applications. For versatility, the trimmer has two speeds – a high speed to take on demanding applications and a low speed to maximize runtime. A 16-inch cutting swath trims more grass in a single pass and an easy-load trimmer head delivers an easy line loading experience with the ability to load up to 25 feet of trimmer line in less than 30 seconds. This M18 brushless string trimmer is part of the M18 System, now offering more than 200 power tool solutions.



STIHL BATTERY- POWERED PROFESSIONAL TRIMMERS

Part of the new Stihl 135 professional battery platform, the FSA 135 and FSA 135 R battery-powered trimmers are assembled in America, and

are true game changers for professional users. The trimmers feature an on-board battery slot that can support an on-board battery or a backpack battery for even longer runtimes. Paired with a brushless motor and the same drive and cutting components used in proven Stihl professional gas trimmers, these units deliver professional cutting performance comparable to Stihl gas units with zero exhaust emissions and low noise. These trimmers are versatile for different cutting applications, including trimming, cutting and weed clearing.



TMC KPW2260V LINE TRIMMER

The KPW2260V line trimmer from TMC Power Equipment, Inc., features the following:

- A true 2-cycle 23.3cc Kawasaki engine with dual ringed pistons and a chrome-plated 4-bolt cylinder provides power and durability for light to normal clean-up activities.
- A heavy-duty felt air filtration system keeps dirt and dust from entering the engine.
- A spring-assisted recoil starter and choke lever and valve assembly greatly reduce the time and effort needed to start and run the engine.
- A 7mm solid-steel driveshaft splined at both ends and mated to the 56mm clutch drum and heavy-duty four bearing gear head

delivers incredible torque and power to the cutting surface.

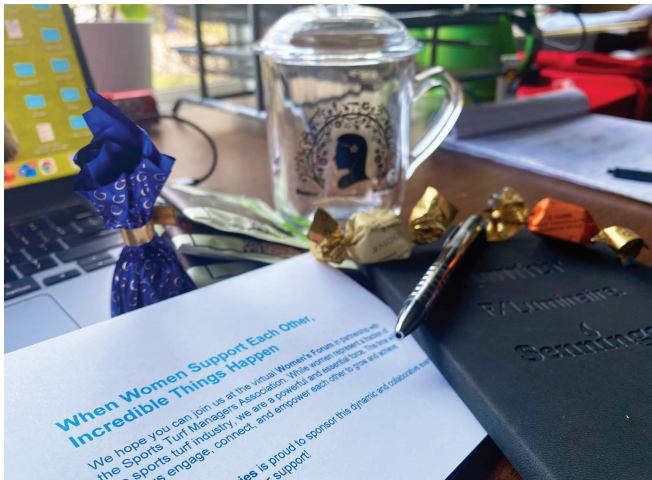
- Extensive use of metal including a cast-aluminum clutch housing, a metal engine stand, and a metal debris shield provide maximum life and durability even in the harshest conditions.
- A vibration damper at the clutch housing significantly reduces vibrations from reaching the operator's hands.



TURF TEQ 1305SP1 POWER EDGER

Turf Teq has a complete line of self-propelled walking-forward power edgers. The model 1305SP1 features a 13-hp. Honda engine, and is the only self-propelled walking-forward bed opener on the market. The machine comes standard with an opening blade to create new landscaping beds or redefine existing beds. The model 1305SP1 also offers a bed grooming blade for manicuring existing bed edges and base fields. A variety of trenching blades are also available as an option. All three of these functions can be performed by simply changing the blade and guard for each application. The power edger features a fully hydrostatic transmission with forward and reverse. The multi-use capability allows the power edger to be converted into a power rake, power broom, brush cutter or snow plow for all-season use. **SFM**

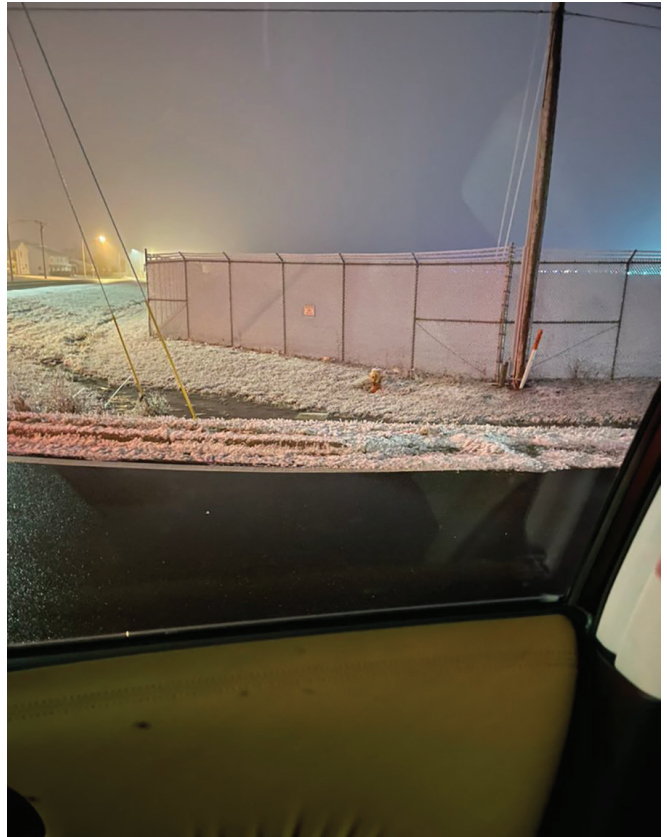
The following are some industry Tweets from the past month:



@Grassybrit

What a nice surprise today! Thank you @Hunter_Ind for sponsoring the women's forum at @FieldExperts

JANUARY 13



@AndyOmmen1

Just a wee bit of ice overnight. Thankfully it wasn't too windy but a lot of cleanup for some areas ahead. New style of wind screen.

JANUARY 2



@Clintsman_STM

It's an honor and a privilege to be a part of this award for 2020. Here is to being together next year.

JANUARY 13



@FieldExperts

In all elements and under any circumstances, STMA members rose to the occasion in 2020. Wishing you all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

DECEMBER 31



@mattcavrak

Grass is growing in December! #beatthegiants #RavensFlock
DECEMBER 27



@BushTurf

Friday night lights! Doing whatever it takes to get it done for
@Twillhog75 and @coachtleee36
#RealTurfRealSports #ChiefsKingdom
DECEMBER 19



@OSUgrounds_crew

Having ourselves a day
DECEMBER 16



@JoeyElmore38

A little frosty this morning @saalemredsox
DECEMBER 15



2021 STMA Innovative Award winners announced

STMA and the Innovative Award Committee announced that Esto Retractable and Sports Turf Company were selected to receive 2021 Innovative Awards.

The Innovative Awards program recognizes STMA commercial company members who have developed a product, service, equipment or technology that substantially enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the sports field manager and/or makes the playing surfaces safer and/or more playable for athletes. Chosen by STMA's Innovative Awards Task Group, entries are evaluated on a wide range of qualities, including whether or not they fill a need; are creative; save time and resources; are cutting edge; make a task easier or more productive; improve quality; protect the environment and improve efficiency.

ESTO RETRACTABLE: RETRACTABLE PITCHING MOUND

Esto Retractable offers a patented design for a Retractable Pitching Mound to allow field conversion in as little as two hours – allowing you to play baseball in the morning and play soccer that

same evening, for example. Scheduling more events in a stadium is key to maximizing venue utilization, ultimately attracting diverse patrons and allowing for higher revenue potential. Esto Retractable's patented system facilitates simple conversions – minimizing disruption to the integrity of a pitching mound's form or grounds crew efforts.

As venue and stadium operators look to expand their offerings and utilization – without building new stadiums – creating a multi-purpose venue is critical to the ability to attract and schedule various sports such as soccer, lacrosse and rugby, as well as concerts and other activities. Yet, field conversion is a scheduling challenge when a pitcher's mound is involved. To manually remove a pitching mound and rebuild it after a non-baseball event, takes time, expensive materials and labor.

SPORTS TURF COMPANY: ARTIFICIAL TURF SYSTEM

Every year, Sports Turf Company strives to bridge the gap between natural grass and artificial turf fields in safety, performance and playability. Sports Turf Company's Artificial Turf System features a shock pad, wood-fiber-based infill, and dense three fiber turf system that more closely replicates a natural grass field. Macon-Bibb County's Ed Defore Stadium in Macon, Ga., was the first field in the country to utilize this system. Here's the breakdown of the technology:

- AstroTurf Rootzone Blend HD Artificial Turf – An incredibly dense three fiber turf system that adds a RootZone layer of texturized fibers that encapsulate infill, provide better shock absorbency, and less infill migration than traditional systems. The turf is

comprised of both slit-film fibers and AstroTurf's patented Trionic fiber, combining nylon and polyethylene for fiber that lasts up to 50 percent longer. Overall, these systems look great for the life of the field, provide improved play and offer longer durability.

- Brock Powerbase YSR shock pad – The Brock Powerbase YSR shock pad technology features large drainage channels, shock-absorbing structures and 25mm thickness to improve player safety and provide more effective drainage. The system is designed to make artificial turf fields safer, and increase playability for athletes by providing better force reduction under the field surface and ensuring consistency of force reduction across the field surface.

- BrockFILL Infill – BrockFILL is the latest in alternative infills. The unique properties of the wood infill decrease field temperatures and give the feel of a more natural surface with increased traction and footing for athletes. The organic infill is incredibly durable and provides a fast, firm field surface with cleat interaction that most closely resembles a well-maintained natural grass field.

Voting for this year's Innovative Awards was extremely close, the committee decided to award STEC Equipment an honorable mention for its VGR Top Changer.

Aqua-Aid Solutions launches Excalibur

Aqua-Aid Solutions launched Excalibur – powered by a new surfactant technology, Potentiated Hydrophobe Technology (PHT) – to the U.S. market.

“Excalibur is the newest addition to our solutions lineup to help turf managers around the world with their water management within their agronomic programs. Excalibur brings the next generation of soil surfactant technology to the turf manager with the proprietary PHT technology. Powered by PHT technology, Excalibur is a rapid response soil surfactant that delivers rapid infiltration and consistent dry-down providing a valuable tool in moisture management,” said Sam Green, president, Aqua-Aid Solutions



New to the industry, PHT is comprised of a molecule with a strong hydrophobic chain that permits a more powerful affinity to attach to a soil particle surface allowing for supreme infiltration and longevity.

“Excalibur further enhances our “Dial-In” programs, allowing for turf managers to choose their application rate and timeline to best suit his or her agronomic programs,” said Green. “We strongly feel this new chemistry will allow our distribution partners and end users to develop comprehensive year-round programs utilizing all our unique chemistries in Aqua-Aid Solutions’ lineup to deliver excellent playing conditions with high quality turfgrass in an environmentally friendly manner.”

Spectrum Technologies releases FieldScout TDR 250 economy soil moisture meter

Spectrum Technologies, Inc., extended its product offering with the release of the FieldScout TDR 250 economy soil moisture meter. The new model enhances the well-adopted TDR product line. It is ideal for turfgrass managers who are looking to capture spot measurements for consistent turfgrass health and quality.

The TDR 250 measures soil moisture (volumetric water content) in less than a second, with settings for standard, hi-clay, or sand texture soils. With a rugged, T-handle frame and exclusive LCD display, the user-friendly TDR can capture accurate measurements across the green or sports field. Data logs (up to 124,000 measurements) can then be downloaded and transferred via a USB flash drive. All of Spectrum’s TDR meters offer interchangeable soil probes at varying lengths, so customers can choose the best option for their root zone.

Spectrum Technologies, Inc.

“Spectrum Technologies is responding to what the turf market has been asking for,” said Mike Thurow, president and CEO. “With the TDR 250, turf managers will receive Spectrum’s precision measurement technology while investing 20 percent less.”



Sidekick now available through STEC Equipment

Sidekick USA, manufacturer of an award-winning and patented natural turf installation machine, announced that its attachment designed for Kioti models will now be available for distribution through STEC Equipment – including demonstrations, leases and purchase.

“We’re extremely excited to partner Sidekick’s unmatched capabilities with STEC Equipment’s sales and marketing drive,” said Paul Carlson, CEO and owner of Sidekick. “Through STEC Equipment’s extensive natural turf network and distribution channel, Sidekick can ensure cutting-edge turf installation not only to a regional market, but a national one as well.”

Through its patented design, the Sidekick is optimized to gently push thick-cut sod together during installation.

“This partnership with Sidekick is just the start of a new chapter for STEC Equipment,” said David Taylor, president of STEC Equipment. “Sidekick’s various Kioti models not only fit perfectly with our current lineup of Kioti products, but they also help in providing our customers with complete turf coverage – from sod field to surface installation.” **SFM**



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- Options-Fracture & Slitter tines and rear floating roller assembly



Bannerman Aerator


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Q&A WITH PAMELA SHERRATT

Last month, Dr. Grady Miller did not write his usual agronomic column. He wrote about the pandemic and what it has done to our ability to feel connected as human beings. He finished by imploring us all to stay engaged, be prepared to adapt, and use our experiences to help others.

The word “adapt” is the word I think we all need to embrace in 2021, since I don’t think we are getting back to “normal” anytime soon. In fact, we may never get back to normal.

This is a time for us to evaluate how we do things, and make some changes. Jesse Potter, speaking at the seventh annual Woman to Woman conference in 1981, said, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you always get what you’ve always gotten.”

If you had a wish for the sports field management industry this year, what would it be? Here are my wishes:

Wish #1: My first wish would be that vaccines roll out quickly to all, including children, and that infections decrease enough to allow us to engage with each other. A reduction in infections would also reduce the amount of times sports field managers are being tested for COVID. One friend told me that he gets tested two to three times per day if the team is at home. Most importantly, our children need to be back in school. As the parent of a middle schooler and high schooler, I can tell you that 12 months away from school has taken its toll. No child should be using the word “depressed,” but sitting at a computer for 6.5 hours a day will do that to you. The opposite of happiness is boredom, after all. As adults, we need human interaction too. Our mental and physical health depends on it.

Wish #2: Appreciation for sports field managers. Hopefully 2020 showed owners and administrators the importance of sports field managers. Who can forget the Reds grounds crew being revered by their team, or the many field managers we saw included in game celebrations? 2020 provided the opportunity to see who did what in the organization, and administrators surely concluded that the people taking care of the playing surfaces were essential. I hope that leads to a place at the table where agronomic decisions are being made, with workable budgets and adequate personnel.

Wish #3: Prioritize wellbeing. For many, a welcome benefit of the past year was the opportunity to spend quality time with family. Let’s keep that going. There’s no reason sports field managers have to work themselves to death, sleep in their offices, and miss so much of their personal lives. Let’s put our wellbeing front and center.

Wish #4: Spread the love. 2020 reminded us that life is precious. So, ask yourself, what will your legacy be? If nothing else, let it be kindness. Every young person should be positively influenced by a caring adult in his or her life, which, unfortunately, is not always the case. As sports field managers, there are opportunities to mentor young people and help them be successful. We can be a positive influence in each other’s lives too. A short thank you note, appreciative e-mail or a text of encouragement can mean a lot to someone who’s struggling.

Wish #5: Diversify our industry. I would love to see the sports field management industry represent U.S. demographics and embrace people of different genders, cultures, races, ethnicities and social-economic backgrounds. Many benefits of a diverse workforce have been identified: different perspectives bring new ideas and a wider talent pool, creativity and productivity increase, retention rates and employee satisfaction improve, and brand/reputation are enhanced. There are many ways we can do this, starting with initiatives from our national board of directors and trickling down to our state chapters and sports facilities. What can your team do to improve diversity?

Please spend some time making your own wish list and come up with a plan to make it a reality. This is the perfect time to do it. **SFM**



Pamela Sherratt

Sports turf extension specialist
The Ohio State University

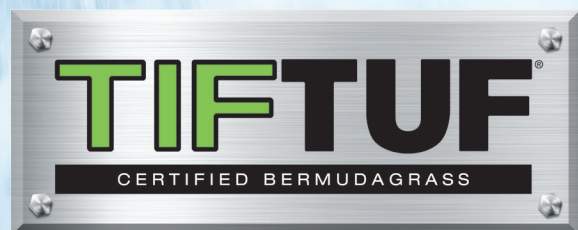
Questions?

Send them to Pamela Sherratt at 202D Kottman Hall, 2001 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210 or sherratt.1@osu.edu

Or, send your question to Dr. Grady Miller, North Carolina State University, Box 7620, Raleigh, NC 27695-7620, or grady_miller@ncsu.edu

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