

SportsField

MANAGEMENT

August 2025

Vol. 41 No. 8

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

College Soccer Field of the Year **10** | Building Your Professional Network **24**

PFFMA News **28** | National Turfgrass Science Invitational **34**

How Field Variability Impacts *the* Athlete

Quantifying variations in key
metrics within and between
natural and synthetic surfaces



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Industry mourns the passing of Dr. Tony Koski

TONY KOSKI, PH.D., longtime professor and turfgrass Extension specialist at Colorado State University (CSU), passed away July 12 after a long and courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 68 years old.

Koski earned his bachelor's degree in Biology from Knox College in 1979, an MS in Agronomy from Ohio State University in 1983, and a Ph.D. in Agronomy from Ohio State University in 1986. He began working for the Colorado State University Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture in 1988, and served CSU for the next 37 years.

Throughout his career, Koski received multiple awards and accolades, including:

- Dr. William Daniel Founders Award (STMA), 2009
- F.A. Anderson Distinguished Service Award, 2011
- Most volunteer hours for Larimer County Master Gardener Program, 2012
- CSU Extension Team Award, 2014
- Epsilon Sigma Phi Team Award, 2016
- Distinguished Service Award, Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association, 2018
- Nebraska Turf Association Presidential Award, 2018

Koski was also a longtime supporter of SFMA, having served on a variety of committees.

According to CSU on Instagram, in his final days, Koski made silly reels with Alison O'Connor (posing as Treelock Holmes and Doctor Watson), recorded an interview with KUNC, and presented a webinar (which he stayed up until 3 a.m. to complete).

"He was an educator to the end," the post stated. "He also made the decision to donate his body to science so others can continue to learn... and possibly one day, find a cure. Tony just started his 37th year at CSU, and people always asked when he would retire. He'd respond with, 'Once it becomes a job, I'll consider retiring.' To him, it wasn't just a 'job' because of the students, his colleagues, and other individuals that he had the pleasure of working with."

Koski's influence and impact is felt throughout the sports field management industry.

SFMA Past President Abby McNeal, CSFM, paid tribute to Koski on LinkedIn, stating, in part, "As a student, there was a time I didn't believe in myself — but you did. You saw something in me and guided me toward opportunities that would test and shape my commitment to becoming

a sports turf manager...

You were instrumental in helping SFMA create the Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) designation, raising the bar for individuals and our entire industry. I'm proud to hold that certification, in part because you believed I could...I'm deeply grateful to have learned from you — as a student, as a colleague, and as a friend. You will be missed, but your impact lives on.

Koski wrote his own obituary:

I was born in Lockport, Illinois, to wonderful parents, Jim and Irene Koski. As the oldest of four boys, I had a typical 1960s Catholic upbringing — lots of family dinners, summer trips to Wisconsin, and dreams of being a bird watcher (I even got into Cornell!). But I landed at Knox College as a pre-med student until my first "B" rerouted me.

I worked summers at Cog Hill Golf Club and later earned both my Master's and Ph.D. at The Ohio State University, where I met Ronda and we began our family — Zach, Chris and Tim. After a short time in Extension at OSU, job offers came from across the country, but I chose Colorado State University in 1988 and never looked back.

For 37 years, I taught, researched, and worked alongside incredible students, colleagues, and Extension professionals. It never felt like a job; it was always fun.

My greatest pride is my family. My sons and their partners, Lauren and Simone, have supported me through everything. I'm in awe of them.

To my CSU family, Master Gardeners, and Extension peers: thank you for keeping me grounded and inspired. And to Alison, you made me a proud tree nerd.

*May your lawns be green, your trees healthy, your friendships deep and never stop trying new things. In turf we trust. **SFM***

The SportsField Management staff offers its sincerest condolences to Dr. Koski's family and all those who knew him.



Tony Koski
1957-2025

Editor's Note



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Several upcoming events are shining a spotlight on women in turfgrass and green industry professions.

GCSAA WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The GCSAA Women's Leadership Academy, Nov. 11-13, 2025, is focused on providing women in the turfgrass industry with education, mentoring and networking. The 2 1/2-day event will guide participants from all walks of the industry and various years of professional experience on a path of discovery aimed at breaking down barriers and producing a spark to inspire women to be successful leaders.

The Women's Leadership Academy will once again be headlined by Suzy Whaley, PGA Master Professional and first woman to serve as president of the PGA of America. Whaley, who has worked side by side with many GCSAA members, will speak to her experience in the golf industry and relate it to turfgrass professionals during a fireside chat.

WOMEN IN THE GREEN INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

SiteOne Landscape Supply will host the 27th Women In the Green Industry conference in Las Vegas, September 10-12, 2025, at Resorts World Las Vegas.

"The Women in the Green Industry Conference is more than just an event; it's a movement. It's where industry professionals come together to grow

as leaders, connect with a powerful network, and gain fresh insight into trends that are shaping our future," said Christina Moore, director events, SiteOne. "The lineup strikes the perfect balance between leadership development, business, marketing, HR, wellness, and real-world industry education."

WOMEN'S RUGBY WORLD CUP FINAL

This September, at Twickenham Stadium (England), an all-female team of grounds professionals will prepare the pitch for the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 final and bronze final, marking a historic first for the sport.

The initiative aims to champion female representation in the sector, and promote the diverse career pathways that grounds management has to offer.

"We're really proud to be hosting this initiative at Twickenham Stadium and to support the team delivering the pitch for such a major occasion," said GMA Board Member Jim Buttar, head of grounds and technical operations at Twickenham Stadium. "It's no secret that our industry needs greater visibility and diversity, especially around female representation, so to see an all-female grounds team leading on one of rugby's biggest stages will be a huge step forward." **SFM**

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From the CEO



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Paula Sliefert

CEO, Sports Field Management Association (SFMA)

PSliefert@Sportsfieldmanagement.org

In these past couple of months as SFMA's CEO, I've been deeply inspired by the people who make this organization, and this industry, what it is. You are the foundation of sports at every level. At SFMA, our job is to serve, support and champion your efforts. Here's how we're doing that right now — and where we're going next.

LISTENING TOUR

One of my first priorities as CEO has been getting out in the field to hear directly from you. This listening tour isn't about checking boxes; it's about gaining a true understanding of your day-to-day challenges, the resource gaps you face, and the innovations you're proud of.

From virtual chapter visits to one-on-one conversations, every interaction has provided valuable insight into what SFMA is doing well — and where we can and must do better. Your voices are directly shaping our strategic priorities. Please don't hesitate to reach out — to me, to our board, or through your local chapter. Your voice matters.

ADDRESSING THE WORKFORCE CHALLENGE

Hiring and retaining talent continues to be a significant concern. That's why we're doubling down on workforce development and plant-

ing the seeds for the future of this profession. You can help us grow the pipeline by spreading the word and inviting young people into this rewarding field.

SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

The role of a sports field manager today is part scientist, part artist, and part environmental steward. Whether it's water conservation, reducing inputs, or adopting innovative field construction methods, sustainability isn't just a buzzword — it's a necessity. SFMA is committed to delivering the tools, education and research to help you make environmentally sound decisions without compromising field performance.

CONNECTION BUILDS STRENGTH

One of the greatest assets of SFMA is our network — local chapters, national events, peer-to-peer learning. As we look ahead to the 2026 SFMA Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, I invite you to not only attend, but to engage.

To every SFMA member: thank you. Your resilience, adaptability and dedication make this industry thrive. Enjoy these final weeks of summer; and know that SFMA is with you every step of the way. **SFM**

— Paula Sliefert, CEO, SFMA



Jonathan Sukosky Wins 2025 Stars and Stripes Field Design Contest

The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) recognized Jonathan Sukosky, Harbison & Central Field Groundskeeper for Globe Unified School District, as the winner of this year's Stars and Stripes Contest. His creative field design, featuring the iconic Liberty Bell, stood out for its patriotic symbolism.

Sukosky shared that the Liberty Bell had long been an idea he hoped to represent on the field. "The Liberty Bell defines our great nation," he said. "It's a symbol I've always wanted to incorporate, but our high school baseball season usually ends well before the Fourth of July." This summer, the absence of a Babe Ruth season in his area presented a unique opportunity. Sukosky used the moment to create something special while also mentoring his summer intern, Josiah Cutter, who is in his first year of sports field management.

Sukosky's path into the profession began more than a decade ago as a volunteer Little League baseball groundskeeper. He has now spent three years managing sports fields and continues to stay deeply involved in the game as the junior varsity baseball coach at his local high school.

"I played baseball growing up, and now I coach the next generation," he said. "We have regular workdays with the players where I teach them how to care for their own field. It builds pride and responsibility."

Sukosky also credits SFMA with shaping his approach to the profession. "SFMA has exposed me to a lot of new ways to do my day-to-day job and has provided a great network of professionals to talk with about challenges and solutions."

As the 2025 Stars and Stripes winner, Sukosky will receive complimentary registration for the 2026 SFMA Conference and Exhibition in Fort Worth, Texas.

Minnesota Parks & Sports Field Management Association Summer Field Day at Target Field

More than 50 members of the Minnesota Parks & Sports Field Management Association (MPSFMA) gathered at Target Field for a hands-on summer field day filled with learning and connection. The event featured four interactive stations, each focused on a different element of field maintenance and turf care.



Participants rotated in small groups through each 30-minute station, gaining practical insights from some of the top professionals in the industry. Following the sessions, attendees enjoyed lunch together while reflecting on the day's learning and the rare opportunity to be on the field at one of Major League Baseball's premier stadiums.

Michigan Sports Field Managers Association Summer Field Day

On June 18, the Michigan Sports Field Managers Association (MiSFMA) hosted its annual Summer Field Day at West Ottawa High School, bringing together professionals from throughout the region for a day of education, networking and hands-on learning.

The event featured three expert-led sessions focused on critical aspects of sports field care:

- “Setting Your Fields Up for Success” — presented by Brian Hall
- “Poa Suppression & the Benefits of PGRs” — presented by Britt Barry
- “Hybrid Surfaces and Proper Hygiene” — presented by Ryan Bearss

Attendees rotated through each session, gaining practical knowledge and fresh strategies to apply to their own facilities. In addition to the educational programming, participants enjoyed field tours, raffle prizes and networking opportunities.

Join the SFMA Mentorship Program

Launched in early 2024, the SFMA Mentorship Program is paving the way for the next generation of sports field professionals. This initiative is designed to connect experienced



leaders in the industry with individuals eager to build their skills, expand their knowledge, and grow their careers in sports field management.

Whether you are a newcomer to the industry or looking to advance your expertise, the mentorship program offers a unique opportunity to learn from some of the best in the field. Participants will be paired based on shared interests, career goals and availability, ensuring a productive and personalized experience for both mentors and mentees.

What you can expect:

- One-on-one guidance from veteran sports field managers.
- Support in key areas such as turf maintenance, irrigation, field design, pest management and more.
- Real-world insights, best practices, and professional advice.
- A chance to expand your professional network and confidence in your role.

The program is delivered through Canvas, an intuitive digital learning platform. Participants can download the Canvas Student app to access mentorship modules, which guide them through monthly check-ins and activities that promote ongoing learning and development.

The program is open to SFMA members only. It features fully matched mentor/mentee pairings, monthly modules and checkpoints, and ongoing support from the SFMA national office. Contact Jennifer McLendon at jmclendon@sportsfieldmanagement.org with any questions.

Ready to join? Scan the QR code to apply and learn more. **SFM**





MSU

SOCCER FIELD

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY, STARKVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

The Field of the Year Awards program is made possible by the support of sponsors
Carolina Green, World Class Athletic Surfaces and The Aquatrols Company.



OUR SOCCER FIELD IS 14 years old with only a sand cap over 20-foot center drain lines on 0.50 percent slope. Due to budget restrictions during the renovation, we had to use north Mississippi clay based 419 sod. As I tell my assistants, we may as well have laid a tarp under the sod. It took two years of solid and coring times to make the field drain properly. This consistent management over the last 14 years has this field performing as one of the best draining fields on campus — if not the best. When Hurricane Francine came through — blessing us with upwards of 5 inches of rain — we were confident that if we had two to three hours of no rain prior to our match that night that the field would perform flawlessly. Just hours after the hurricane had passed, the field performed just as I expected, and Mississippi State was able to defeat Abilene Christian 5-0. In complete honesty, the field surprised me; after 16 years of experience in this industry, that's doing something.

Having to utilize student labor brings its own set of challenges. Balancing each student's time is very important to me; after all, they are here to get an education



— not work full time. It is very challenging to ensure that everything gets done on the Athletic department's requested schedules due to the students being in and out all day. It is imperative that we completely utilize the time that the students are here, and keep the overtime as low as possible while still providing the safest, most aesthetically pleasing fields possible. When our soccer field is finished and the television cameras come on, the final product that everyone sees is done mostly by students under the guidance of Hayes McMullen. This field is often used as a teaching ground for our students to learn how to mow, spray, paint and aerate. Teaching the next generation of sports field managers is very important to me.

I am blessed to have a stellar staff of full-time employees, as well as a great crew of students willing and eager to learn as much as they can. These types of awards are very enticing to our students, as they seem to listen a bit more when discussed. When students walk into my office and see all of our awards, they usually ask tons of questions about each award. The Field of the Year program has helped not only me, but all of my full-time employees as well. Administration listens and is more appreciative when these awards are part of our departments.

— Brandon Hardin, associate director, athletic grounds



Level and category of submission: College Soccer

Field manager: Brandon Hardin

Title: Associate director, athletic grounds

Education: Bachelor of Science in Agronomy with an emphasis in golf and sports turf management

Experience: Student employee, Mississippi State (2001-06); intern, Roger Dean Stadium, Jupiter, Florida (2005); assistant manager of facilities and grounds, Louisiana State University (2007-08); assistant superintendent/sports turf, facilities management, Mississippi State University (2008-14); superintendent/sports turf, facilities management, Mississippi State University (2014-22); associate director, athletic grounds, Mississippi State University (2022-Present).

Full-time staff: Hayes McMullen

Original facility construction: 1995

Turfgrass: Certified clay based Tifway 419 bermuda

Overseed: Champion GQ perennial ryegrass

Rootzone: Sand

Drainage System: Herringbone





SportsField Management (SFM): Congratulations on the Field of the Year win. What are you most proud of with this win?

Brandon Hardin: Our soccer field is our oldest field on campus, so to see it get this recognition means the world to us.

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

Hardin: Little to no downtime is always a challenge (we have a very small window to get our things done); and weather is another concern. For example, we received more than a foot of rain in just the month of May (2025), and received another 6 inches of rain in four hours — which is the ninth highest amount of rain in a 24-hour window in the 132 years of data that we have.

SFM: Can you share a little about your overall management approach to the winning field and what you feel have been the most important aspects to getting this field to an award-winning level?

Hardin: A soccer pitch is agronomically maintained a lot more tediously than a football field. Whereas with most fields we concentrate on footing and surface hardness numbers, for soccer we have the added variables of ball roll and ball skip — along with all the other factors that we look at daily.



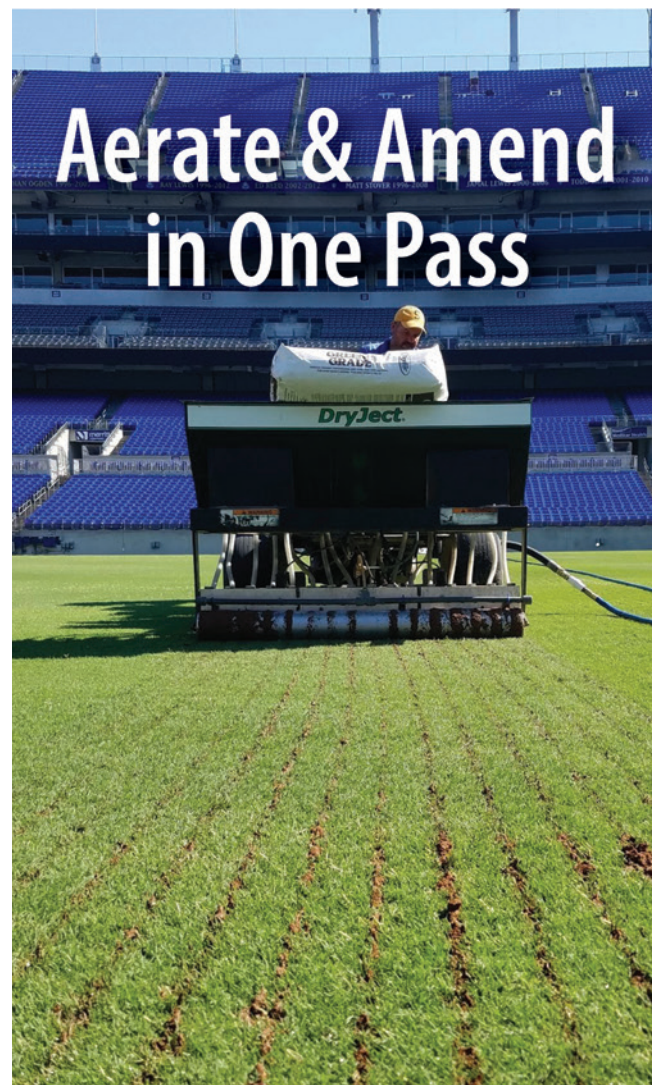
Hayes McMullen (sports turf specialist) has done a fantastic job of managing our pitch for our student athletes.

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?

Hardin: Hayes manages our soccer pitch daily, and has three to four students at his discretion when needed. He coordinates directly with the soccer staff every day to make sure everything is ready to go for our student athletes.

SFM: Can you share a bit of insight into what the Field of the Year application process was like for you, as well as any tips you might have for other sports field managers?

Hardin: The process can be a bit tedious and time consuming with providing the overall information, but that's just part of it. Start to finish you have to be able to tell the story of your field. I hear all the time from people who apply but only include the "glamor shots" in the package. Tell the story — the struggles, the good, the bad and the ugly. There's plenty of time for the glamour shots. Our soccer field is the oldest field on campus. We renovated the field in 2010 with a sand pea gravel sand cap root one. Budget constraints were a real challenge back then. The sand cap is still performing flawlessly. For the first three years we struggled with drainage due to having to use a heavy clay cheaper sod. Over three years with very aggressive core aeration and sand topdressing we got the field to drain properly, and it has done so ever since. I am proud of the work we've accomplished on our soccer field over the years. **SFM**



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The Emotional Discipline of Leadership

I didn't snap. I didn't roll my eyes. I didn't even raise my voice. But inside? I was tight.

The coach had just told me we were “using too much topdressing” on the soccer field and it felt “spongy.” His tone said it like it was a fact. But I knew he couldn't tell me what product we had used, calling it compost when it was only sand. He didn't know the material, the application rate, or the purpose. And that hit a nerve. Imagine that — a coach telling me how to do my job! Because this wasn't just any coach. We had history together.

This was someone I'd worked with for a few years — someone who, until now, had raved about the field and how much better it had played since we began managing it. His team had found success on this field. The players would arrive early for matches to take photos of the field. The coach even used it as a backdrop to player recruiting, bringing recruits out to show off the quality of the surface. But this season, things were different.

The team wasn't doing well. The buzz about the team had gone silent. I had even heard whispers that his coaching tenure was in question. So, when he criticized the field, it didn't feel like a question. It felt like a redirect. Speaking honestly, I took it personally.

That moment didn't make me question my abilities nor the process I had followed. I knew the program, the products and the process. What it made me question was my response. Because even though I didn't show it on the outside, I felt it on the inside. And that's where emotional intelligence starts to matter. Not in how loud we react — but in how well we understand the feelings we carry, and what we do with them.

In sports field management, we often talk about irrigation schedules, height of cut, soil compaction and herbicides. But rare is the real conversation about stress, miscommunication, unspoken disrespect, frustration or burnout — the emotional realities that come with doing professional work in a public, scrutinized and high-pressure environment.

Sports field managers work in a space where people see your work but don't understand your process; you're held accountable for the impact of the weather, even when you've done everything right; coaches, players and administrators bring stress into your space; and you can feel unseen, underappreciated or disrespected.

In moments like these, how you respond becomes the defining marker of your reputation — professionalism matters. The version of you who goes home and replays conversations, second-guesses decisions, and absorbs pressure without having anyone to hand it off to needs to practice emotional intelligence. At its core, emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize what you're feeling, understand where it is coming from, and respond in a way that aligns with your values and goals. That's it — noticing, naming and navigating your emotions with intention.

■ **NOTICE.** Don't ignore the frustration, the defensiveness or the embarrassment. That moment with the coach? My frustration was real. But when I took a step back, I realized it wasn't about the topdressing. It was about feeling betrayed, disrespected and disappointed.

■ **NAME.** Ask yourself: What am I really feeling? Not just “mad.” Maybe it's “I feel overlooked,” or “I feel like my hard work was dismissed.” Accurately naming it takes the sting out of it.

■ **NAVIGATE.** Now, decide what to do with it. You might choose to have a conversation later, or you might choose to let it go entirely. Either way, you're not driven by the emotion — you're directing it.

How you model emotional maturity impacts your entire environment. The person who can stay calm under fire, lead with clarity, and know when to listen instead of lash out is the person who earns trust. Emotional intelligence doesn't make you soft. It makes you stronger than your feelings; not immune to them, but not controlled by them either.

The next time something ticks you off, catches you off guard or makes you feel small — stop. Ask yourself: What am I feeling? What's underneath that feeling? How can I respond in a way that shows leadership, not just emotion? That's what draws the line between talented SFMs and leaders in the profession. **SFM**



Alpha Jones, CSFM, is an athletic field specialist at Duke University. He also serves on the SFMA Board of Directors as President-Elect. He can be reached at morthangrass@gmail.com

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Dead Kentucky bluegrass, and live perennial ryegrass and crabgrass

TURFGRASS AREA:

Baseball outfield

LOCATION:

Ohio

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and crabgrass

Answer on page 33

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International



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How Field Variability Impacts *the* Athlete

Quantifying variations in key metrics within and between natural and synthetic surfaces

By Ava Veith; David McCall, Ph.D.; Chase Straw, Ph.D.; Daniel Sandor, Ph.D.; Jay Williams, Ph.D.; Elisabeth Kitchen; Kevin Hensler; Aaron Tucker, Ph.D.; and Caleb Henderson, Ph.D.



A safe playing surface is essential for athletic competition; and key field characteristics such as surface hardness, rotational resistance, soil moisture, thatch depth and infill depth (for synthetic fields) play a crucial role in assessing field quality.

To improve field safety and optimize athlete performance, interdisciplinary collaboration among turfgrass scientists, sports scientists and sports medicine professionals is necessary. Evidence-based field management strategies must be developed to ensure more consistent playing conditions, reducing the risk of injury.

The objective of this study was to quantify the impact of surface variability on athlete safety and performance, both within and between natural turfgrass and synthetic turf surfaces. This research will quantify how variations in key surface metrics affect athletes utilizing data from wearable technologies such as GPS trackers and inertial measurement units (IMUs).

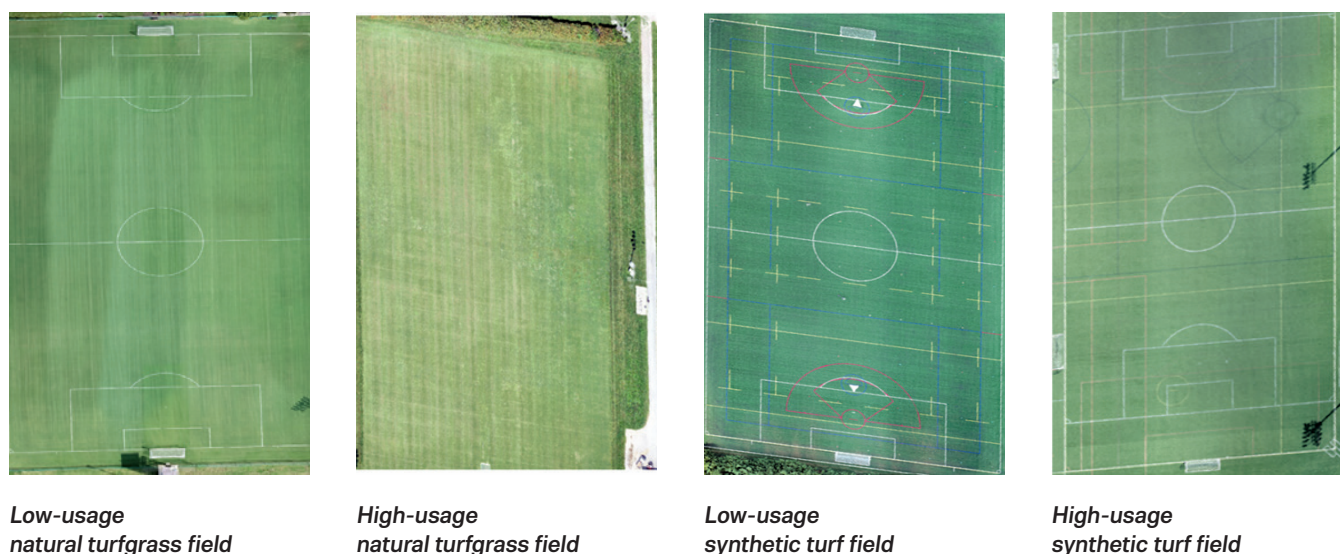
Additionally, to further understand the influence of field surfaces, athletes were surveyed before and after performing drills to gather insights into their perceptions of how surface variability impacts their performance.

METHODOLOGY

ATHLETIC FIELDS TESTED

This research was conducted in August of 2024, during which four athletic fields on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, Virginia were studied (**Figure 1**). Two of the fields were natural turfgrass (bermudagrass) grown on native soil, where one was maintained at a mowing height of 1.59 cm, and the other at 2.54 cm. The other two fields were synthetic turf, both composed of slit-film fibers with a mix of sand and crumb rubber infill. For both field types, one field was classified as “low usage,” while the other was classified as “high usage.” This was determined based on traffic frequency, field age and management practices. Specifically, the low-usage

FIGURE 1



natural field receives regular maintenance and is reserved for varsity athletics who use it a limited number of times per week on a scheduled basis. In contrast, the low-usage synthetic field, high-usage synthetic field, and high-usage natural field receive less frequent maintenance, and are accessible year-round to both the public and club sports teams. The low-usage synthetic field was approximately one year old at the time of this study, which is why it was still classified as low-usage.

PRELIMINARY DATA COLLECTION

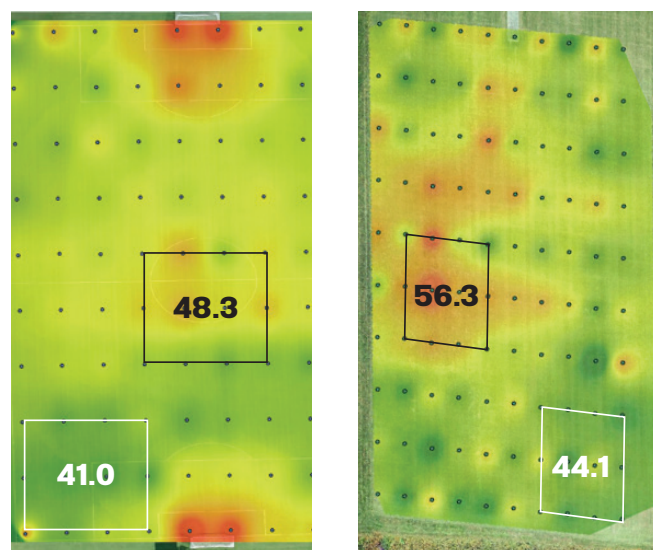
Prior to the introduction of live athletes, surface hardness was assessed on all four fields using a Clegg hammer, with 100 measurements collected per field. Surface hardness data were subjected to analysis of variance, and means were separated using Fisher's protected least significant difference (LSD) test at $\alpha = 0.05$ to evaluate statistical differences between locations. The data were then analyzed using ArcGIS Pro to generate surface hardness heatmaps, highlighting variability between and within each field. These maps allowed us to identify specific locations for the athletes to perform drills, where one selected area within each field was harder than the rest of the field, and the other being softer (**Figure 2**). Additionally, 20 measurements of rotational resistance (using Deltec's rotational resistance tester), thatch depth (by extracting a soil plug with a profile sampler and

using a tape measure to record thatch thickness), soil moisture (using a TDR 350 soil moisture meter) and infill depth (using a Turf-Tec Professional Model infill depth gauge) were taken in both the softer and harder areas to further characterize each field and understand the relationship between surface conditions and athlete performance.

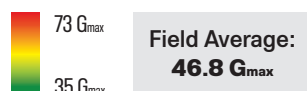
DATA COLLECTION DURING ATHLETE INVOLVEMENT

Fourteen female athletes participated in the study, and were equipped with STATSports GPS (STATSports, 2025) devices to measure running speed, as well as Vicon Blue Trident (IMeasureU, 2022) ankle IMUs to measure lower limb impact intensity (**See photo on page 18**). Both devices were used to quantify athlete movement during drills. The athletes were each given new Nike cleats prior to participation to eliminate variation based on cleat configuration. They completed three drills, including a drop landing or drop jump drill, a T-drill, and a modified acceleration-deceleration drill, which were designed to replicate common athletic movements. Each drill was performed three times in both the softer and harder areas identified within each field as shown in **Figure 2**. Additionally, each athlete completed pre- and post-performance surveys designed to capture their perceptions of field quality before and after completing the drills. This provided insight into how different surfaces may have influenced their performance.

FIGURE 2



Low-usage
natural turfgrass field

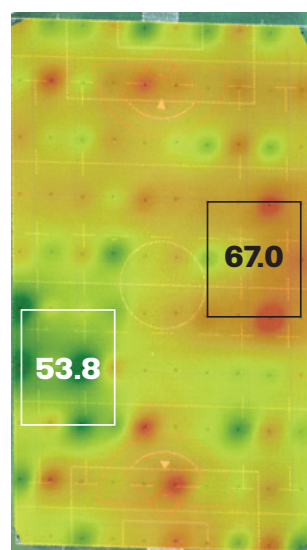


Field Average:
46.8 G_{max}

High-usage
natural turfgrass field



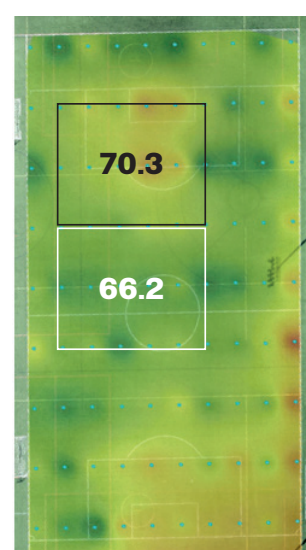
Field Average:
49.8 G_{max}



Low-usage
synthetic turf field



Field Average:
61.3 G_{max}



High-usage
synthetic turf field



Field Average:
69.7 G_{max}

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SURFACE HARDNESS DATA

Heatmaps shown in **Figure 2** highlight surface hardness variability within each field studied. Both synthetic turf fields had significantly harder surfaces than the natural turfgrass fields ($p < 0.001$), and for both surface types, the high-usage field had a significantly harder surface than the low-usage field ($p = 0.0029$ for the natural turfgrass fields and $p < 0.001$ for the synthetic turf fields). Both synthetic fields tested in this study were not constructed with a shock pad, which is typically placed beneath the layer of material that supports the synthetic fibers and is utilized to help replicate the cushioning effect of natural turfgrass. The absence of a shock pad, along with the tendency of synthetic turf to harden over time due to infill material compaction from athlete foot traffic, may explain the harder surface values observed on the synthetic fields compared to the natural fields. Further, increased use or foot traffic on both natural turfgrass and synthetic turf leads to compaction, which causes the playing surface to harden over time. Therefore, it is anticipated that the high-usage fields exhibited higher surface hardness compared to the low-usage fields.

DATA WITHIN EACH HARD AND SOFT AREA

Resulting rotational resistance, thatch depth, soil moisture, and infill depth (synthetic fields only) measurements taken within each hard and soft area on all four fields are presented in **Table 1**. These measurements ($n = 20$ per both hard and soft areas within each field) were analyzed using analysis of variance, and means were separated using Fisher's protected least significant difference (LSD) test at $\alpha = 0.05$ to evaluate statistical differences between locations.

STATSPORTS GPS UNIT DATA

GPS units were securely attached to each athlete's upper back, as shown in **Table 2**. These devices were used to determine if athlete running speed varied based on field type, field usage level, or hardness. However, no statistically significant differences were found. This consistency in speed across conditions is important because running speed can directly affect impact forces and biomechanical measurements. Prior studies have shown that faster running increases

TABLE 1

Table 1. Mean rotational resistance, soil moisture, thatch depth, and infill depth data for both areas within each of the four fields studied. Means followed by different letters within the same row are significantly different according to Fisher's protected least significant difference (LSD) test at $\alpha = 0.05$.

FIELD	Hard Area Average				Soft Area Average			
	Rotational Resistance (Nm)	Soil Moisture (%)	Thatch Depth (mm)	Infill Depth (mm)	Rotational Resistance (Nm)	Soil Moisture (%)	Thatch Depth (mm)	Infill Depth (mm)
Low-usage natural turfgrass field	32.9 A	40.9 A	27.4 A	N/A	30.4 A	39.4 A	40.9 A	N/A
High-usage natural turfgrass field	35.1 B	35.8 B	11.1 B	N/A	33.2 B	42.4 B	25.1 B	N/A
Low-usage synthetic turf field	25.6 C	N/A	N/A	39.7 A	25.8 C	N/A	N/A	42.3 A
High-usage synthetic turf field	22.3 D	N/A	N/A	31.3 B	24.2 D	N/A	N/A	33.5 B

the ground reaction forces, which in turn raise lower limb impact loads (Leatham, 2004; Jiang et al., 2024). If athletes ran at different speeds across field types, it could have confounded interpretation of the ankle IMU data by introducing speed-related variation in impact load. However, since no significant speed differences were found across field types, usage levels, or hardness zones, we can more confidently attribute the observed differences in ankle IMU data to the playing surface.

ANKLE IMU DATA

Ankle IMUs were utilized to record a metric called average intensity, which is defined as the mean impact intensity derived from every impact propagated into both limbs (IMeasureU, 2022). This metric is recorded in units of gravitational force (g). The devices were securely attached to each athlete's ankle and recorded data as the athletes performed drills on all four fields studied. After running statistical tests that accounted for individual differences between athletes, significant differences were found based on field type, usage levels, and hardness zones.

Across all three drills, field type had a noticeable impact ($p < 0.0001$) where athletes showed higher average intensity on synthetic turf fields compared to natural turfgrass. For

the drop jump drill, the average intensity was 19.73 g [standard error (SE) ± 1.88] on natural turfgrass and 22.73 g (SE ± 1.82) on synthetic turf, placing the synthetic turf value within the IMU Step 'high intensity' foot strike range of 21.5–26.7 g (Wong and Finch, 2018). A similar trend was seen in the t-drill, with average intensities of 15.84 g (SE ± 1.20) on natural turfgrass and 18.07 g (SE ± 1.16) on synthetic turf. For the modified acceleration-deceleration drill, average intensity was 17.72 g (SE ± 1.15) on natural turfgrass and 21.35 g (SE ± 1.10) on synthetic turf.

Field usage also made a difference in the t-drill ($p < 0.0001$), where the average intensity on high-usage fields was 18.14 g (SE ± 1.24), compared to 16.49 g (SE ± 1.24) on low-usage fields. Hardness played a role as well, especially in the t-drill ($p = 0.0073$) and the modified acceleration-deceleration drill ($p < 0.0001$). In the t-drill, hard areas resulted in an average intensity of 17.43 g (SE ± 1.22), slightly higher than the 17.05 g (SE ± 1.22) on soft areas. For the modified acceleration-deceleration drill, intensity averaged 20.38 g (SE ± 4.28) on hard areas and 18.85 g (SE ± 3.81) on soft areas.

TABLE 2

Table 2. Athlete perceptions of field quality before and after performing drills. Athletes rated each field on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 represents the best field they have ever seen and 1 the worst. Means followed by the same letter within the same row are not significantly different according to Fisher's protected least significant difference (LSD) test at $\alpha = 0.05$.

FIELD	Pre-Performance Average Field Quality Rating	Post-Performance Average Field Quality Rating
Low-usage natural turfgrass field	8.78 A	8.57 A
High-usage natural turfgrass field	4.42 C	4.14 D
Low-usage synthetic turf field	8.14 A	7.53 B
High-usage synthetic turf field	7.07 B	6.71 C

Overall, the synthetic turf fields, high-usage fields, and hard areas within fields exhibited higher average intensity values than natural turfgrass fields, low-usage fields, and softer areas. This pattern aligns with our surface hardness findings: synthetic turf fields were significantly harder than natural turfgrass fields on average, hard areas within synthetic turf were harder than those on natural turfgrass, and high-usage fields were harder than low-usage fields for both surface types. These results suggest that harder surfaces may contribute to the higher average intensity values recorded on the athletes' lower limbs.

This trend is consistent with prior research showing that running on harder surfaces increases impact stress, which may contribute to lower limb injuries. However, all surface hardness values in this study were below 100 Gmax, the safety threshold defined by the NFL (Seifert, 2024; Sports Field Management Association, 2024) and FIFA (FIFA, 2022). Still, the observed positive correlation between surface hardness and ankle IMU intensity

values indicates that higher surface hardness could elevate impact load. While further research is needed, surface conditions exceeding 100 Gmax could present a greater risk for injury over time due to increased impact loading. Establishing threshold values for ankle IMU metrics is also important for identifying impact levels that may lead to injury.

SURVEY/ATHLETE PERCEPTION DATA

Athletes completed pre- and post-performance surveys to assess field quality and its impact on performance. Individual responses were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess statistical differences among fields. Post-hoc comparisons were conducted using Fisher's protected least significant difference (LSD) test at $\alpha = 0.05$.

The low-usage natural turfgrass field received the highest quality rating on both pre- and post-performance surveys; while the high-usage natural turfgrass field, hindered by weed encroachment and poor maintenance, scored the lowest. Synthetic turf fields ranked in between the two natural turfgrass fields, with the high-usage synthetic turf field rated lower than the low-usage synthetic turf field. These findings suggest a preference for synthetic surfaces over a poorly maintained natural turfgrass fields.

CONCLUSIONS

Considerable variation in surface hardness was observed both within and between fields, with synthetic turf fields generally being harder than natural turfgrass fields. High-usage fields, regardless of surface type, were significantly harder than low-usage fields. Other surface metrics — such as rotational resistance, soil moisture, thatch depth and infill depth — also showed variability. On natural turfgrass fields, higher soil moisture was associated with lower surface hardness. On synthetic turf fields, increased usage reduced infill depth, which in turn increased surface hardness.

Although perfect field uniformity is not achievable, these findings emphasize how field usage and maintenance impact surface variability.

Additionally, our data suggest a potential relationship between surface hardness and mechanical load on athletes' lower limbs. While this trend was evident, further research is needed to investigate its long-term health implications, particularly on surfaces that exceed acceptable hardness thresholds.

Survey data revealed that athletes rated the low-usage natural turfgrass field the highest, likely due to its softer surface and better aesthetics. In contrast, the high-usage natural turfgrass field, affected by poor maintenance and weed pressure, received the lowest ratings, underscoring the influence of field condition on athlete perception. These findings highlight the importance of field management and athlete feedback in evaluating and improving field quality.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into how sports surfaces affect athletes. The results suggest that harder surfaces, such as synthetic turf or high-traffic areas, may increase impact and loading on the lower limbs. This reinforces the importance of effective field management and careful consideration of surface conditions prior to athletic competition. **SFM**

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Networking Is Not Just for Extroverts

Networking — some people hate it; others love it. No matter where you fall on that spectrum, networking is an important part of professional development. Everyone has a network. Think about people you know well, such as family, friends, and colleagues. You also have countless acquaintances: regular visitors to the facilities you maintain, members of your church, parents of your kids' friends and teammates, members of professional associations you are part of, and more. The act of networking involves nurturing relationships you already have while proactively capitalizing on opportunities to expand your network.

By Kerri Day Keller
and Erin Wolfram

So, how do you do this? If you are interested in utilizing your network for professional growth, think about the type of information you would like to acquire from your network: innovative turf management practices, more industry connections, and/or job opportunities, for example. Additionally, consider the knowledge, information and opportunities that you can share with others. Networking is a two-way street — it's important to give as much as (or more than) you receive. Therefore, when having conversations or communicating online, always aim to learn what others need. If you have information that might be helpful in fulfilling that need, be open to sharing; hopefully, your connections will do the same!

Networking can be done in person or online, and can be very natural in many situations — such as at an annual industry conference or via LinkedIn. However, you are likely to engage your network every day without even realizing it. Each conversation you have with someone you already know or with new people you meet is an opportunity to build your network.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Think about the professional associations of which you are already a member — such as the Sports Field Management Association (SFMA), affiliated chapters or state/regional turfgrass associations. Make sure you are taking full advantage of the opportunities offered through those memberships. Attend meetings, conferences, outings and training sessions as much as possible. While there, ask people questions to learn about their facilities, jobs, needs and goals. If possible, swap business cards and/or connect via LinkedIn to

officially add new contacts to your network. Follow up shortly after the interaction with an email, LinkedIn message, text or phone call, as appropriate, to further solidify your professional relationship.

In addition to being an active association participant, get more involved by serving on a committee or board or volunteering to help plan an event or meeting. This will help you establish stronger relationships with other members as you work toward common goals.

Make sure to also utilize the SFMA online directory to find members with similar positions or in geographic regions of interest to you. Don't hesitate to send an email or LinkedIn connection request with details on why you reached out and would like to connect. For example, if another facility recently completed a renovation similar to one that you are preparing to execute, you may want to reach out to the sports field manager of that facility to learn about their renovation experience.

Sample email:

Dear Katie,

I am an SFMA member who currently maintains all of the baseball and softball fields in Ridgewood. We are preparing to do a major renovation soon, and I noticed your team recently did something similar in Canyon City. Would you be open to a 30-minute call sometime next week to discuss your project? I'd love to learn about any tips you have or unexpected obstacles you encountered.

Thank you for considering a call. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Sincerely,
Joel**

Additional tips:

- When attending meetings, events and activities, try to sit by somebody new whenever possible. Introduce yourself and engage in conversation.

- Run for office in an organization. Even



if you aren't elected, this still shows your commitment to your industry and introduces you to the entire membership.

- If you don't have business cards, order some. You can find easy do-it-yourself options online.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Many cities have formal and informal clubs that are completely free or have a nominal fee. These groups can help you develop your interpersonal skills and engage with people who have similar interests outside of the sports field management industry. Your interpersonal skills or transferable skills are often what make you stand out in a job application or impact your leadership ability, so why not enhance those skills while building your network?

A lot of people don't realize groups like these exist in their city and accept people from all industries

who are interested in the group's charge. A quick web or social media search can help you identify some options. Simply search your city and phrases such as "social media," "entrepreneurs," "technology," or "Toastmasters," along with "club," "network," and/or "meet-up," and see what you find. Most of these organizations have social media groups you can join, as well as websites where you can access information and a calendar of upcoming events.

Not only can you develop new skills through such organizations, but you can build relationships with others outside of your industry, so you can serve as a sort of ambassador to help others learn about your facility and the sports field management profession.

Additional tips:

- If engaging in a new group sounds intimidating, invite a friend, relative or colleague to join you.
- Don't be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone and try something new.
- If you find that you don't enjoy a group, attempt something else until you find a good fit.



Photo credit: ©Adobe Stock - N Felix/peopleimages.com

VOLUNTEERING

Look for volunteer opportunities related to your industry and other passions that aren't work related. For example, if a large event is being hosted at a field or facility, they are likely seeking volunteers to help with event preparation and execution. By volunteering, you can build your network while applying your professional skills and expertise. Alternatively, it could be just as beneficial to volunteer to coach a Little League team. This would allow you to give back to the community while meeting new people (parents, umpires, other coaches, etc.) and expanding your network.

Additional tips:

- Keep an eye out for green spaces in your local area (a dog park, for example) that are maintained by non-profit organizations; they may greatly appreciate an industry expert volunteering to maintain their space.
- Participating in volunteer activities that aren't related to your field of work can be very fulfilling and give you a bit of a break. Seek opportunities you will enjoy.

LINKEDIN

Thanks to online tools such as LinkedIn, it is now easy and acceptable to reach out to people you may never meet in person. If you don't have a LinkedIn profile, consider creating one. If you already have one, make sure to update it regularly. An easy way to expand your LinkedIn network is to start by reaching out to people who are already part of your broader network. Next, aim to connect with people you have something in common with, such as your alma mater, work industry, or an organization membership.

If you send a connection invitation to your best friend, college roommate, significant other or cousin, you don't need

to send a personalized invitation. They know who you are and will (hopefully) accept your invitation. However, if you send a connection invitation to someone you don't know well (or at all) make sure to send a personalized message with your invitation.

Sample connection invitation:

Hello Sam,

I am also an SFMA member who currently works on a college campus. I am looking to connect with more industry professionals in Texas, as I plan to relocate in the next year. Thank you for considering my request.

Todd

Additionally, join groups and follow organizations and company pages that interest you. Then start engaging with their content. This will help you build more connections while staying abreast of industry trends, research and best practices. You can find suggestions on who to follow via the "My Network" section within your profile.

Additional tips:

- Demonstrate your expertise by posting valuable content and engaging authentically with others.
- Check your LinkedIn messages and connection requests regularly, and respond, as appropriate, in a timely manner (within one week, if possible).
- Take your LinkedIn relationships offline. For example, if you are going to be in the city of one of your new connections, invite them to meet for coffee or ask to tour their facility.

Now that you have a few ideas on how to grow your network, think about what you can do to start imple-

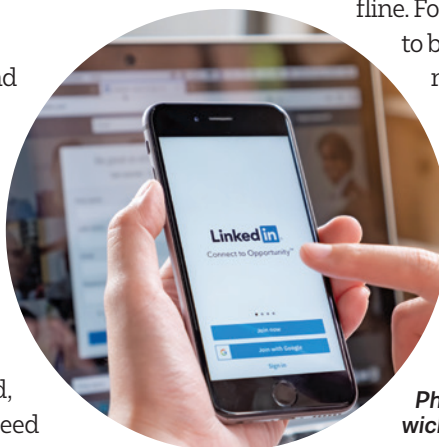


Photo credit: ©Adobe Stock - wichayada

menting these tips. Is there an upcoming industry conference? Set a goal to make at least five new connections while you are there. Every time you drive by the local animal shelter, do you grimace at the sight of their flower beds? Send an email asking about volunteer opportunities to help them care for their landscaped areas. Do you enjoy reading science fiction novels in your free time? Do a quick online search to see if there is a sci-fi book club in your city. These are small steps that you can take now to make new connections and help you grow personally and professionally. You never know; the next person you meet may know of a great person to fill a job opening at your facility or know someone who knows someone who will pave the way to your dream job. **SFM**

Kerri Day Keller has been director of the Career Center at Kansas State University (K-State) since 2003. Her more than 30 years of tenure in career services also includes work at

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Erin Wolfram has more than 15 years of experience in career services and owns and operates Career Advantage Golf (<http://careeradvantagegolf.com>), specializing in career services for those in the turf management field. Wolfram has a Bachelor of Science in Secondary English Education, Master of Science in Counseling Psychology, and Master of Science in Educational Technology. She is also a Certified Professional Resume Writer (CPRW) and certified professional etiquette consultant. She can be reached at erin@careeradvantagegolf.com



Years ago, LSU decided to move to Celebration Bermudagrass across their sports facilities. Over the years, the athletic grounds staff has installed Celebration on the soccer, softball, baseball, practice fields and the crown jewel, football's Tiger Stadium. Across the maintenance spectrum for Celebration, the LSU grounds staff have been innovators. They continue to produce a championship product year in and year out.



“

For us at LSU, all our athletic fields that we compete on are all Celebration. So the (football) stadium, softball, soccer, our practice facilities, Alex Box, our baseball stadium, they're all Celebration as well. Celebration for us just works and it's a good fit.”

—TREVOR AUSTIN, LSU SPORTS TURF MANAGER

Scan here to see how Celebration is a gamechanger for the Tigers



PFFMA launches scholarship program to support industry internships

The Professional Football Field Managers Alliance (PFFMA) launched a new scholarship program to support student internships at professional football facilities. This initiative underscores PFFMA's commitment to cultivating the next generation of sports field managers and advancing excellence across the industry.

The scholarship program is designed to provide emerging professionals with meaningful, hands-on experience working alongside veteran field managers in some of the most prominent sports venues in the country. By facilitating access to real-world learning environments, the program aims to bridge the gap between classroom education and professional practice at the highest level of play.



"This scholarship program allows us to give back while helping young professionals gain meaningful experience on professional playing surfaces. It's about preparing tomorrow's leaders today."

- Nick Fedewa, PFFMA President

"Developing future talent is not just a responsibility — it's an investment in the longevity of our profession," said PFFMA President Nick Fedewa. "This scholarship program allows us to give back while helping young professionals gain meaningful experience on professional playing surfaces. It's about preparing tomorrow's leaders today."

The program has been made possible through the generous support of industry partners and the collective efforts of the PFFMA membership. Investing in the future of the profession and giving students access to elite-level mentorship helps ensure a sustainable and innovative future for the field management industry.

This initiative reflects PFFMA's ongoing mission to grow, support and inspire the next generation of sports turf professionals.

The inaugural class of internship scholarship winners includes Richard "Will" Confair, Benjamin Kuiters and Emma Seiver.

■ **Richard "Will" Confair** will be graduating this summer from Penn State's 4-year turfgrass program. After internships with the Steelers and Eagles, his goal is to become a professional football field manager. Confair said his internship goals are to gain valuable experience working with different bermuda cultivars, build new relationships, and continue exploring all the industry has to offer.

■ **Benjamin Kuiters** recently graduated from Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, with a degree in Sports Turf Management. He will further his education at Iowa State University beginning fall of 2025. His internship goal was to gain hands-on experience with a professional football team and to learn new skills and management techniques for maintaining turfgrass at a professional level. "I am grateful for this internship opportunity, and excited to continue gaining knowledge in the sports turf industry," he said.

■ **Emma Seiver** will be a junior this fall at NC State University, studying turfgrass. Her internship has taught her about maintaining fields to the highest professional standard. "It was rewarding to hear what the players thought of the field after all the work we put into it," said Seiver.

PFFMA launches inaugural Ring of Honor ceremony

The Professional Football Field Managers Alliance (PFFMA) launched its inaugural Ring of Honor ceremony this year, recognizing the lasting impact and legacy of trailblazing professional football sports field managers. This distinguished new program was created to honor individuals whose careers have shaped the field management profession at the highest level and inspired generations to come.

In this year's historic debut, three legends were honored: George Toma, widely regarded as the godfather of sports field management; Steve Wightman, known for his pioneering work in field safety and innovation; and Darian Daily, remembered not only for his exceptional skill but also for his mentorship and leadership within the community.

"These men elevated our profession and helped pave the way for all of us working in the industry today."

- Ken Mrock, PFFMA board member

"This program has been a long time in the making, and it's incredibly meaningful to see it come to life," said Ken Mrock, PFFMA board member and the driving force behind the Ring of Honor. "These men elevated our profession and helped pave the way for all of us working in the industry today. Honoring their legacy is both a responsibility and a privilege."

This special recognition reflects PFFMA's commitment to celebrating excellence, preserving industry history, and paying tribute to those who laid the foundation for the next generation of sports field professionals. **SFM**



Colorado SFMA completes field renovation

On June 17, more than 60 members and sponsors of the Colorado Sports Field Management Association (CSFMA) completed a field renovation event at Varsity Duke While Baseball Field at Brighton High School, Brighton, Colorado. This goal of the event was to give back to a local sports team while also offering demonstrations and hands-on learning opportunities for CSFMA members.

The work included mound reconstruction, laser grading of the infield, repairing and replacing irrigation, widening the baselines and removing turf from behind home plate to the dugouts. Additionally, the field was mowed, aerated and fertilized. CSFMA members also had time to mow and aerate the adjoining softball field.

CSFMA and the Brighton Bulldogs were able to have this event due to the generous donations of time, equipment, tools and supplies from sponsors. Sponsors supplied infield material, clay and dirt for the mound rebuild, as well as mowers, UTVs, fertilizer, sod and tools for the team to keep. Some CSFMA members also brought tools and equipment to share for the day. A new pitching rubber and bases were also donated.

The baseball team provided breakfast burritos and lunch as a gesture of thanks. According to CSFMA, it was a great day of working together to teach CSFMA members and the baseball staff about ball-field maintenance.





Oregon Sports Turf Management Association announces Demo Field Day

The Oregon Sports Turf Management Association (ORSFMA) announced that its Demo Field Day will be held September 24, 2025, at Delta Park in Portland, Oregon.

It will feature field and product demonstrations from 8-11 a.m. with lunch and networking to follow.

More information coming soon at <http://www.oregonsportsturf-managers.org>. **SFM**



SGL expands LED grow lighting range

SGL expanded its LED grow lighting systems range with the LED60, LED30 and LED10. Developed and produced entirely in-house, these new products allow SGL to cater even more precisely to the needs of grounds teams — offering compact, user-friendly solutions for every situation.

The introduction of the LED60, LED30 and LED10 ensures that a suitable lighting solution is available — whether for quick repairs in tight corners or broader turf recovery in high-wear zones.

This new line of lightweight, compact units is built for frequent and efficient operation. A slim construction, combined with smart leg design and strategic SmartBox placement, ensures minimal shadowing beneath the unit and superior, uniform light distribution in all climates.

The separation of light and heat, an important function of LED grow lighting technology, is now available even in the smallest units, increasing efficiency while saving energy in the process.

Although launched simultaneously, the LED60, LED30 and LED10 are distinct products, each designed for specific pitch conditions.

The LED60, designed to cover 60 square meters, is the largest of the three compact models — ideal for high-wear zones such as goalmouths. The LED60 delivers more light, more coverage, and more efficiency, all while reducing operational costs.

The LED30 covers 30 square meters, and offers the same advanced features in a smaller format. It's well-suited for targeted recovery across the pitch, providing flexibility for grounds teams who want precise application in a compact, easy-to-handle unit.

The LED10 is the most compact unit model, covering 10 square meters, and is perfect for fast recovery in specific high-wear zones such as corners. Its two-leg rear design with wheels makes it especially easy to handle and reposition.

All three units are supported by SGL's data management dashboard, TurfBase, which enables users to register lighting hours, remotely turn units on and off, or schedule timers to optimize the microclimate 24/7.

Agri-Fab shows new soft top lawn vac

Agri-Fab, Inc. introduced a new soft top lawn vac (model #45-0630). This 220-gallon capacity (29-cubic-foot) vacuum features



a 10-cubic-foot poly utility bed and 13x4 pneumatic tires bundled with the power of a 208cc engine to gather a large amount of yard waste in no time.

Woven with ripstop nylon, Agri-Fab's soft top is constructed of a strong, thick vinyl to prevent tears, allowing customers to pick up a wide variety of lawn materials. It also includes a built-in drawstring to secure the hose and reduce wear and tear. Additionally, the soft top features venting through the back that limits dust and debris during cleanups.

"This vacuum is perfect for gathering grass clippings during the spring and summer months and leaves and other debris in the fall and winter," said Hilary Conner, vice president of sales and marketing for Agri-Fab.

The 126- x 6-inch clear hose is the appropriate length for zero-turn mowers, and the universal deck adapter fits perfectly to right-hand discharge decks. Assembly and storage are convenient as well with an easy top assembly that folds up quickly.

Real Madrid partners with Kress and Worx

Positec, a global manufacturer of outdoor power equipment, announced a strategic partnership with Real Madrid as the club's official greenskeeper sponsor through its Kress and Worx brands. This dual-brand collaboration marks a step forward in Real Madrid's commitment to advancing its sustainability goals.

Kress satellite-guided robot mowers have been adopted for turf maintenance to improve sustainability and turf quality through consistent mowing.

Kress' professional-grade battery-powered handheld equipment will be used to support sustainable landscaping across Ciudad Real Madrid's training complex, spanning nearly half a square mile.

"This is more than a sponsorship," said Don Gao, CEO at Kress/Worx. "It's a declaration of intent — to lead with excellence, to innovate responsibly and to raise the global standard of sustainable lawn care." **SFM**



ANSWER

From page 17

The reason this baseball outfield in Ohio has dead Kentucky bluegrass while the perennial ryegrass and crabgrass are still alive and thriving is because of insect activity. Bluegrass billbugs and lesser billbugs seem to prefer Kentucky bluegrass over perennial ryegrass and especially over crabgrass. Billbug damage can resemble drought stress; and destruction of turfgrass crowns, especially during periods of drought, often escapes detection, which can result in extensive turf death. Damage to turf is caused by the larval stage of this billbug, as they burrow down through the grass stem toward the crown and roots of the turf plant and eat the base of the plant, leaving behind their poop (fras) as a telltale sign of infestation. Performing the tug test (literally tugging on the bluegrass) showed that the plant detached from the roots, and billbug fras and larvae were visible. Since ryegrass and crabgrass were able to be identified and noted to remain green — as they are not on the billbug's preferred menu — the diagnosis was able to be made quicker and additional turfgrass loss was prevented. This demonstrates the importance of proper grass identification while looking at problem areas.

Photo submitted by Pamela J. Sherratt, turfgrass specialist at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and recipient of SFMA's Dr. William H. Daniel Founders Award in 2003 and 2018.

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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Observations in Self-efficacy from a Turfgrass Science Event

THE INAUGURAL National Turfgrass Science Invitational (NTSI) was held February 3-5, 2025, during the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Conference and Trade Show in San Diego. This competitive event for high

school agricultural education students emphasized skills in turfgrass science. During the event, competitors engaged in individual and team activities on topics such as turfgrass identification, playing surface set-up, equipment operation and best management practices. Practicums were held to test participants' hands-on and observational skills.

The National Turfgrass Science Invitational was also the subject of a study to explore the capacity of a turfgrass science competition to influence change in sentiments toward turfgrass science instruction and recruitment into the turfgrass industry.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

There are jobs available in the turfgrass sector, but supply is dwindling into a severe labor shortage (Hartsock, 2019; Woelfel, 2019; Letot et al., 2024). A decade ago, reports showed declining numbers in undergraduate turfgrass management programs (Richman, 2014; Bigelow, 2016a) and the trend is continuing. Recent work from Branham (2023) documented that enrollment in turf programs at US-based R-1 universities is down 74% since their peak in the late 1990s to early 2000s.

The study was conducted of nine FFA advisors and 46 students participating in National Turfgrass Science Invitational. Data collection occurred immediately after the competition in February of 2025 via an email with a link to the Google Form survey, and focused on three areas of interest:



1. Evaluate sentiments from participating students and teachers towards a national turfgrass science invitational.
2. Compare sentiments from participating students and teachers towards turfgrass science topics, skillsets, and careers from before and after the competition.
3. Investigate sentiments towards career exploration based on career decision self-efficacy.

STATEMENTS AND RESPONSES

Said one student, "Seeing how the competition was run this year, I'll have a better understanding how things will work next year and I'll be better prepared. Nonetheless, the competition was amazing and I had a great time."

Added another student, "Now that this year was more of a learning experience on what turfgrass as a competition and

career looks like, I plan to study a lot more for next year and want to succeed.”

According to one of the teachers, “Even though two of my four students had worked at golf courses prior to this contest, there were still some learning struggles along the way. After hearing how the contest was run and the expectations during the knowledge exam and contest, it will change how we prepare for this contest if we are able to go in 2026.”

Said another teacher, “I think getting teachers and turfgrass professionals in touch for teacher learning and preparation is essential — especially in states where there has not historically been a turfgrass competition or there is limited access to turf. As an advisor, it can be difficult to prepare students for something that we ourselves have little experience with.”

Yet another teacher commented: “All of the hands-on skills were great; being able to use industry people and be in an actual industry setting was incredible. Having the opportunity to go to the trade show and make the connections that they did was something that they really enjoyed and I feel will put them ahead in this career field. As an advisor, I was very happy with everything that my students did.”

The National Turfgrass Science Invitational is endorsed by FFA and open to FFA members. Teams are not currently required to qualify at the local or state level to participate in this invitational. The National Turfgrass Science Invitational will alternate between the conferences of GCSAA and the Sports Field Management Association (SFMA). The 2026 event will be held at the SFMA Conference and Exhibition in Fort Worth, Texas. For more information — including important dates, resources, and the invitational schedule — visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/2026-national-turfgrass-science-invitational/> **SFM**

Carson Letot, Ph.D., is event superintendent, turfgrass science, National Turfgrass Science Invitational.



All photos courtesy of
@GCSAA on X

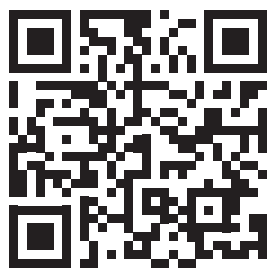
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FROM THE FEEDS

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.

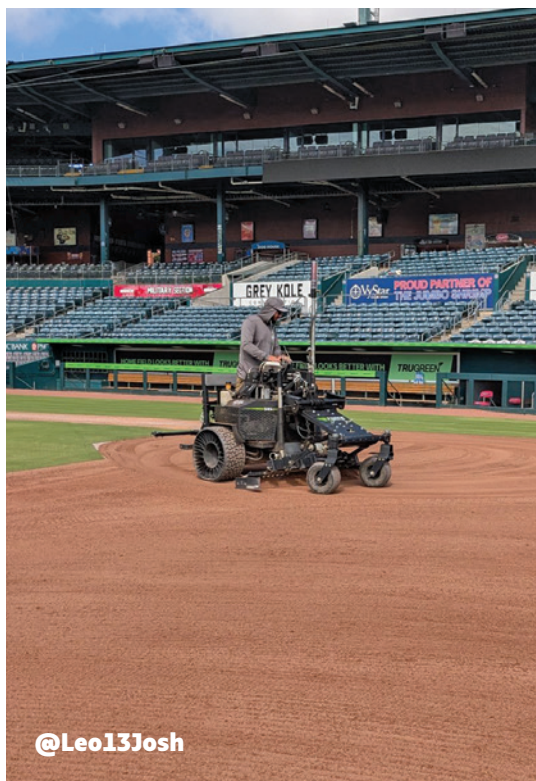


@WisconsinSTMA

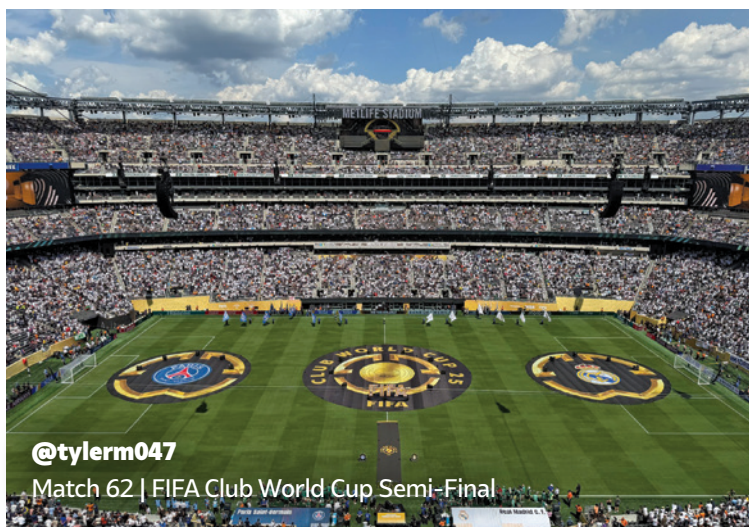
Great day at the WSFMA summer conference at Timber Rattler Stadium



@ASUGroundsCrew



@Leo13Josh



@tylrm047

Match 62 | FIFA Club World Cup Semi-Final



@VTTurfTeaching

THANK YOU to all the @4H members who participated in our annual 'STEM in Sports Field Management' workshop at the @Virginia4_H Congress this week. We had a blast connecting with you and hope to see you in our @VTTurfgrass program soon!

@NPappas23

Summer prep continues ahead of the 2025 @NFL international games. Always good to bring out the playing surface @SpursStadium - a unique operation where the surface spends much of the year rolled-up in storage. Summer install allows us to ensure quality ahead of its fall install.



@SportsTurfSun

We had the awesome opportunity to host some int'l guests at the NAAC this past week as they trained for their match against the USWNT. Super cool to be selected as a training site, and prepare the pitch for the Ireland Women's national team. #BestOffice #FieldExperts @ChristiClay23 (Note: Photo provided by @IrelandFootball)



@TurfgrassTiger

Another incredible time at the best event in the turfgrass industry, the @TheToroCompany Grounds Leadership Academy! Connecting with peers from across the country with a common goal of growing in education and sharing our stories in leadership, mentorship, innovation and so much more. Honored to be a member of the panel this year with phenomenal industry leaders. Catching up with our @ToroGrounds family is always the best! Podcasts coming soon!





@AvaVeith

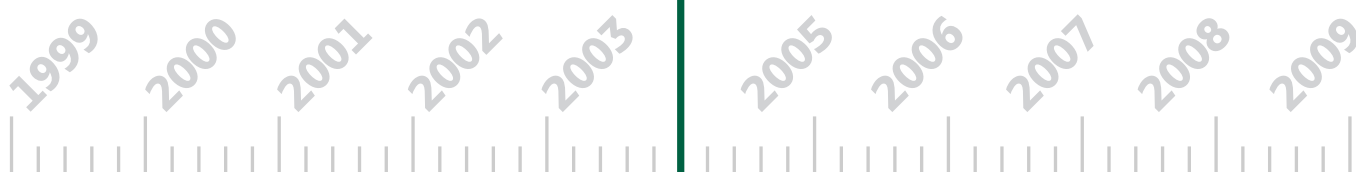
So thankful for the opportunity to present some of the work I've been doing so far as the KC Current's playing surface data technician intern at the MoKan SFMA event today! Can't believe they let me put my presentation on the scoreboard! @MoKanSTMA @FieldExperts



@BillyMyrehn

Well 2 years and thousands of lessons learned later. My time at Michigan has come to an end. I want to give a special shout out to @mowdaddy53 and @TurfSpartanLord for helping me so much during my time here. Next stop is Orlando City.

2004



THIS RETROSPECTIVE DELVES INTO the historic issues of *SportsTurf* magazine, predecessor to *SportsField Management* magazine. For this edition of Accessing the Archives, we take a look back at 2004.



The January 2004 issue kicked off with Steve Wightman detailing the preparation for Super Bowl XXXVII at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego. According to Wightman, after the final painting of the field, crewmembers “donated their multi-colored shoes to the rafters above the main tunnel entrance” — a longtime tradition at Qualcomm Stadium.

Also, history was made at Super Bowl XXXVII, as it was the first time that female ground crew members helped prepare the Super Bowl field. Abby McNeal, CSFM, of the Denver Broncos, and Raechal Volkening of the Milwaukee Brewers contributed their hard work and expertise as members of the Super Bowl crew.

Sports Turf Manager of the Year Awards for Minor League Baseball were also detailed in the January 2004 issue, as Tom Nielsen, Ed Attalla, Tommy Walston and Joe Skrabek earned top honors.

The February issue focused on softball, with a feature on softball infield maintenance, as well as a profile of the 2003 STMA Softball Field of the



Year winner. Top honors went to Oran Good 5, the fifth field of the Oran Good softball complex in the City of Farmers Branch, Texas.

“Oran Good 5 is just one example of our concentration on excellence,” said F. Jeff Fuller, director of parks and recreation. “Our entire system operates on the standard that mediocrity is intolerable, which puts us on track for continuous improvement.”



Petco Park, which was opening as the new home of the San Diego Padres, was the highlight of the March 2004 issue. Luke Yoder, who managed construction of the Pittsburgh Pirates’ PNC Park from 2000 to 2003, was responsible for the pristine field at Petco that debuted in April

2004. The field featured sod from West Coast Turf that contained Bull’s Eye bermudagrass overseeded with Chaparral ryegrass. According to Yoder, two key factors helping his efforts to maintain an exceptional field included San Diego’s year-round mild climate and the fact that the Padres would no longer have to share the field with the Chargers.

Hawks Field at Haymarket Park of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was the cover story for April 2004 as the winner of the STMA 2003 College/University Baseball Field of the Year. As home of University



of Nebraska Baseball and the Lincoln Saltdogs professional baseball team, the field hosted more than 200 events over a 10-month period.

"We all communicate, bringing our perspective on the field and facility together with the coaches' perspective and the administrators' perspective to develop and maintain the most beneficial program for all involved," said Dan Bergstrom, athletic turf manager.

For the May 2004 issue of *SportsTurf*, Dr. Michael Goatley, Jr., wrote about "Matching Expectations with Limitations," in which he detailed turfgrass considerations and limitations based on climate, sport and anticipated use.

"Bermudagrass is a logical choice for warm climates, and Kentucky bluegrass blends or Kentucky bluegrass/perennial ryegrass mixtures work well in cool-season climates," he wrote. "Turf managers in transition zones face special challenges. Even after making the most informed decision possible, the grass you select will still have major limitations due to times of field use outside of seasons of growth. No matter how good a turf manager you are, there is no way that you can always be expected to deliver a top-notch playing surface."

The June issue delved into Arizona State University winning College Softball Field of the Year, as well as athletic field fertility, relieving compaction, turfgrass education, and much more.

In July 2004, STMA President Bob Campbell, CSFM, announced "The next big step" for the association — the creation of a committee to bring on an executive director and staff.

"The STMA Board must consider many options as we go through this transition," Campbell wrote. "We are confident that we will be interviewing very strong and capable candidates, and look forward to hiring a strong leader and association executive director, one that will open new doors and blaze new trails for us to travel."



George Mason winning College Soccer Field of the Year was the cover story for August 2004, which also included articles on planning new field projects, sports turf in Spain, soccer facilities, and establishing bermudagrass.

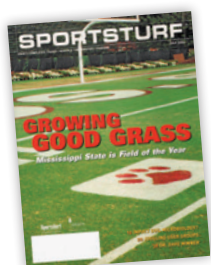
In September 2004, STMA followed up on Campbell's July article about an executive director and staff announcement with the news that the association had hired Kim Heck as its first full-time executive director. Heck came to STMA from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America with a strong background in marketing and association management.

"My goal for the association is to help it grow in size and influence in the agronomic and sports worlds," Heck wrote in her introductory statement. "My pledge to the STMA members is to truly listen to your ideas and concerns, and design a road map that will lead to greater success for the individual member and for the association."

Turf horse racing tracks were the focus of October 2004 with a feature about three horse racing tracks near New York City — Belmont, Aqueduct and Saratoga — and the track superintendent for all three tracks, Jerry Porcelli. All three tracks used a Kentucky bluegrass blend that includes Jefferson, Liberator, Rambo and Midnight, cut to about 4 inches, as well as use of a plant growth regulator.

November 2004 was dedicated to a preview of the 16th Annual STMA Conference & Exhibition in Phoenix; while the December issue focused on turfgrass research, irrigation and drainage, field construction, and career development. **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>.





UK government announces £400 million boost for grassroots sports facilities

The UK government recently announced at least £400 million for new and upgraded grassroots sports facilities across the country.

According to the Grounds Management Association (GMA), this significant funding package recognizes the vital role that high-quality sports infrastructure plays in supporting participation in communities across the country. It also reflects the collective efforts of the wider sporting sector, including the often-unsung work of grounds management professionals and volunteers.

Since the launch of the Pitch Advisory Service in 2014, the GMA has carried out more than 50,000 pitch inspections in England, working alongside National Governing Bodies (NGBs) as well as local authorities and volunteers to raise standards and improve playing surfaces. The Pitch Advisory Service now extends across Wales.

“We welcome the government investment as a real boost for grassroots sport,” said Geoff Webb, CEO at the GMA. “Over the past decade, the Pitch Advisory Service — working hand in hand with national governing bodies and local volunteers — has helped transform the quality of many community pitches across the UK. This funding allows us to continue that vital work, ensuring clubs and communities benefit from well-maintained facilities that inspire more people to play and stay in sport.”

Beyond technical support, the GMA plays a central role in training and upskilling the grounds management workforce all the way from volunteers at grassroots clubs to full-time grounds staff at elite venues.

“Sport tells our national story in a way few other things can — uniting communities, inspiring millions, and showcasing our nation on the global stage,” said Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Lisa Nandy. “This major backing for world-class events will drive economic growth across the country, delivering on our Plan for Change. Coupled with strong investment into grassroots sport, we’re creating a complete pathway to allow the next generation of sporting heroes to train and take part in sport in communities across the UK.”

Registration open for PGMS 2025 Annual Conference

Registration for the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) 2025 Annual Conference, “Transform,” is open. Register before August 13 to get Early Bird pricing.

The annual conference — to be held October 21-24 in Louisville, Ky. — is designed to optimize interactions for hundreds of grounds management professionals and leave with implementable solutions to the latest grounds management challenges.

For more information and to register: <https://pgms.org/page/2025AnnualConf>



Irrigation Show registration and housing now open

Registration and housing are now open for the 2025 Irrigation Show and Education Week in New Orleans, December 8-11. Whether you’re in ag or landscape, manufacturing or contracting, distribution or design, the Irrigation Show delivers the tools, connections and insights to help you succeed.

- Discover the latest irrigation installation and maintenance solutions during the trade show, featuring the Start-up Showcase and the 2025 New Product Contest Plaza.

- Grow with continuing education — earn CEUs, sharpen your skills in expert-led sessions and take a certification exam.



Landscape professionals unite in service at Renewal & Remembrance

On July 14, approximately 400 landscape and lawn care professionals from throughout the country gathered in Washington, D.C., for the National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) annual Renewal & Remembrance service event, bringing their skills and dedication to two of the nation's most hallowed grounds: National Mall

around the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery.



For nearly three decades, Renewal & Remembrance has been the landscape industry's largest day of service, as volunteers donate their time, expertise, and equipment to honor America's veterans and public servants. This year, teams will undertake vital projects such as pruning cherry trees at the FDR Memorial, applying lime, irrigation system updates, tree protection, plant installation, stump removal, and hardscape repairs to enhance these historic green spaces for future visitors.

"Renewal & Remembrance is a powerful example of our industry's deep commitment to community, country, and stewardship," said Britt Wood, National Association of Landscape Professionals CEO. "It's humbling to see so many professionals come together to care for sacred spaces that honor our nation's heroes."

This year's event included a children's program at Arlington National Cemetery designed to educate and engage the next generation in environmental stewardship and civic service. **SFM**



- Build connections with peers, suppliers and industry leaders during exciting networking events, like the Bayou Bash Welcome Event and The Big Easy Brewfest.

- Explore the host city, celebrated for its rich culture, historic charm and lively atmosphere.

For more information, or to register, visit <https://www.irrigation.org/2025Show>

Aeration

BOBCAT AE30S STAND-ON AERATOR

The Bobcat AE30S stand-on aerator is ideal for sports field maintenance, delivering efficiency and precision. This machine can cover 2.25 acres per hour, reaching ground speeds of up to 7 mph, making quick work of large areas. Its 30-inch working width and 48 durable, hardened alloy steel coring tines ensure deep and consistent aeration — penetrating up to 5 inches to promote healthy root growth and turf vitality. The AE30S features a comfortable anti-vibration stand-on platform that can be folded for walk-behind operation. All controls are intuitively placed on the handlebar for easy access. Patented depth stops guarantee uniform results across playing fields, while the patented cooling and chain tensioner systems enhance durability and simplify maintenance. Powered by a robust 15-hp. Kawasaki engine, the AE30S is a reliable investment for any professional aiming for pristine turf conditions. Optional accessories such as a seed spreader and light kit further enhance versatility.



DRYJECT AERIFICATION/SOIL AMENDMENTS/ TOPDRESSING SERVICE

DryJect is a one-step service that combines the agronomic benefits of aeration, soil amendments, and topdressing in one easy, simultaneous service. Following a DryJect service, playing surfaces are clean, smooth and free from plugs. No messy cores to clear up; and virtually no

downtime nor lost revenue due to facility maintenance closures. DryJect's patented high-pressure water-based injection system creates aeration holes through the root zone to fracture the soil while its pioneering vacuum technology

simultaneously fills holes with sand, peat, or other soil amendments. Use in tandem with, or in place of, traditional aeration. Improve your existing program and possibly reduce the number of coring events. Incorporating DryJect into your existing aerification schedule, especially after a deep tine event, magnifies the benefits of deep tine aeration. Also, DryJect is a service, so there's no large capital outlay or special employee training required. DryJect independent franchise service providers expertly operate the equipment, leaving most of your staff to fulfill routine tasks.

GKB COMBISLIT FROM STEC

The GKB Combislit is suitable for both natural grass and hybrid fields. The versatility of the machine was taken into account during development.

The machine uses Evolvente blades that have a working depth of up to 15 cm. These are designed to minimize prying in the top layer. For

weed control and aerification, cutting discs can be mounted. The Combislit is available in a working width of 1.6 or 2.0 meters. Optionally, a pressure roller can be chosen as a finishing touch.



LESCO PRO-AER 30 RIDE-ON AERATOR WITH SEED BOX FROM SITEONE

The LESCO PRO-Aer 30 aerator with seed box from SiteOne offers a fast, effective way to simultaneously aerate turf and distribute

seed. Maintenance needs are kept to a minimum thanks to the chainless drive system. The stand-on platform provides excellent visibility and quick access to controls, and helps to



reduce fatigue even during extended use. Its 30-inch width allows it to navigate narrow areas and fit through most common gate openings with ease. Powered by a compact-yet-robust Vanguard Twin engine known for dependability, this ride-on aerator features a roomy seed hopper capable of holding up to 50 pounds. Designed for productivity and durability, the PRO-Aer 30 includes a one-year commercial warranty and is fully supported by SiteOne's trusted service and industry knowledge.

TORO PROCORE 648S AERATOR

The Toro ProCore 648s provides improved operator controls, consistency, productivity and after-aeration performance. The revised controls allow for single-handed operation while easily walking in the direction of travel, so operators can keep focus forward with less fatigue. A floating handle allows users of various heights to operate the aerator comfortably and locks in the raised position to reduce floor space when storing. New features include electronic drive control for more consistent hole spacing on slopes, the ability to easily increase speeds on turnarounds, a tighter turning radius and more. While operating in Delayed Mode, the ProCore 648s provides improved hole quality at the start of aeration passes. An onboard controller constantly monitors the position of the coring head in its rotational path and the speed at which it drops to help ensure maximum tine depth at the first contact with the ground.



Z-AERATE 50 FROM Z TURF EQUIPMENT

The Z-Aerate 50 takes productivity and profitability to new heights, with a 50-inch, 12-row aeration head and 25-hp. Kohler Command Pro V-Twin engine. The positive down pressure, full-floating tine head and articulating front axle let Z-Aerate 50 adjust to the ground contour while maintaining



consistent aeration depth. Perform two jobs at once with an integrated broadcast spreader with a 150-pound capacity hopper. The ability to perform multiple jobs with each pass dramatically increases profit potential. Plus, a wide range of accessories are available, making the Z-Aerate 50 a

true multi-functional productivity machine. Other specifications include:

- Speed up to 10 mph forward and 5 mph reverse.
- 50-inch, 12-row aeration head; pulls up to 3.5-inch cores.
- Hydraulic tine lift and down force.
- Accessories include a 30-gallon sprayer, 36-inch slicer seeder, 46-inch dethatch rake, and 40-inch spike-style aeration head. **SFM**



2025

SEPTEMBER 16-18

2025 NRPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Orlando, Florida

www.conference.nrpa.org

OCTOBER 13-15

SYNTHETIC TURF COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

www.syntheticurfCouncil.org

OCTOBER 22-24

EQUIP EXPO

Louisville, Kentucky

www.equipexposition.com

OCTOBER 22-24

PGMS SCHOOL OF GROUNDS MANAGEMENT

Louisville, Kentucky

www.pgms.org/page/AnnualConference

NOVEMBER 2-5

ELEVATE (NALP)

Phoenix, Arizona

www.landscapeprofessionals.org/ELEVATE

NOVEMBER 12-13

SALTEx 2025

Birmingham, UK

www.saltex.org.uk

DECEMBER 1-5

**AMERICAN
SPORTS BUILDERS
ASSOCIATION
TECHNICAL MEETING**

San Antonio, Texas

www.sportsbuilders.org/page/UpcomingEvents

DECEMBER 8-11

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

New Orleans, Louisiana

www.irrigation.org/IA



2026

JANUARY 18-22

SFMA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Fort Worth, Texas

www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference

FEBRUARY 16-19

**TPI 2026 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
CONFERENCE AND FIELD DAY**

Tucson, Arizona

www.turfgrasssod.org/event/tpi-2026-international-education-conference/

JUNE 23-25

**NATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY AND SECURITY
CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

Palm Desert, California

www.ncs4.usm.edu/events/annual-conference/ **SFM**

Emerging industry leaders honored at the National Sports Safety and Security Conference

Eight professionals were recognized for their leadership in addressing safety and security issues during the 2025 National Sports Safety and Security Conference and Exhibition in San Antonio. The event was presented by the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) at The University of Southern Mississippi.

The Emerging Industry Leader Award recognizes a young professional who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in addressing safety and security issues. In addition to the enhanced safety and security of their venue/event, the recipient's contributions have set an example for others to follow.

Individuals receiving the award include:

- **Bonnie Almond**, vice president, Venue Operations, Tepper Sports and Entertainment
- **Austin Augustus**, PMP, MBA, security manager, Florida Panthers

■ **Madison Benner**, Manager, ballpark operations and security, Major League Baseball

■ **Taylor Dey**, Manager, safety and security, Major League Soccer

■ **Matt Elliot**, assistant athletic director, events and facilities operations, The University of Alabama

■ **Aaron Moore**, athletic administrator, Noble High School

■ **Ed Whetham**, director of event operations, Twin Cities in Motion

■ **Jacob Zive**, director, event security operations, New York Road Runners

"We are thrilled to recognize these outstanding young professionals who are raising the standards of sports safety and security and setting an example for their peers," said Dr. Stacey Hall, NCS4 executive director and professor of sport management.

MSU's Tom Izzo Football Building wins Build Michigan Award

Bluewater Technologies played a key role in a collaborative effort that led to Michigan State University's Tom Izzo Football Building receiving a 2025 Build Michigan Award by the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Michigan.

As part of a four-company team, Bluewater provided all audiovisual integration for the reimagined 65,000 square-foot facility. This award-winning project was the result of a strong partnership that included the construction management team from Granger Construction, the architectural planning team at Integrated Design Solutions, and the experiential design and branding team from Jack Porter.

The Build Michigan Award, presented annually by AGC of Michigan, recognizes outstanding commercial construction projects in the state that exemplify exceptional management



skills, creativity, perseverance under challenging conditions, and innovative construction and building techniques.

The project team assigned to the Tom Izzo Football Building transformed and expanded a facility originally built in 1980 into a modern, immersive and interactive football hub. Bluewater's AV integration systems are seamlessly integrated throughout the facility, elevating functionality and creating an enhanced experience for athletes, staff, and visitors alike.

The renovation at the Tom Izzo Football Building included:

- An expanded 19,000-square-foot weight room, a sports science area, and multiple nutrition stations;
- Renovated athletic training areas and recovery modalities;
- A new player locker room, lounge and Nike Gear Lab. **SFM**

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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.

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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.

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■ 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). **SFM**

For more information, visit:

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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.georgiasfma.org or georgiasfma@gmail.com

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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/nestma

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.sfmnj.org

Southern California SFMA: www.socalsfma.com

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The Benefits of Switching to Improved Turf Cultivars

This Midwestern summer has been particularly hot and humid, and turfgrass diseases have become top concerns in sports field management. A recent call from a sports field manager dealing with brown patch disease (*Rhizoctonia* spp.) led to a broader conversation about host resistance and the remarkable progress made in turfgrass genetics. I connected the manager with our turfgrass pathologist to discuss fungicide options, and we also explored how modern cultivars now offer much greater resistance to destructive turf diseases.

Brown patch in tall fescue offers a clear example. For years, the standard advice was to avoid fertilizing tall fescue during the summer, based on the belief that it would worsen brown patch outbreaks. Recent research has challenged that assumption. When applied appropriately, summer fertilization doesn't necessarily increase disease risk; and in some cases, it may actually help the turf recover more effectively from damage. Another long-held belief was that high-density, fine-textured cultivars were more susceptible to brown patch because they retained moisture. However, studies have shown this is not consistently the case.

What we do know is that cultivars bred specifically for disease resistance can withstand significant disease pressure. In fact, even if only about 75 percent of a tall fescue sward consists of resistant cultivars, brown patch severity can be reduced by up to 70 percent. Full resistance across the entire stand isn't necessary to see meaningful results. For turf managers currently battling brown patch, an aggressive overseeding program with improved cultivars can be an effective long-term strategy.

Cultivar selection should always be based on the performance traits most relevant to your region and field use. If your field sees heavy spring activity, Kentucky bluegrass cultivars with early green-up and strong seedling vigor may be a good fit. For perennial ryegrass fields, which are highly disease-prone, disease resistance should be the top priority. With tall fescue, brown patch resistance often takes precedence.

It's also important to consider other characteristics, such as drought and heat tolerance, wear resistance, insect resistance, and overall turf quality. While data from cultivar tri-

als is essential, not all high-performing cultivars make it to market. Some fail to produce enough seed for commercial viability. Your seed supplier can help you identify cultivars that not only possess the traits you need, but are also commercially available and suited to your site.

Fortunately, several excellent resources are available to help turf managers evaluate and select cultivars. The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (ntep.org), compiles performance data from university trials across the country. Cultivars are statistically ranked for traits such as disease resistance, drought tolerance, and wear recovery. The Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance focuses on identifying turfgrass cultivars that demonstrate improved water-use efficiency, which is an increasingly important trait in areas facing water restrictions or recurring drought. For more than a decade, the Alliance for Low Input Sustainable Turf (A-LIST) has identified cultivars that require fewer inputs — such as water, fertilizer, pesticides and mowing — while maintaining strong performance under stress.

The takeaway is that cultivar selection is about far more than aesthetics. With advances in breeding and the growing availability of reliable performance data, sports field managers can now build fields that are more resilient, more sustainable, and easier to manage through the most challenging parts of the season. Selecting the right cultivar(s) is one of the most effective nonchemical strategies available.

Thanks to modern plant breeding and trusted evaluation tools, sports field managers are better equipped than ever to make informed, environmentally responsible decisions. **SFM**



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Beyond the Field will be distributed monthly on the final Friday of the month. The regular *SportsField Management* Insider newsletter will continue to be deployed weekly, and will continue to focus on sports field management news and products, SFMA updates, turfgrass science and research, industry education, grounds management, outdoor power equipment, irrigation, and more.