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SportsField

MANAGEMENT

May 2023

Vol. 39 No. 5

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

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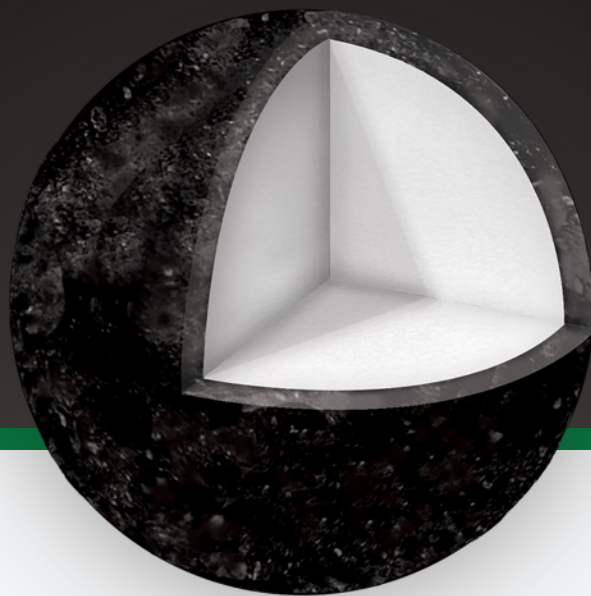
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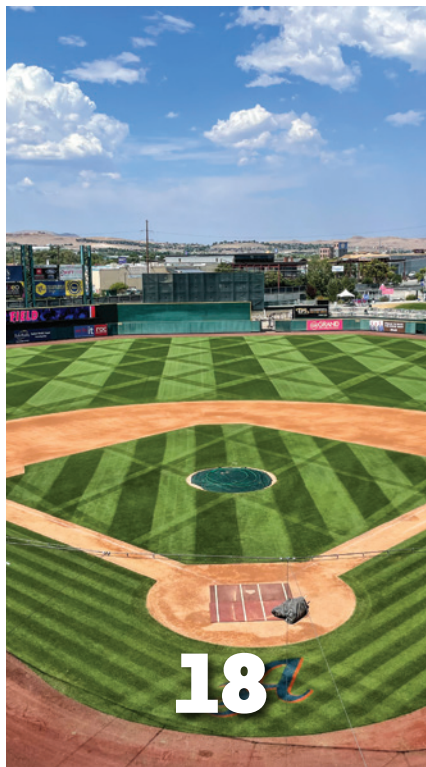
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Editor's Note



John Kmitta

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Survey says...people like surveys.

Okay, not everyone enjoys taking a survey, but most people like – and use – survey results in one format or another. Surveys, polls and ratings are all a part of our daily lives. Reviews help direct us to the best hotel or the tastiest cheeseburger. Ratings tell us how many people liked a particular movie. News/political polls show us what others think of topical issues. Or sometimes we just want to see if we can guess the top answer on Family Feud.

Data acquisition, surveys, polls and rating systems are important in all walks of life. They give us a view of the consensus, and also let us compare what we think with the feedback of others. Surveys also help businesses and services find out what they are doing well – and identify areas they could improve.

As a media and information company, surveys are a vital part of what we do. In fact, an entire division of our company is devoted to data, insights and analytics (visit <https://epgspecialtyinformation.com/>). Surveys help us to not only monitor industry trends, buying habits and readership preferences, but also to gather feedback on a variety of topics.

In this issue of *SportsField Management* magazine, we share the results of some recent reader surveys we conducted (see article on page 26). The responses provide a snapshot of our reader base, buying

habits and upcoming projects. Comparing this year's results to those of similar past surveys also helps us draw some conclusions about trends over time.

While the results outlined on page 26 don't delve into readership trends, we also conducted surveys to get a feel for how our audience gets their information and the types of information our readers seek.

The highest percentage of respondents (74%) indicated that they seek out information and articles tied to field science and maintenance, as well as content regarding turfgrass research (also at 74%), followed closely by equipment/product information (73%). Also receiving majority votes were articles on irrigation and drainage (62%), field construction (61%), pest and disease management (58%) and facilities operations (55%).

These results – and these types of surveys – help us to better tailor our magazine and digital content to the topics and information you need. We are extremely thankful for all those who participate in our surveys on a regular basis – your feedback is essential to what we do. And thank you to everyone who took the time to provide additional comments and constructive feedback about the magazine and the job we are doing.

If you would like to be included in future surveys, please contact me at jkmitta@epgacceleration.com. **SFM**

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President's Message



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Board Liaison: Chase Straw, Ph.D.

Members: Matthew Arms, CSFM;

Philip Braselton; TJ Brewer, CSFM; Joe

Churchill; Forrest Jammer; John Kmita;

and David Schwandt.

"You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give." – Kahlil Gibran



Sun Roesslein, CSFM

SFMA President

Sun.Roesslein@jeffco.k12.co.us

April celebrated National Volunteer Month. In this issue, you will see the volunteers who help keep our association advancing and growing by volunteering for committee service. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all who signed up to be a part of a committee this year. Volunteering your time to add your voice and perspective to the conversation really does strengthen our association. Our membership has such diverse experiences, job descriptions and duties that it is very important to have many of those perspectives represented. As we work to implement our strategic plan, bringing that wide range of viewpoints will help the SFMA to serve our members even better in the years to come.

Serving on many committees over the years gave me great insight into many of the inner workings of SFMA. If you haven't looked into volunteering before, these groups work on almost every aspect of the association's business. The view from inside is certainly eye opening, especially if you have ever wondered, "Why does the association do this, or not do that?" Serving on committees is another way to meet and work with your peers from across the profession, building your network.

The Board of Trustees for Safer Fields For Everyone (SAFE), our charitable foundation, is another

dedicated group of volunteers who work to raise money for industry-related research funds, as well as scholarships and grants.

Your SFMA Board of Directors is also a passionate group of servant leaders dedicated to the organization and the direction we are headed as we look to grow our association, grow the respect of what we all do every day, and entice the next generation of sports field managers.

To all our previous board members and committee members who have served, thank you for your leadership and forging the path to where we are today.

I've been incredibly lucky to volunteer on crews for several industry events alongside many of you. Those experiences are some of my career highlights. Working with new people who quickly become friends, while helping to provide excellent playing surfaces for athletes of all ages is more rewarding than I can describe. Those of you who have been part of the Volunteer Field Rebuild project at our annual conference have made a lasting difference in a community.

Whether your contribution is hands-on in the field or a few hours a year on Zoom, your volunteerism is influencing SFMA and beyond. **SFM**

Sun Roesslein, CSFM

Committees: crucial to SFMA's future

Each year in early February, SFMA members are asked to volunteer for one or more committees. Using these submissions, SFMA President Sun Roesslein, CSFM, recently appointed the chairs and seated the volunteers. Committees began their work in April.

Each committee has a yearly "charge." Some committee charges do not change, such as the Nominating Committee; other committees change yearly to address SFMA's strategic direction.

ADVOCACY

To recommend outreach efforts to advance the profession and highlight the work of the sports field manager. A specific goal for this year is to create materials to be used in outreach efforts by SFMA Ambassadors.

Chair: Zachary Holm, CSFM.

Members: Kelly Bartlett; Robert Blake; Christopher Buck; Ronald Dobosz; Jesse Driver, CSFM; Alan Dungey, CSFM; Jeff Fleetwood; Brad Garrison; Zach Horsley; Ryan Kopke; Andrew Larghe; Andy Ommen, CSFM; Rick Perruzzi, CSFM; Daniel Sandor, Ph.D.; and Josh Tvrdik.

AWARDS

To judge the association's awards program applicants selecting the Field of the Year winners and to develop strategies to enhance the program.

Co-chairs: Jason DeMink, CSFM, and Jeremy Driscoll, CSFM.

Members: Jaxon Bailey, CSFM; Ben Baumer, CSFM; Jackie Kaluba; Michael Kerns; Glenn Lucas; Bob Maloney; Andrew Marking, CSFM; Mark Medellin; Terry Nance; Steve Ruckman, CSFM; Andrew Siegel; Brett Teel; Rob Walls; Douglas Wildt, CSFM; and Scott Wohlers.

CERTIFICATION (CSFM and/or academic members only)

To develop strategies to grow the number of certified members; to consistently monitor the program and recommend enhancements to ensure that the program is the top achievement for sports field managers.

Chair: Brian Bornino, CSFM.

Board Liaison: Jeremy Driscoll, CSFM.

Members: Jason DeMink, CSFM; Cliff Driver, CSFM; Ron Hostick, CSFM; Brad Jakubowski; Nate Miller, CSFM; Rick Perruzzi, CSFM; Don Savard, CSFM; and Derek York, CSFM.

CHAPTER RELATIONS

To create a chapter structure that is beneficial locally and nationally; to financially assist chapters with their

administrative, operations and educational efforts; to facilitate the sharing of best practices; to utilize the chapter structure to effectively deliver services.

Chair: Jason Bowers, CSFM.

Members: Jason Allen, CSFM; Caleb Bailey; Noah Bard; John Clintsman; Tanner Coffman; Robbie Miller; Kyle Patterson; and Kyle Slaton, CSFM.

COMMERCIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

To provide a forum to exchange ideas on how SFMA can better serve and engage its commercial members and how this segment can help to advance the association; to develop strategies to engage commercial members in the annual exhibition and provide value for doing so.

Chair: Paula Sliefert.

Members: Chris Bell; Erin Boyd Wilder; Gregory Brodd; Josh DeJong, CSFM; Arthur Eddy; Amy Fouty, CSFM; Chris Franks; Joshua Koss, CSFM; Peter MacGregor; Nathan Mezera; Doug Schattinger; David Taylor; Albert Villalobos; and Keith Ward.

CONFERENCE EDUCATION

To develop all content, sessions and workshops and select speakers and moderators for the next year's conference that will make it a "must see" event for members and nonmembers; to recommend strategies that will drive attendance to the exhibition and will add value to exhibitors.

Chair: Chase Straw, Ph.D.

Members: Ryan Bjorn; Leah Brilman, Ph.D.; Jason Campbell; Tyler Carr; Ryan DeMay, CSFM; Weston Floyd, CSFM; Gerald Henry, Ph.D.; Brad Jakubowski; Timothy Legare, CSFM; Jamie Mehringer; Drew Miller; Bradley Park; Ben Polimer; Jeffrey Sheehan, CSFM; John Sorochan, Ph.D.; Clint Steele, CSFM; Todd Tetreault; Alan Wilson, CSFM; and Keith Winter.

CONFERENCE TOURS

To select and organize off-site tours at the annual conference site.

Chair: Jody Gill, CSFM.

Board Liaison: Nick McKenna, CSFM.

Members: Mark Bajno, CSFM; John Mascaro; Jamie Mehringer; and Tony Strickland, CSFM.

EDITORIAL

To ensure that *SportsField Management* magazine contains information relevant to the sports field manager; to provide ideas and contacts for articles for publication.

Chair: Brad Thedens, CSFM.

Board Liaison: Chase Straw, Ph.D.

Members: Matthew Arms, CSFM; Philip Braselton; TJ

Brewer, CSFM; Joe Churchill; Forrest Jammer; John Knitta; and David Schwandt.

ENVIRONMENTAL

To develop environmental strategies that position SFMA and its members as leaders in environmental stewardship and the related health and safety issues that impact fans and players.

Co-chairs: Vickie Wallace and Zack Holm, CSFM.

Members: Richard Calarco, CSFM; Grant Davisson; Kyley Dickson, Ph.D.; Matt Duncan, CSFM; Elizabeth Guertal, Ph.D.; Susan Haddock; Jason Kruse, Ph.D.; Mason McMurphy; Ben Polimer; Chrissie Segars, Ph.D.; and John Turnour, CSFM.

FINANCE & AUDIT

To provide oversight of the SFMA's financial resources by reporting information to the Board of Directors.

Chair: Adam Thoms, Ph.D.

Members: Josh McPherson, CSFM; Boyd Montgomery, CSFM; David Pinsonneault, CSFM; Jimmy Simpson, CSFM; and Tim VanLoo, CSFM.

HISTORICAL

To preserve the history of the association and the profession.

Chair: John Mascaro.

Board Liaison: Sun Roesslein, CSFM.

Members: Stephen Crockett, CSFM; Ryan Ferguson, CSFM; Steve Guise; Mike Hebrard; and Mike Schiller, CSFM.

INFORMATION OUTREACH

(LEARNING INITIATIVES)

To develop educational and informational opportunities for members to enhance their personal and professional development.

Chair: Alpha Jones, CSFM.

Members: Cliff Driver, CSFM; Jody Gill, CSFM; Michael Goatley, Ph.D.; Tim Howe; Ben McIntyre; Brianna Perez; Matt Piersanti; Cam Richardson; Timothy Siegel; and Jack Vaughan.

INNOVATIVE AWARDS JUDGING

To judge the innovative awards program, ensure a fair judging process and enhance the program as necessary.

Chair: Jason Craft, CSFM.

Board Liaison: Alpha Jones, CSFM.

Members: Andrew Beggs, CSFM; Scott Dobbins, CSFM; Leanne Nadwidny; Chris Webb, CSFM; and Jacob Winger.

INTERNATIONAL

To position SFMA as a global leader in sports facility management and make SFMA the 'go-to' resource for those who work internationally in the industry.

Chair: Simon Gumbrill.

Board Liaison: Sun Roesslein, CSFM.

Members: Andre Amaral; Joe Breedon, CSFM; Douglas Estes; Abby McNeal, CSFM; Abayomi Omotayo; and Don Scholl, CSFM.

MEMBERSHIP

To develop initiatives to drive membership growth and retention; to recommend programs that add value for each member.

Chair: Erin Boyd Wilder.

Members: Keith Bartlett; John Clintsman; Darren Criswell, CSFM; Bradley Finn, CSFM; Brandon Hardin; Morgan Hunter; Maritza Martinez; Darrion McKinney; Jeff Mondor; and Justin Reaves.

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NOMINATING

Presents to the membership by written notice a slate of qualified candidates for the Board of Directors, and places those names in nomination.

Chair: Sarah Martin, CSFM.

PAST PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

To advise the SFMA Board on issues pertaining to the past, present and future of SFMA. (Limited to SFMA Past Presidents).

SCHOLARSHIP

To judge the recipients of the SAFE Scholarships, the Terry Mellor Educational Grant, the Gary Vandenberg Internship Grant, the Darian Daily Legacy Scholarship, and the Leo Goertz Membership Grant; to develop strategies to enhance these programs and evaluate new opportunities.

Chair: James Bergdoll, CSFM.

Board Liaison: Sun Roesslein, CSFM.

Members: Matt Anderson, CSFM; Joe Breedon, CSFM; Gary Dickinson; Ken Edwards, CSFM; Martin Kaufman, CSFM; Matthew Kerns; John Schedler; Grant Spear, CSFM; Alexander Steinman; Barry Stewart, Ph.D.; and Mike Tarantino, CSFM.

STUDENT CHALLENGE

To develop the annual student challenge exam protocols and assist in proctoring the exam as needed.

Chair: Sarah Martin, CSFM.

Board Liaison: Sun Roesslein, CSFM.

Members: Syed Ahmed; Matt Anderson, CSFM; Scott Bills, CSFM; Tanner Delvalle; Samuel Doak; Marc Moran, CSFM; David Pinsonneault, CSFM; Chrissie Segars, Ph.D.; and Kevin White, CSFM.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

To help determine standards and best management practices needed in the profession; to guide the work of ASTM on developing sports field and facility standards.

Chair: Pam Sherratt.

Board Liaison: Adam Thoms, Ph.D. **Members:** Jim Barbuto; Michael Boekholder; Conlan Burbrink; Jeffrey Foor; and Brandon Schanz.

TECHNOLOGY TEAM (WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA)

To oversee SFMA's communication platforms to insure they are current, cohesive and serve members' needs; to ensure members are educated on the latest communication technology.

Chair: Ryan DeMay, CSFM.

Members: Eric Harshman; Mitch Hooten; Stephen Lord, CSFM; Colby Murray; and Leah Withrow.

The month of April was National Volunteer Month. SFMA values its volunteers who share their time, expertise and passion for the sports field management profession. SFMA is grateful for the support you provide to the organization and, more importantly, your peers; and is excited to see what we can accomplish together in 2023.

Pursue your CSFM designation today

The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA), having recognized the importance of fostering and improving professionalism within the sports field management industry, developed the Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) program. The purpose of the certification program is to:

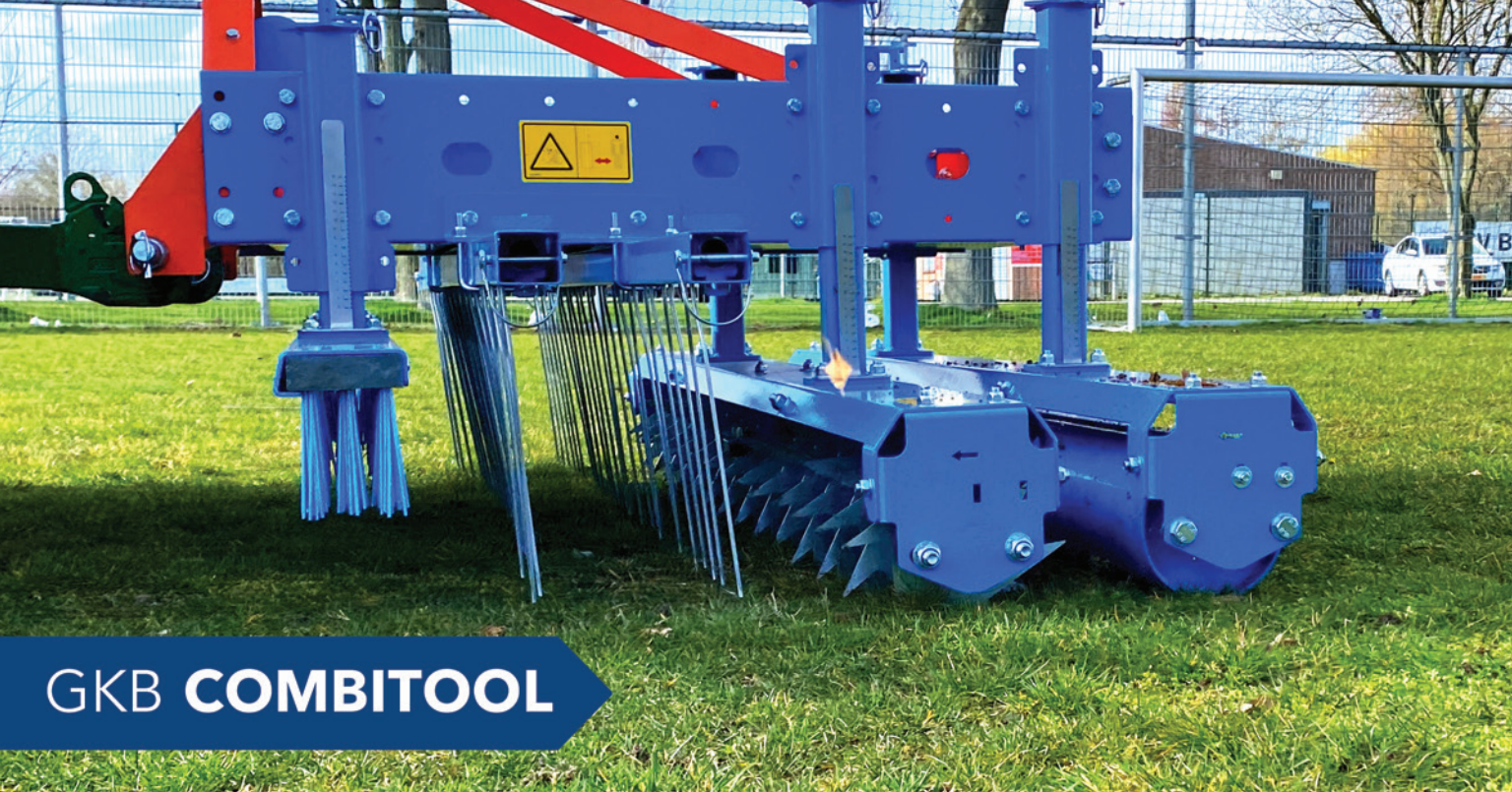
- Increase professionalism in the sports field management industry.
- Promote better and safer sports field areas.
- Establish credentials that signify a specific level of expertise.
- Increase career opportunities and promote the sports field manager and the profession.
- Provide recognition for attaining a level of expertise and performance as professionals in the industry.
- Stimulate and motivate improved performance and increased professionalism.
- Increase opportunities for education and training.

In order to attain the designation of Certified Sports Field Manager, a candidate must 1) satisfy the basic requirements; 2) satisfy the combination of education and experience point requirements; 3) pass a national certification examination.

Join this elite group of sports field management professionals and pursue your CSFM designation today. For more information, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/csfm-program/>.

Mark your calendar for the 35th Annual SFMA Conference and Exhibition

The 35th Annual SFMA Conference and Exhibition will be held January 22-25, 2024, in Daytona Beach, Fla., allowing members to share information with other successful members of the sports field management industry. In addition to educational seminars, hands-on workshops and the latest technology on display, conference attendees have the opportunity to tour professional, college and municipal facilities that offer a range of insights to take back home. For more information, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference/>. **SFM**



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College and University Turfgrass Programs

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is next in our series delving into colleges and universities that offer programs devoted to turfgrass management, turfgrass science, and related disciplines. In this issue of SportsField Management, we examine the turfgrass programs at The Ohio State University and Virginia Tech.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Ohio State University (OSU) offers a four-year Turfgrass Science specialization within its Sustainable Plant Systems major, as well as a two-year Turfgrass Management degree program at the OSU Agricultural Technical Institute (ATI) in Wooster, Ohio (about an hour north of OSU's main campus in Columbus, Ohio).

According to Dominic Petrella, Ph.D., assistant professor and program coordinator, Turfgrass Management program, OSU ATI, the ATI program offers two different degree options: "One is the associate of Applied Science in Turfgrass Management," said Petrella. "Those are students who come here, get the two-year degree, and leave to go directly into the industry. Then we have a two-year degree that is an associate of Science, for students who plan to go to Columbus and get a four-year degree."

Petrella added that students at ATI get hands-on experience mowing, grinding reel mowers, fertilizing, operating GPS sprayers, and delving into precision turfgrass management.



"We obviously can't cover everything, but we try to get a really well-rounded student in two years," he said.

ATI is also in the process of building a soccer pitch on campus and a 3- to 4-hole golf facility that the students will maintain start to finish.

Currently there are approximately 10 students pursuing the four-year Turfgrass Science specialization at The Ohio State University main campus, and another 19 students in the Turfgrass Management program at ATI.

"One challenge we have is that it's very difficult to get into OSU Columbus as an incoming freshman," said Doug Karcher, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Horticulture and Crop Science department at OSU. "The average ACT score has been 28 to 29 during the past couple of years. That's limiting our ability to recruit new freshmen."

Karcher added that his department is working to address the issues with student numbers in the four-year program and develop alternate pathways for students to enter the program.

"Ideally that would be through ATI, but if that's not an option, we are working on 1-plus-3 pathways with our regional campuses," he said, noting that OSU has four regional campuses. "We are also working with admissions to lower the threshold for students declaring a major in under-enrolled programs, which would be a lot of the majors in the agriculture college."



Both the two- and four-year programs are working to build awareness of careers in the turfgrass industry.

"We've met with the ag programs at local high schools that offer programs through FFA, and we are trying to put together a program where we can offer a turfgrass competition as part of FFA," said Pamela Sherratt, turfgrass specialist at OSU. "We also offer a Turf Bowl-style competition at [Ohio Turfgrass Foundation] for high school and two-year programs; and we offer a STEM camp each summer."

Most of the students in both the two- and four-year programs at OSU are pursuing careers in the golf course industry, but sports field management is often the key to getting students interested, said Ed Nangle, Ph.D., associate professor, coordinator, Turfgrass Equipment Manager Certificate, ATI.

"We will go on recruiting trips to the various vocational centers and high schools, and we will use the sports field part as the hook," he said. "It's a lot easier to sell the NFL and MLB than it is to sell your standard country club, because most kids have more of an interest in football or baseball."

However, most students come into the program pursuing golf because it is what they were exposed to as a job opportunity.

"One of our students was asked why they got into golf, and it was because they worked at a golf course during high school," said Petrella. "They didn't play golf. It's because somebody hired them to work on a golf course, so they saw that as the career option. I haven't heard anyone say they have worked on the local high school grounds crew."

For students in the OSU program, the resulting career opportunities are amazing.

"I've been here a little over a year, and every student has had multiple job offers before they graduate," said Petrella.

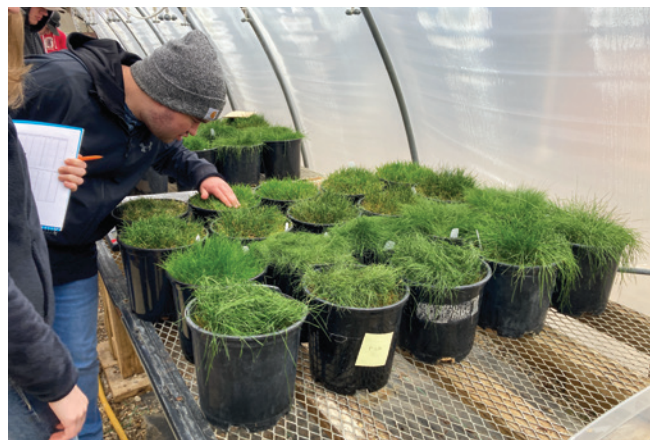
Added Sherratt, "We had a run for 10 years where most of the MLS grounds managers were Ohio State graduates. We have fantastic job placement."

According to Sherratt, OSU also offers the Mike O'Keeffe international internship program. Students can go to England, Australia, New Zealand or Ireland and get experience on golf courses and sports fields. Similarly, O'Keeffe brings students to the U.S. from abroad.

"Getting international recognition like that has been a unique part of Ohio State's Turfgrass program," said Sherratt.

Ohio State University is also a leader in turfgrass research.

"In the last year, we've submitted upwards of \$1 million in research grants," said Petrella. "We brought in \$110,000 from the state of Ohio for more research on turf. That's a big effort right now to get those dollars to support continual research."



Added Tyler Carr, Ph.D., assistant professor, Turfgrass Extension & Research, "We are offered a unique situation in which we are at the northernmost limit of where we can grow warm-season grasses, so there are options for exploring those under sports turf use."

Carr added that OSU is collaborating with other universities on a grant that will examine community sports fields. "It is trying to give stakeholders a full understanding of the environmental, economical and health impacts of artificial and natural turf so the stakeholders have all the information they need," he said.

According to Nangle, the OSU main campus and ATI are also working in a much more cohesive manner now than five to 10 years ago on teaching, research, and aligning the programs.

"There is going to have to be a much greater emphasis on teaching students precision turf, which is the idea of using the latest technology available to allow students and turfgrass managers to make decisions," said Nangle. "There are a range of things that we will be incorporating into our classes – whether tied to irrigation or mowing and the equipment that is coming out – that would put us in a very unique position. We have always tried to give our students exposure to the latest and greatest technologies."

Added Carr, "Incorporating those technologies into training will make this field more attractive to individuals interested in STEM."

For more information about the Ohio State University Sustainable Plant Systems major and the Turfgrass Science specialization, visit <https://hcs.osu.edu/>.

For more information about the Turfgrass Management degree at OSU Agricultural Technical Institute, visit <https://ati.osu.edu/turfgrass-management>.

VIRGINIA TECH

The Virginia Tech School of Plant and Environmental Sciences offers a four-year Bachelor of Science degree for Turfgrass Science majors; and Virginia Tech's Ag Tech program is a two-year associate degree program that offers a Landscape and Turfgrass option.

"We have a number of students working at local golf courses and the athletic facilities on campus helping out on all of the VT athletic fields," said Dan Sandor, Ph.D., collegiate assistant professor, turfgrass science, Virginia Tech. "So, they get hands-on experience with the staff here and get credit hours out of it."

According to Sandor, students in the Turfgrass Club have the opportunity to attend the SFMA Conference and the GCSAA conference.

"Turfgrass Club members also participate in an annual golf tournament each spring with turfgrass students from the University of Maryland," he said. "Both 2-year and 4-year students are able to be members of the Turfgrass Club. We also combine the two-year students and the four-year students in the Advanced Turfgrass class to allow the sophomores in the Ag Tech program to connect and learn with their peers in the four-year program."

Sandor added, "Many of our 4-year students have transferred into the bachelor's degree program from community college, due to the university's challenging academic requirements for high school seniors to be directly admitted into the turfgrass science major as a freshman," he said. "We encourage students to attend community college to get their gen eds out of the way while living at home, and work at a local golf course and gain some hands-on instruction in turf management."



Virginia Tech works with the Virginia Community College System to offer a guaranteed route to admission for students earning transferable credits or their associate degrees. Students in the Ag Tech turf management program also have the opportunity to transfer into the 4-year turfgrass science program after earning their 2-year degree.

According to Sandor, students in the Virginia Tech turfgrass program are a mix of students pursuing careers in sports field management, golf course maintenance, lawn and landscaping, and even sod production.

"We've had two SFMA scholarship winners in back-to-back years," he said. "A lot of students played sports in high school and knew they weren't going to make it, so being involved in the SFMA is a way they get to stay in sports."

When it comes to getting high school students interested in pursuing a turfgrass degree, Virginia Tech is in a bit of a unique position, as 17 schools in the state of Virginia offer turfgrass education at the high school level.

Such programs include Brentsville District High School in Nokesville, Virginia, directed by Drew Miller; Atlee High School in Mechanicsville, Virginia, directed by Marc Moran, CSFM; and Louisa County High School in Mineral, Virginia, directed by Logan Horne. These programs are not only offering turfgrass education at the high school level, but they are winning national awards for their athletic fields and their sports field management practices.

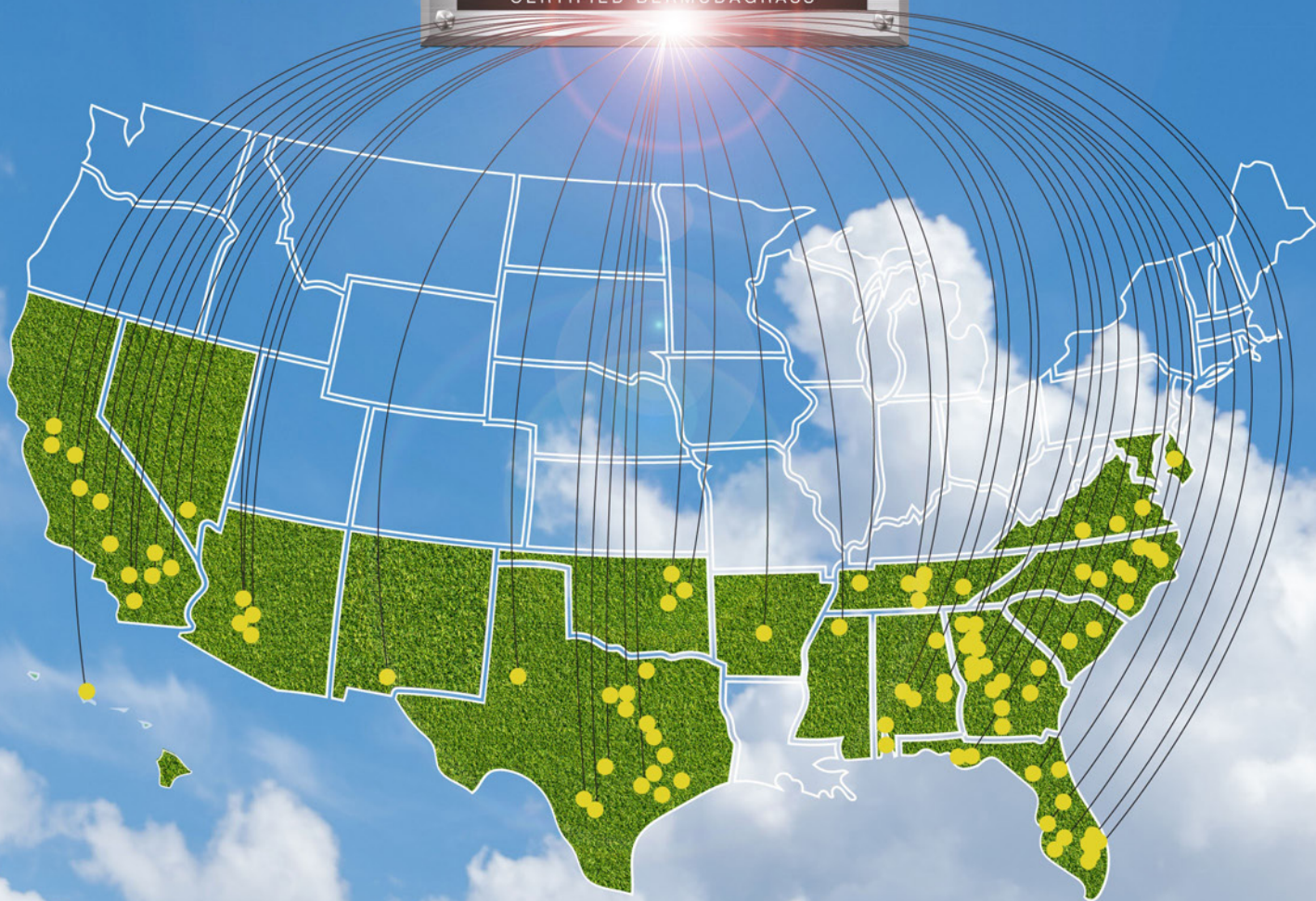
"These kids are taking solid green industry classes, and the students are involved with the upkeep and maintenance of their fields," said Sandor. "I visited both Marc and Logan's programs a couple weeks ago, and the students mow the fields and mark the fields. They



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have big shops to house the equipment, and they have the opportunity to learn how to adjust and sharpen reels and bedknives, as well as service and repair small-engine equipment.”

According to Sandor, a driving factor for those opportunities is Virginia’s Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. If Ag teachers want to offer a turfgrass class, the Virginia Department of Education provides the CTE requirements and the plan of study for curriculum such as Introduction to Turfgrass and/or Advanced Turfgrass. As a result, some of the larger high school programs in Virginia have 100 to 200 students who are taking some sort of turfgrass class.

“Every time I visit one of these programs, I’m impressed,” said Sandor. “Students are learning turf-management concepts in their classes, and directly applying this practical knowledge in maintaining their high school fields. They are able to share with their parents that they painted the end zone that week or that they helped get the infield skin ready for a softball game – so it’s a wonderful and unique opportunity for these students.”



Sandor added that Virginia Tech also attracts students to its turfgrass program through on-campus events in conjunction with 4-H and FFA – including a hands-on sports field management workshop at the annual 4-H Congress and a turfgrass management career development event at the annual FFA convention.

“I’m on the Virginia SFMA Board, and we have started doing regional field days, which has helped get the word out to high schools,” said Sandor. “We are really trying to maximize these regional opportunities to promote sports field management BMPs with coaches, Ag-Ed teachers and athletic directors, and increase our engagement with their students at these events.”

Sandor added that the Virginia Tech faculty, staff, mentors and alumni network combine to set it apart from other schools.

“All of the faculty members are heavily involved in the success of our students,” he said. “We have a 14-member team comprised of faculty and research staff (not including grad students), and many sports field managers and golf course superintendents in the region who mentor students and provide experiential-learning and employment opportunities. We have a wide network of alumni all over the world working in the turfgrass industry. There is outstanding support for our students; you can’t go far without running into a Hokie.”

For more information about the Virginia Tech School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, visit <https://spes.vt.edu/> or <https://turf.spes.vt.edu/>.

For more information about Virginia Tech’s Agricultural Technology program, visit <https://agtech.vt.edu/>. **SFM**

SportsField Management magazine will detail other college and university turfgrass programs in coming issues. If you would like your school profiled, please contact John Kmitta at jkmitta@epgacceleration.com or 763-383-4405.

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Grass on skinned area

TURFGRASS AREA:

Parks and rec community center softball field

LOCATION:

Hyattsville, Md.

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

Kentucky bluegrass, perennial rye and tall fescue mix outfield. Unknown turf on infield.

Answer on page 33

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

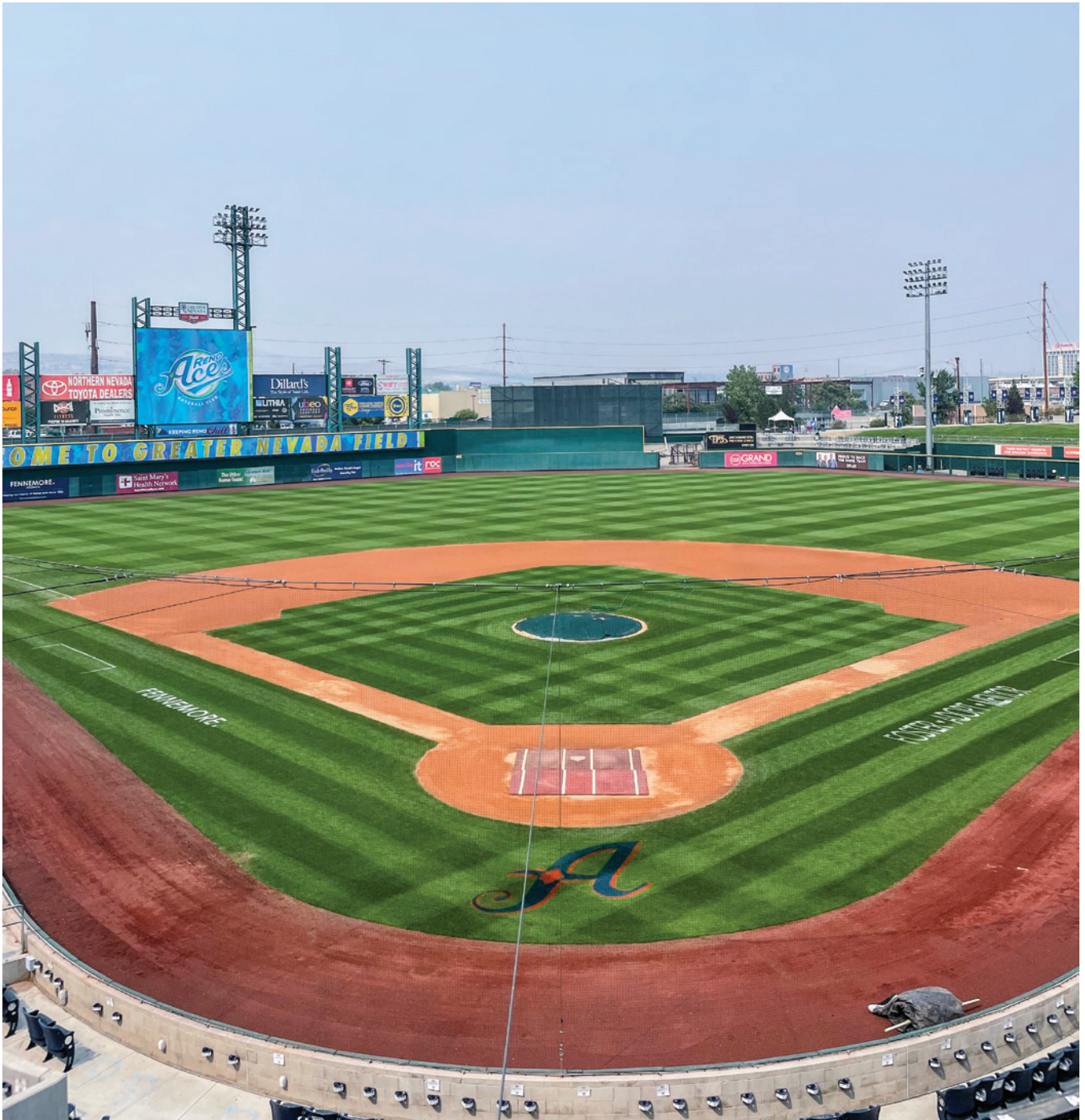
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GREATER NEVADA FIELD

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



Greater Nevada Field is a winner because of the passion both the staff and the players have put into it. My staff and I take so much pride in our work, and we know that everything we do impacts every game or event on the field. We follow the motto “Undefeated,” meaning we don’t let anything defeat us. Nitro Circus on July 1 with our biggest game of the year less than 72 hours after? Not going to defeat us. Concert five days before a two-week homestand? Not going to defeat us. The field was safe and playable for every game, and we take great pride in being “Undefeated.” The 2022 Reno Aces had the highest fielding percentage in team history, ranked the best defense, and went on to win the PCL championship. My staff and I work tirelessly to make sure our guys are confident when playing at home, and trust our field to help them be the best. Although we went into last season with a new field, I only had myself until May. I had my mom helping with the landscape around the stadium while my dad helped me topdress, fix irrigation and fertilize. Once I got an assistant, it was just the two of us for every game, every event, every day for the

whole season. For only having two full-time staff members, we made sure everything was done and done right, and we set a high standard. This field has seen three concerts, two Nitro Circus events, multiple corporate events and 124 games played on it in two years, and it’s ready for so much more in its lifespan. The goal is always to leave the field better than you found it; and if I ever leave, I have full confidence this field has been maintained to last another 10 years. A winning field is more than green grass and cool patterns; a winning field is resilient, durable and dependable. I feel so deeply that our field is all those things and more. It’s more than just the time we put into it – it’s about the true love and passion we have for what we do. It’s more than the events, it’s how the community wants their events at the best venue in town. It’s more than just the games, it’s how the players feel like they’re in the big leagues when they play on our field. The winning field is ours because of the love we put into it, the part of the community it has become, and the confidence our players have while on it.

– Leah Withrow, head groundskeeper



Level and category of submission: Professional Baseball

Field manager: Leah Withrow

Title: Head groundskeeper

Education: Bachelor of Science in Sports Turfgrass Management, North Dakota State University

Experience: Worked for NDSU Athletics in their grounds department all four years of college (2014-2018) taking care of practice football fields, practice and game soccer fields, track and field, and softball fields. 2015 intern with the Reno Aces, 2016 intern with Milwaukee Brewers, 2017 seasonal assistant with the Reno Aces/Reno 1868FC, 2018 grounds lead at Northern Arizona University, 2019 full-time assistant with the Reno Aces/Reno 1868FC, 2020 manager of field operations with the Reno Aces/Reno 1868FC, 2021-present head groundskeeper for the Reno Aces

Full-time staff: Max Casper

Original construction: 2009

Turfgrass: 100% 365SS Kentucky bluegrass

Rootzone: Sand

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

Leah Withrow: I think what makes this win so special is that my peers recognize all of the hard work we put into this field, day in and day out. We do it with just myself, my full-time assistant, my seasonal assistant and my intern, so everybody had a hand in every part of this field. We had to overcome many hurdles, and my crew not only took on the challenge, but exceeded expectations.

SFM: What attracted you to a career in sports field management, and what has been your career path through the industry?

Withrow: I was drawn to the fact that it was a hands-on job and I wasn't glued to a desk. I love being outside, I love sports, I love biology/science, and this industry blends all those things together. My first ever internship

was with the Reno Aces in 2015, I completed an internship with the Milwaukee Brewers the following summer before returning to Reno as a seasonal assistant in 2017. Post graduation in May of 2018, from North Dakota State University, I accepted a job at Northern Arizona University. I was then offered to come back as a full-time assistant in Reno for the 2019 season that led to a quick promotion in 2020 to head groundskeeper.

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

Withrow: I would say Grant Trenbeath is a big one, because without him allowing me to shadow him, I would not be here. Then I would definitely give a lot of credit to both Tom Drietz and Joe Hill who taught me not only how to be a good field manager, but to be a good leader that the crew respects and looks up to. All three of these men have driven me to the spot I am today, accepting a Field of the Year award, and I

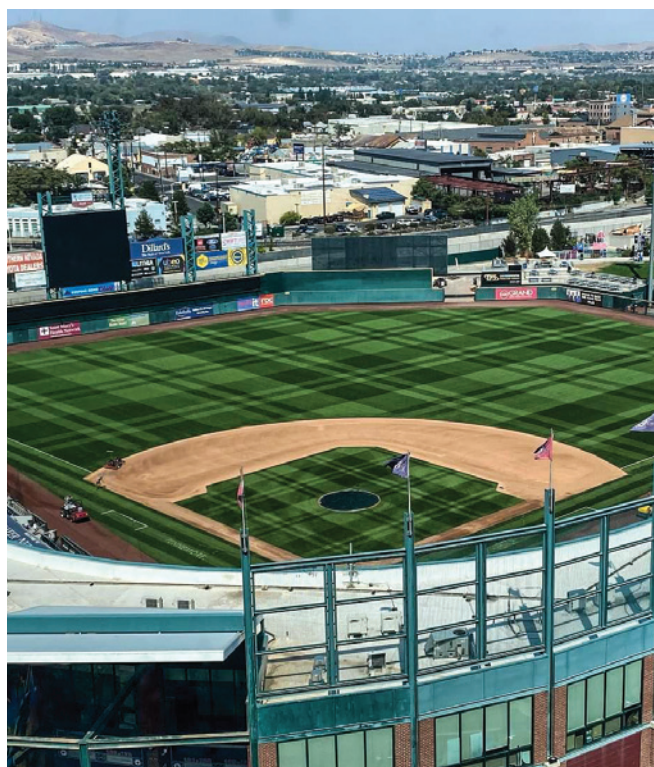


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RESULTS

FIELD OF THE YEAR
PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL





could not have done it without their guidance through the years. The best advice I ever got was, “No one will remember the stupid question you asked, but everyone will remember the stupid thing you did because you didn’t ask the question.” I think we can all be a little afraid to ask questions and maybe a little prideful, and you don’t want to admit that you don’t know what you’re doing. Asking questions is the key to gaining knowledge and is so important in our industry.

SFM: What are the biggest challenges you have faced with the winning field, and how have you approached those challenges?

Withrow: I think the biggest challenge we faced, and that most of the industry is facing, is being short-staffed. There were multiple games this year that a three-man drag was completed in-game. We are also a staff of two full-time year-round employees and two full-time seasonal employees plus part-time game-

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FIELD OF THE YEAR
PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL



day crew. It's hard to rotate the four full timers to be able to give them the time off they need and still get everything done. Thankfully, we've found a system and routine that worked for us and maintained a good balance. I'm also beyond lucky to have had a crew that loves to be at the ballpark and working on the field. Everyone had ownership in the field, and they treated it like they wanted the award.

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

Withrow: The network that SFMA has provided me is indescribable. Having professionals from across country in my Rolodex is something for which I'm truly grateful. That everyone is so willing to help their colleagues out is what makes this industry and this association special. Not to mention the constant seeking for new technologies to help us and the continuing education to grow us as professionals in the eyes of the public. **SFM**



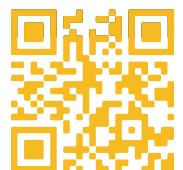
"This grass can definitely take the heat...it is a very aggressive grass. It can take the abuse so we do a lot of topdressing, verticutting, aerifying and things like that."

- Sheldon Rogers - LSU Horticulture Leader

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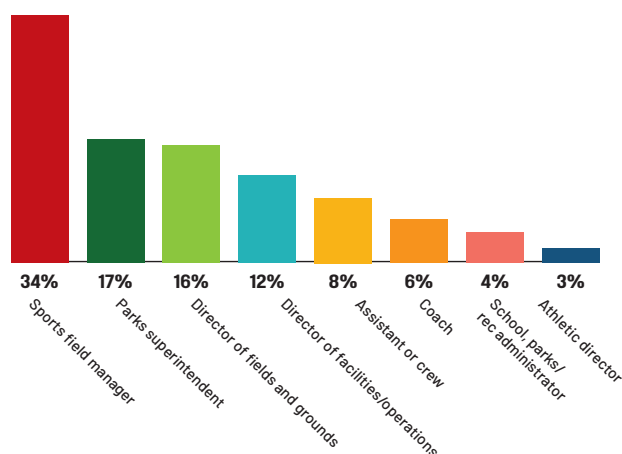
SportsField Management

Survey Results



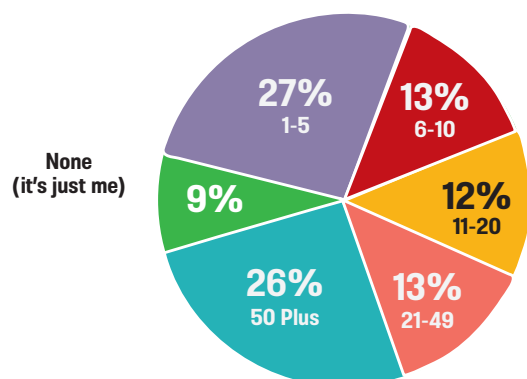
SportsField Management magazine recently completed multiple surveys of its audience. Thank you to all those who participated. While the results are only the portion of our readership that responded to our recent surveys, the responses help provide a snapshot of industry trends. The results and some corresponding analyses – including comparison to 2020 survey results – are presented here.

What best describes your job title?



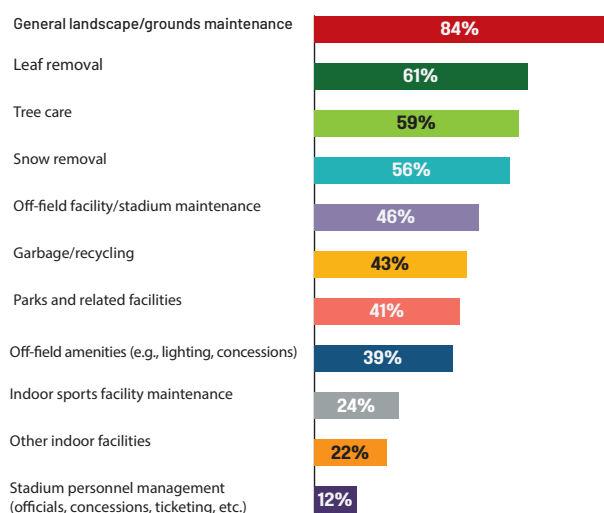
As we have seen, sports field management industry professionals hold a variety of job titles. We probably could have added even more options to the survey, but the results paint a solid picture of our survey respondents. Predictably, the majority of respondents hold the title of sports field manager, parks superintendent, or as a director of their field/facility. The number of respondents identifying as parks superintendent is up slightly from 2020 (from 13% to 17%), while the number indicating they are director of fields and grounds is down slightly (22% to 16%). Other categories saw minimal changes in overall percentage, and coaches, athletic directors and administrators in our audience continue to be well represented.

How many employees does your organization have?



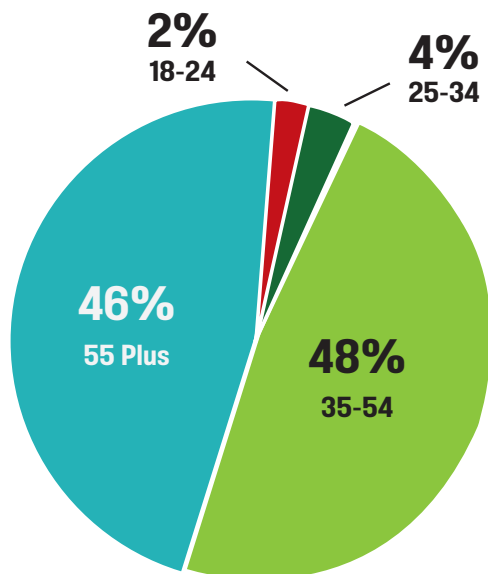
We did not ask this question three years ago, and found the results to this question interesting, as the bulk of respondents indicated between 1 and 5 employees in their organization and 50-plus (with other options being fairly even). This is most likely due to an interpretation of the question itself, as it is possible that those in the 50-plus category are counting their entire organization as a whole, while others might only be counting their crew or those handling field and facilities management. For example, those who work for a K-12 school or a college/university are obviously part of a much larger organization, but only a small portion of those have similar tasks. Future surveys will drill down into this topic further to provide better analysis of the number of personnel directly impacting each organization's fields, facilities and grounds management.

What other areas are you responsible for besides athletic fields? (Select all that apply)



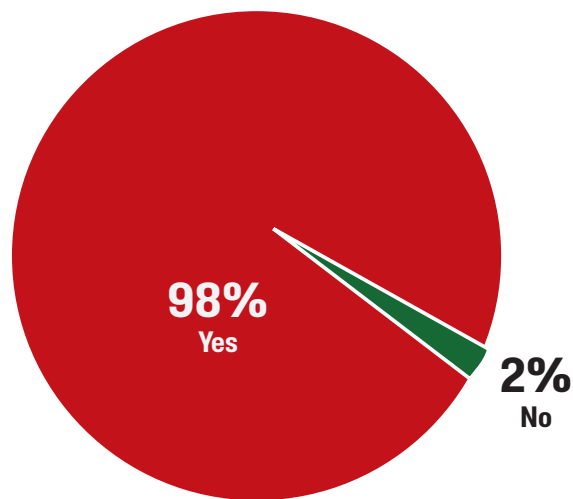
As with the range of job titles in this industry, this survey result also shows the wide range of hats worn by our respondents. The results also show that most respondents have duties that extend well beyond the athletic field/playing surface into grounds maintenance, leaf removal, snow removal, facility maintenance and even oversight of supporting stadium personnel. Interestingly enough, the same percentage of respondents in 2020 (84%) indicated that they are responsible for landscape/grounds maintenance, and those responsible for leaf removal, snow removal, tree care and garbage/recycling are all within 3% of the results for those categories from three years ago. However, we have seen increased numbers in those responsible for off-field stadium maintenance (from 41% to 46%), off-field amenities (28% to 39%) and other indoor facilities (16% to 22%), which could indicate either a bigger seat at the table or, quite possibly, roles that have expanded out of necessity.

What is your age range?



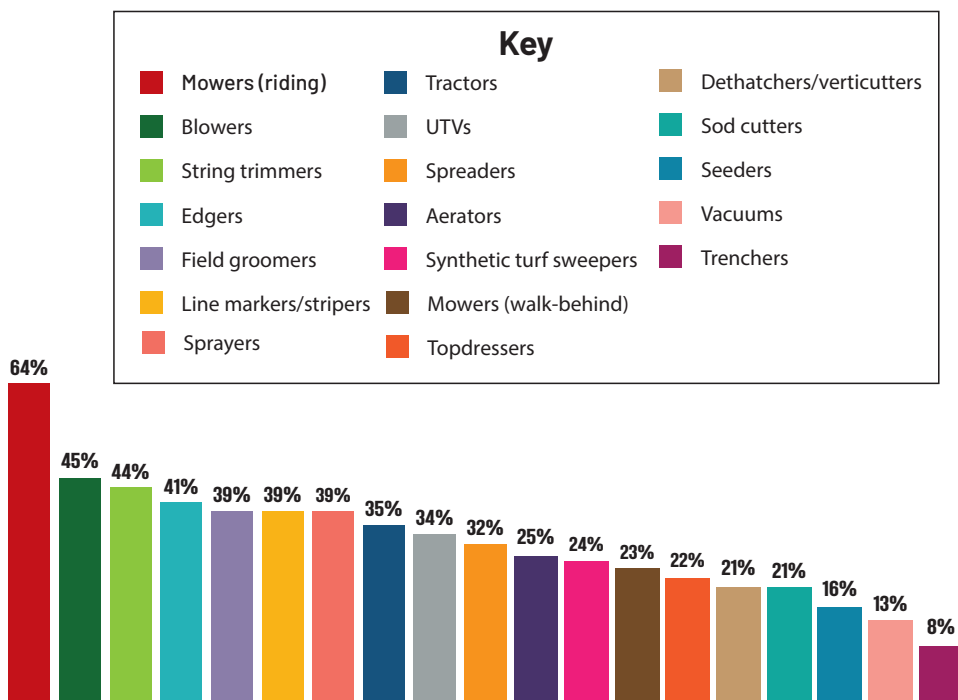
The results of this survey question are fairly consistent with past surveys, indicating that our readership skews slightly older – with 94% of respondents over the age of 35.

Do you recommend, specify or approve the purchase of equipment and supplies?



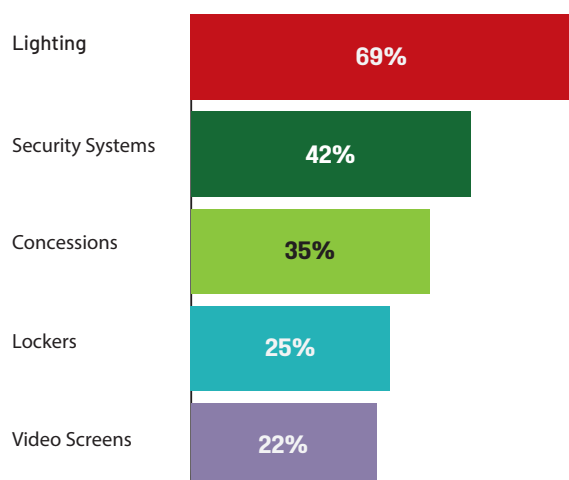
This response rate highlights that *SportsField Management* readers are in decision-making and leadership roles.

What equipment do you plan to purchase in the next 12 months? (please select all that apply)



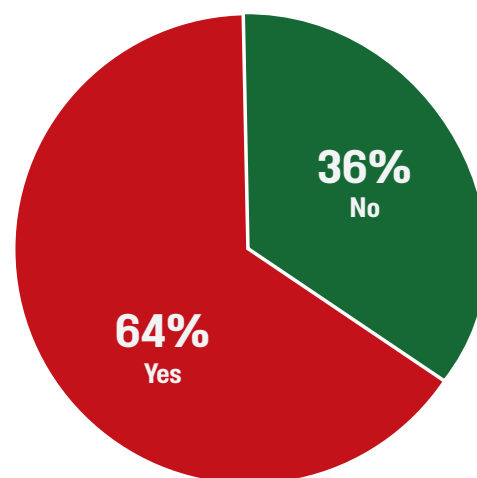
More so than the breakdown of the types of equipment survey respondents plan to purchase in the next year, the biggest takeaway with this survey question is that each category is up significantly over the same category in 2020. In several categories, results are 15% to 20% higher than in 2020. For example, riding mowers were the highest category in 2020, with 42% of respondents intending to purchase (compared to 64% this year). That said, given the uncertainty that was 2020, the fact that sports field management professionals intend to spend more on equipment during the next year is not exactly a shock.

Are you involved with the buying decisions relating to any of the following? (Select all that apply)



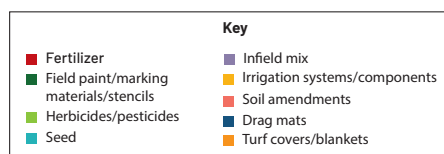
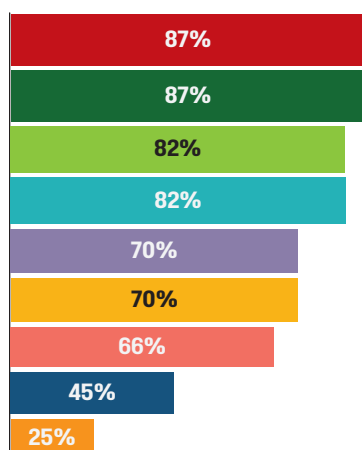
This question was new this year, but the result once again shows the wide range of duties of those in our audience and the fact that our readers are increasingly involved with decisions that impact their entire facility.

Do you currently own, or plan to purchase in the next year, any battery-powered equipment?



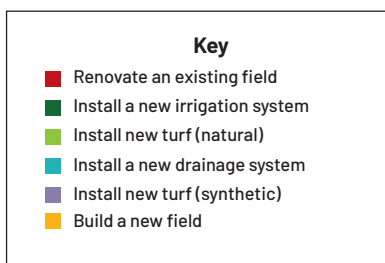
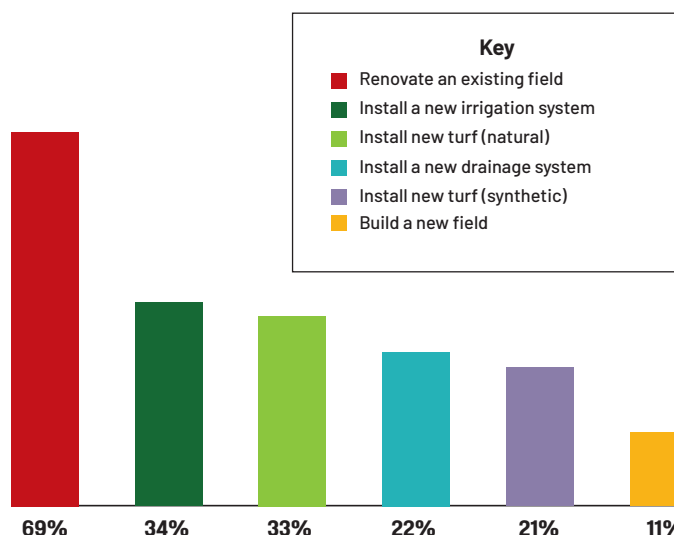
The adoption of battery-powered equipment continues to rise, as the number of respondents who own or intend to purchase battery-powered equipment is up 3% compared to 2020.

What other products/supplies do you plan to purchase in the next year? (Select all that apply)



Unlike the equipment-buying responses, the results for this survey question are very consistent with 2020 responses, showing that most of these products/supplies are always going to be essential needs.

What building and/or renovation projects do you plan to conduct in the next year? (Select all that apply)



Building and renovation remains fairly consistent with slight upticks in existing field renovations (up 6% from 2020) and synthetic turf installations (up 10% when compared with 2020).

Overall, the results of this year's surveys are fairly consistent with past results, but we will continue to delve into other topic areas with additional surveys in the coming months. **SFM**

Syngenta enhances Manuscript herbicide label with new uses on cool-season turf



Syngenta announced the Manuscript herbicide label has been enhanced to provide post-emergent weed control on cool-season grasses on sports turf, golf courses, lawns and sod farms. The updated label features expanded state registrations in the northern and midwestern United States, as well as new uses for centipedegrass, fine fescue and *Poa annua*. These changes will provide turf managers with a new option for controlling ryegrass in *Poa annua* turf, as well as foxtails, ryegrass and barnyardgrass in native and low-maintenance fine fescue turf areas.

“We’re excited about the benefits the enhanced Manuscript label will bring to the turf market,” said Stephanie Schwenke, market manager for turf at Syngenta. “With limited options for post-emergent control of grassy weeds in *Poa annua*, turf managers will now have a solution with Manuscript.”

Powered by the active ingredient pinoxaden, Manuscript has been trusted by turf managers to control persistent grassy weeds in warm-season turf species since it was first launched in 2018. It also includes a built-in, proprietary safener, which enables spot treatment rates to increase weed control while maintaining turf safety.

“Controlling grassy weeds safely in desirable turf can be difficult, especially if pre-emergent herbicides weren’t applied or fail to provide acceptable control,” explained Matt Giese, M.S., technical services manager for turf at Syngenta. “We’ve been very happy with the trial results we’ve seen from Manuscript on cool-season grasses, and are pleased to offer these expanded uses to our customers.”

Several new Syngenta agronomic programs for golf and sports turf now incorporate Manuscript, including:

- Weed control in fine fescue naturalized areas – Northeast
- Weed control in fine fescue naturalized areas – Midwest
- Weed control in fine fescue naturalized areas – West

Husqvarna Z560LS commercial zero-turn mower



Maximize productivity, cut quality and all-day comfort with the new Z560LS commercial zero-turn mower from Husqvarna Group. The Z560LS features a 38.5-hp. Kawasaki FX1000 EFI engine that ensures quality results even in the toughest conditions. The high-powered engine, coupled with the ZT-5400 drive system, maintains a high blade tip speed even under load, and propels the mower forward with ground speeds up to 12 mph.

The mower’s 6-inch deep, 60-inch high-performance cutting deck produces exceptional cut quality, while the 10-gauge fabricated construction and oversized 10-inch-diameter blade spindles offer the durability needed for consistent performance throughout the mowing season. Add in comfort features including a full suspension seat, automatic park brake and hands-free deck lift system, and the result is a durable commercial mower that’s ready for a full day’s work. A 12-gallon fuel capacity with easy-to-read LED gauge complements the performance and comfort features that enable uninterrupted work and maximum productivity.



FireFly Automatrix M220-AV autonomous field mower



FireFly Automatrix, Inc. announced initial customer implementation of the M220-AV, the company's first fully autonomous field mower, which has been in development since 2018. The new AV (Autonomous Vehicle) version of the popular 22-foot M220 for turfgrass production is premiering as a hybrid diesel-electric vehicle that takes the company's proven features to an entirely new level of automation.

FireFly has selected a limited number of turf farms for eligibility of its first commercially available M220-AV's. The program officially commenced with the delivery of the first pilot production vehicle to Prime Sod, in Kopperl, Texas, with additional orders booked through early Summer, 2023.

Operators program the current M220-AV models through "teach and repeat" by driving a path in "teach" mode, then bringing the mower to the start of the path and telling it to "repeat" without a driver, allowing the mower to autonomously repeat the path over and over. Turf farms generally mow their fields one or two times per week, and farms may range from several hundred acres to the largest farms over 10,000 requiring productivity and scale. This repetitive activity saves labor and is an ideal place for the utilization of autonomy and robotics. The new model uses a powerful controller to coordinate the robust suite of LiDAR sensors, cameras and GPS receiver that ensure safe and accurate operation of the M220-AV. As safety measures, the vehicle stops when it detects objects in its path or loses connectivity. Alerts notify operators when the mower is stopped and provide camera views to allow operators to intervene and operation to resume safely and quickly.

As a significant update to earlier models of the M220, the M220-AV features the following:

- A high-performance 125-hp turbo-charged hybrid diesel/electric engine with Bosch Rexroth drive train and premium quality bearings and hydraulic system.
 - Climate-controlled cab for operator comfort during the initial teach modes and pressurized to keep out dust.
 - State-of-the-art electrical controls and automated mow height.
 - Optimized front-mounted electric decks meticulously engineered to finishing quality mowing at speeds of up to 13.3 acres/hour.
- "The M220-AV represents a full paradigm shift for turf farm mowing," said Steve Aposhian, FireFly's founder and CTO. "We are creating new efficiencies to meet the turf farm industry's highest needs, which we will ultimately expand to fulfill turf maintenance roles in every place they are needed."

FireFly CEO Andrew Limpert noted that the steadily increasing costs and shortages of labor in many parts of the U.S. and the world is becoming a serious threat to the future of traditional farming. The ability to automate manual repetitive tasks is critical to its survival and robotics and automation hold the key to the long-term competitive positioning in agriculture.

"While autonomous machines will never fully replace the need for qualified human resource, innovations like the M220-AV are a vital complimentary development toward farming's ability to produce ideal turf and traditional crops more efficiently," said Limpert.

Werk-Brau wheel loader angle brooms

Werk-Brau introduced hydraulically driven wheel loader angle brooms that are ideal for cleaning and clearing of snow, dirt, debris, grass and more. They are available in 8-, 10- and 12-foot widths, each with 30 degrees of swing left or right of center. Polypropylene brush with wire filaments provides long service life



even in adverse conditions. Hydraulically driven brooms are powered by a standard dual hydraulic motor capable of 28-40 gpm flow (standard), with dual hydraulic motors for low flow (16-24 gpm), or high flow (40-60 gpm) motor available as options. A loader mounting kit is provided along with a storage stand for simple mounting, dismounting, and storage. Sight indicator flags are provided for safety. Broom speeds of up to 250 rpm are attainable, depending on the prime mover, making this angle broom an ideal attachment for wheel loaders of all makes, models and sizes.

Werk-Brau angle brooms are American made and some models are stocked for immediate shipment. The wafer-style brush has a 32-inch outside diameter (OD) by 10-inch inside diameter (ID). The brush core can be installed with either end to the left/right with no effect on sweeping performance, to simplify installation. The brush and core assembly can be removed from frame without disconnecting drive motor hoses. The brush hood is manufactured from 16-gauge steel with formed edge fold for additional strength. Robust end plates are 12-gauge steel for more durability. The brush hood covers 140-degrees of brush and includes pre-drilled holes for easy installation of front deflector. Dirt deflectors are standard on all models.

Brooms are standard with a single, low-speed, high-torque, 18-cid hydraulic motor. Motors are coupled directly to the brush core through a 5-5/16-inch poly hexagonal hub. The motor is mounted outside of brush frame and is protected by formed 1/4-inch guards. Hoses are provided from hydraulic motor to bulkhead or valve on broom; customer must supply hoses from bulkhead or valve to prime mover. A spring system to dampen transportation bounce is included.

The finish is black polyurethane topcoat with epoxy primer for protection from the elements. The steel surface undergoes a phosphatizing acid bath to clean and etch the surface for superior adhesion of primer and paint.

Optional accessories include dual low-flow drive motors, electric/hydraulic swing, dirt deflector, 90-gallon brush-hood-mounted sprinkler system, front spray bar only with nozzles, and an oil cooler with fan (40 gpm max).

ISOtunes Air Defender AM/FM

ISOtunes is expanding its line of Bluetooth hearing protection with the launch of Air Defender AM/FM, a noise-isolating over-ear hearing protector with AM/FM radio connectivity. A variation of the 2022-launched Air Defender, the Air Defender AM/FM (\$69.99) is ideal for professionals who do not get cell service



in their workspaces, but still want to listen to music while working in loud environments and prefer a comfortable, over-ear style that doesn't break the bank.

For those who prefer a non-Bluetooth model or have limited cell phone service in their workspace, the upgraded product is complete with AM/FM radio connectivity and a station-saving memory function for easy listening. Air Defender AM/FM includes ISOtunes' SafeMax Technology to deliver exceptional audio while limiting output volume to a safe 85 decibels. Created with comfortability and convenience in mind, it offers a comfort foam headband and ear cushions presented in a lightweight design for continuous, comfortable listening. With a 60-hour playback time and a 300-hour standby time, the Air Defender AM/FM is truly built for those who want all-day, quality audio on-the-go.

"We strive to provide best-in-class products across all industries and usage levels, and Air Defender AM/FM is ideal for the professional who prefers a comfortable, over-ear style offered at an affordable price point," said Eric Murphy, co-founder of ISOtunes. "With our new offering, customers don't need to rely on Bluetooth to listen to music while they work. We wanted to create a product that suits our unique customers' needs all while maintaining the safety and functionality that ISOtunes products are known for."

For non-stop listening, Air Defender AM/FM comes with an auxiliary cable to easily plug into smartphones or other devices for a wider array of listening choices. Tactical control buttons on either side of the headphones make for easy handling and station changing, and the memory button allows effortless tuning to favorite saved stations. Air Defender AM/FM has a noise-reduction rating (NRR) of 24 dB and is IPX4 rated for sweat and water resistance. **SFM**

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



ANSWER

From page 17

During spring preparation of this softball field, the recreation/maintenance coordinator saw a funny green look to one of his community center softball fields. He stated that, upon further investigation, "We encountered new growth on the field." Apparently, someone took it upon themselves to seed Kentucky bluegrass into this softball field's skinned infield. The presence of tire tracks and the uniformity of coverage indicated that it was probably applied with a drop spreader. He is not totally sure who performed this volunteer effort; however, his prime suspect is a particular group that asked if they could have a "grass infield" the year prior. When questioned, they did not confess. The seed must have been applied in early spring, a week or two before the municipality's crew arrived at this field for renovation. The crew mechanically removed the seed by skimming the top layer off. Luckily, since the seed was in the early stages of germination, not much root mass had developed. I would classify this action as vandalism, even though the responsible party figured they were "helping."

Photo submitted by Shawn Beaumont, CPRP, recreation/maintenance coordinator at Prince George's County in Hyattsville, Md.

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz, please send a high-resolution digital photo to John Mascaro via email at john@turf-tec.com. If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos submitted will become property of *SportsField Management* magazine and the Sports Field Management Association.

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It Takes a Village

How a change in approach, open communication and community effort led to success for Johnson Park



By John Kmitta

In the game of baseball, it often takes a team effort to earn the win. Proper communication, buy-in by all parties, and team pride are key factors in that approach. That same philosophy has also led to success for those who manage Johnson Park in New Ulm, Minnesota.

Johnson Park is a professional-size baseball field that only accommodates high school and above levels of play. Constructed in 1938, the field is a blend of bluegrass, ryegrass and fescues; has never undergone a full renovation; and hosted 85 baseball games in 2022. But through a revised management approach that involves open communication and a substantial dose of volunteer effort, Johnson Park earned the Turfco/Minnesota Park and Sports Turf Managers Association (MPSTMA) Field of the Year Award in 2022.

According to Ryan Weier, facilities maintenance supervisor, City of New Ulm Park and Recreation

department, that change in structure – as well as the resultant effort put forth by the city and Johnson Park user groups – can serve as an example for other municipalities and other sports field management professionals, as well as their user groups.

“Any turf manager understands the challenges with weather, schedules, customers and traffic. We have similar issues,” said Weier. “How we’ve dealt with it is through the partnership with local volunteer organizations – mainly the main baseball club in town.”

When the weather doesn’t allow the City of New Ulm Park and Rec staff to maintain Johnson Park, the off hours have been supplemented with volunteer hours.

“That is the difference between what our field was five to seven years ago compared to what it is today, which culminated in the field of the year award,” said Weier. “That group has been able to get trained and consistently on board to carry our operations to nights and weekends.”



But attaining the current volunteer structure, user buy-in, and high-quality results is an effort that has been years in the making.

According to Weier, when he took on the role of facilities maintenance supervisor approximately six years ago, he inherited a relationship between the city and its user groups that he feels is pretty typical of such relationships.

"It was, 'The city is lazy...doesn't care...wastes money...wastes time.' And the city's view was, 'All the baseball club wants is everything for free,'" Weier said of the situation he inherited. "From day one, every time these discussions with the user groups came up, I would say, 'You can't undo the past, and that attitude doesn't do anything for the future.'"

According to Weier, getting that message across took time; and the added component was if the city committed to doing something, it followed through with doing it.

"Those two components are key," he said. "It was about moving forward together having the same goals, and when you say you are going to do something, doing it. Over time, we have won over some of the hardest of hearts in those long-term baseball association relationships."

Another key to the reinvigorated relationship was that Weier limited his communication with the baseball club to just one contact person.

"The baseball organization could hold its meetings, they would come to a consensus, and that was communicated through one person," he said. "Then it was just a matter of following through."

As a result of the partnership between the city and the local baseball club, there are now six to seven consistent volunteers working at Johnson Park on a regular basis.

"They enjoy it. There is pride there," said Weier. "We're all going after the same goal. If you can find the right people who can share that pride, those are the people to partner with. It just takes training."

Training the volunteers to be able to maintain the field to the desired level took time as well. Said Weier, "We worked with them the first few years. They would come during the day, and we would work together so they could see our staff work with our equipment. But now I trust those people to do it independently if I'm not standing there or our staff isn't standing there."

In terms of staff at Johnson Park, there is one full-time staff maintenance person dedicated to the



complex (which also houses another baseball field and a football field). In addition, there are typically four staff members who put in 40 hours per week during the summer, but their tasks are also expanded to other New Ulm youth fields.

As facilities maintenance supervisor, Weier is in charge of all New Ulm Park and Recreation facilities, including a recreation center, a civic center, a community center and 42 park units (the baseball/football complex that is home to Johnson Park is just one of those 42 park units). There are 12 full-time staff members, and that number grows to approximately 20 with the addition of part-time/seasonal staff.

According to Weier, the workload at Johnson Park is cyclical, but between in-house staff and volunteers, there is someone working at Johnson Park every day. That includes edging, dethatching, aeration and other maintenance duties.

"Our aeration has lessened because our cores are so sand filled now that we can get them to drag out fairly quickly. We don't have to pick them or collect them," he said. "If we have a game that night or the next day, we will do some minor dragging or brooming to knock those cores down. That's something the user group can help us with."

Weier said he also trusts the volunteers to spray fence lines. "If it has been windy three or four days in a row, you can't spray and get drift. So, if Saturday morning is

a beautiful morning, I will call our local volunteer and get him set up and he will spend an hour spraying fence lines and killing weeds in off areas like bullpens. We have a local teacher who has worked for us for five straight summers, and he is as good as a full-time turf manager."

In a typical week, volunteers put in 15 to 20 hours per week maintaining Johnson Park. And according to Weier, having a park that was built in 1938 and has never undergone a full renovation presents unique maintenance challenges. In 1938, when much of the park was constructed, the materials, designs, playing surface options, spectator experiences and code requirements were significantly different from what is typical today. Everything from the soil specifications and turf seed blends to the player's equipment to the spectator's safety and accessibility needs have evolved over the decades since the facility was designed and built.

"The technology over the course of 80 years has changed dramatically, and our knowledge base has changed dramatically," said Weier. "There have been some minor attempts at improvements – working from the surface of the turf down – but there was no full turf removal. So, you have a lot of variation."

Those variations change the dynamics of everything from treatments to irrigation.

"Everybody's budgets are constrained," said Weier. "The ability to just gut it and start over isn't there, so we have to find creative ways to address some of these things. That's where data collection comes in – compaction and moisture readings; we try to adjust chemical treatments, fertilizers, even down to different grass seeds in different locations. It is a moving target. So that's where partnering up comes in. The more eyes you can get on it, the better. The team effort approach has produced different ideas that are still in play today."

According to Weier, partnering and growing that mutually beneficial relationship helped earn Johnson Park the Turfco/MPSTMA Field of the Year award, which ultimately helps recruit more volunteers.

"There is pride and tradition," he said. "This is just one more feather in the cap. If anybody wants to be a part of it, they can. It garners a bit more volunteer willingness. People want to be a part of that type of situation."

Weier hopes other municipalities and other industry professionals can learn from the model that has worked so well for New Ulm.

"You have to get past the past," he said. "You have to work and be patient, and be willing to say sorry when you maybe aren't sorry. Develop a long-term



relationship with the right people, and you can get there. It's not always fun, but stick to it, stay firm and work on communication. Be willing to see their side, and hopefully they can come around to your side."

As Weier told the MPSTMA when accepting the award, "This award isn't all about the glitz and glamor. This isn't about the party deck or the comfortable seats or the great concession stands. This is the playing surface. All the work that goes into this award is before anybody walks into the stadium – before the players get there and before the fans get there. All they see is a beautiful field...but the work is done. It makes all the early mornings, all the afternoons when it is stifling hot, feel better that it is recognized. That's why this means the most to me and my staff, and definitely those volunteers." **SFM**

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

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Dethatchers and Verticutters

BILLY GOAT POWER RAKE / DETHATCHER

Billy Goat's PR551V & PR550H Power Rake removes matted thatch from turf in 20-inch passes, and its rugged design withstands the most demanding use. A 5.5-gross-horsepower Honda or Vanguard engine coupled to a

free-swinging heat-treated tempered flail blade reel is mounted to construction-grade cast-iron pillow block bearings with grease zerks. Steel guards protect bearings and pulleys.

Heavy-duty wheels, inside engagement bail and padded handle extend durability and ergonomics. Converts to overseeder, vertislicer or spring tine rake with optional accessories.



JOHN DEERE VERTICUTTERS

The QA5 and QA7 verticutters from John Deere are powerful blades that are capable of delivering precise cuts thanks to their consistent verticutting depth. The QA5 features 5-inch verticutter blades on a 3/4-inch standard spacing with standard carbide tips for excellent wear, while the QA7 is equipped with 7-inch blades on a standard 1-1/8-inch spacing. Both models feature a depth system



that is easy to adjust for simplified use. The patented Speed Link system ties both ends of the rear roller together with a spring-loaded rod and worm gears, meaning adjustments can be performed from either end of the rear roller, automatically adjusting the other side at the same time. A simple front roller design allows for paralleling the front roller to the blades for optimal performance. Optional front and rear roller scrapers keep depth consistent, promoting new growth and opening up the canopy for topdressing.

POWER TURF RENOVATION PTO-60

The Power Turf Renovation PTO-60 sports turf renovator is a tractor PTO-powered turf renovation machine that has many uses. In just one pass it will remove the problematic infield lip on a baseball or softball field, dethatch, aerate, verticut and level turf. The lips on a baseball field can be removed easily without removing the existing turf. This machine will turn rock-hard infield conditioner into soft, usable media without disrupting the base. Using this machine will significantly reduce irrigation costs while promoting healthy turf. This machine has been widely used by governmental agencies, cities, school districts, colleges, professional sports teams and golf courses. The depth of the cut is infinitely adjustable with the use of a ratchet jack from 0-2 inches.



REDEXIM VERTI-CUT 2000 AND 1600

The Redexim Verti-Cut 2000 and 1600 are the ideal deep verticutting tools, with 2mm (0.07-inch)-wide blades working to a depth of up to 2 inches. The front roller not only allows the Verti-Cut to cope with undulations, but also controls the working depth with precision, all while having unmatched levels of productivity. Redexim has been marketing the Verti-Cut for years, with the 1600 and 2000 being added in response to customer needs. Redexim stated, “At Redexim, we work with our customers worldwide to ensure that we research and develop with products that meet their expectations, save time and deliver value.” The Verti-Cut 1600 is 64 inches wide, while the 2000 is 80 inches – making it one of the largest straight verticutters on the market. These machines come standard with carbide-tipped blades, and can quickly be changed thanks to the FBS rotor system.



RYAN MATAWAY DETHATCHER

For heavy-duty turf renovation and verticutting this spring, look no further than the Ryan Mataway dethatcher. Constructed with a durable Honda engine, this self-propelled dethatcher with a 19-inch frame provides a consistent ground speed, covering 18,700 square feet per hour. The Mataway dethatcher's intuitive design makes it easy to adjust the throttle and cutting depth from the operator's station.

Operators can choose from five different reels, with flail and fixed blade types available to suit different applications.



WOOD BAY TURF TECHNOLOGY VERTICUTTER AND DETHATCHER



Verticutting and dethatching are the two “must do” maintenance procedures that every sports field requires for long-term health and playability. Wood Bay Turf Technology has more than 30 years of manufacturing turf equipment for the world of golf and sports. Wood Bay manufactures the world's leading verticut blades – the dynaBLADE – which fit on any OEM head, and the highly sought-after mechanical rake – the FDS 9200 turf dethatcher – for use behind high-speed tractors and ATVs. Wherever you find top grounds professionals who are responsible for impeccable turf conditions, you will find verticutting and mechanical raking as mainstays for top turf health. Verticutting, while important, is very time, labor and field intrusive. It's often put off until absolutely necessary, so mechanical raking is your short-term answer. Wood Bay offers a one-two punch. **SFM**



Emergency Preparedness BMPs



The following emergency preparedness best management practices are excerpted from SFMA's National BMP guide, *Best Management Practices for the Sports Field Manager: A Professional Guide for Sports Field Management*. The full guide, as well as a customizable BMP template, is available at https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/knowledge_center/bmps/

Facilities related to the storage and handling of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals – especially in their concentrated form – pose the highest potential risk to water sources if accidentally released in quantity. Learning proper procedures for dealing with pesticide spills is part of being a licensed applicator. Anyone storing, mixing or loading potentially hazardous chemicals should treat all leaks, spills and fires as emergencies and be prepared to respond to these emergencies promptly and correctly. For unintended releases of any chemicals, an emergency plan, spill kit and first-aid kit should be readily available.

PLANNING

Planning and preparations should be made for potential emergencies related to unintended releases of any chemicals. Local emergency personnel such as fire departments should be consulted, be notified about the locations of pesticide and fertilizer storage, and be given regularly updated lists of chemicals stored. Storage areas should have proper signs. Training and orientation should also be conducted annually with employees to review plans and preparations.

PESTICIDE SPILL RESPONSE PLAN

For facilities that store pesticides, a Pesticide Spill Response Plan with actions to take and personnel to contact in the event of a spill or accident should be in place. The plan should include the following:

- Names and quantities of pesticides in inventory.
- Location of property, including a map and directions (to relay over the phone in an emergency).
- Names, addresses and phone numbers of the designated spokesperson, sports field manager and key employees.
- Plan of facility showing pesticide storage locations, flammable materials, electrical service, water supply, fuel storage tanks, fire hydrants, storm drains and nearby wetlands, ponds or streams.
- Location of emergency equipment supplies.

■ Contact information for fire, police, hospital, pesticide regulatory agency and facility owner, as well as any other contact information deemed necessary.

Ensure that copies of the plan are located near the pesticide storage facility and the office, and are distributed to local police and fire departments. Maintain copies in English and any other language commonly used by employees. Be sure to update the information regularly for local police and fire departments.

SAFETY DATA SHEETS (SDS)

OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard – 29 CFR 1910.1200(g), revised in 2012 – requires that the chemical manufacturer, distributor or importer provide SDS for each hazardous chemical to users to communicate information on these hazards. More information on SDS can be found on the Hazard Communication Standard: Safety Data Sheets page of the OSHA website.

An up-to-date file should be maintained with copies of all the SDS for all chemicals used. The file should be stored on the property and made available to employees. Copies of these files can be provided to local fire departments and hospitals in case of any emergency.

SPILL CONTAINMENT

Spill kits should be used for incidental releases. The following procedures should be followed to safely contain the release:

- Consult the appropriate SDS and label (for pesticides).
- Wear the appropriate PPE.
- Contain the spill. Prevent spread or escape from the area by using sorbents.
- Clean up the spill. Never hose down an area until the cleanup is completed.
- To clean up pesticides:
 - Recover as much product as possible in a reusable form. Store and use as intended.
 - Recover the rest of the product as a waste product by using an absorbent or sweeping compound.
 - When all recoverable material is secured, clean contaminated surface residues using triple-rinse technique. For instance, a spill of liquid on the floor requires that the area be damp mopped three times.
 - To clean up all other chemicals:
 - Small liquid spills can be cleaned up with a commercially available absorbent. Avoid using paper towels; they increase the surface area and the rate of evaporation, increasing the fire hazard.
 - For acid or base spills, use a sorbent that will neutralize the liquids (trisodium phosphate, sodium bicarbonate or other commercially available products).
 - Use a dustpan and brush to sweep up the absorbed spill. Wash the contaminated area with soap and water.
 - Dispose of absorbents used to clean spilled materials properly.

FIRST AID

Adequate provisions should be provided to immediately treat any person exposed to chemicals. These include eye wash stations and showers. First-aid kits should be available to treat skin contact, ingestion or inhalation.

NATURAL EVENTS

Natural events and disasters (e.g., lightning, flooding, hurricanes, etc.) can and do occur. An emergency response plan for any facility should contain information to be followed to protect human health and the environment.

The sports field manager should have a copy of the plan and understand decision-making responsibilities, lines of communication and roles in implementing the plan in case of a natural event or disaster. The plan should include how to protect players, staff and members of the community from adverse impact from any such events, how to prevent any exposure to chemicals, and how to secure stored chemicals and equipment. **SFM**

BMP QUICK-REFERENCE CHECKLISTS

SPILL RESPONSE AND CONTAINMENT BMP

- Develop a pesticide spill response plan that includes procedures to control, contain, collect and store spilled materials.
- An inventory of the pesticides kept in the storage building and the SDS for the chemicals used in the operation should be accessible on the premises but not kept in the pesticide storage room itself.
- Prominently post “Important Telephone Numbers” including CHEMTREC, for emergency information on hazards or actions to take in the event of a spill.
- Ensure an adequately sized spill containment kit is readily available.
- Designate a spokesperson who can speak on behalf of the facility should an emergency occur.
- Host a tour for local emergency response teams (e.g., firefighters) to show them the facilities and to discuss the emergency response plan. Seek advice on ways to improve the plan.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS BMPS

- Personnel should be familiar with an emergency preparedness plan for the facility.
- All chemicals and equipment should be secured in a location where human health and the environment are protected in case of a natural disaster.

The following are some industry Tweets from the past month. Follow us @SportsField_Mag.



@CREEDY95

Day games with the views. #MastersSunday #coorsfield #daygame
#springweather #schoolofRaz #openingweekend



@Maritzamows

Tornadoes, Hail, Thunderstorms, and a Win... What a night



@TIMMMAY8

Opening day is a dream of mine every year to put out the best possible product possible not only for the team but for my dad who left this world before I got my field. Greatly appreciate everyone that has helped me along the way and continues to help. LET GO @Kcannonballers



@INDYINDIANSTURF

Green means go!



@Bennyemery

What an incredible 6 months it has been in Adelaide. Created some amazing memories alongside gaining some lifelong friends. Overseas work is definitely a risk but one worth taking. A massive thank you to everyone involved @TheAdelaideOval. On to my next adventure...



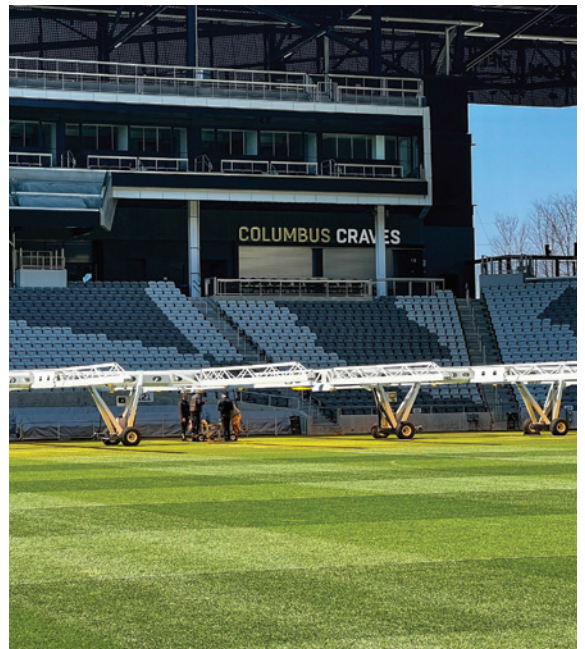
@barnstonworth

From Miami to floodlight testing in 36 hours @WarwickshireCCC



@DoboszRon

Laser grading Mclaughlin softball field and two fields at memorial today. @wilbparkrec @NE_STMA @FieldExperts @DuraEdge



@Grassybrit

Tagged along with @TylerTalksTurf today (we share a birthday!) while we watched @UTurfgrass doing some soccer field testing. Lots of great soccer research happening now! #FIFA26



@CBEwingSports



@drewsky18

A bit of a different look for the Maroon and White game this year but the Latitude36 is looking great and we are ready to go!



@Tyler_Bergin

2023 Season underway! Thank you to all my support across the board
I couldn't have made it happen without any of you!! Look what we pulled off! @MatthewBergin11





@C_Buck10

7am paint job for the fields after a nice away stint for both squads.
#SportsTurf #DOOP



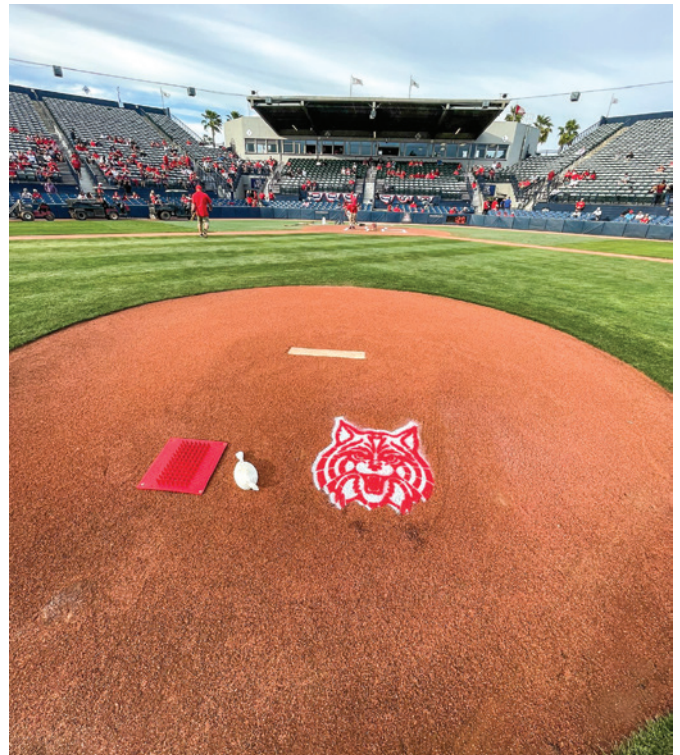
@PSUTurfRainman

And yet, one more day of serious work by these seniors. They finished preparation and installation of an 8,000 sq ft sod nursery and instructions for mound repair. Very proud of them all! #psuturf #psuplantscience



@AaronFink4

Always improving things. Warmer temperatures means it's time to start pushing the bermuda. Big game Saturday. Come out and cheer on Louisville City at 7:30pm.



@IM4UACATS

#BearDown #GoCats #BeatASU @ArizonaBaseball



@CaseyMont

With that, tarp season is officially over. All 16 acres of NB are finally uncovered until 2024. A lot of work ahead in the next couple of weeks to get it ready for training, but any summer we don't sprig is a win. It's go time!

Pamela Sherratt receives OSU CFAES Distinguished Teaching by a Lecturer Award

Ohio State University's Pamela Sherratt received the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) Distinguished Teaching by a Lecturer Award.

Sherratt is a turfgrass specialist the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science (HCS) and has been with OSU since 1999. She's also an alumnus of HCS, having received her BSc (Honors) in Horticulture from The University of Central Lancashire in England and her MS in Turfgrass Science from OSU.

She currently teaches undergraduate courses focused on plant science, including The World of Plants and Sports Turf Management.

Said Sherratt, "The Sports Turf Management class has supported Columbus city schools over many years by carrying out hands-on renovation projects on baseball fields."

She also conducts extension/outreach efforts focused on offering certificate programs for industry professionals, engaging with youth, and promoting the green industry through activities such as summer STEM camp, FFA events, Explore Ag activities and Scouts BSA merit badges. Additionally, Sherratt writes regularly for *SportsField Management* magazine and speaks at events throughout the United States and internationally.



Pamela Sherratt

Jaasko leads DLF North American wholesale and production

DLF announced the promotion of Brian Jaasko to senior vice president, wholesale and production for DLF's North America business unit.

Jaasko is now responsible for the overall strategic direction, growth and development of the wholesale and production functions and teams throughout the United States and Canada including wholesale and export sales, grower services, operations and seed enhancement. It is a new and critical role for DLF that brings a North American-level strategy and focus to

its wholesale and production activities.

"Having this leadership scope is essential to reach our collective growth objectives and position DLF as a true leader in the North American and global seed industries," said Neil Douglas, executive vice president, DLF North America.

Jaasko has more than 30 years of seed industry experience, encompassing a variety of disciplines and progression within KWS, Bayer Crop Science and most recently with Smith Seeds. He joined DLF in February 2022 to head its seed enhancement strategy and construction of DLF's new seed enhancement facility in Oregon. In July, he took on the added responsibility of the strategic direction and execution for all of Oregon's operations as director, Oregon operations and seed enhancement.

"Brian's expertise has been essential to bring together our operations groups, increase operational efficiency and effectiveness to support our customers and growers, and help DLF develop and cultivate new relationships within the industry," said Douglas.

Solidifying this role within DLF is one of many investments being made to help it partner more closely with its customers and seed growers.

"The core leadership within DLF are among the best leaders I've known while working in this industry," said Jaasko. "We also have a wealth of talented people supporting pivotal initiatives and investments to better serve our customer and grower partners. I truly feel we are poised to be leaders in innovation and stewardship worthy of DLF's 150-year history in the seed industry."



Brian Jaasko

Landmark Seed Company hires Russ Hayworth

Landmark Seed Company hired grass seed industry expert Russ Hayworth as business development manager. Hayworth learned about the production of grass seed while growing up on his family's farm in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

After spending four years marketing grass seed in California's Coachella Valley, Hayworth moved to Arizona

and expanded his role as a turf specialist with Turf Seed and Tee-2-Green Corp., helping to introduce the “A” and “G” series of bentgrasses and writing seed specifications for golf course architects. The expansion of long-time client West Coast Turf into Arizona provided the opportunity for Hayworth with the perfect combination of sod and seed to promote and market. Hayworth, with his farming roots, researched varieties, and managed seed production for West Coast Turf with Oregon growers while marketing to the golf and sports field industries in southwest.

He is a Lifetime Fiesta Bowl Committee member and served as turf manager to the Fiesta Bowl while serving as head groundskeeper of 10 football fields around Phoenix for the Fiesta and Insight Bowl team practice facilities from 1993-2017. Since 2018, Hayworth has been part of the College Football Playoff – National Championship Game/Stadium Operations Team, where he has assisted in all areas of field preparation. He has consulted and specified products, becoming well known for his numerous contributions to clients at private, professional and collegiate facilities throughout the nation.

In recent years, Hayworth worked on the “ground floor” and helped develop product lines and branding concepts of both the cool- and warm-season grass seed species at Pure Seed.

Equip Exposition 2023 registration now open

Equip Exposition opened registration for the 2023 trade show, to be held Oct. 17-20 at the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) in Louisville, Ky.

“Equip Exposition is the experience of the year for anyone in the landscape, hardscape, outdoor living and power equipment business,” said Kris Kiser, president of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, which owns and manages the trade show. “Last year we saw a sold-out exhibit hall and brought more than 25,000 people to Louisville. As we celebrate 40 years of Expo together, it’s going to be a can’t-miss event.”

Early-bird discounted registration is available until Sept. 7. Attendees can register to attend for as little as \$25 per person. Learn more at <https://www.equipexposition.com/attendee>.

Last year, attendees hailed from all 50 states and 49 countries. The show brings more than \$20 million in revenue to Louisville, and books more than 32,000 hotel rooms during show week.

In addition to Expo’s 30-acre Outdoor Demo Yard and expansive indoor exhibit space, downtown Louisville will feature several major events for attendees, all included in their registration:

- A first-ever arena concert, sponsored by Bobcat Company and Senix, at the Yum! Center featuring headliner Third Eye Blind and Dylan Scott. Arena suites and event spaces are available to sponsor.

- A welcome reception, sponsored by Cat Compact Track Loaders, hosted at the downtown Kentucky International Convention Center (adjacent to the downtown Marriott and Hyatt hotels) with a concert from Expo house band, The Crashers.

Other new show experiences for 2023 include:

- An “adventurous” keynote speech by polar explorer and master storyteller Ben Saunders.

- Expanded exhibit space in the West Wing, allowing exhibitors to showcase and demonstrate more products indoors.

- A first-ever Women’s Reception, open to all women attending Expo, Thursday, Oct. 19, at the KEC.

- Expanded education tracks designed to help attendees expand into new business segments and increase their profits.

- New business lounges, meeting spaces and expanded seating areas at the KEC.

- Landscape education for young people will be sponsored by the TurfMutt Foundation. Children ages 12 and up may attend the show.

- Improved shuttle bus, rideshare and transportation logistics.

- More coffee shops, breakfast and food offerings on site.

Equip Exposition will also feature live in-tree climbing demonstrations from the Women’s Tree Climbing Workshop and Davey Tree; Mulligan’s Fun Run & 5K; the UTV Test Track; the Drone Zone; and Mulligan’s Mutt Madness, a national dog adoption event, sponsored by the TurfMutt Foundation. **SFM**





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A woman with long brown hair and a bright smile is looking towards the right. She is wearing a blue denim shirt and holding a light-colored smartphone in her hands. The background is a solid yellow color. In the top right corner, there is a white speech bubble icon containing the text 'MY VOICE REWARDS'. Below this, the text 'WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!' is written in large, bold, white capital letters. At the bottom, a dark grey banner contains the text 'ANSWER SURVEYS. EARN REWARDS. FAST. FUN. EASY.' in white capital letters. Below the banner, the text 'VISIT THE WEBSITE TO START EARNING.' is written in white capital letters, followed by a yellow button with the text 'MYVOICEREWARDS.COM' in white capital letters.

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Tom Curran, CTomSell@aol.com

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

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

Gateway Sports Field Management Association:
www.gatewaystma.org

Georgia Sports Turf Managers Association: www.gstma.org

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

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<http://imstma.blogspot.com>

Indiana: Contact Clayton Dame,
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Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association:
www.iowaturfgrass.org

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

Mid-Atlantic STMA: www.mastma.org

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

Minnesota Parks and Sports Field Management Association: www.mpsfma.org

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

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

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North Carolina Chapter of STMA:
www.ncsportsturf.org

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Ohio Sports Turf Managers Association (OSTMA): www.ostma.org

Oklahoma Chapter STMA:
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Oregon STMA Chapter:
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Ozarks STMA: www.ozarksstma.org

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JOHN DEERE

Super Bowl LVII Turfgrass

Q: What is going on with the Super Bowl field's grass? (via text during the second half)

A: Within 24 hours of the Super Bowl ending, I received at least a dozen comments or questions about the Super Bowl field. It started with colleagues and friends, but by noon Monday I had requests for information or interviews from various media outlets.

Internet posts on the field and how it performed were plentiful. The first posts on the subject were generally related to the turfgrass cultivar, the cost of the field and the in-game slippage issues. Many focused on the concept that Tahoma 31 was a relatively new grass developed by Oklahoma State University. Writers often made a link between its newness and it not having been used as an NFL grass, neither of which were true.

Then some post-game sports talk shows and social media posts turned a bit condemnatory of the people in charge of preparing the field for the event. Several discourteously alluded to George Toma's age and his relationship with the Kansas City Chiefs. When the sports field managers were not "made available by the NFL," the negativity quickly turned toward the decisions made by NFL leadership. Following the trend established with pandemic politics, later social media posts often focused more on where to place the blame rather than learning about the problem.

I was a little surprised by how interested people outside the turfgrass industry were in the Super Bowl field. I wonder if the interest would have been as high if the announcers had not kept bringing it to the viewer's attention with slow-motion replays of sliding feet. A *Washington Post* article written about the field's condition two days after the Super Bowl had more than 500 comments in the first 48 hours after it was published. I read the comments, and they were made by sports fans who had next to zero knowledge of

turfgrass management. Then social media continued to stir the pot with various conspiracy theories.

But modern-day Super Bowls have components of art and science. There are so many challenges with putting on the pageantry of a Super Bowl that are beyond a regular home football game. Unfortunately for Super Bowl LVII, there was a clash when the activities on the field met the biology of growing the turfgrass. I do not think anybody was happy about how the field performed – most of all George Toma, who addressed

the chain of events that led to the field's problems in a post-retirement interview.

So, let me end by pointing out a few positives. First, the

Unfortunately for Super Bowl LVII, there was a clash when the activities on the field met the biology of growing the turfgrass.

situation highlighted the importance of the turfgrass surface for an athlete's safety and potentially the outcome of a game. Second, I believe a strong message was sent to the NFL that there need to be changes in how a field is prepared and used leading up to the Super Bowl. Mistakes happen, but we must learn from them. Third, sports field managers at any location can use this example to increase their involvement in the decision-making process regarding how a field is used and managed to ensure that the field is ready. No person is better equipped for making field decisions than the sports field manager.

Lastly, I would like to thank George Toma for his years of service to this industry. You have been a great ambassador for sports field managers... "and then some." **SFM**



Grady Miller, Ph.D.

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Questions?

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

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