

SportsField

MANAGEMENT

October 2024

Vol. 40 No. 10

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

Also in this issue:

★ **SportsField Management magazine 2024 Rising Star Awards** ★

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for Spartanburg HS Lady Vikings Softball Field**



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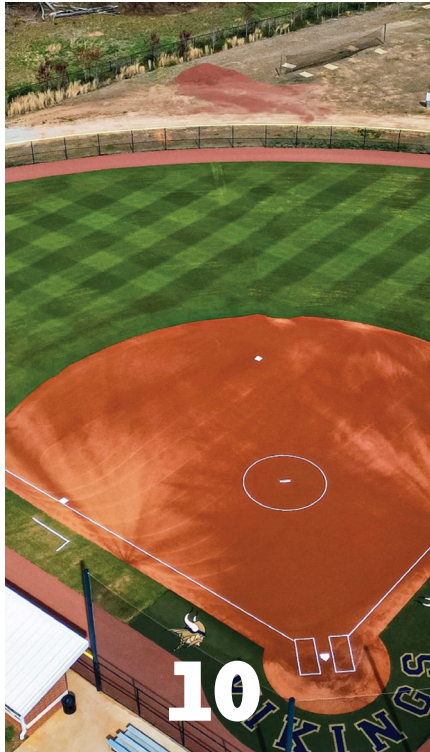
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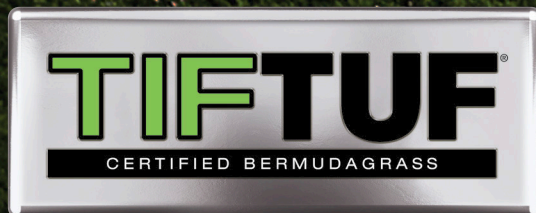
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Editor's Note



John Kmitta

Associate Publisher /
Editorial Brand Director
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763-383-4405

This edition of *SportsField Management* is our second annual Rising Star Awards issue, and I couldn't be prouder of the program we have built. But it's not about the awards program itself — it's about the people.

Last year's inaugural class was amazing. I enjoyed getting to know the winners through the interview process and by meeting them at the SFMA Conference. And, once again, with the help of SFMA, we have identified an amazing class of Rising Stars.

In recent months I have had the opportunity to speak with all of this year's winners and learn more about them. While those conversations are but a brief glimpse into their personalities and their careers, it was clear why their peers nominated them — and selected them — as stars on the rise.

All of this year's winners have already accomplished a lot in their young careers. They have improved their organizations, helped advance the profession, demonstrated strong leadership skills, and bettered their communities. Most of all, these Rising Stars have put others first.

They have volunteered their time to help other sports field managers with major events, supported their superiors to create better work/life balance, helped revitalize and grow their local SFMA chapters, served as mentors to others, created opportunities for young people, performed charitable works and much more.

When I ask people their favorite part of the job, the most common response I get is the support and camaraderie among those within the profession. That is why I try to stress to our Rising Star winners that these awards are a sign of the impact they have had on others. That their peers took the time to nominate them says a lot about these up-and-coming industry leaders.

With that in mind, please consider nominating a Rising Star in this industry who has had an impact on you. We will soon be accepting nominations for the 2025 Rising Star awards. And remember, nominees don't have to be under the age of 40. I'm sure there are plenty of deserving stars out there over the age of 40 who have come to sports field management as a career within the past decade. So, please take some time and share their story.

My thanks to all those who nominated someone for this year's awards. If the person you nominated wasn't selected as a winner this year, please nominate them again in 2025. I also want to thank the SFMA members who reviewed the nominations for their insight and expertise. And special thanks to STEC Equipment for sponsoring the Rising Star Awards — your support makes programs like this possible.

Congratulations once again to all of this year's winners. You are an example to others, and your efforts are truly deserving of this recognition. **SFM**

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President's Message



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October is upon us, which means the 2025 Conference is just a few months away! SFMA headquarters staff along with VRS, the board and conference committees have been working year round to put together our flagship event for you. Registration opens this month, and I really hope to see you in Palm Springs. Stay tuned for November's issue, which will feature an in-depth preview of our time in the desert for our Oasis of Knowledge.

Something huge that has been happening at SFMA HQ is the migration to a new association management system. This new system was necessary on several fronts, but what you should notice is an enhanced user experience with a personalized dashboard and advanced features. The new system will also better support the HQ team.

Please note that as this is a completely new system — your previous username and password will no longer work. For security reasons, we are unable to transfer existing usernames or passwords. You'll need to follow the instructions on the welcome page to create a new account. This process will link your new account to your previous account. Please take a moment to update your access.

Now that the business is handled, I would like to congratulate the 2024 Rising Star Award winners announced in this issue! These sports field management



Sun Roesslein, CSFM

SFMA President

Sun.Roesslein@jeffco.k12.co.us

professionals have been nominated by their peers to be recognized as up-and-coming leaders in our profession (i.e., sports field managers to keep an eye on as they continue to grow the game).

Please consider nominating someone you feel should be recognized for next year's class. Program details can be found at <https://sportsfieldmanagementonline.com/rising-star-awards/> or you can email Editor John Kmitta at jkmitta@epgacceleration.com.

I would also like to thank the board members who have contributed to this column throughout the year. We truly have a great team in the boardroom, which is a microcosm of our profession. Whether it's hosting a chapter event and watching members jump in to help clean up, seeing the support for each other on social media, hearing members advocating for one another or knowing you have a network to reach out to for support, I'm incredibly honored to be a part of the SFMA team with each of you.

Happy fall! **SFM**

Sun Roesslein, CSFM

October 15 — Don't Miss the Deadline

SFMA's high-profile awards, grants and scholarship programs all have application deadlines of October 15. Visit sportsfieldmanagement.org, and click on the "Programs" tab to find the applications for:

- **Field of the Year** — For practitioners who exhibit excellence in sports field management practices.
- **Innovative Awards** — Presented to one or more exhibitors who have introduced an innovative product, service or technology that enhances the sports field manager's effectiveness or makes the field surface safer.
- **Founders Awards** — Nominate a peer for one of SFMA's highest honors. These four awards recognize those members who have made significant contributions to SFMA and to the profession.
- **SAFE Scholarships** — for students including the Dr. James Watson Scholarships (funded by the Toro Giving Program), the Dr. Fred Grau Scholarship (named in honor of the first turfgrass extension specialist in the United States), and the Paul Zwaska Scholarship, presented by Beacon Athletics.
- **SAFE Grants** — Leo Goertz Membership grant, funded by Pioneer Athletics; Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant; Terry Mellor Continuing Education grant, funded by Turface Athletics.



SFMA Membership — A Sound Investment

SFMA is pleased with the opportunities that lie ahead. With your support, SFMA will grow and reach the strategic initiatives of increasing respect for the profession, growing the industry with younger generations using technology, and welcoming and including everyone into this incredible profession.

By renewing your membership, you have the opportunity to learn and advance your career. First, you are able to connect with other professionals who have valuable insights and skills. You also have access to great resources including the Playing Condition Index, Best Management Practices, Technical Education Bulletins, webinars, *SportsField Management* magazine, education and networking at the annual SFMA Conference & Exhibition, and much more.

The cost to join or renew is \$130 for a sports field management professional and \$85 for additional people from the same facility. Commercial members pay \$340 and \$85 for additional people from the same company.

To join or renew your membership, visit sportsfieldmanagement.org and click on the member "Login" button to renew or "Join SFMA" if you are new.

Products and services you receive with SFMA membership:

- Monthly *SportsField Management* and News Online electronic communication
- Educational Resources — Bulletins, booklets, DVDs (English & Spanish), online classes, webinars and videos
- Certification programs
- Awards program and scholarships
- Discounts to the annual SFMA Conference & Exhibition
- Employment and career resources
- Chapter resources
- Leadership opportunities via service on a committee or the SFMA Board of Directors



■ Online membership directory

If you have any questions, email [SFMAinfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org](mailto:SFMALinfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org) or call 800-323-3875.

2025 SFMA Conference & Exhibition Registration

Get ready for the premier event of the year! SFMA is thrilled to announce that registration for the 2025 SFMA Conference & Exhibition will officially open on October 15. This exciting annual event brings together the top professionals in the sports field management industry for four days of learning, networking and innovation.

Event details:

■ **Dates:** January 13-16, 2025

■ **Location:** Palm Springs Convention Center, 277 N. Avenida Caballeros, Palm Springs, CA 92262

■ **More than 60 hours of education sessions:** Enhance your skills with sessions covering the latest techniques, strategies, and best practices in sports field management.

■ **Industry-leading exhibitors:** Explore the latest technologies and solutions at the trade show, where you can meet industry experts and discover tools to enhance your operations.

■ **Facility tours:** Gain valuable insights with tours of area facilities.

■ **Networking opportunities:** Connect with fellow SFMA members, build relationships, and share ideas to improve your approach to sports turf management.

Be sure to check www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference for additional details on education sessions, hotel and travel information, networking events, trade show and exhibition opportunities, sponsorship options, the SFMA Student Challenge.

Registration opens on October 15, so don't miss your chance to reserve your spot at this must-attend event in sunny Palm Springs, California. Stay tuned for more updates on how to register and what exciting sessions, speakers, and opportunities await you at the 2025 conference.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2025 SFMA Conference & Exhibition! **SFM**



January 13-16, 2025
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Convention Center
Palm Springs, CA

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Over 60 Hours of
Education and Over
150 Exhibiting
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Professionals

Registration
Opens October
15th!

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LADY VIKINGS SOFTBALL FIELD

SPARTANBURG HIGH SCHOOL,
SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

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.

This field has been through many changes in just four seasons of play. The main reason for this is the lack of willingness from engineers and architects to listen to a Certified Sports Field Manager before, during and after construction. The extra funds that could have been saved by following said recommendations were astronomical. This field has finally been built the way I had originally intended from the start. My staff and I have spent countless hours attempting to make the field playable under adverse conditions. We believe this field is one of the best high school softball fields in the nation. The functionality and playability of the field speaks

for itself, and the overall appeal of its aesthetics are phenomenal. The amount of detailed effort is why this field deserves recognition. It is laser graded twice per season, edged weekly, and the artificial turf is cleaned before every game. This is an overall attention to details typically unseen by the untrained eye and overlooked by many. Considering the attention to detail and the finished product, I felt it necessary to make an effort on the part of my staff to bring some much needed and deserved appreciation for their efforts.

— Matthew Arms, CSFM, grounds superintendent





Level and category of submission: Schools and Parks Softball

Field manager: Matthew Arms, CSFM

Title: Grounds superintendent

Education: Bachelor's degree in English

Experience: Sixteen years of experience working on sports fields. Began as an assistant field manager for Greenville Parks and Recreation. Gained my certification in Turfgrass Management from the University of Georgia. Transferred to Spartanburg Parks and Recreation as sports field manager at Tyger River Park, and obtained my CSFM. School District 7 approached me to oversee construction of a new facility and athletic fields at Spartanburg High School.

Full-time staff: Jesse Bowers and Austin Dill

Original construction: 2019

Turfgrass: Artificial Halo, Latitude 36 bermuda, overseeded annually with perennial rye

Rootzone: Loam

Soil amendments: Mirimichi Carbonize

Drainage system: Herringbone patterned Vertidrain

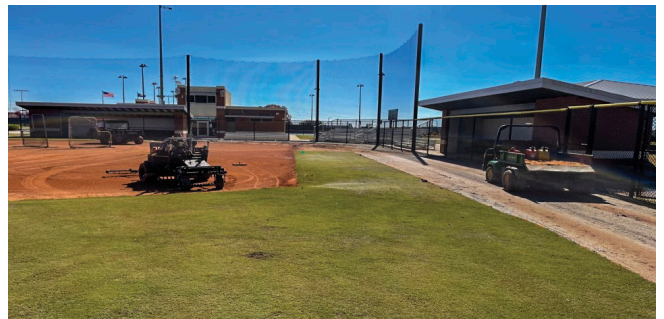
SportsField Management (SFM): What are you most proud of with this win, and/or what do you think stands out most about the winning field?

Matthew Arms, CSFM: I am most proud of this win because this was a milestone goal in my career. I had set out to win at least one FOY during my tenure as a sports field manager. I waited to apply until I was managing a field that met my standards, as well as organizational standards. The efforts of the staff associated with this field deserve significant credit for this award. Their time and effort focusing on details and quality have created this awesome playing surface. The school district also deserves credit for its willingness to spend the necessary funds to help improve drainage, safety and overall aesthetics of the field. We could not accomplish all we have without the district and the athletic director's support.

In my opinion, the most appealing aspect of our softball field is its playability. It can now handle some significant rain and be playable in a short time. We are incredibly pleased with the aesthetic side of the field's condition. Another huge aspect is the effort made by the staff every game to make the players feel special and given the best opportunity for success on their home field.

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

Arms: My career path and education has been a little unorthodox from your typical sports field manager. I obtained a bachelor's degree in English from the University of North Greenville. While finishing my degree, I started my own landscape company in 2005. While our company was growing to new heights, the recession of 2008 hit us hard and I had to find employment to supplement my income. I was hired at Greenville Parks Department as a groundskeeper, which introduced me to sports field maintenance. During my tenure in Greenville, I worked under a sports field manager with a degree from Ohio State, and he pushed me to take the Sports Turf Manager Certificate Program through the University of Georgia. I received my certificate in August 2008. At the time I received the certificate, he had transferred jobs and the fields were under my care. In the fall of 2008, I accepted a position as field supervisor at Spartanburg Parks Department.

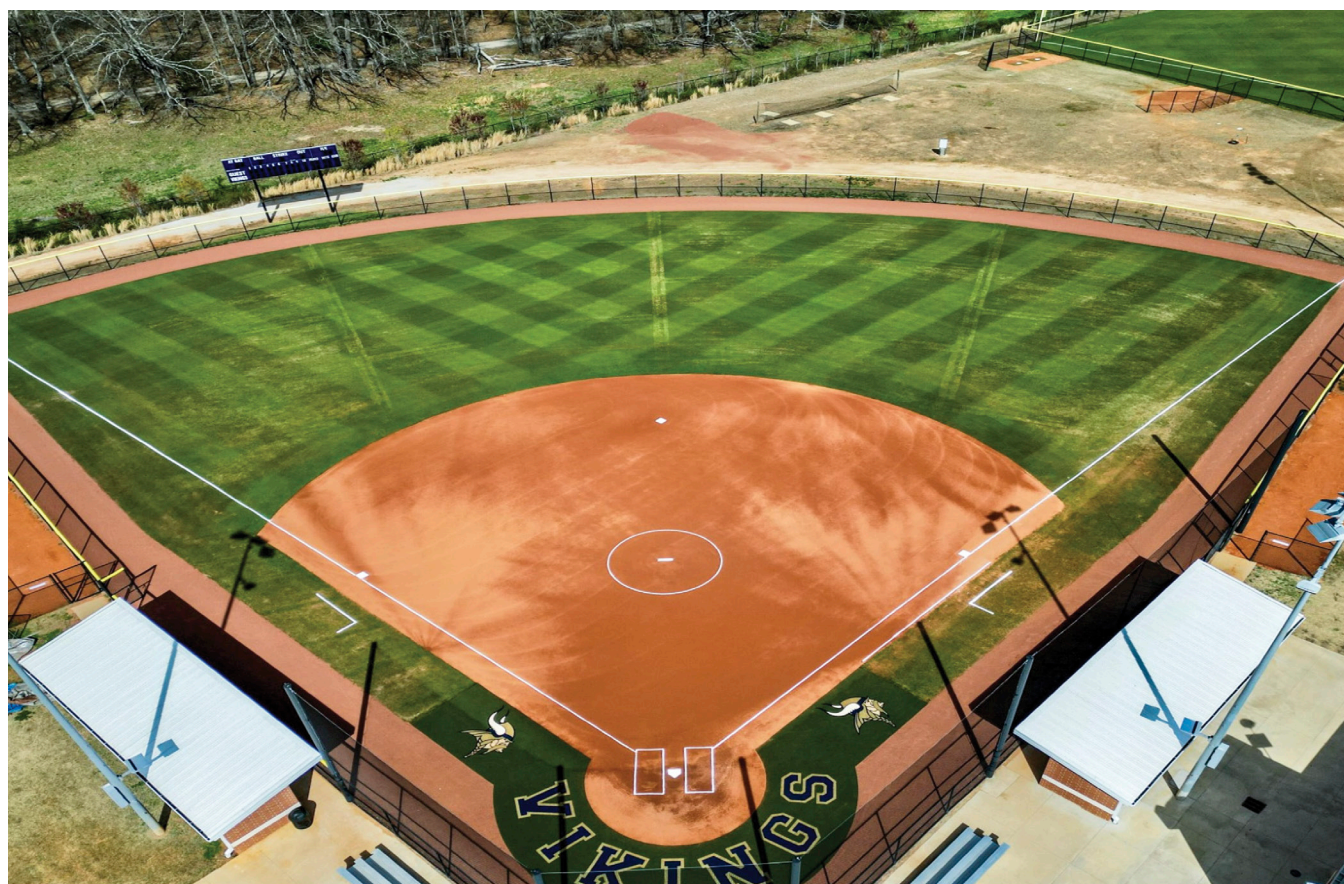




While at Spartanburg for almost 10 years, we have accomplished many things: ASA and NSA National Softball Complex of the Year at Tyger River Park, and SC Complex of the year in 2014. During my time at Spartanburg, I obtained my CSFM and became president of SCSFMA in 2017. 2017 is also when I was hired at School District 7, where I was able to oversee the construction of all athletics fields and the landscape construction of a new high school. In addition to the National Field of the Year in 2023 we also won the SCSFMA State Softball Field of the Year Award.

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

Arms: There are many people who have shaped my work and practices in this industry over the years. The best piece of advice I ever received was “do not be afraid to fail.” This attitude has helped me feel a bit freer with learning and understanding how to accomplish goals and how to turn negatives into positives. I am always looking for new, innovative ways to accomplish





tasks or try new products to help our environment and landscape be healthier and aesthetically pleasing to everyone it affects. Not being afraid to fail has allowed me and my crews to turn the ordinary into extraordinary, regardless of the circumstances.

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

Arms: The biggest challenge we faced with the field has been playability due to drainage. During any significant rainstorm, we could not allow the team on the field for several days — even while other fields were being used. This was due to the drainage on the field being removed during a value engineering session while its original construction was taking place. I had strongly suggested that the field's drainage was a vital part of its ability to be playable in a timely manner. After a few years of moaning and groaning from me, the athletic director and the coach, the district agreed to do the drainage and some other things to improve playability including a warning track and an artificial turf halo. Since that work has been completed, we have missed only a game or two and a couple of practices — all due to inclement weather at the time of the events.

SFM: Please tell us about your crew, and anything else you would like us to know about your organization and the fields/facilities that you manage?

Arms: My crew for athletics consists of me and two others. Other groundskeepers help sometimes when needed. If it were not for the dedication of my crew, we would not be having this discussion. I lean on them heavily due to other responsibilities that pull me away from my true love — athletic fields. They honestly deserve all of the credit for this award. I have only been

the vehicle to accomplish the task and sometimes the brains. Our school district allows us the freedom to do all that we need to do for our athletes and fields. The facilities for all sports in our district are second to none, and are utilized by schools throughout our state. We are blessed to be in an organization that takes such pride in its fields and landscape, and supports our grounds crew with the products we need to be successful. I am only as good as my crew, and we are only as good as our district allows us to be. I may be biased, but I feel like the product we produce and the ownership that each groundskeeper and I take is a perfect reflection of those thoughts. **SFM**



Breaking Down Stereotypes

Have you ever had someone state an assumption about you or your work? Maybe a person stepped in to do a task without asking, perhaps because of your physical stature or gender. These moments often make us pause and reflect because they're rooted in stereotypes.

Stereotypes can distort the reality of what people do and who they are — leading to misunderstandings, undervaluation and even exclusion. In the world of sports field management, stereotypes often fail to recognize the expertise, skill and dedication that the profession requires.

One of the most common stereotypes about sports field managers (SFM) is that all we do is cut grass. SFMs do much more than making light and dark stripes in the grass. They use turfgrass science, water management and weather patterns to ensure the safety and playability of the field. The stereotype that sports field management is just “lawn care” diminishes the importance of the profession. A properly maintained field can prevent injuries, improve player performance and enhance the overall experience of players and spectators. This view of the role ignores the science, planning and decision making that go into every aspect of the job. Break this stereotype with a willingness to share that many SFMs have degrees in turfgrass science or related fields and they participate in continuing education to keep up with the latest industry trends and technologies.

When others assume that SFMs don't need expertise, it can be frustrating and insulting. Share the reality that the health of a field directly impacts the health of the athletes who play on it. Grass plant health provides good footing, soft landings and requires knowledge and experience that should not be underestimated.

Another stereotype about the sports field management profession is that it's not diverse and is male dominant. This stereotype discourages diversity in the profession and limits opportunities for others to become involved. The perception that managing fields involves strenuous physical labor limits opportunities for women who are just as capable of excelling in this field. Women are making strides in sports field management, and their contributions are helping to challenge these stereotypes.

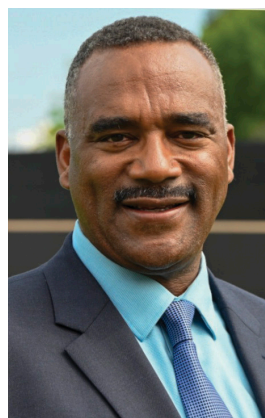
As more women pursue careers in the industry, they bring fresh perspectives and skills that enhance the profession. Breaking down gender stereotypes not only opens doors for more people, but also creates a more inclusive and innovative environment in the field.

Education systems located in densely populated areas or large cities typically do not offer sports field management training in their curriculum. The challenge to you as an SFM is to expose and share information about the sports field management industry. Seek opportunities to connect our profession to these untouched sources of future sports field managers. Share over a cup of coffee, provide small group presentations, invite groups to your facility and show them what you do. Open their eyes to the close connection with the athletes they dream to be. Most importantly, be willing to share with anybody, not just someone who looks like you.

The most damaging stereotype of all is that sports field managers are not an integral part of the team. They are often seen as behind-the-scenes workers who simply maintain the environment in which the “real” work happens — on the field with the athletes. This stereotype minimizes the essential role that SFMs play in ensuring the success of the game. A sports field in poor condition can lead to injuries, game delays or even cancellations. SFMs work closely with coaches and teams to ensure that the playing surface meets the specific needs of the sport and the athletes. Their work directly impacts the performance and safety of the athletes, making them a crucial part of any team's success.

Stereotypes about sports field managers undermine the value and complexity of the profession. These generalizations can lead to misunderstandings, exclusion and a lack of appreciation for the important work SFMs do. As an SFM, promote a more accurate understanding of the profession and encourage diversity, inclusivity and respect within the industry. Sports field management

is a profession that demands expertise, dedication and passion — and it deserves to be recognized and valued accordingly. **SFM**



Alpha Jones, CSFM, is director of field operations for the Fayetteville Woodpeckers, MiLB affiliate of the Houston Astros. He also serves on the SFMA Board of Directors as Secretary-Treasurer.

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Brown circular area

TURFGRASS AREA:

NFL practice field

LOCATION:

Houston, Texas

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

TifSport Bermudagrass

Answer on page 35

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

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By John Kmitta

Welcome to our coverage of the *SportsField Management* magazine Rising Star Awards. The pages that follow showcase the 2024 Rising Star winners.

The *SportsField Management* magazine Rising Star Awards highlight the best up-and-coming leaders in the sports field management industry. Nominees were submitted earlier this year from throughout the sports field management industry.*

Rising Star nominees had to be under the age of 40 as of January 1, 2024; or, if over the age of 40, must have been new to the sports field management industry within the last 10 years.

Candidates were evaluated based on professional accomplishments, leadership, community and industry involvement, philanthropic efforts and other exemplary qualities.

The Rising Star Awards review panel included *SportsField Management* magazine staff, as well as

SFMA members from all areas of the industry. Rising Star Award winners were nominated by their peers and selected as winners by their peers.

The 2024 Rising Star Award winners are (in alphabetical order by last name):

- ★ Colt Boxler
- ★ Andy Hebrard
- ★ Morgan Hunter
- ★ Danny Losito, CSFM
- ★ Jake Mays

* The SportsField Management magazine Rising Star Awards are an independent award production created and presented by SportsField Management magazine. Although SFMA members were involved in the nominee review process, the awards program is not an official SFMA award. As such, nominees did not need to be members of the national SFMA to be considered for a Rising Star Award. **SFM**

Colt Boxler

**Assistant groundskeeper,
Akron RubberDucks**



Hometown pride is real for Rising Star Award Winner Colt Boxler.

Boxler, who grew up in Akron, Ohio, attended nearby Ellet High School and graduated from the University of Akron, now maintains the baseball field at Canal Park, home of the Akron RubberDucks (Double-A affiliate of the Cleveland Guardians) — a field at which Boxler attended games as a child.

“I went to the University of Akron for sports management and was looking into facility/stadium operations,” said Boxler. “I did an internship here with the RubberDucks doing facility operations. At the end of the internship, Head Groundskeeper Chris Walsh needed extra help, so I helped out for the final 10 games that season and really enjoyed it. Chris was impressed enough that he offered me a job on the game day crew the following year.”

Boxler worked as a game day crewmember for the next two seasons, and in 2019 was offered the position as assistant groundskeeper.

“Before that, I had never really even considered turfgrass or working on a sports field,” said Boxler. “I was hired in February of 2020 as the full-time assistant. Then, two weeks in, we were in this unprecedented time with no idea what was going to happen.

“Once the pandemic hit, we were told we couldn’t be at the stadium, and we had to try to figure out a way to work from home,” Boxler added. “Chris was great in guiding me on using that time to educate myself as best I could. He was looking up articles, lectures and videos, so I could read them or watch them, and use that time at home. SFMA opened up free access to their resources, so I utilized that April through June. When things opened back up, I was able to start applying all that stuff I had read about and learned.”

By 2021, Boxler was back to work at the field, and, he says, very particular about everything he did.

"I wanted everything to be perfect," he said. "I was so excited; I had a great time throughout that year. The team won a championship that year. Having all the players come up to us after they won and thank us for everything we did was a real cool experience."

Since then, Boxler has strived to continue to improve his effort each year and create the best field possible. In his role as assistant groundskeeper for the RubberDucks, he helps Walsh with day-to-day operations while also overseeing and managing a game day staff of 6 to 8. In that role, he handles all scheduling, planning and oversight of the game day crew.

According to Boxler, from the start he has tried to make Walsh's life easier, allow him more work-life balance, and serve as a security blanket so that Walsh can leave him in charge and not have to worry.

"I've tried to be someone that he can trust to set up the field, take care of irrigation issues or whatever the case may be," said Boxler. "He can rely on me, and not have to stress and worry and try to do everything. He has taught me everything I needed to know to be able to take care of a field at a high level.

"He is my boss and he is the head groundskeeper, but we really do work as a team, which is fantastic because we have trust in each other," he added. "He allows me to do things that probably most other assistants don't get to do."

While many sports field managers deal with the challenge of schedules and events, Boxler feels fortunate that the RubberDucks organization does a great job of listening to



input from the grounds crew. “Knowing that work-life balance is a focus we want to have, they do a great job of not overloading us too much,” he said.

As result, Boxler says the biggest challenges of the job are the things you don't necessarily expect or prepare for; the things that you don't learn in a classroom or through an article, but through experience.

“After a game a couple years ago, we were packing the bullpens, and in front of the bullpens we saw bit of a dip,” he said. “We opened it up and found out we had a mini sinkhole. The next thing you know, we were out there digging it up, trying to find the issue, and fixing it until 4 a.m. That's a freak occurrence that you have to adjust for on the fly and figure it out. You can't be set in your ways of doing something. You have to be able to adapt”

But Boxler loves such challenges, as well as the opportunity to be outdoors and physically active on a daily basis.

“One of the greatest things is hearing fans rave about how great the field looks, or comments from players, coaches and umpires about how well the field plays,” he said. “I take pride in knowing I was a part of creating that, and responsible for what everyone is seeing and enjoying.”



When not at work creating an awe-inducing field, Boxler enjoys golfing, fishing and spending time with his three-year-old German Shepherd, Madchen.

On the job, knowing that he has the support and admiration of his peers and his boss is something Boxler is proud of.

“I have tried to be a quick study,” he said. “I've always prided myself on schoolwork. My grandparents were teachers, and I had an uncle who was a principal. I was told if I wanted to play sports, I had to have good grades; so I always put a focus on learning”

Launching his career as an assistant during COVID not only allowed Boxler time to research and learn, but it also allowed time to experiment with different techniques, approaches and equipment.

“That's where having the support of the organization is huge,” he said. “They're willing to allow us to do different things and have those kinds of resources.”

When asked about what the future holds and what his dream job might be, Boxler said he gets that question a lot lately.

“I've been an assistant here full time since 2020, and a lot of people ask when I'm going to take a head job somewhere,” said Boxler. “It all depends upon the opportunity and what makes sense for me. I'm very fortunate to be working with Chris and with the RubberDucks. We're in a great spot and we are taken care of pretty well. Not every place is necessarily going to be like that.

“Yes, the idea of one day potentially having my own field and being completely in charge of it is certainly enticing,” he added. “But I'm not actively looking to leave. I'm very grateful for the opportunity I'm in, and the organization. I know how special the place I get to work at is.”

After all, there is a bit of hometown pride mixed in. **SFM**



What their nominator had to say:

“By adopting innovation and new methods of performing his job duties, Colt is not afraid to try new things. He also enjoys passing along what he has learned to the next generation of groundskeepers. His passion and drive to learn and be a better sports field manager is unmatched. Colt exemplifies what a Rising Star is and represents everything this industry is striving for in the future.”

Andy Hebrard

Founder and Sports Turf Manager, Athletic Applications

Rising Star Award Winner Andy Hebrard called me from outer space. Well, at least it appeared that way as he showed off his galaxy background during a late-August Zoom call to discuss his career journey. For Hebrard — a man who likes metaphors, analogies and symbolism — it was rather fitting.

After all, Hebrard doesn't see himself as a supergiant in the night sky, but merely one of many bright lights in the sports field management galaxy.

"I'm just a little comet," he said. "I lean on so many professionals and so many vendors who actually know what they're doing. There are so many people just crushing it."

Some industry peers (and crews) that Hebrard would like to credit for his success include, "Lupes, Denny Jr.,

Big Juan, Yogi, Rene, Cito, Jordan, Coach, Pretty Nicky, PB2, J Spray, Hansen, Bobby Love, B Love, Big Puma, Bullseye, Glen, Kev, The Golden Goose, Sammy, Brad, Dougie P., Derrski, Big Smooth and Big Time Timmy Jim."

And although he is only in his mid-30s himself, Hebrard's star has been on a slow and steady rise for a long time. That's because he began his journey in the orbit of another star in the sport field management universe — his father Mike (a.k.a., "Hebby" or the recently coined "Spaceman").

"My dad's been in the profession a long time," said Hebrard. "That was my daycare — getting in the truck and going with him. As you do with your kids, you try to show them the way, and perhaps how you found

success. It's up to them to create their own opportunity out of that. But he did a great job as a mentor from when I was a boy, all the way through high school, through college and then into adulthood."

According to Hebrard, his father taught him about work ethic, resiliency and how to be a grinder. "He has a lot of 'Mike-isms' that are top notch, but one is that 'You got to know the bus route home.'"

Hebrard didn't have the sports turf bug coming out of high school, because it was something he had already been working on for six years. At that time, his heart and soul were focused on playing baseball, and he was following his father's advice to "play as long as you can."

And for Hebrard, college was all about baseball — first at Feather River College in Quincy, California, where he played for CP & T-Baum. Then on to Missouri Western State University as a utility player (pitcher and corner infielder) for the Griffons under head coach Charles "Buzz" Verduzco. Along the way, Hebrard was first-team all-league at every level of baseball he ever played.

But after college — and after baseball — he returned home and went to work with Mike; adding that, most of the time, he and Mike work best from opposite ends of the field.

Through his baseball and work experiences, he learned about communicating to a team, handling different management styles, how to coexist with others and the importance of team chemistry.

Taking what he learned from his father, coaches, mentors and other professionals, Hebrard took a job working in the NFL at FedEx Field in Washington, D.C., and from there a stint with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Having seen the freedom and success his father had in running his own business, Hebrard decided to branch out on his own and build a new company — Athletic Applications (AA). He initially focused on painting synthetic turf and developed a niche in the market.

"I reached out to my supplier and let him know that I was in California and to let me know of any leads that come through," said Hebrard. "That was the start of AA."

Hebrard's father routed some projects his way; he built his relationships and connections through SFMA; and with the help of his wife, Lindsay, jobs began to trickle in. They moved to Phoenix and grew the business.

"Sports are huge in that city," Hebrard said of the decision to be based in Phoenix. "It's year round. There's a lot of turf management, a lot of natural grass. It's exciting times."

Hebrard now has five trusted employees he calls "The starting five" — stating that he is just the sixth man. The starting five is composed of "The Barber, Iceman, Smitty, Wardog and The Company Man."





"They are the lifeblood guys that I can trust," said Hebrard; adding that the company also relies on subcontractors for certain projects that require specialized equipment. "I'm not going to try to do it all myself. Sharing is very important to me. Tying guys in on projects where you know they could have success and work with different people; that's why I do it."

According to Hebrard, business is split fairly evenly between local projects in the Phoenix area and projects throughout other parts of the country — usually dependent upon inventory and supplies in other states or regions. Athletic Applications specializes in line and logo painting on synthetic and natural surfaces, field layout/ renovations, baseball specialty projects, turf management programs, and athletic facility branding. Hebrard enjoys the artistic side of the industry and finds inspiration from many places.

"Scrolling through Twitter, I saw a post from Ryan Nagy — the Tamp Champ," he said. "I've never met him in person, but I saw he had posted this very simple photo of a clean edge. It was conditioner on top of packed infield clay alongside beautifully manicured turf. That is art. We love the logos, but then you realize having that clean edge with the transition you can't feel with your foot is as artistic as anything."

When it comes to running a business, Hebrard says that the biggest challenge is the sheer physical demands of the job — not only the demands of working in the Phoenix heat, but mobilization, getting to and from out-of-state jobs, and meeting demanding event schedules and deadlines.

And although launching and running a business has had its challenges, Hebrard and Lindsay faced a greater challenge when their daughter Mackenzie was

born prematurely, weighing only 15 ounces. Mackenzie spent nearly a year in the hospital, more than two years on a ventilator, and dealt with a feeding tube, surgeries, transfusions and more.

"She just survived it," said Hebrard. "It really put things into perspective and lit our path. God gives you trials, and you just live in the moment. You don't know why they're presented to you in the way that they are, but then you come out so much stronger."

Mackenzie inspired the formation of the Kenzie Kares Foundation (<https://kenziekaresfoundation.com/>), a 501(c)(3) that celebrates her story and supports families who are "enduring the journey of the neonatal intensive care unit." Now five years old, Mackenzie is the true star in Hebrard's life. "She is just the light," he said.

Hebrard credits his mom, Kim, and wife, Lindsay, for helping him keep calm through an extremely difficult time. And amid Mackenzie's birth and through

the challenge of the COVID pandemic,

Hebrard successfully launched Athletic Applications, and has grown the company to the point that he now handles major projects on a national level.

"Everything's growing right now," he said. "I'm just trying to treat people right. At the end of the day, relationships matter.

Your relationship with Christ matters, your relationships with your wife and your daughter or your kids matter. How you treat your parents and your grandparents matters. How you treat people you work alongside matters. The goal for me is to impact people and have a good time together."

Bringing it full circle, when asked about being named a *SportsField Management* Rising Star, Hebrard said that it's not about trophies on the mantle or features in a magazine — even though that's definitely a perk.

"It's about connecting with people," he said. "It's an exciting time to be in the industry, and I'm just floating among the stars." **SFM**



What their nominator had to say:

"Andy is a great resource, helping others with knowledge and equipment. He gets facilities and grounds personnel to better maintain their facilities, and he supports organizations with sponsorship and training."



Morgan Hunter

Director of field services, Quad Cities River Bandits

Fairly early in life, Morgan Hunter set her sights on a career in turfgrass and has never looked back.

Hunter, director of field services for the Quad Cities River Bandits (High-A affiliate of the Kansas City Royals), grew up in the small farming community of Assumption, Illinois — pretty much smack dab in the middle of the state. Her grandparents owned a farm, but Hunter knew it was not big enough to support multiple generations.

In high school, Hunter was already helping her softball coach with field maintenance when an FFA trip to St. Louis sold her on a career in turfgrass.

“I’m a big Cardinals fan, and I Googled ‘How do I work on the field at Busch Stadium?’ Turfgrass popped up, and I didn’t really think of anything else from that moment on,” said Hunter. “That was sophomore year in high school. Some of my friends didn’t know what they wanted to do, and I was set on what I wanted.”



Following high school, Hunter attended Lake Land College, a community college about an hour from her hometown, and also worked at a golf course in Moweaqua, Illinois. From Lake Land, Hunter transferred to Ohio State University for her bachelor's degree, and eventually did internships with the Chicago Cubs and Billings Mustangs.

Following graduation from OSU in the fall of 2019, Hunter was supposed to embark on a year-long internship with the Indianapolis Indians, but that got cut short only two months in due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She returned home to Assumption, went to work on a hog farm, and gave herself a deadline of getting a job by a certain point.

Hunter searched the SFMA job board and found a job as assistant groundskeeper for the Columbia (S.C.) Fireflies (Single-A affiliate of the Kansas City Royals). She spent one season as assistant groundskeeper for the Fireflies, was promoted to head groundskeeper, and spent a season in that role before moving on to Quad Cities as director of field services.

At Modern Woodmen Park, home of the River Bandits, Hunter oversees all grounds — including the field and approximately an acre of berms. She is assisted by Robert Jump, who mows and performs other maintenance tasks, and a game day crew of 5 to 7 people — which this year included a large percentage of high school students.

Hunter describes her role as, “Day-to-day maintenance of the baseball field, trying to make sure it's safe and playable and looks pretty.”

She has succeeded in that effort. Since Hunter took the reins at Modern Woodmen Park, USA Today named it the country's “Best Minor League Ballpark (2024).”

Now Hunter adds a *SportsField Management Rising Star Award* to her accolades. And, according to Hunter, being recognized by her peers means everything.

“Awards are cool, but it's how you make people feel and the people that you work with that's really cool,” she said. “I struggle sometimes with thinking that I'm a leader or might have any kind of influence in this industry. Even just being nominated is an honor, and getting to win one of the awards is really cool. It really does mean so much to me since it is from peers in the industry; and to hear what they said really made me feel good. I try to make it a point to be a good friend and leader whenever I can. I am very grateful to everyone who had any part in me being considered for, let alone receiving, a Rising Star award.”



As a leader, Hunter's advice to the next generation of sports field managers is to just get your feet wet and see what the industry encompasses.

"Kids might have an internship and think we're working six hours. They have no clue that I'm here at 8:30 a.m. on game days and I'm here until 11 p.m. or later," she said. "I also think it's about getting your start wherever you can. I started on a golf course even though I knew I didn't want to go into golf. But at least it got me into the industry."

"When I'm working with high school students, I teach them why we're doing what we are doing so they can learn and understand the process," she added. "There's a reason behind everything."

The lessons Hunter shares are lessons she learned from others, including Matt Williams, Hunter's Turf Club advisor at Ohio State, whom she credits with pushing her outside of her comfort zone.

During Hunter's time at Ohio State, the Chicago Cubs were conducting an interview tour at various university turfgrass programs to identify potential interns. Said Hunter, "I told Matt, 'I can't do this; I've never had a turf internship — the golf course was the extent of my experience.' He said, 'You just have to go for it and try. You can't tell yourself no. At least try.' He was a huge, huge part in my career. He was very helpful not only from an academic standpoint, but he also cared about us as students and people in the world."

Another of Hunter's mentors was Jeff Limburg with the Billings Mustangs.

"My first day in Billings, Jeff was like 'Can you go mow the field?' I said, 'I haven't mowed a baseball field before.' He's like, 'Oh, you got it.' He had blind trust in me from the start. It scared the crap out of me, but he taught me a lot out there," she said.

The support of others in the industry is something that carries on for Hunter, and is, to her, the best part of the job.

"I enjoy coming to work and I enjoy the manual labor and going home after a long day on the field," she said. "But at the end of the day, it's the other people. I've got people all over the country, and they're all willing to help."

When not on the job, Hunter enjoys golfing, hunting and spending time with her family and friends. On the job, Hunter had to adjust quickly to being in charge.

"I never envisioned myself to be a head groundskeeper in my second year in Minor League Baseball," she said. "That was a huge shock and a very big adjustment for me. I pictured being five or eight years in trying to go for a head spot. This was an opportunity I couldn't pass up, but it was hard — especially being a woman in turf."

"I have this pressure that I put on myself because I care about my job and just want to do a good job," Hunter added. "But I also want to represent other women in the industry and young groundskeepers in general. Part of that was being willing to admit that I need help or looking for information that I might need. It's not just 'I'm a head groundskeeper and I know it all.' That is the farthest thing from the truth. I think being willing to learn and ask questions was important, because I'm a very reserved person. I don't enjoy going out of my comfort zone a lot; but in this case I needed to do it not only for my job, but to be a good representative of young groundskeepers and women in turf."

Through it all, Hunter has been a great representative of young sports field managers and women in turf — one who has earned the respect and recognition of her peers.

"I'm just proud of myself for all that I've learned and for becoming a good leader," she said. "There's a lot I'm proud of. I don't know if that sounds cocky, but I think I'm doing an okay job, so I'm pretty happy with that." **SFM**

What their nominator had to say:

"Morgan is a force for change in sports field management and SFMA. As a leader, she is resilient and levelheaded. Passionate about maintaining pristine playing surfaces and elevating industry standards, she tirelessly works to enhance every facet of her profession. Morgan's unwavering dedication and relentless pursuit of excellence make her a deserving candidate for recognition."

Danny Losito, CSFM

Director, sports fields & grounds, Tepper Sports & Entertainment



Rising Star Award Winner Danny Losito, CSFM, is at the top of the game. As director of sports fields and grounds for Tepper Sports & Entertainment, Losito oversees Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina, as well as the practice facilities for the stadium's tenants — the NFL's Carolina Panthers and Charlotte FC of Major League Soccer.

Despite having already attained such a coveted position in professional sports, Losito pursued — and attained — CSFM certification from SFMA in 2023.

"If you're at this level, it's not about you," said Losito. "It's about pushing the industry forward and trying to increase professionalism standards. It's easy to just go to work and do your job and not care about the industry.

But I like the industry; I like to network and I love the people who are in it. It's a way for me to stay involved, keep myself accountable and set an example for people."

Losito also stays involved in the industry by helping his peers with NFL International Series games and preparation for the Super Bowl. He helped launch a co-op internship program in North Carolina and hosts young professionals and students — such as those from the Brentsville HS Turfgrass Management Program — at his facility.

"You get high school kids who don't know yet if they want to work in turf," he said. "A lot of them don't end up in turf, which is okay. What I like is that they're aware that this is an industry. They might go on to work in sports or at a facility. They may not be

a groundskeeper, but they know the effort and the hard work that goes into it. And that's awareness, that's respect, and that goes a long way in spreading awareness of the industry in general."

In addition to hosting students at the facility, Losito also brings in outside contractors, industry peers and other groundskeepers of all skill sets, levels and sports as a labor source.

"We don't use a part-time staff, and I don't have a game day crew. When we get into conversions from sport to sport or sport to concert, we use peers," he said.

Based on the strength of those connections, Losito's advice to others is, "Don't be afraid to network. Don't be afraid to reach out to people. Don't be afraid to try new things. And don't be afraid to move around."

That last piece of advice is something Losito learned from SFMA Past-President Jimmy Simpson, CSFM. It is advice that led Losito, who wanted to be in professional sports, on his coast-to-coast journey through the sports field management industry.

A native of Cary, North Carolina, Losito's original career plans were far from sports field management. But an interest in art spurred thoughts of a career in architecture then the idea of landscape architecture, which in a roundabout way led to realizing sports field management is a career option.

After two years at Wake Tech Community College, Losito went on to NC State for a degree in turfgrass science. During college he did an internship with USA Baseball (in Cary, N.C.) under Simpson, and followed that up with an internship for the Washington Nationals.

Upon graduation from NC State, Losito wanted to broaden his skill set, work with different turfgrass types and under different event loads. So, he journeyed to San Diego and took a seasonal position with the Padres, experiencing the grind of an MLB season. From there, he shifted to Minor League Baseball and a position with the Reno Aces working for Joe Hill, who Losito credits with teaching him about the people side of the business.

Following his stint with the Aces, Losito took the head groundskeeper job with the Columbia Fireflies — a position he deems the single most important move of his career.

"It allowed me to prove to myself that I can do it on my own," he said. "Have all the management, the weight, the pressure and start to learn how to manage the business and manage the people. It tested me physically and mentally."

Having experienced the heavy lift of Minor League Baseball, Losito was then offered a first assistant position at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, and





headed back to the West Coast to manage the fields for the USC Trojans and Los Angeles Rams.

"All those moves were moving upward, expanding skill set experience and chasing a more well-rounded resume," said Losito. "I went there with the intent of working football for a while and seeing where it took me."

Where it took him was back home to North Carolina and a first assistant position with the Carolina Panthers under longtime head groundskeeper Tom Vaughan. Losito served in that role from 2020 until April 2022, at which time he was promoted to his current position as director of sports fields and grounds. He now oversees all sports field and landscape operations for Bank of America Stadium, as well as natural grass fields at the Panthers practice facility, four natural grass and two synthetic turf fields at the Charlotte FC training facility and a new Panthers indoor fieldhouse that is coming next year.

According to Losito, balancing the overlap of the NFL and MLS seasons can be tricky. What makes that challenge more manageable is the 11 skilled full-time staff members on his crew.

"We have three managers — one for each property — a coordinator at each site, and then a crew of assistants at each as well," he said. "We have four at soccer and, with me, we have eight at the stadium and practice fields. We are

all one department over two campuses. When we need to help each other or when we need excess labor, we can all come together as a group of 12 or we can split up into groups of four or eight."

In addition to his crew, Losito also cares for their "shop cat," affectionately named Little Purr (or LP) in homage to the Panthers' mascot, Sir Purr. "A couple months ago, she was hiding under a mower at the practice fields," said Losito. "She popped into our lives, and now she hangs out in the office with me during the day and comes home at night."

LP serves as "therapy cat" for those who visit Losito's office. And, according to Losito, workplace culture is a priority. He hires predominantly based on character and fit with the team culture, with the intent of teaching his staff any needed skills.

"We work a lot of long hours, and call a lot of audibles throughout the schedule and throughout the week," he said. "We serve two teams and event loads here, so a lot of things change on the fly. We get a lot of weather interruptions, so everyone has to be willing to work in adverse conditions and on short notice. But they are good people — honest, hardworking, dedicated and driven."

When all is said and done, the fields are painted and the hard work comes to life, Losito encourages his team to look at the fruits of their labor and take pride in what they do.

"It's hot out, you're working long days and maybe it takes a few days to get everything painted and set up," he said. "But then you take a step back and get to see it — that's the most rewarding. Getting to see the crew have that same pride is probably the most fulfilling moment." **SFM**

What their nominator had to say:

"Danny leads as a teacher, and wants everyone around him to be better and grow alongside him. He possesses qualities that allow not only the younger generation to look up to him, but the older generation to take notice and advice from him as well. Danny is a Rising Star because of his impact on not only his organization, but the turf industry as well."

Jake Mays

Director of grounds at The Westminster Schools

When it comes to sports field management, Jake Mays was “born into it.”

As the only child of two high school head coaches, Mays was always around sports. He played football, baseball and golf in high school and spent time working on his parents’ fields — maintaining the baseball field and painting the football field in the fall. He even switched from playing football to playing golf so he could spend more time working on the football field.

“I definitely had a more direct path than most,” said Mays. “When I was in high school, I knew turfgrass management was the thing, and Virginia Tech was the goal, so I continued to do as much as I could.”

Mays, who now serves as director of grounds at The Westminster Schools in Atlanta, achieved his goal of attending, and earning his degree from, Virginia Tech.

Said Mays, “I had three internships — two in college and one post college. I did a summer with the Boston Red Sox, a summer with the Washington Nationals, and then, after graduation, a season-long internship at the Seahawks practice facility in Seattle.”

From there, Mays got a job at The Lovett School, but the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a move back home to Fredericksburg, Virginia. Mays was contemplating leaving the sports field management industry altogether when the Fredericksburg Nationals moved to a new stadium in his hometown. He took a job with the team and was able to spend a season in Minor League Baseball, helping get the new facility up and running.

“I met a girl, moved to Raleigh, and spent about eight months with Nolan Thomas and Company out of Oxford, North Carolina, doing field construction all over

the East Coast,” said Mays. “I was enjoying doing the field construction stuff when I got a call in the spring of 2022 about my current position as the director of grounds here at The Westminster Schools — a K-12 private school outside of Atlanta. I oversee all the grounds and athletic fields operations here.”

Mays and seven other full-time members of the grounds department maintain the 200-acre campus, including all grounds, flowers and shrubbery, with Mays and two other members of the team focusing on the athletic and performance fields.

“It is a demanding place that expects very high-quality facilities that are an experience,” he said. “It has given me the resources to be able to grow a lot — not just as a turf manager, but as a landscaper and horticulturist as well, because there are so many aspects to the properties we own. I wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

In terms of the athletic fields, Mays and his team maintain a stadium performance field for football, soccer and lacrosse, as well as baseball and softball fields and three natural grass practice fields.

“We are all natural grass here except for one practice field that we use for a mix of different events,” he added. “We are all bermudagrass in the fall, and overseed with perennial rye. We’re lucky enough that we don’t really host on our performance field too much in the summertime. We use it in the springtime, three to four nights a week, with lacrosse and soccer from all levels. Then in fall for football we play middle school, JV and varsity football out there. It definitely sees its wear throughout the year.”

When Mays arrived at The Westminster Schools, he brought with him a new approach.

“I’ve been fortunate that we’ve been able to get some different equipment to go in the direction culturally that we wanted to go,” he said. “I was able to take bits and pieces from the experiences I’ve had and put them into place. I know how I want to run my staff and how I want things to be organized.

“I knew it was going to take time and I knew I had to win the respect of the people here — some who have been working here for more than 20 years,” Mays added. “I had to show that we are going to go in the right direction, and even though this is a demanding place with high expectations, it’s only going to get better the better we do.”



According to Mays, the best part of the job is the people — those with whom he works, those he has connected with throughout his career, and those who have impacted him along the way.

For Mays, it started with Dr. Mike Goatley at Virginia Tech. “He has been just such a great mentor throughout my entire career and still checks up on me,” said Mays. “And I’ve been fortunate enough that he picks up the phone when I call.

“You take bits and pieces from working with great people,” he added. “John Turnour at the Nationals made a huge impact and has been a big help in my career. Even when I was looking to get out of the industry, he let me know that I need to make the decision that was the best for me. I’m glad John talked me into staying in. I’ve been so lucky to work with so many good people and meet good friends.”

Outside of work, Mays is planning a wedding (for 2025) and spends a lot of time with his fiancée, at the lake, golfing, traveling to visit family and friends, or just hanging out with their dog “Turf.”

“We don’t have many weekends where we sit around and do nothing,” he said. “We like living in Atlanta — it was a big change coming from Virginia. Even though we’re in more of a suburban area, moving to a major city was a change. We’re looking to buy a house down here in the next year and try to make it more like home.”

Before moving to Atlanta, Mays was at a point in his career where he was tired of bouncing from place to place.

“I wanted to get somewhere and feel like I am a part of something,” he said. “I think I found that here. I take a lot of passion and pride in what I do. I work a lot, but I love being at work and I like to stay busy.

“I took this job thinking it was way bigger than me; but it will always be bigger than me and that’s fine,” he added. “I feel like I’m a part of something, and that’s been huge because I’m taking care of such a large campus that has been impactful for so many people. There’s a lot of other staff here that do amazing things. But just feeling like I finally have gotten into a place I can call home has been very cool, and I thoroughly enjoy it.”

Being part of something is important to Mays outside of his day job as well. He volunteers with the Georgia chapter SFMA, where he serves on the board of directors as K-12 director.

“The Georgia chapter struggled for a while, and we now have a group of people who have been able to revive it and bring it back to something we are all very proud of,” he said. “We’ve been able to expand the horizon and get more people involved.”

According to Mays, industry involvement is not only about giving back to the industry, but connecting with other industry professionals and building relationships.

“Everyone who maintains sports fields for a living is in the same boat,” he said. “Having other people to be able to lean on and call on when you’re trying to make decisions is huge.”

Being recognized as a Rising Star by those industry peers was unexpected for Mays, who labels himself as “an under-the-radar kind of guy.” But he is thrilled to be chosen for the award, and is grateful for the opportunity to reach others in the industry, help younger sports field managers grow and share his passion for his work.

“I just love what I do,” he said. “Being able to be outside every day and being involved in so many different aspects really makes it feel like you’re actually doing something. We are here to create an experience and bring a community together. People are proud to set foot on this campus. That is what I really enjoy most.” **SFM**



What their nominator had to say:

“Jake is one of the most passionate sports field managers I have ever met. He has worked at all levels of the industry where he has always tried to have a positive impact on the community around him – whether that means volunteering at local high schools to talking with high school students about the sports field management industry. He continues to bring the SFMA to the forefront and has created more opportunities for those around him to better understand what this industry is all about.”

Invest in Your Future: Join SFMA Today



The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) is the recognized leader in championing the sports field industry and its professionals.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

SFMA has specific membership categories for every professional in the sports field management industry.

- **Sports field manager:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining sports fields.
- **Sports field manager associate:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining a sports field(s) and your organization already has an SFMA sports field manager member employed.
- **Affiliate:** If you are indirectly or on a part-time basis involved in the maintenance/management of sports fields (coaches, athletic directors, volunteers, etc.).
- **Academic:** If you are in teaching, extension or research.
- **Student:** If you are a full-time student.
- **Commercial:** If you work for a company engaged in a commercial enterprise providing services and/or products to the sports field management profession (consultants, architects, designers, contractors, management companies, distributors and manufacturers, etc.).
- **Commercial associate:** If you are the second person (or more) from a commercial company (must first have an SFMA commercial member at their company before this lower-dues category can be selected).
- **Retired:** If you are retired and no longer seeking full-time employment within the scope of activities of any SFMA membership category, and have been a member for a minimum of five years, you may become a non-voting member of SFMA and are not eligible to hold elective office.

THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT REASONS TO JOIN SFMA

1. **Job security:** SFMA's programs and services proactively enhance your value to your employer.
2. **Career success:** SFMA's education and information help prepare you to take that next step in your career.
3. **Recognition of your professionalism:** In addition to the individual recognition you receive because of your good work, SFMA's advocacy with groups such as athletic directors, parks and recreation directors, coaches and parents enhances the image of the entire profession.



BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE AS AN SFMA MEMBER

- A network of peers who share their best practices.
- Opportunities for education.
- Quick access to information and resources.
- A monthly electronic newsletter that communicates association and industry information.
- Access to the Member's Only section of *sportsfieldmanagement.org*, which has a real-time membership directory and hundreds of technical educational resources.
- Access to Michigan State's Turfgrass Information File, a resource for up-to-date technical information.
- Ability to enter your field in the nationally recognized Field of the Year awards program.
- Opportunity to become a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and to have your facility certified as environmentally responsible.
- Significant savings on registration to SFMA's annual and regional conferences, and discounts to other organizations' education.
- Opportunity to participate in volunteer leadership positions.
- Opportunity to join one of SFMA's affiliated chapters for a strong local network. (Each chapter sets its own local dues.)
- Purchase SFMA branded apparel.
- *SportsField Management Magazine* each month.
- The ability to apply for scholarships (students only).
- Discounted exhibitor booth at the annual conference (commercial members only).

For more information, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/why-join-stma/> **SFM**

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

ANSWER

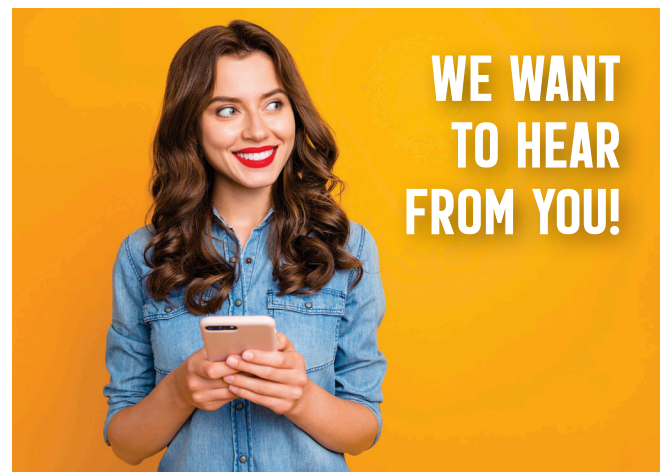
From page 17

This brown circular area on the NFL practice field in Houston, Texas is the result of a stationary tackling dummy that sits on a weighted tire that the team uses in practice drills. The training staff for the team has been using these dummies for many years now, and this was the first time they had ever seen this happen. The model they were using had oil in the tire located on the bottom of the unit for stability and additional weight — presumably to create a heavier base. Somehow, during practice, the tire popped off the rim and leaked the oil onto the field. The grounds crew saw the oil the day of the spill, so they tried to wash it through the soil profile with soap and water. The damage appeared over the next few days and progressively got worse. To ensure there were no future issues, the crew drained all the remaining oil out of this unit and washed the inside of the tire out. They then replaced the oil with water in this unit, as well as repeating this process with the other units the team uses for practices. Due to the damage, the crew also had to resod the area with thick cut sod from their turf supplier. Unfortunately, you never know when a dummy is going to take a leak on your field.

Photo submitted by Jonathan Wolf, assistant sports fields and grounds manager with ASM Global/Houston Texans. Kevin Hansen is the sports fields manager.

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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1995

In this retrospective, we take a look back at historic issues of *SportsTurf* magazine, predecessor to *SportsField Management* magazine. This edition of Accessing the Archives examines 1995, a year in which field safety was a recurring theme.

The January 1995 issue highlighted Broward County School District's Ed Birch, who earned the *SportsTurf* Man of the Year Award that year for his track record of creating safe playing surfaces. Under his leadership, the district's 80 fields went more than a decade without recording a single injury to the athletes. Birch, who helped found the first Florida STMA chapter gave credit for the safety record to the efforts of his crew.

In February, the magazine focused on preparing infields, basepaths, pitcher's mounds and batter's boxes, and also shared mowing tips, including cutting heights, frequency and mowing patterns. The

February issue also featured an article by Ken Mrock of the Chicago Bears on handling the challenges of sports field management in the Chicago climate, including seeding, fertilization and dealing with cold weather.

March 1995 focused on aeration strategies to reduce compaction, field covers and hybrid bermudagrass, among other topics.

Safety audits were detailed in the April issue, with an emphasis on being "prudent, reasonable and consistent." "If groundskeepers are prudent and reasonable in their maintenance...if they do the best they can with what they've got, and they do it in a consistent manner, then they may be free of liability," the article stated. The April issue shared results of a 1995 NFL player survey that revealed that 85 percent of NFL players preferred to play on natural grass. Seventy percent of the players also indicated that playing on a natural grass surface was either very important or somewhat important in

selecting the teams they would consider signing with as free agents. At

the time, 93 percent of players felt that artificial turf was more likely than grass to contribute to injury, 91 percent believed artificial turf was more likely to shorten their careers, and 90 percent believed artificial turf was more likely to worsen their quality of life after football.





The May 1995 issue of *SportsTurf* featured two articles about Coors Field, as well as content on tall fescue, insect damage and monitoring, and integrated systems for controlling aquatic weeds. The June issue, meanwhile, delved into spreaders and sprayers, wetting agents, integrated pest management and guidelines for summer mowing.

The cover story for the July 1995 issue was about measuring field playability and how World Cup Soccer's Architectural, Construction and Turf team measured the performance of fields as it relates to athlete performance — with the goal being consistent playing surfaces across all World Cup venues. “The field performance was to be such that a world-class soccer player could be blindfolded and not be able to feel a difference between them,” the article stated.

Safety was again the focus in the August issue, but this time as it related to safe surfaces for turfgrass horse racing tracks. “Though these thousand-pound competitors may look sturdy, they have vulnerable stress points, particularly in the legs. The horse requires some degree of give in the surface both to help absorb some of the stress and to provide a stable base from which to push off with the movement of the fetlock (the ankle of a horse) that leads into the next stride.”

The article went on to detail soil requirements, moisture characteristics and turf selection.

October 1995 took a look at subsurface heating systems, mid-season sodding, erosion control, turf disease prevention and winter prep; and November/December 1995 wrapped up the year with an industry “report card” of several new or renovated fields, including Coors Field, Jacobs Field, Joe Robbie Stadium and Kauffman Stadium. **SFM**

All content for this section is pulled from the SportsTurf/SportsField Management archives, an ongoing cooperative project of EPG Media, SFMA and the Michigan State University Libraries. Public access to the archive from 1985 to the present (less two months) is available at <https://sturf.lib.msu.edu/index.html>.



MPSFMA, Minnesota Twins and Toro partner on community service project



More than 20 Minnesota Park and Sports Field Management Association (MPSFMA) members teamed with the Minnesota Twins and The Toro Company on September 5 for a community service project at Dunning Sports Complex in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Work performed by volunteers included measuring bases and aerification on the Dunning East, West and South softball fields along with Jim Kelly and Billy Peterson Little League fields and mound modification on the Toni Stone Field.

MPSFMA members worked alongside the Twins, Toro and the City of St. Paul for this project. MLB Hall of Fame catcher Joe Mauer showed up to show his appreciation of the efforts of more than 60 people at the St. Paul site. The project helped make the complex that Mauer, Dave Winfield, Jack Morris and Paul Molitor once played at even better than it already was.

Also on hand were St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter and Minnesota House Representative Rep. Samakab Hussein.



"We are committed to providing our young people in St. Paul with super-high-quality facilities in this community," said Carter. "There is no magic wand, the city can't do it all alone."

MPSFMA President Trenton Waters, grounds manager for the Minnesota Twins, said the fields were chosen due to the MLB and Hall of Fame connections, and the amount of traffic the fields receive.

"We're doing a lot of work today to renovate this field," he said. "New base anchors, new mound, reset home plate, bring the field level, edge everything, cleanup around the fields and all the fence lines."

"Toro is a massive help with equipment, and all the volunteers are highly skilled and committed to raising the quality of these fields," he added. "There are a lot of people in our association who care. We could do a lot in this community."

MPSFMA issued a special thanks to Toro's Liz Ramirez and Marnie Wells for their efforts in making the day possible.

According to Edric Funk, Toro's group VP of golf, grounds and irrigation, the work performed improved the safety and playability of the fields, enhanced the efficiency of ongoing maintenance, created beautiful playing surfaces, and celebrated Mauer's Hall of Fame induction while also celebrating the young athletes who enjoy these fields.

The scope of the work included the following:

- Dunning softball fields: Reset the base anchors, home plate and pitching rubbers (three fields) and aerated the outfield grass.

- Jim Kelly Field: Revamped the bullpens and new plates and rubbers, painted wooden bleachers, installed Under Guard along the fence lines and aerated the outfield grass.

- Billy Peterson Field: Added ag lime and regraded; aerated the infield and outfield; edged; lightly topdressed and overseeded infield grass; sodded around the mound; did a mound re-do with ag lime and new pitching rubber; added a new home plate; revamped the bullpens and added a new rubber and plate; added a retaining wall behind the dugout; cleaned up garden areas, re-mulched and added Under Guard under all the fencing.

"The whole spirit is to give back and to support underfunded fields," said MPSFMA's Joe Churchill, fields and grounds specialist for Reinders, Inc. "It's nice for us to share what we know with the city and all working here. There is so much sports field knowledge here today. It's a day well spent. And the corporate sponsorship is a huge bonus."

Said Derek Hollanitsch, St. Paul Parks and Recreation Division maintenance crew leader, "When people walk by or drive by, they see the stripes and the manicured field and they know it's a good field. The work we do allows all sorts of people to enjoy these fields. I want to give people a fine field to play on every day. It's my passion." **SFM**

– Report and photos by Glenn Hansen



The following are photos and posts pulled from industry social media feeds during the past month.

Scan the QR code for links to all of our feeds and connect with us.



@SportsTurfSun

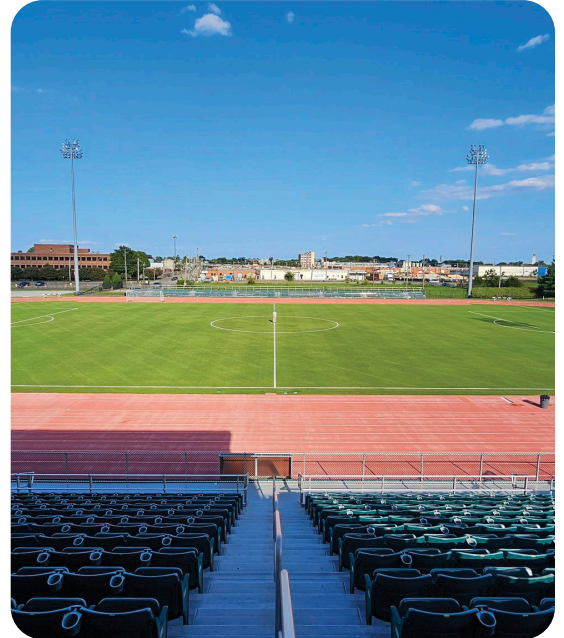
Football 2024 is underway! 27 regular season games scheduled this year. Let's go! #BestOffice #FieldExperts



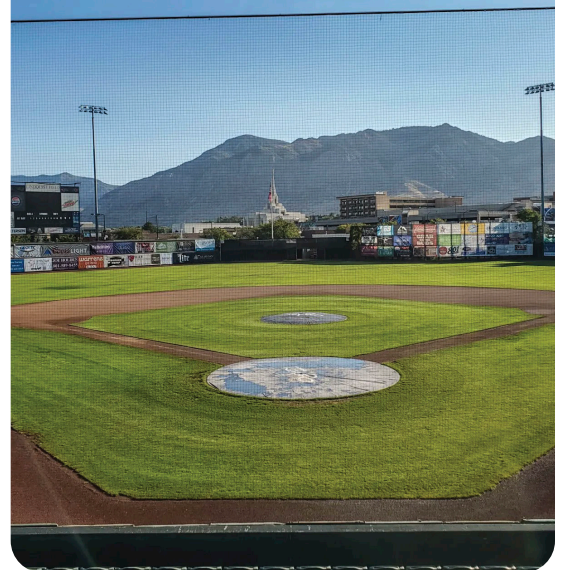


@DamonDaniels

Spent the day getting Sports Backers Stadium ready for the first home games for @VCUWomensSoccer and @VCUMensSoccer. Solid cut on the @Tahoma31Bermuda by my guy @Hammy_Wammy_34, seen here at midfield. Laser lines by yours truly. #fieldexperts #soccer #footballpitch



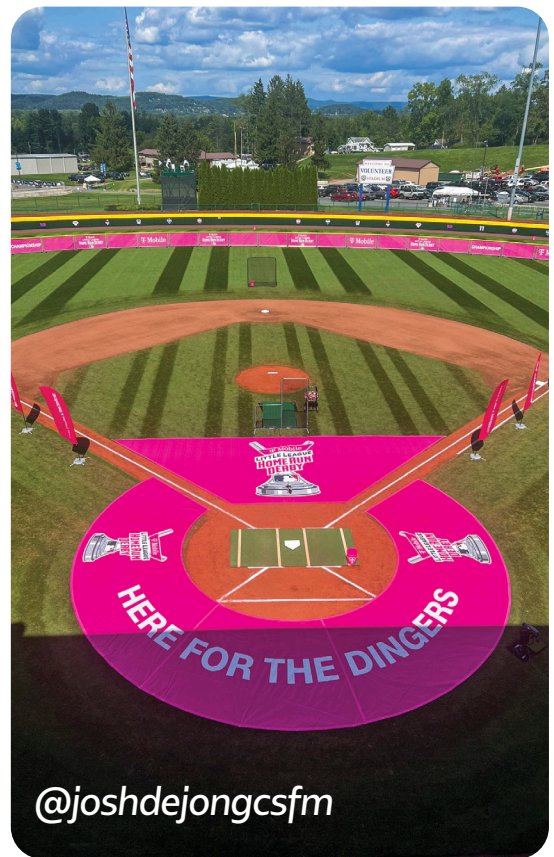
@1LegSportsField





@cookmurray

First logo on asphalt #SpeedwayClassic August 2, 2025
Reds Vs Braves! #ItsBristolBaby



@MNUFC

The grass is greener at Highwood Hills. Today we came together with @TheToroCompany for a Pitch Rebuild at Highwood Hills Rec Center in St. Paul. Huge shoutout to Toro and our front office staff who put in the work this afternoon for the community.

**@CREEDY95**

What a great weekend honoring the Todd Father!! The crew killed it!!! PC: @KyleCoopah #itsabouttheTEAMnotYOU #rockies #halloffamer #MLB #coorsfield

**@paul_pburgess**

Dethatchers and Verticutters

GKB COMBITOOL FROM STEC

Are you looking for a great tool to keep your natural and synthetic sports turf in top condition quickly and easily? Promote stolon growth and break through thatch layer in your natural turf? The GKB Combtool combines several operations in one machine. It comes standard with a brush, rake, splitter and roller. Chemical-free maintenance of your surfaces requires more mechanical field management — the brush, rake and splitter are well suited for this. For synthetic turf, utilize the Combtool to redistribute infill, stand fibers back up and break up compaction. The standard base frame mounts four tools, which can be customized to your field needs by using these tools in a variety of combinations. Switching between the tools is quick and easy. Each tool can be independently set to the desired depth, ensuring optimal results. Four width variants are available, ranging from 48 to 79 inches, depending on what tractor works best for you.



JOHN DEERE VERTICUTTERS

The John Deere QA5 and QA7 verticutters offer precise and consistent verticutting depths. The QA5 comes with 5-inch verticutter blades set on a 3/4" standard spacing, featuring durable carbide tips for long-lasting performance. The QA7 is equipped with 7-inch blades on a 1-1/8" spacing. Both models boast an easy-to-use depth adjustment system. Their patented Speed Link system connects both ends of the rear roller with a spring-loaded rod and

worm gears, allowing for simultaneous adjustments from either end of the rear roller. Additionally, the front roller's simple design helps align it with the blades for optimal results.



Optional scrapers for both front and rear rollers maintain depth consistency, which is crucial for effective slicing of rhizomes and stolons, encouraging new growth, and topdressing incorporation.

POWER TURF RENOVATION PTO-60 SPORTS

FIELD RENOVATOR

The PTO-60 Sports Field Renovator is a tractor-PTO-powered natural grass renovation machine. In just one pass it will remove the problematic infield lip on a baseball or softball field (without removing the grass), dethatch, aerate, verticut and level grass. Using this machine will significantly reduce irrigation costs while promoting healthy growth. 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

The Verti-Cut series from Redexim features heavy-duty construction and industry-leading 1.18-inch blade spacing, making it perfect for light and heavy applications. It features precise depth adjustment and carbide-tipped blades. The Verti-Cut is available in 51-, 63- and 79-inch working widths. A max working depth of 1.96 inches and operating speeds up to 4 mph will make your verticutting jobs

smooth and efficient. As little as a 20-hp. tractor can operate the smallest Verti-Cut. Available options include a 3mm carbide-tipped blade and rear anti-scalp roller.



REDEXIM VERTI-RAKE

The Verti-Rake is a dethatching tool with multiple applications. This tool can be used on many different surfaces including natural grass, synthetic turf and hybrid turf surfaces. It features spring tines that can be precisely set to dethatch according to the sports field manager's program. The angle of the tine can also be adjusted to match the application. The Verti-Rake is used to lightly dethatch or

used as a renovation tool to prepare for seeding. A 20-hp. tractor can operate the Verti-Rake with speeds up to 8 mph. Minimal moving parts make this tool easy to use and a must have for quick and easy dethatching.



THATCHMASTER BY TURFTIME EQUIPMENT

The ThatchMaster commercial-grade verticutter delivers a beautiful cut that removes excess thatch, allowing gas exchange and facilitating water infiltration. For more than 35 years ThatchMaster has been improving athletic fields from coast to coast. ThatchMaster's extremely strong construction reduces maintenance to a minimum. The ThatchMaster dethatcher/verticutter is ideal for heavy-duty dethatching on fairways, ball fields and large sports complexes, or fine verticutting on golf greens. Most importantly, the standard carbide tip blades slice through turf for fast healing, getting you back in play quickly. With four sizes to choose from, there is a size that is practical for your application. A 20- to 25-hp. tractor will easily power



the smaller TM-3600 and TM-4800. Larger TM-6000 and TM-7200 units will require a little more power. Deeper slicing may also require more power.

TRILO M4 FROM STEC

The Trilo M4 vacuum mower/sweeper, available from STEC, with the change of a rotor, is able to serve sports field managers throughout every season. The M4 can be fitted with a flail mowing rotor, as well as a verticutting rotor for the spring and summer months when grass is growing rapidly. This rotor can be replaced with a brush rotor for sweeping up leaves in the fall. The large hopper on this machine provides 4.3 cubic yards of capacity and is equipped with a high dump point for easy disposal of collected



material and debris into most standard containers. The Trilo M4 comes standard with a 6.5-yard suction hose that is perfect for collecting litter and unwanted materials from fence lines, drainage grates, next to buildings or other hard-to-reach areas.

WOOD BAY TURF TECHNOLOGIES DYNABLADES

Wood Bay Turf Technologies' dynaBLADES with tungsten carbide tips are long lasting and are manufactured to fit most OEM mower and dethatching heads — saving time and money. Precision, durability and quality allow the dynaBLADE to stand the test of time. Each dynaBLADE is made with the highest quality hand-picked steel, and laser-cut to our exacting specifications for superior toughness and wear. Tungsten carbide tips protect blades from abrasion for extended life and maintain a consistent cutting depth. Optional cutting widths meet local turf conditions. With dynaBLADES, you will have



fewer mower verticut head height adjustments and blade replacements. Convert your old mower into a dedicated verticutter.

WOOD BAY TURF TECHNOLOGIES FDS 9200 TURF DETHATCHER/CONDITIONER

The fds series turf dethatchers from Wood Bay Turf Technologies are engineered to handle a variety of surfaces, from the contours and undulations of a golf course to the flat surfaces associated with grass or dirt sports fields. No longer limited to using tractors, the latest series of dethatchers

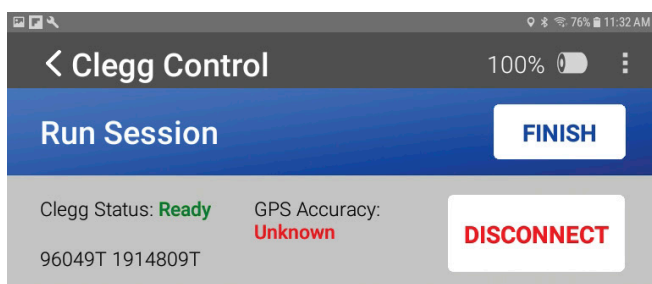
offers a Quad (ATV) transportation option. The fds series turf dethatchers reduce the G-Rating in synthetic athletic fields. The fds series turf dethatchers have spring-loaded tines to help create tour-quality fairway turf conditions and relieve sports field or track surface compaction. They quickly allow water and fertilizer to penetrate the rootzone, as well as quicken germination of all types of grass seed. **SFM**



Clegg Impact Tester app

Turf-Tec International announced that the newly released Clegg Impact Tester app for Android and iOS allows users to wirelessly connect the FieldScout TDR350 Moisture Sensor or the Mascaro Infill Cleat Depth Tester. For natural grass areas, this will allow users to receive Gmax readings by Bluetooth from the Clegg, as well as moisture readings from the TDR350 as you test surface areas. For synthetic turf surfaces, you can also receive Gmax readings by Bluetooth from the Clegg, as well as infill depth readings from the Mascaro Infill Cleat Depth Tester on areas tested. The app also GPS maps these readings, and allows exporting into .CSV format for recording and reporting purposes.

Additional information can be found at <https://store.turf-tec.com/Clegg.html>



Site
Office

Current Drop Location
2

NEXT
LOCATION

Infill/Cleat Depth Value
0.286 in

Drop Locations +
1: 1 43 g
2: 2 43 g
3: 3 NA

Peak Drop

43 g

Conditions

No Rain 24 hours

1: 43 g

Shear Strength

13

Altoz announces two new 2025 zero-turn models

Altoz introduced two new zero-turn mower models for 2025 designed for commercial users.

TRX 766 I

The 2025 TRX 766 i tracked zero-turn mower features a fully welded, wider front axle for enhanced durability and larger frame rails that reduce stress in critical areas. The TorqFlex front suspension features a new limited travel design and greaseable wheel and caster bearings. The reengineered rear undercarriage features improved heavy-duty bearings and seal design supported by a ground-contouring rear torsion axle for traction and a smooth ride. A new drive sprocket system powers a completely new TerraFlex track with heavy-duty drive links, reinforced with steel cables encased in vulcanized rubber that is impervious to sharp objects and stretching. This combination is key to a smooth ride and bridging the gaps found in rough terrain.

At the heart of the TRX 766 i is the Kawasaki FX EFI 38.5-hp. engine backed by a high/low ZT-5400 Hydro-Gear commercial transmission that reaches speeds up to 10 mph. The TRX also features a styled high-back suspension seat with armrests and 12-way adjustments including lumbar, weight and tilt. The TRX 766 i offers a choice between a finish cut Aero Deck and an All-Terrain Deck. The All-Terrain Deck features greaseable steel spindles and spindle guards that protect the spindle against damage and prevent debris from wrapping, which can harm seals.



This tracked mower is suited for maintaining areas you cannot mow safely with other equipment, including areas with slopes or soft terrains like dams, levies, water retention ponds, embankments, abandoned lots, roadsides, ditch bottoms, wetlands and solar fields.

XP 610 RDi

The new XP 610 RDi is based on the XP HD platform, featuring a rear-discharge deck to deliver a quality cut. Strategically placed internal baffles lift grass and disperse it efficiently and evenly to the rear of the mower, ensuring debris stays off walkways, driveways and roads.

When you need a high-performance commercial zero-turn mower, the XP 610 RDi is powered by Kawasaki's 852 cc FX EFI engine, boasting 29.5 hp., featuring electronic fuel injection for easy starting and increased fuel efficiency. Paired with the responsive Hydro-Gear ZT-4400 hydrostatic transmission, this combination propels the XP RDi model up to 11 mph.

The XP's 14-gallon gas capacity allows for extended mowing time.

Operator comfort starts with the 12-way adjustability of the high-back suspension seat with armrests. The rugged TorqFlex front suspension ensures a smooth ride, reducing operator fatigue. Standard flat-free front tires eliminated downtime.



New RedMax backpack blowers

The RedMax EBZ9000 backpack blower and RedMax EBZ9000 RH offer the industry's highest blow force. Designed to tackle heavy-duty leaf blowing tasks, it



delivers 1,245 cfm and 56 Newtons of blowing force to clear large areas of leaves and debris. An AutoTune feature automatically adjusts the electric carburetor, optimizing performance in varying weather and altitude conditions. Weighing just 26.5 pounds, the new RedMax models (the EBZ9000 is a frame-mounted throttle, and the EBZ9000-RH is a tube mounted throttle) feature cushioned, adjustable straps with reflective striping, a supportive hip belt and a ventilated back pad for all-day user comfort.

Yanmar launches new tractors

Yanmar America is unveiling three new SM tractor models. The SM240 is available in both a clutch-less hydrostatic transmission variant and a gear-driven variant. The new SM475 is Yanmar's highest horsepower tractor in North America.

SM240/SM240H

The SM240 models use Yanmar's TNV engine with an output of 36.9 horsepower. The front-end loader delivers more than 2,000 pounds of lift capacity. The SM240 prioritizes safety and convenience, featuring a foldable ROPS, a joystick-operated front-end loader, and an ergonomic operator station for style and comfort. The SM240H adds a clutch-free hydrostatic transmission for ease of use.

SM475

With an output of 74 horsepower, the SM475 is Yanmar's most powerful offering in North America, and combines advanced technology and luxury design. It features a clutch-less power shuttle transmission and allows adjustments to power steering, tilt, implements, and an optional joystick-controlled loader, without leaving the seat. It features a dual-entry deluxe cab, advanced climate control, ergonomic operator station with a digital command hub, and immersive audio system. **SFM**





SFMA Affiliated Chapters Contact Information

- Arizona SFMA:** www.azsfma.org
 - Colorado SFMA:** www.csfma.org
 - Florida #1 (South Florida STMA):** www.sfstma.com or Phil Busey (phil@philbusey.com)
 - Florida #2 (North Florida):** 850-580-4026, John Mascaro (john@turf-tec.com)
 - Florida #3 (Central Florida STMA):** www.CFSFMA.org or CentralFloridaSFMA@gmail.com
 - Gateway STMA:** gatewaystma.squarespace.com or info@gatewaystma.com
 - Georgia SFMA:** www.georgiastma.org or georgiasfma@gmail.com
 - Greater L.A. Basin SFMA:** www.sfmalabasin.com
 - Illinois STMA:** www.ilstma.org or illinoisstma@gmail.com
 - Intermountain Chapter STMA:** Gavin Gough (gavin.gough@utah.edu)
 - Iowa SFMA:** www.iowastma.org
 - Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org. (KAFMO):** www.kafmo.org
 - Mid-Atlantic SFMA:** www.masfma.org
 - Michigan SFMA:** www.misfma.org
 - Minnesota Park and Sports Field Management Association:** www.mpsfma.org
 - Mo-Kan STMA:** www.mokanstma.com
 - Nebraska SFMA** www.nebraskaturfgrass.com/n esfma
 - New England STMA:** www.nestma.org
 - North Carolina SFMA:** www.ncsportsturf.org
 - Northern California SFMA:** www.norcalstma.org
 - Ohio Turfgrass Foundation:** www.ohioturfgrass.org
 - Oklahoma STMA:** oksfmasecretary@gmail.com
 - Oregon STMA:** www.oregonsportsturfmanagers.org or oregonstma@gmail.com
 - Ozarks STMA:** Derek Edwards (dedwards@cardinals.com)
 - Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey:** www.sfmanj.org
 - Southern California SFMA:** www.socalsfma.com
 - South Carolina SFMA:** <https://scsfma.org/>
 - Tennessee Valley SFMA:** www.tvstma.org
 - Texas SFMA:** www.txstma.org
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- To find the chapter near you, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/interactive-chapter-map/>

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JOHN DEERE

Fall Renovation in Extreme Drought

Q: With no rain in the forecast, how can we renovate dead and dormant, non-irrigated athletic fields this fall to make sure we have playable fields in the spring of 2025?

A: This summer, severe drought has significantly impacted the central and eastern United States, with the Ohio River Basin being the hardest hit. Under drought conditions lasting two to four weeks, most cool-season grasses will go dormant but recover with adequate rainfall.

Recovery from normal summer dormancy with rain and cooler weather may take a couple of weeks for full green-up. For example, Kentucky bluegrass can stay dormant for several weeks due to active perennial parts like crowns and rhizomes, which can regenerate new shoots and roots. To check if your turfgrass is dormant or dead, examine the crown at the base of the plant above the soil. Hydrated crowns indicate the grass is still alive, while dehydrated and brittle crowns suggest it is dead.

The best time to do renovation work on cool-season fields is in the fall, but the success of fall renovation of non-irrigated fields relies upon timely rain to aid in seed germination and establishment. If there is no rain, the challenge becomes how to renovate so that grass is in place for spring sports. You have several options.

First, determine whether you will seed this fall, wait and apply seed as a “dormant seed” in late winter, or wait until spring 2025 to seed. The timing will depend entirely on whether rain is forecast before the fall renovation window closes. If drought conditions continue after the fall renovation window has closed, there are options to get grass into and onto the playing surface between now and spring.

Seed into the dead grass: Use a slit seeder or aerator to sow seed into the soil, deep enough to bypass the dormant/dead grass and thatch. Tall dead grass could be mowed low/scalped to lightly expose the soil surface. Fraise mowing would achieve the same result. For small areas such as goal mouths, a sod cutter could be used to slice under the dead grass and thatch layer. This is the type of seedbed preparation normally carried out after a non-selective chemical application where the goal is to kill weeds and replace the ground cover with turfgrass without tilling the soil. You can’t

spray a non-selective herbicide right now though, as the vegetation is dormant and it will not take the herbicide up. The seed that has been sliced or applied with aeration is in place to germinate when conditions are right next spring, and the dead vegetation prevents soil erosion and conserves near-surface soil moisture.

Topdressing with good quality topsoil and/or compost will further aid soil moisture conservation, improve surface evenness, and help improve native soil composition, especially those soils low in organic matter content. Many compost materials are high in phosphorus, so their addition could also eliminate the need for additional phosphorus from supplemental fertilizer next spring.

Prepare the seedbed as outlined above, or till the soil and hydromulch. Hydromulching involves spraying a slurry mixture of seed, mulch, water and often a tackifier (a binding agent) onto the soil. Research by Gerald Henry, Ph.D., and Jared Hoyle, Ph.D., showed that a hydromulching mixture can significantly aid in seed germination, protect the seed against the elements, and prevent soil erosion. Hydromulching also results in lower weed infestations compared to tilling alone. Tilling the soil offers an opportunity to improve the soil and correct surface levels. However, tilling/disturbing the soil, particularly in spring, can cause major weed problems because it can disturb the seed bank. But covering the seedbed with a material like hydromulch is a great way to aid establishment and limit weeds.

Similarly, tilled soil or a scalped and exposed seedbed can be sodded. Non-netted sod is a great way to get 100% ground cover of desirable turf species established in a relatively short period of time, as long as irrigation during the sod establishment period is sufficient. **SFM**



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Questions?

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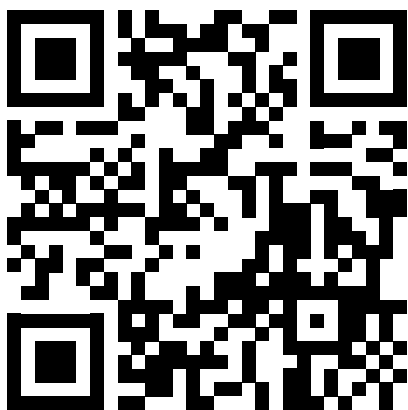
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