

SportsField

MANAGEMENT

December 2025

Vol. 41 No. 12

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

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RISING FROM THE DEPTHS

Westminster overcomes hurricane
flood damage to win S&P Football
FOY for Fritz-Orr Field



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SportsField

MANAGEMENT

BEYOND *the* FIELD

Introducing Beyond the Field, the monthly facilities management newsletter brought to you by *SportsField Management* magazine.



**SUBSCRIBE TO
BEYOND *the* FIELD**

**Beyond the Field
includes the latest news
and information on:**

- Stadium/venue security
- Synthetic turf
- Sport courts and surfaces, including pickleball, tennis and track surfaces
- Stadium design and construction
- Events management
- Stadium/field lighting
- Concessions and amenities
- Locker rooms and other facilities
- Sports business news and trends

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.

Editor's Note



John Kmitta

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December is always a time for us to reflect on the year that was, but also to look forward to the year to come and plan accordingly. From a magazine perspective, that means continuing to evolve and tailor content to meet changing needs.

As part of that effort, I rely on those in the industry for feedback. We recently asked SFMA Editorial Committee members and SFMA Board members for their insight on topics to help grow and shape the content of the magazine.

When asked where they get their industry news and information (other than *SportsField Management* magazine), responses included publications from colleges/universities, social media, manufacturers and vendors, industry newsletters, seminars, chapter events, podcasts, and conversations with other sports field management industry professionals.

When asked what information is most beneficial to their jobs, respondents mentioned new equipment/products, research data, industry trends, best management practices, and insight into the operations of other industry pros.

Perhaps the most important feedback was to the question of what information is lacking. Responses were varied, but included things like robotics, emergency management, dealing with storm damage, perspectives on real-world problems and solutions, and information regarding the impact of

current events — such as tariffs and labor shortages.

My sincerest thanks to all those who provided feedback, and, as a result, are helping to shape our future editorial content.

I would ask that all of you reading this ponder those same questions:

- What sources do you turn to for industry information?
- What types of information are most beneficial to your job/role?
- What information do you wish you had that you feel is lacking?

Feel free to email your responses to me at jkmitta@epgacceleration.com. Your feedback helps us to provide the information you seek.

I would also appeal to all of you to share your photos. Many people in this industry already post regularly to social media. We can help you share your images and your stories with our larger audience. It can be as simple as a high-resolution image and a caption.

This is also a good time to remind those of you who are Certified Sports Field Managers (CSFM) that writing an article that gets published in *SportsField Management* magazine earns you Industry Service Points needed to qualify for recertification. So please reach out to me to discuss article ideas for 2026.

Thanks for reading, and Happy Holidays! **SFM**

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President's Message



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Adam Thoms, Ph.D.

SFMA President
athoms@iastate.edu

I can't believe you will only be hearing from me once more in this magazine as SFMA President before Alpha Jones, CSFM, takes the lead of SFMA and the President's Message. I truly enjoyed meeting many of you this year at events around the country, and the last month has been a blur attending various chapter events from the Atlantic to the Rockies.

As I have done in the past couple of articles, I will provide an update of our organization. The fall SFMA Board of Directors meeting took place in mid-October, during which the board approved the 2026 SFMA operating budget with a recommendation to approve the budget from the Finance and Audit Committee. This year's budget gives us financial strength to continue to follow the SFMA mission and vision. We also received feedback from the listening tour that CEO Paula Sliefert conducted. Results from this have already started to help the board with decisions being made for the SFMA. We will share results of this listening tour with membership immediately prior to our annual meeting at the conference and as part of a podcast. I hope to see many of you in the audience for that.

The board also spent time discussing events and education as a part of the SFMA Annual Conference and Exhibition. We have a great

lineup of speakers, as well as networking events — including a new Chapter Officers Reception and recognizing our members at our awards banquet. We have exciting full- and half-day Seminar on Wheels planned and we will again host the Student Challenge.

New in 2026, we will be hosting the Second Annual National Turfgrass Science Invitational in partnership with the USGA, GCSAA and FAA. During the event, high school students will compete in a knowledge contest, with the winners recognized during the trade show.

We also have a sold-out trade show that we hope you will take time visit. Our suppliers' support makes it all possible.

Due to weather concerns, you will not see a couple of events during conference week — the Volunteer Field Rebuild and the SAFE Golf Tournament. The field rebuild will take place as part of a Texas SFMA Chapter meeting in early December. Thanks to Texas SFMA and Project Evergreen for leading this year's field rebuild efforts. The SAFE Golf Tournament will not be held due to concerns with cool temperatures, but there will be plenty of other activities to be a part of, including bowling and cornhole.

I'm excited to attend the conference and catch up with many of you. **SFM**

— Adam Thoms, Ph.D.



SFMA CEO Paula Sliefert receives PGMS Gold Medal Award

SFMA CEO Paula Sliefert received the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) Gold Medal Award for her dedication and leadership in the sports field management community.

The PGMS Gold Medal Award is presented to an individual or entity to recognize them for outstanding and long-term achievements and/or contributions to the green industry.

For more information about the PGMS Professional Awards, visit <https://pgms.org/page/ProfessionalAwards>.

CSFM application deadline approaching

Achieving the Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) designation positions you as a leader in the industry. This prestigious credential not only fosters a sense of pride and accomplishment but can also enhance your current and future employment prospects.

If you are interested in taking the CSFM Exam at the 2026 Conference, applications must be received by SFMA no later than Monday, December 8.

Pre-qualification and pre-registration are required for those who wish to take the certification exam in Fort Worth. Access the application forms at <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/csfm-program/>.

If you have any questions about whether you qualify to be approved for the CSFM program and take the certification exam, email lcraig@sportsfieldmanagement.org or call 800-323-3875.

Texas Education Agency recognizes SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has formally recognized the Sports Field Management Association's (SFMA) Turfgrass Science Certification as an approved Industry-Based Certification (IBC) for public school accountability in the 2025–2030 cycle. The credential appears on TEA's new IBC List with IBC ID 1284 and is classified as a Tier 3 certification, with SFMA listed as the certifying entity.

This action means Texas high school students who earn the SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification can now help their campuses meet College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) indicators, since TEA uses approved IBCs as one of the measures in the student achievement domain of the state accountability system.

SFMA welcomes Western Canada Turfgrass Association as newest International Affiliate

SFMA announced that the Western Canada Turfgrass Association (WCTA) has been recognized as its newest International Affiliate Organization, further expanding SFMA's global network of professionals dedicated to safe, high-quality and sustainable sports fields.

WCTA serves sports turf and green industry professionals across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. By joining SFMA as an International Affili-

ate, WCTA and its members now have enhanced access to SFMA's education, certification and networking opportunities, while strengthening cross-border collaboration on sports field management.

WCTA Executive Director Jerry Rousseau described the connection between the groups as having “looked at one another over the fence” for years. The new International Affiliate status makes that long-standing relationship official and creates a stronger structure for continued cooperation.

SFMA looks forward to:

- Partnering with WCTA on joint education initiatives and information sharing.
- Welcoming WCTA members to SFMA conferences and programs.
- Highlighting Canadian perspectives and expertise within SFMA publications, committees and learning opportunities.

Renew your SFMA membership for 2026

Investing in your SFMA membership is an investment in your future. SFMA offers a membership that connects you with a network of peers eager to share best practices, provides valuable educational opportunities to enhance your skills, and grants quick access to essential information and resources to help you save time.

Be sure to renew your membership before the December 31 deadline to continue enjoying member benefits. As a 2026 member, you'll also qualify for a discounted rate of \$525 to attend the annual conference in Fort Worth, Texas.

How to renew:

- Visit SFMA's new portal at <https://members.sportsfieldmanagement.org/welcome>. Since this is a new system, follow the instructions on the welcome page to create a new account, linking your login to your membership record.
- After creating and verifying your new login information, you'll be directed to the member portal. Select the “Join/Renew” link under the membership tab, choose “Renew your Membership,” and follow the steps to renew for 2026.

If you have any questions about membership or the renewal process, contact SFMA HQ at 800-323-3876 or sfmainfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org.



Photo by Mark Skalny

SFMA Conference Registration now open

Registration is open for the 2026 SFMA Conference & Exhibition in Fort Worth, Texas January 19-22, 2026.

The SFMA Conference will feature:

- Top-notch education: Learn from leading experts in the field during informative seminars.
- Networking opportunities: Connect with fellow professionals, share best practices, and build valuable relationships.
- Cutting-edge technology: Explore the latest advancements in sports field management from top exhibitors.
- Facility tours: Get inspired by tours of FC Dallas/Toyota Stadium, Frisco RoughRiders, Southern Methodist University, AT&T Stadium, and Globe Life Field.
- Don't miss out! Secure your spot today and take advantage of early bird rates.

For more information, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference/>. **SFM**



FRITZ-ORR FIELD

at Thompson Stadium

THE WESTMINSTER SCHOOLS,
ATLANTA



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 STAFF IS COMMITTED to player safety, environmental sustainability and community impact. At Westminster, we are very fortunate to have more available resources than most K-12 independent day schools, but with those resources comes a high level of expectation. When guests step onto our campus, our football field is one of the first things they see. Our grounds team adheres to a detail-oriented maintenance schedule that ensures the field remains in optimal condition throughout the year. We bring a professional approach to field maintenance at a K-12 level. Player safety is our number one priority. This past year we have



started using a TDR moisture meter to ensure great footing condition for our players. This has also helped us with our irrigation strategies to get the correct amount of water on the playing surface. Working with our athletics department, I will never put athletes on our field if the conditions are not right for them to perform at their highest level. With our approach to maintenance we have not had to many cases of unfavorable conditions. Having people buy in to a safe and playable natural grass field is a huge accomplishment.

– Jake Mays, grounds an athletic field manager



Level and category of submission:

Schools & Parks Football

Field manager: Jake Mays

Title: Grounds and athletic fields manager

Education: Bachelor's degree, Turfgrass Management

Experience: Worked on fields as a youth and through high school. Attended Virginia Tech for Turfgrass Management. Summer intern for the Boston Red Sox in 2017. Summer intern for the Washington Nationals in 2018. Season-long internship with the Seattle Seahawks' practice facility in 2019. Took a position as the head sports turf manager at the Lovett School. Then as head groundskeeper with the Fredericksburg Nationals in 2021. Worked with Nolan Thomas and Company in sports field construction. Then grounds and athletic fields manager at the Westminster Schools in Atlanta.

Original facility construction: 1955

Full-time staff: Bret Thatcher, Jake Farrell and Chris Poynton

Turfgrass: 419 bermudagrass

Overseed: We have used Latitude 36 or Tahoma 31 in any resodded wear spots.

Rootzone: Sand

Drainage: Vertical drain lines length of the field on 40-foot spacing

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

Jake Farrell, campus and athletic fields groundskeeper:

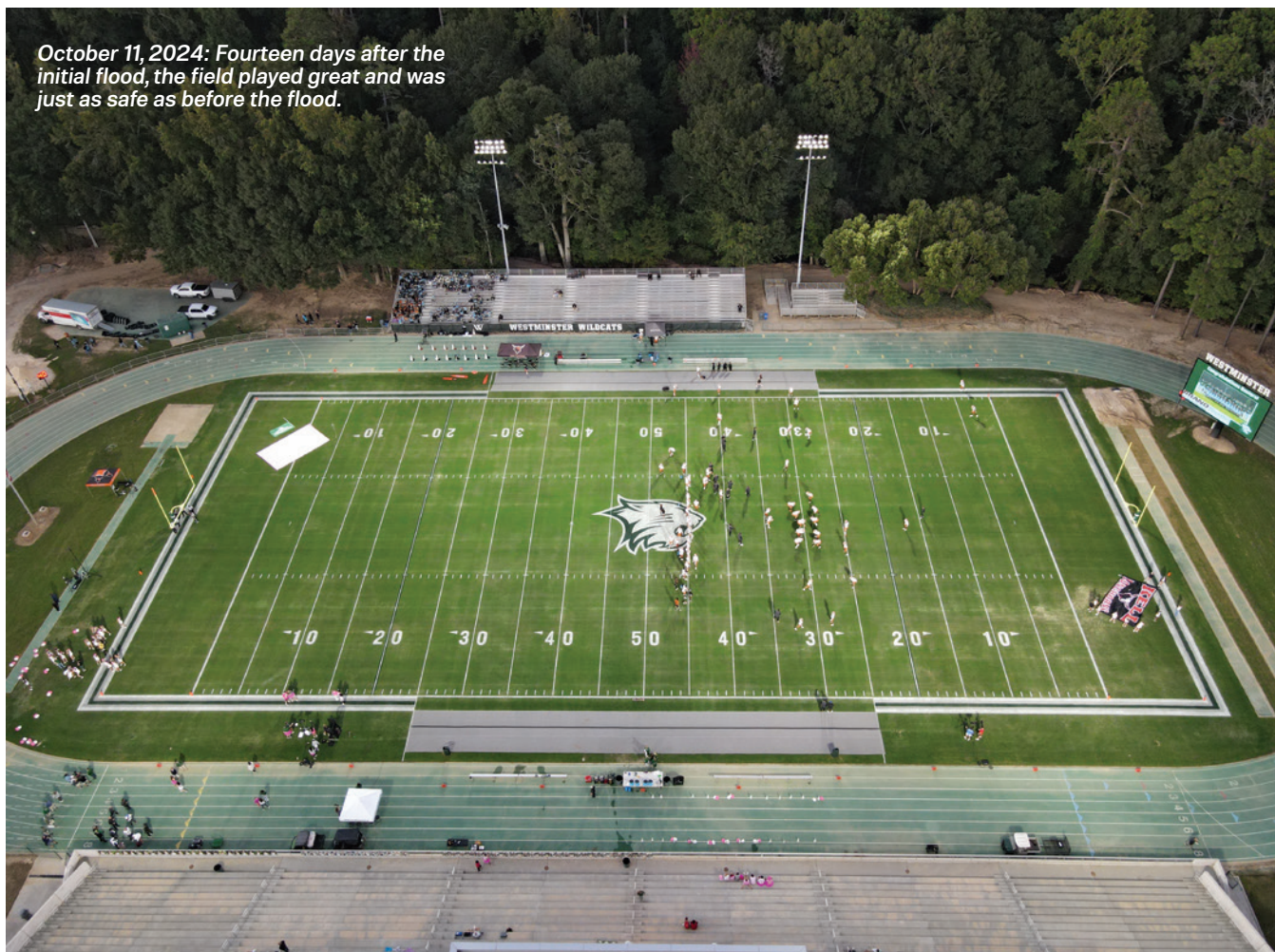
Field of the Year was a goal our team set its sights on early in the year. We knew it would require attention to detail and going the extra mile — but we didn't realize just how long that mile would become. Despite torrential rain from Hurricane Helene, which caused historic flooding and left our field submerged under more than six feet of water, our team — armed with a “can-do” attitude — pulled together to achieve what I'm most proud of: hosting a home game just 14 days later. Once the rain stopped, it took about two days for the water to recede, leaving a 4-inch layer of thick silt and mud on our bermudagrass field. Our grounds crew, coaches, athletic staff, and even the transportation department sprang into action with the shared goal of hosting the season's final home game.

“Without the dedication and teamwork of the grounds, athletic and transportation departments, this achievement would never have been possible.”

Our progress became more visible every day, and hope began to glimmer. I am proud to say that we prepared the field not only to be safe but to exceed expectations. Without the dedication and teamwork of the grounds, athletic and transportation departments, this achievement would never have been possible.



October 11, 2024: Fourteen days after the initial flood, the field played great and was just as safe as before the flood.



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

Bret Thatcher, campus and athletic fields groundskeeper:

One of the biggest challenges, without a doubt, was the flooding from Hurricane Helene. When faced with nature's power, humility is essential. While we rely on forecasts, and are thankful for those who provide them, sometimes Mother Nature presents the toughest challenge. In the end, it was our teamwork that allowed us to overcome the damage and rise to the occasion.

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?

“In the end, it was our teamwork that allowed us to overcome the damage and rise to the occasion.”



Farrell: This field serves as the center for our sporting events — football, soccer, lacrosse and track — and it is used to its fullest potential every year. Our approach focuses on providing a safe and consistent surface for every athlete who steps onto it. By diligently following our agronomic program and paying attention to the little things throughout the year, we achieve this consistency. Lowering the height of cut on the ryegrass in spring and removing as much as possible through cultural practices before resorting to chemical treatments has improved recovery in our bermudagrass year after year. During the summer, aeration and verticutting as needed help ensure the field enters the season as healthy as possible, ready to host 15 or more football games plus additional practices.

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?

Thatcher: The Field of the Year application truly highlights the work that goes into maintaining a top-quality playing surface throughout the year — not just in photographs. One piece of advice: track your performance and maintenance practices throughout the year — it will make the application process much smoother. This program is a fantastic way to spotlight the efforts of field managers, and I hope SFMA continues to recognize their dedication for many years to come. **SFM**

Invest in Your Future: Join SFMA Today

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



SPORTS FIELD
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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

■ **Sports field manager:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining sports fields.

■ **Sports field manager associate:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining a sports field(s) and your organization already has an SFMA sports field manager member employed.

■ **Affiliate:** If you are indirectly or on a part-time basis involved in the maintenance/management of sports fields (coaches, athletic directors, volunteers, etc.).

■ **Academic:** If you are in teaching, extension or research.

■ **Student:** If you are a full-time student.

■ **Commercial:** If you work for a company engaged in a commercial enterprise providing services and/or products to the sports field management profession (consultants, architects, designers, contractors, management companies, distributors and manufacturers, etc.).

■ **Commercial associate:** If you are the second person (or more) from a commercial company (must first have an SFMA commercial member at their company before this lower-dues category can be selected).

■ **Retired:** If you are retired and no longer seeking full-time employment within the scope of activities of any SFMA membership category, and have been a member for a minimum of five years, you may become a non-voting member of SFMA and are not eligible to hold elective office.

THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT REASONS TO JOIN SFMA

1. **Job security:** SFMA's programs and services proactively enhance your value to your employer.

2. **Career success:** SFMA's education and information help prepare you to take that next step in your career.

3. **Recognition of your professionalism:** In addition to the individual recognition you receive because of your good



work, SFMA's advocacy with groups such as athletic directors, parks and recreation directors, coaches and parents enhances the image of the entire profession.

BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE AS AN SFMA MEMBER

■ A network of peers who share their best practices.

■ Opportunities for education.

■ Quick access to information and resources.

■ A monthly electronic newsletter that communicates association and industry information.

■ Access to the Member's Only section of *sportsfieldmanagement.org*, which has a real-time membership directory and hundreds of technical educational resources.

■ Access to Michigan State's Turfgrass Information File, a resource for up-to-date technical information.

■ Ability to enter your field in the nationally recognized Field of the Year awards program.

■ Opportunity to become a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and to have your facility certified as environmentally responsible.

■ Significant savings on registration to SFMA's annual and regional conferences, and discounts to other organizations' education.

■ Opportunity to participate in volunteer leadership positions.

■ Opportunity to join one of SFMA's affiliated chapters for a strong local network. (Each chapter sets its own local dues.)

■ Purchase SFMA branded apparel.

■ *SportsField Management Magazine* each month.

■ The ability to apply for scholarships (students only).

■ Discounted exhibitor booth at the annual conference (commercial members only). **SFM**

For more information, visit:

<https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/why-join-stma/>

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Rectangular areas void of grass

TURFGRASS AREA:

Collegiate multipurpose field

LOCATION:

South Central U.S.

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

419 Bermudagrass

Answer on page 37

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

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Budget Crunch?

You Can Still Renovate Your Field

By Mary Helen Sprecher

Photo courtesy of Iowa Sports Turf Management

"CHAMPAGNE TASTE ON A BEER BUDGET" is a familiar expression. But what is the corollary when it comes to sports facility upgrades: World Series taste on a tee-ball budget?

That might be an overstatement, but the struggle to make do with limited finances is a very real and pressing concern nationwide. And, of course, the next question is this: What can you do to economize without sacrificing the final project?

PRIORITIZE YOUR NEEDS

Create a plan for your budgeting as it pertains to the project. If, for example, you're upgrading a current facility, write down your wish list, then break it into sections. These should include the following:

- **Immediate needs:** These are the items that can't be deferred to another season or another fiscal year. In general, these are needs that affect the playability of the facility and the safety of the players who use it, as well as that of the spectators who come to take in a game.
- **Intermediate needs:** Maybe this isn't an immediate priority, but what else would you like to get done this year, if at all possible?
- **Not priority needs:** What can you put off until the next season or the next fiscal?

Once you have your list, you have a plan of attack. Next it's time to investigate your options. Research opportunities to leverage additional funding through grant programs or sponsorships that could help you gain a new revenue stream. Look inside and outside your immediate community.

Once you have a plan and a budget, speak to a contractor with sports-specific expertise who can provide advice, as well as knowledge of other ways to get the best value for the project.

INVEST, DON'T JUST SPEND

Sports facility contractors have long championed the approach of investing in facilities, rather than simply spending money on them (or, as the slang term goes, throwing money at them).

For example, drainage is an investment. It might not be as eye-catching or exciting as, for example, a video scoreboard, but it will pay dividends in helping avoid rainouts. If a field has had problems with muddy or boggy conditions, or if it does not drain well, upgraded drainage is a sound investment.

Another good investment is irrigation systems that do not waste water or oversoak fields; smart systems with rain sensors are able to detect rainfall and automatically shut off sprinklers (or keep them from turning on).

Perhaps the best investment in a facility, however, is a solid maintenance plan. No field, no matter what it costs to build or rehab, will remain playable without a well-defined maintenance schedule that includes work done on a daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual basis. Care includes looking at the facility holistically. Athlete performance and experience depends on an understanding of the interconnectedness of the grass and the soil, the weather and the use patterns, the seasons and any risks or problems that might present themselves.

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY TO SAVE MONEY

LED lighting has been shown to be not only better aesthetically, with good color rendering, but more easily aimable — meaning fewer complaints from neighbors about light spill or sky glow. Perhaps the most remarkable of all of LED's advantages is its energy-efficiency, which translates into cost savings. In general, an LED system can help field owners leverage 50 percent in energy savings over the use of older lighting such as high-intensity discharge (metal halide). A lighting contractor can provide information as it pertains to a specific facility, taking into consideration operating hours and seasonal use.

Another way of saving money in terms of lighting installations is to have the lighting contractor evaluate the efficacy of installing the new lights on any existing poles. This will save time and money. The lighting vendor will be able to evaluate the condition of the existing



*Photo courtesy of
Rettler Corporation*



*Photo courtesy of
Fisher Tracks, Inc.*

poles, and to make recommendations on the height and positioning of the new fixtures on them.

Over the years, LED systems have come down in price, thanks to more widespread manufacturing and better availability of systems. A number of vendors provide sport-specific systems; seek those, rather than lighting for more general use.

Unfortunately, one of the downfalls of this has been the prevalence of pop-up ads that show LED systems at incredibly low costs. Before clicking on such ads, remember that the systems they advertise tend to have limited functionality and may not provide what your facility needs.



Photo courtesy of Nemaha Sports Construction



Photo courtesy of the Clark Companies

Additionally, many inexpensive systems are manufactured outside of the country (where there are low product manufacturing standards) and may not offer the buyer any customer support if problems are encountered. A better choice is a domestically manufactured sports-specific system that is backed by a reputable company with references from users who can speak to the customer service experience before, during and after installation.

Other technologies are proving to be a sound investment as well. For example, robotic field painters can mark all lines easily and precisely in less than

two hours (often less than 30 minutes), at a time and labor savings of 90 percent.

Autonomous devices employ GPS technology to do the job, using the field's coordinates to drive along the grass and leave accurate lines of paint to create yard lines, hash marks, numbers and everything in between. Not only are fields marked quickly but staff members can be redistributed to other, more pressing tasks.

To stay within their budgets, school districts, recreation departments, sports parks and others are pooling their funds to purchase these types of equipment, and simply trading it back and forth as needed.

RENOVATING SYNTHETIC FIELDS

If the field under consideration for renovation is synthetic, a few options can help lower the cost of the upgrade:

- Reuse of the field base, if it is structurally sound
- Reuse of the irrigation system, if it will perform well with the new surface
- Recovery and reuse of the shock pad or e-layer
- Removal and reuse of the infill in the new field
- Selling or donating the old surface, rather than having it trucked to a landfill.

As field managers increasingly find themselves navigating a landscape that includes funding cuts and slimmer budgets, the need for creative cost-saving solutions will continue. **SFM**

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA). Need more information? ASBA's website (www.sportsbuilders.org) has resources to help. The Find A Member feature on the site allows for easy lookup of builders, design professionals and suppliers in the industry.

Integrity

Integrity doesn't show up as a line item on a budget sheet, and it isn't something you can measure with a soil probe or a moisture meter. But anyone who's managed a sports field for more than a week knows it's the quality that shapes everything else. It's the quiet truth that follows you onto every field, in every email, and every conversation with a coach, colleague or crew member. It's the part of leadership that isn't flashy, but it's the foundation that makes people trust you with everything that matters.

In sports field management, integrity shows up in ways that most people never see. It's in the moments that never make it into "Field of the Year" applications. It's choosing to do the right thing long before anyone is around to applaud it. Some days, it's as simple as walking back to put away a rake someone else left out. Other days, it's standing behind a decision that wasn't popular but was best for athlete safety. Integrity is the consistency between your words and your actions, even when there's pressure to take the shortcut.

The truth is that shortcuts always catch up to you — maybe not next game or next season, but eventually. A crew that sees you bend your standards will eventually do the same. A team member who hears you stretch the truth once will wonder if you'll do it again. A young assistant watching you navigate tough situations is learning, every time, what leadership really looks like. Whether they learn discipline or compromise depends on what you model.

Integrity is the thing that keeps you grounded when the job gets loud. And it does get loud. Fields get overused. Weather doesn't cooperate. Deadlines pile up. Someone wants the field open five minutes after a thunderstorm, and everyone wants the answer "yes." But integrity forces you to respond with what's true, not what's convenient. It means you explain why a field is unsafe instead of caving to pressure. It means you own your mistakes instead of hiding them. It means you treat every group the same way. Fairness isn't situational. Consistency isn't optional.

Integrity rarely feels heroic. Most of the time, it just feels like doing the job right. It's being honest about a timeline. It's telling your crew "we're not cutting corners today" —

even when they're tired, even when it's hot, even when skipping a step might go unnoticed.

Over time, that pattern becomes your rep. People trust you because they've seen enough to know your "default" is steady. They don't have to guess which version of you they're getting. That reliability shapes everything from how your staff communicates to how your administration supports you. Integrity isn't just personal; it becomes cultural. And culture is contagious.

A crew that sees their leader own a mistake learns that mistakes aren't the end of the world. A new team member who sees you walk the field everyday understands what professionalism actually looks like. Integrity is a domino that sets the expectation for the entire operation.

One of the hardest parts about integrity is that it makes you face yourself. It asks you to be honest about your weaknesses. It reminds you that leadership isn't just about knowing "the work," it's about knowing yourself. The job is physical, but the leadership part is deeply internal. You can't hide from the truth of your habits, and you shouldn't. Integrity forces you to align who you want to be with what you consistently do.

This matters even more when you consider the future of sports field management. Young professionals are watching closely. They're entering the industry at a time when expectations are high, staffing is tight, and visibility is greater than ever. They need leaders who show that integrity isn't outdated or optional — it's the stabilizer that keeps everything else functioning. They're learning whether this profession is worth giving themselves to long-term, and integrity is one of the things that convinces them it is.

Integrity is what protects your legacy. You don't have to be perfect; you just have to be consistent. You don't have to impress everyone; you just have to be honest with them. People may disagree with your decisions, but they'll respect the fairness behind them. And respect lasts longer than popularity ever will.

Integrity is the multiplier that makes your team stronger, your relationships smoother, and your operation more resilient. It's the reason people listen to you when things go wrong and it's the reason they follow you when things get better. **SFM**



[This article is part of an eight-part series on the Stolons of Leadership.]

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From Moisture to Microbes

Building top-tier sports turf from the soil up

For insight into soil health, *SportsField Management* magazine recently spoke with Rebecca Knapp, CSFM. A Penn State Turfgrass alumnus, Knapp has prior experience in MLB, MLS, NCAA and MiLB. Knapp is also a member of the SFMA Editorial Committee.

SportsField Management (SFM): How can we effectively assess and monitor soil health in sports fields beyond standard soil nutrient testing?

Knapp: Soil health goes far beyond NPK values. While nutrient testing is essential, we need to gain an understanding of what's happening below the surface if we want resilient, high-performing fields, especially under the stress of play and tight turnaround schedules.

One of the most critical challenges is soil compaction. Regular use of a penetrometer or a shear strength tester — especially in high-traffic zones such as goal mouths, position areas and sidelines — can provide real-time insights into rootzone resistance and whether aeration and topdressing programs are effective.



All photos provided by
Arborjet | Ecogel

It is also important to monitor organic matter levels through annual physical soil testing not just for thatch, but for how it affects water infiltration and rooting. Caution must be taken when applying compost to sand-based fields. If organic matter exceeds 3%, water infiltration and percolation rates will be restricted.

Soil biology deserves a greater focus. Microbial activity or biomass testing are available and will present soil respiration. Results will vary with seasonality because soil temperatures and moisture levels affect microbial activity. Inputs such as carbon-based fertilizers, biostimulants, and molasses-based fertilizers are solutions that can be implemented to support beneficial microbial life.

Develop a consistent visual inspection routine. In addition, use a soil probe to assess rooting depth and evaluate soil moisture. Smell the soil, as healthy soil will smell earthy. These observations can help validate lab data and assist with field management decisions.

SFM: What are the best practices for improving soil structure in high-traffic areas such as goal mouths and sidelines?

Knapp: With high-traffic zones like goal mouths, sidelines and player bench areas, the key is being proactive and layering multiple strategies together.

Aeration remains an effective approach. Depending on available field recovery time, hollow- or solid-tine aeration can be effective. Aeration will relieve compaction and open up space for air and water to enter your soil profile and provide space for new root growth.

Topdressing complements this process, and is best managed through consistency. Use a sand blend that matches the existing rootzone. Light and more frequent applications tend to deliver the best results to maintain a uniform surface.

Being proactive with aeration and topdressing can prevent severe damage later in the season. If an area becomes worn, compacted and begins to thin, consider re-sodding or consider rotating fields to allow time for recovery. Thin areas can become a safety issue and affect playability.

SFM: How does organic matter management impact soil health and playability over the course of a sports season?

Knapp: Organic matter management plays a central role in both soil health and field playability. Excessive organic matter, especially in the upper inch of your soil profile can hold excess moisture, and limit oxygen exchange. The result is a soft, spongy surface that reduces footing and increases instances of disease and pest pressures.

When organic matter is managed effectively through aeration, topdressing and biological activity, the soil stays firm yet resilient. It drains efficiently after rainfall, recovers faster from wear, and supports healthy root growth.

From a season-long perspective, consistent organic matter management means the field stays more predictable with smoother ball roll, safer footing, and reduced mid-season decline.

SFM: What role do soil microbial communities play in turf health and recovery from stress or damage?

Knapp: Soil microbial communities are vital to long-term turf performance. These beneficial microbes decompose organic matter, cycle nutrients, and even protect roots from harmful pathogens. When the microbial population is active and balanced, the soil becomes a dynamic support system that helps turf recover faster after stress from play, heat or drought.

Microbes make nutrients more available, improve soil structure, and boost root resilience. Incorporating biostimulants such as humic acid, seaweed extracts or microbial inoculants strengthens and supports the soil ecosystem. Over time, turf supported by healthy microbial activity develops deeper roots, greater shoot density, and improved resilience.



Thriving soil biology separates a good playing surface from a great one. Turf will recover quicker, have consistent color and increased durability across the demand of sports schedules.

SFM: How can we balance soil moisture for optimal turf performance without promoting compaction or disease?

Knapp: Balancing soil moisture is one of the most precise aspects of sports turf management. This goes for both turf and infield skin management. It's all about consistency and balance with weather conditions. Maintain moisture levels with the soil's field capacity in mind while providing adequate moisture for root uptake and maintaining enough air space in the soil profile for gas exchange.

Dry soil puts turf under stress, limits rooting and slows recovery. Oversaturated soils promote compaction, encourage shallow rooting and increase disease pressure. Achieving the right balance requires both data-driven irrigation management and sound soil practices. Using weather data, evapotranspiration rates and real-time soil moisture sensors allows field managers to fine tune irrigation schedules with precision to match turf needs.

Humectant-based products can help stabilize soil moisture by extending the intervals between irrigation cycles, creating a more uniform environment for nutrient uptake, and supporting soil microbial life.

Improving infiltration rates through aeration and maintaining healthy organic matter levels also helps water move freely through the soil. This will reduce surface saturation and compaction risk. Balancing soil moisture is about understanding how water moves within your soil profile. Water movement will vary across your fields and even microclimates within a field. Giving the turf exactly what it needs, when it needs it will result in a firmer, healthier and more resilient playing surface all season long. **SFM**



In this edition of the *SportsField Management Interview*, we meet Andrew Felix, manager of grounds at Sandhills Global Youth Complex, Lincoln, Nebraska.

SportsField Management (SFM): Can you tell us a bit about yourself and what led you to a career in sports field management?

Andrew Felix: My initial fascination with sports fields was just from playing on them. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to play several different outdoor sports, including soccer, football and baseball.

I was also an Eagle Scout, so I was very active in volunteering for neighborhood cleanups. My dad had a huge garden, and, as a kid, I was always outside mowing, pulling weeds or helping out around the household.

When I went on to college, I wanted to be a teacher and a coach, so I got my degree in history. While I was in college, I came back during the summer to work for Park Hill School

District on the athletic fields I grew up playing on. I eventually worked as a full-time seasonal assistant eight months out of the year and I would go to class at night or on the weekends.

After graduation, a full-time job opened up at Park Hill School District managing the north half of the district, and it was right place, right time. I knew the role and the pace, and I thought this might be just as good of a gig — if not better — than teaching. I got to be on fields, and I got to be outside. I don't regret that decision at all.

I worked at Park Hill School District for 14 years overall — nine of which were full time. During that time, the cam-



pus transitioned to a lot of artificial turf. My experience with that led me in February of 2025 to the job I have now at Sandhills Global Youth Complex, where I'm in charge of everything on site when it comes to buildings, grounds and field management.

SFM: What can you tell us about Sandhills Global Youth Complex and your fields/facilities?

Felix: I don't mean to sound cliché, but it's almost like "if you build it, they will come." We were sold out this year — in our first year. We've already hosted more than 2,600 games this year, and people have come from throughout the country for youth tournaments at our facility. We have the ability to play on any given day, from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m., and can provide consistent field conditions. We have eight fields, and they are all Sprinturf artificial turf.

Fields 1 through 4 are a traditional wheel arrangement with standard 300-foot fences down the line, and 325 feet to center. We have multiple base lengths and can do baseball at 60, 70, 80 and 90 feet and softball at 60 feet. We have portable mounds for every field and we have portable fences. It takes us 25 to 30 minutes to set up and 15 minutes to tear down. We can do fences at 225 feet for softball and 10-U baseball, and we've done 260 feet for 11-U and 275 feet for 12-U. We can adapt at any time for either sport and any age group.

Our own Sandhills league runs Monday through Thursday throughout most of the spring and summer, Legion baseball, Babe Ruth baseball, and we have two different fall leagues, as well as a softball fall league and weekend tournaments.

Field 5 is a full-sized college/pro field reserved for the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Fields 6 and 7 are the home softball and baseball fields for the University of Nebraska, Wesleyan, a local Division III school. Those fields have grandstands and professional-quality dugouts. But if they're not playing, we use those fields for our tournaments. We play anything from 11-U baseball and down on Field 6 because, as a regulation softball field, it's a one of our smaller fields. A lot of the championships for our tournaments are on Field 7, because it's a full-sized field.

Field 8 is only a 100-foot-fence field and is reserved for special needs athletes and people with disabilities. The dugouts and fences are extra wide, and every transition is smooth so you can wheel wheelchairs from the





concourse all the way out to the field. The bases are stitched in, so there's nothing raised on the field.

We also host 15 soccer teams per night for soccer practice. So we're doing a little bit of everything here in our first year. It's exciting what we can do and what we're going to be doing moving forward.

SFM: What is your role at Sandhills, and what type of crew or staff do you have?

Felix: I'm in charge of pretty much everything on site, but I have no full time help. We have a lot of college students who work four hours a day because they have school. On a given day, I typically have three crew members in the morning who work for about four or five hours and then one person at night who works for about four or five hours. They are responsible for all field flips, transitions and setups. We try to do a lot of our field setups in the morning, but there are times when we're going from league to tournament or tournament to league. Some of those tournament nights we are here until midnight, flipping fields, putting up fences, moving mounds, etc. So, we do a lot of work at night unless we know we have an ample amount of time the next day.

We're a lot more efficient than what we used to be. This facility was new to everybody, so we are learning every day. All of our processes have only gotten more efficient and more effective. For example, you might be responsible for trash and bathrooms, and then you might do some field work. Everyone is trained to do everything — from field grooming and adding rubber to the mounds to scrubbing toilets.

We try to groom every field at least once in a two-week period. But some fields just don't get a break. For example, we hosted four tournaments in 10 days. You're not packing clay, and you're not dragging fields, but it's just as intense on this level when you have this many games. But it has been awesome.

Our executive director oversees the scheduling, partnerships and business operations. We also have people who handle our human resources, baseball operations and softball operations. Then we have another person who handles the gate, staffing and concessions. As mentioned, I handle all the grounds, buildings, custodial, and any contractors and sub-contractors.



SFM: What's the best part of the job?

Felix: The best part of the job is the growth. We've done things this year with these fields that I didn't know was possible. That includes pushing myself and my team to meet deadlines and go outside our comfort zones. Having some people here only four to eight hours per week makes it challenging because it is more people you have to train. Finding that balance of labor was tough, and doing something on this scale is different.

It's being able to juggle multiple things at once, think ahead, and handle bigger responsibilities. The scale is a lot

larger here, so the impact is a lot larger. I'm seeing more than 100 teams per week, and I want to provide the best facility and best fields possible. I'm constantly learning, changing and improving. I couldn't do it without my team. They came together and dealt with some intense times and heavy deadlines. Seeing how they've changed and came together has been one of my favorite parts. **SFM**

For more information about Sandhills Global Youth Complex, visit <https://sandhillsglobalyouthcomplex.com/>



EQUIP EXPO 2025

Equip Exposition — the international landscape, outdoor living and equipment exposition — was held October 21-24 in Louisville, Kentucky, and posted another year of record attendance with nearly 30,000 registered attendees.

“Now in our fourth year as Equip, we continue to break records in both attendance and exhibit space,” said Kris Kiser, president and CEO of OPEI, which owns and manages Equip Exposition. “The show continues to serve as the most important gathering for the global industry, with attendance from all 50 states and 52 countries.”

This year’s show featured a standing-room-only keynote address from Jesse Cole, creator of the Savannah Bananas, sponsored by Kress. Attendees also opened the show with a welcome reception at the Churchill Downs raceway, took in a concert featuring Big

and Rich with Gretchen Wilson, and took part in the annual TurfMutt Fun Run and 5K.

Also new in 2025 was the Equip Creator Space, which allowed attendees to connect with industry influencers on the trade show floor. And the event again hosted Mulligan’s Mutt Madness, a national dog adoption event held in conjunction with the Kentucky Humane Society, which found forever homes for 13 dogs.

Equip offered attendees a broad lineup of education in both English and Spanish. Meanwhile, the Equip Expo exhibit hall and Outdoor Demo Area showcased the latest outdoor power equipment for industry professionals. Our recap of some of the new product highlights is as follows:



ALTOZ XC SSI SERIES AND XP 610 SSI ZERO-TURN MOWERS

Altoz expanded its lineup with two new high-performance zero-turn mowers: the XC SSi Series and the XP 610 SSi.

Both models combine industry-leading drive trains, advanced suspension systems, and ergonomic comfort to handle demanding conditions while delivering precision cut quality and dependable performance.

XC SSi Series

- Kawasaki FX 1000V EFI — 38.5-hp., 999cc displacement
- 61" or 72" finish cut aero deck options
- Hydro-Gear ZT-5400 high/low transmission
- Tri-axis front suspension with adjustable coil spring over oil shock
- Power deck lift for easy operation
- High-visibility safety color
- Flat-free front tires
- 14-gallon fuel capacity
- 12-way adjustable suspension seat

XP 610 SSi

- Kawasaki FX 820V EVO EFI — 34.5-hp., 822cc displacement
- 61" finish cut aero deck
- Hydro-Gear ZT-4400 transmission

- Tri-Axis front suspension with adjustable coil spring over oil shock
- High-visibility safety color
- Flat-free front tires
- 14-gallon fuel capacity
- 12-way adjustable suspension seat

BILLY GOAT NEXT-GENERATION HURRICANE STAND-ON BLOWERS

Billy Goat launched the new Z3002 and X3002 Hurricane stand-on blowers. These models are built upon the performance of the prior 3001 series, incorporating significant new and carried-over upgrades focused on increasing durability, enhancing operator comfort, and improving ease of use.

The new Hurricane series incorporates key structural and comfort enhancements that were recently applied to the 3001 series, ensuring a longer service life and better field performance.

■ Stronger front axles, foam-filled caster tires, and improved bearings to withstand the toughest commercial environments.

■ A convenient side fill fuel tank with gauge for easier refueling and monitoring.



- Updated operator console and heavier throttle and choke cables for more reliable control.

The new module offers improved protection and eliminates temporary control resets, ensuring consistent operation throughout the workday. The operator now has a more responsive, intuitive tap-to-adjust gate control — a short tap for minor adjustments or a longer tap for full open/close — providing precise control over airflow. The control system is no longer tied to the engine start and brake functions, streamlining the start-up sequence and boosting overall reliability.

EXMARK PRODUCT UPDATES

Exmark announced several product updates.

Turf Tracer with XiQ Technology

Looking to refine and expand the performance of its autonomous commercial mower — the Turf Tracer with XiQ Technology — Exmark released a number of updates to the machine's operating system.

Exmark focused the operating system updates around improving the consistency of path planning and providing quicker response to heavy cutting conditions. RTK coverage has been improved as well, and the machine now selects the best network to use automatically.

Remote stop functionality has been added to the Exmark XiQ app, eliminating the need for crews to charge and carry a separate remote stop device.

New service reminders have been incorporated into the operating system, so they now appear on the machine's 4.3-inch color display. This makes it easier for operators to track the service needs of each machine. In addition, new Spanish and French language options have been launched both for the machine's operating system and Exmark's XiQ app.

2026 Radius E- and S-Series zero-turn mowers

Exmark unveiled redesigned 2026 Radius E- and S-Series zero-turn mowers.

The 2026 Radius E-Series features a new Exmark Series 2+ cutting deck in a choice of 48- 54- or 60-inch cutting widths. Fabricated and fully welded of high-strength steel, with maintenance-free sealed bearing blade spindles, the Series 2+ cutting deck is durable and low maintenance. Exmark's Adapt system is available as an accessory. Adapt enables quick, tools-free deck rake adjustments from the operator seat, so the operator can tailor deck performance for specific turf types and cutting conditions.

The new Radius S-Series features Exmark's UltraCut Series 3 cutting deck, with available Adapt tools-free deck rake



adjustment as an accessory. Fabricated and welded of high-strength steel, with a 10-gauge top and 7-gauge steel skirts, the UltraCut Series 3 cutting deck offers higher capacity while preserving the cut quality Exmark owners expect. When combined with the higher capacity HydroGear ZT-3100 transmission, the Radius S-Series can mow at speeds of up to 9 mph, with pinpoint control for maximum efficiency on any property. Large 23-inch drive tires and a deluxe suspension seat offer increased operator comfort by reducing bumps and vibrations that reach the operator.

Tractus drive tire system

Exmark launched its second generation Tractus non-pneumatic tire system. The revamped Tractus system features an increased load rating to more easily handle the loads landscape pros put on them. The non-pneumatic Tractus design eliminates flat tires, while delivering up to five times longer lifespan than conventional pneumatic tires. The larger contact patch Tractus tires provide increased traction while reducing ground pressure for reduced turf compaction. The lambda design of the new Tractus system also offers a smoother ride quality than pneumatic tires over rough terrain.

GRAVELY PRO-STANCE ULTRA

Gravely expanded its commercial stand-on portfolio with the introduction of the Gravely Pro-Stance Ultra. The new platform features 52- and 60-inch deck offerings, plus a 72-inch EFI model.



Pro-Stance Ultra features:

- A wide, curved operator pad extending below knee height eliminates the potential for knee impact.
- 15-inch caster wheels.
- An adjustable platform accommodates a variety of operators.
- The pitched, forward-facing controls are angled to reduce wrist strain.
- A 16-gallon fuel tank.
- A trio of Gravely's new commercial spindles are cast from cold-forged aluminum, serviceable, and more resilient to moisture penetration and debris ingestion.

The Pro-Stance Ultra also carries over the proprietary deck-lift assist pedal from the existing Pro-Stance platform. This feature allows the operator to float the deck over roots and ruts without the need to remove their hands from the controls and it makes changing cutting height easier.

It's powered exclusively by 35- and 38.5-horsepower Kawasaki FX1000 and FX1000 EFI engines, and comes with a pair of Parker HTG integrated transaxles to move the machine to a top speed of 12.5 mph.

HYDRO-GEAR SMARTEC HYBRID

Hydro-Gear introduced the Smartec Hybrid Commercial ZT system, which combines the power and reliability of an electric machine with the technology of traditional gas machines. Hydro-Gear partnered with Kawasaki to offer the FT730V EFI engine in this system.

The system can deliver 40 hp. to deck so the blade speed remains constant regardless of the deck load. The Smartec Hybrid ZT Commercial system relies on the patented 3-in-1 hybrid deck motor, which acts like a mechanical deck spindle, electric deck motor or generator depending on the load and battery charge status.

With three operating modes to choose from (EV, Hybrid, Power), the user can select the most appropriate for the job. No worries if you forget to plug it in overnight, just start the day in Hybrid or Power Mode and charge the battery while you work.

IGNITE ATTACHMENTS SOIL CONDITIONER

Ignite Attachments added to its lineup a new soil conditioner designed to make cleanup, grading and seedbed preparation easier and more efficient. Compatible with compact tractors in the 18-to-60-horsepower range, the implement is available in 48-, 60- and 72-inch widths.

Key features include:

- Spiral-pattern drum for consistent ground contact and a smooth finish, even on hardpack or uneven terrain.



- Slip clutch protection instead of shear pins to reduce downtime and protect tractor and implement during operation.
- Quick hitch compatibility and 540 PTO driveline for fast, hassle-free hookup.
- Flip-up wing kits to increase surface coverage or allow rocks and debris to pass to the side.
- Adjustable rubber deflector with single-pin tilt-away action to control material flow without tools.
- Manual or optional hydraulic angle adjustment to create windrows or shift material as needed.
- Fiber-reinforced rubber deflector and sealed chain box with external tension adjustment for reduced maintenance and longer life.

JOHN DEERE DIESEL ZTRAK ZERO-TURN MOWERS

John Deere expanded its lineup of Diesel ZTrak zero-turn mowers, and also unveiled its new independent E-Cut wing deck design with the introduction of the FastBack Pro 100, available exclusively on the Z998R model. The John Deere lineup of commercial mowers is welcoming three models, including the debut of the brand new Z998R. In addition, the existing Z997R model received a full design upgrade and is now available in two trim levels, including the Z997R and Z997M.

New to the market, the Z998R operates as a traditional 100-inch zero-turn mower or adapts on the fly with the touch of a button. Thanks to its independently controlled E-Cut wing decks and electric drive motors, operators can raise or lower each wing deck to navigate around trees, fences, gates and other obstacles without interrupting mowing. You can even mow with just one wing deck down, giving you flexible cutting widths of 60, 80, or 100 inches to suit the job at hand. Additionally, the electric spindle motors are designed for easy serviceability and are well protected from jobsite elements.

Making for a more customized experience, operators using a Z997R or Z998R can benefit from the smart powertrain system that offers multiple mowing settings including Eco, Cut Quality and Productivity modes. Controlled through a new, advanced touchscreen display, operators can easily manage setting to meet their desired mowing needs. The new LoadMatch feature helps maintain consistent blade tip speed under heavy loads by adjusting traction speed automatically, allowing for a higher cut quality overall. Additionally, drive-by-wire



electronic controls enable automated throttle, transmission and enhanced steering control for increased efficiency.

Designed strategically with the operator in mind, the Z998R and Z998M models received various operator station improvements, including enhancements that deliver a more ergonomic operator experience. The premium air ride seat enables a smoother ride and decreased strain on the operator, while the new steering levers provide optimal control. In addition, the integrated park brake makes for easy and intuitive operator transitions.

The Height of Cut (HoC) system has been enhanced to offer center deck adjustment ranges from 1.0 to 5.5 inches in 0.25-inch increments. The wing deck height adjustment features a front caster system, which allows for tool-free field adjustment using magnetic locking keys. This simplified design enables the operator to seamlessly adjust the mower's cut height on the go.

Lastly, a newly improved cooling package has been repositioned to be housed behind the operator. The relocation of the cooling package significantly reduces debris accumulation, allowing for longer operations in hot weather conditions.

KRESS AUTONOMOUS COMMERCIAL MOWER

Kress Commercial unveiled its latest breakthrough in autonomous mowing technology. The Kress Robotics KR800, or "Voyager," is designed specifically for route-based landscaping operations.

Voyager is an autonomous, 40-inch robotic mower equipped with a fusion of real time kinematic (RTK) technology, LiDAR, VisionAI and high-tech sensors. Voyager operates boundary-wire-free with centimeter-level accuracy and the sophistication typical of autonomous cars. After a simple, one-time mapping process,

Voyager travels with the crew from property to property with infinite map memory capability. While crews focus on highly-skilled, detailed landscaping tasks, Voyager handles the bulk work in the background autonomously, efficiently and emission-free.

Voyager mows up to seven acres or eight hours per charge and operates at a rate comparable to, or faster than, traditional on-site crew tasks. With a mowing speed of 5.6 mph, it can also travel between properties in dense HOA-style neighborhoods, trailer-free, making it ideal for high-efficiency route work.

Voyager will be available at Kress dealer locations across North America in early 2026.

KUBOTA INTRODUCES NEW PRODUCTS ACROSS THREE SEGMENTS

Kubota Tractor Corporation unveiled three new additions to its equipment lineup: the SVL65-2s compact track loader, the RTV-X Long Bed, and the F2510 commercial front-mount mower.

SVL65-2s

Building on the SVL65-2 platform, the SVL65-2s retains its core specs, including a 68.4-horsepower Kubota engine, 2,100-pound rated operating capacity at 35 percent tipping load, and available high-flow auxiliary hydraulics up to 27 gallons per minute on select configurations. Inside the cab, operators will find a standard high-back seat with an available heated air-ride option, an LCD monitor with jog dial control, keyless start, an integrated backup camera, and an integrated Bluetooth radio. LED front and rear work lights and backlit switches further enhance visibility and ease of operation.

RTV-X Long Bed

The new RTV-X Long Bed model boasts a powerful Kubota diesel engine, VHT-X transmission, and, most importantly, a robust six-foot steel cargo bed with a 1,212-pound capacity. The RTV-X Long Bed features a ProKonvert flatbed conversion, a hydraulic dump box, and exclusive cargo bed accessories. The RTV-X is available in Kubota orange with HDMP tires or ATV tires, or a factory-assembled RealTree Camo package that comes equipped with LED cargo lights, a cargo winch, and a tailgate extender.

F2510 front-mount mower

Kubota's F Series adds the updated F2510, a 23.3-horsepower model. Updates include a new LCD



display with white backlight and battery meter for improved visibility, a relocated parking brake lock conveniently positioned on the dash, and a new push-button light switch that replaces the former toggle design. Additional upgrades include an LED headlight, orange front guard, and a safety valve added to the lift cylinder. Access to the fuse box has also been improved, making maintenance easier, especially when the grass catcher is installed.



STEEL GREEN MANUFACTURING SG48EV AND SG36EV SPREADER/SPRAYERS

Steel Green Manufacturing announced two new zero-turn spreader/sprayers.

The SG48EV can carry 50 gallons of liquid and 150 pounds of granular product. When you're done for the day, it can fully recharge in eight hours, so it'll be ready to go again in the morning. It is available to pre-order.

Steel Green is also taking pre-orders for the smaller SG36EV with 30-gallon liquid capacity, 150-pound electric hopper, and ability to fit through a 36-inch gate.

With an electric spreader/sprayer, there's no oil to change, and there's no risk of hydraulic failures or leaks, either.

TORO LANDSCAPING SOLUTIONS

Toro highlighted its latest products from nearly every Toro division.

GrandStand Multi Force Evo

The new GrandStand Multi Force Evo is powered by a Kawasaki Evo 34.5-hp. engine and can be equipped with various attachments for year-round efficiency and revenue. For hands-free precision, the new Autonomous Proline

AMI uses intelligent technology to deliver consistent results, freeing up operators for other tasks. Similarly, the TurfMaster HDX features a new caster front end on its 30-inch deck,



giving operators the mobility to work in tight spaces and navigate diverse properties with ease.

Dingo compact utility loaders

Toro's lineup of Dingo compact utility loaders provide the power and versatility to dig, haul, trench, grade, auger and more. Whether it's the nimble TX 525, the high-torque TX 1000 Turbo, or the powerful TXL 2000, there's a model to meet every crew and jobsite need. Paired with the Ultra Buggy 2500, users can overcome the toughest jobsite demands.

Workman UTX

Customize the Workman UTX to meet the exact needs of each operation. This versatile 4-wheel drive utility vehicle is made for tough work, featuring commercial-grade components and the highest payload in its class.

Eagle Plus irrigation controller

The Eagle Plus irrigation controller delivers superior efficiency and water savings. An enhanced and intuitive internet-connected interface equips the user with real-time irrigation control from anywhere. Plus, the Eagle Plus controller comes in a variety of configurations, including multiple enclosure options.

Battery-powered solutions

The Toro eDingo and electric Ultra Buggy family offer compact, clean and quiet solutions for high-output tasks. The eDingo 500 and eDingo TX 750 are built to navigate tight spaces while powering through hauling and loading jobs. For material transport, the electric Ultra Buggy 2500-TS offers precise placement with a 180-degree swiveling tub, while the 2500-THL adds high-lift capability — easily clearing a 30-yard dumpster for fast, efficient debris removal. Toro's battery solutions also extend to grounds care with the Groundsmaster e3300. Built on the same rugged chassis and

commercial-grade deck as its diesel-powered predecessor, it can be equipped with up to 17 HyperCell batteries for all-day power and productivity in the most demanding conditions.

VERMEER ML SERIES MINI LOADERS

Vermeer launched its next-generation mini loaders with the introduction of the ML series. The new streamlined lineup includes four models: the ML80, ML100, ML130 and ML150.

The ML series' updated hydraulic system operates a wide range of Vermeer-compatible attachments, offering flexible solutions for various jobsite needs. The ML100, ML130 and ML150 models also feature turbocharged engines for added torque when under load. To match the machine to the application, the lineup offers both radial lift path models (ML80 and ML100) for tough digging and loading tasks and vertical lift path models (ML130 and ML150) for optimal loading and material handling at height.

The chariot-style operator station is designed with comfort and safety in mind. A cushioned platform and supportive padding enhance operator comfort, supporting productivity during long hours on the job, while the integrated operator presence system suspends the ground drive and hydraulics if the operator steps off the platform. A single pilot-operated joystick provides intuitive control for precise maneuvering. The ML series is also built with top-tier ground drive components and Vermeer Fleet standard telematics.

The new Vermeer ML series offers a machine for every application, from light tree work in residential settings to heavy-duty construction.

■ With a 760-lb. rated operating capacity (ROC) and a 25-hp. diesel engine, the ML80 is ideal for replacing manual labor in residential landscape settings, light tree work and rental applications.

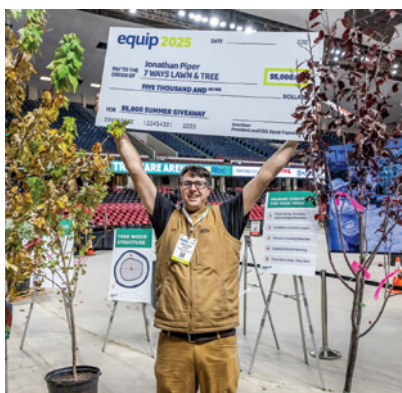
■ The ML100 steps up to a 950-lb. ROC and adds a turbocharged 25-hp. diesel engine. The ML100 is a versatile radial lift path performer for the demanding rental, landscape and urban tree care markets, providing additional torque for more power when running attachments.

■ The ML130 delivers serious power with its 40-hp. turbocharged diesel engine and 1,270-lb. ROC. Its vertical lift path design tackles larger-scale projects, demanding tree care and truck-loading applications.

■ The ML150 features a powerful 1,530-lb. ROC and 40-hp. turbocharged diesel engine. The ML150 handles trenching, hauling, digging and grading applications. **SFM**



EQUIP EXPO 2025 PHOTO GALLERY



JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

ANSWER

From page 17

These rectangular areas that are void of grass on this multipurpose collegiate field are the result of training. This field, located in the south central United States has a 419 bermudagrass base that is overseeded with ryegrass in the winter to allow green grass for practices and games. This particular college coach used to like to run practice drills on the same area of the field. Despite requests from the sports field manager to move the drills around, the coach kept the drills in the same areas. It seems that as you move down the age groups or levels of play, professional level coaches almost always move around their drills, college and university coaches sometimes move around their drills, and high school coaches seldom move the players around on the field. Despite the increased wear to these areas, the sports field manager did a good job, applying additional overseeding as needed and keeping the overseeded ryegrass growing through the winter. When the ryegrass transitioned out, you can clearly see the rectangular wear areas that were totally void of bermudagrass.

Photo from John Mascaro's collection.

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 at john@turf-tec.com. If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos become property of SportsField Management magazine and the Sports Field Management Association.



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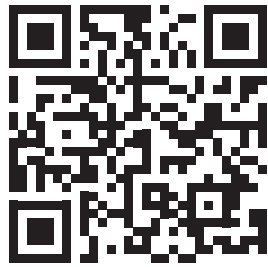
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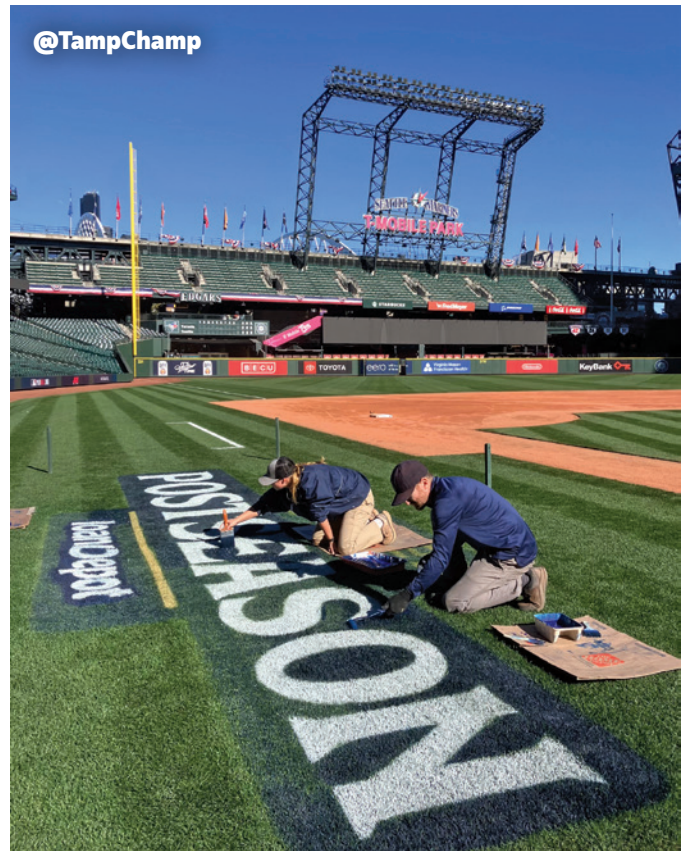
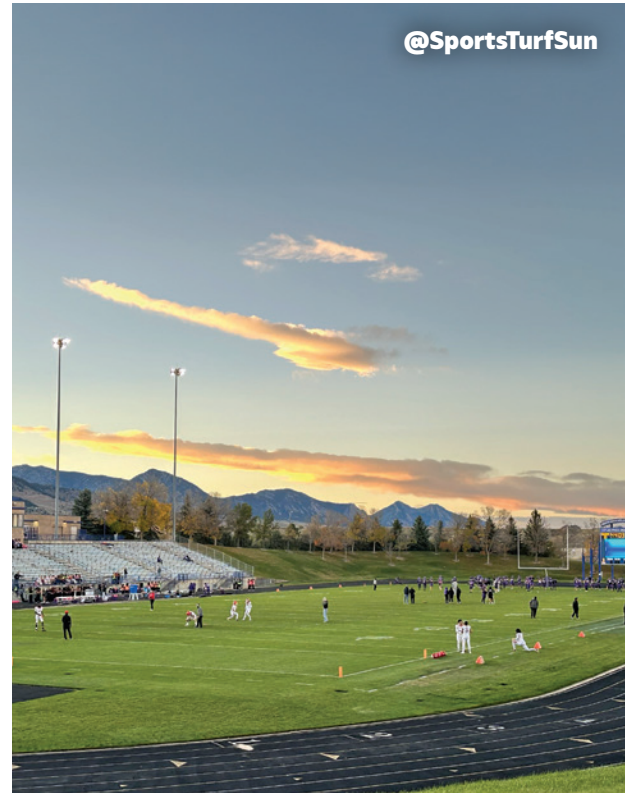
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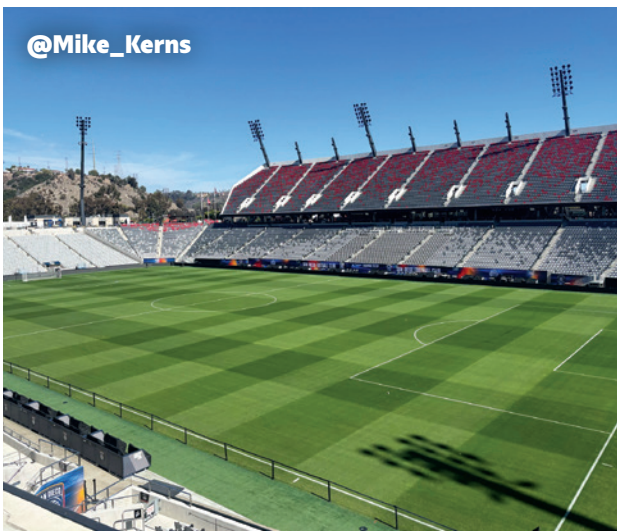
FROM THE FEEDS

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.









Seed Your Future launches horticulture campaign

Seed Your Future, a national movement dedicated to inspiring the next generation of plant professionals, launched its “From Classroom to Career: Growing Green Futures” campaign. Running through December 31, 2025, the effort seeks to raise \$50,000 to equip teachers with career-focused horticulture resources, reaching thousands of students across the country.

For just \$8.50, donors can underwrite one teacher's access to free Seed to STEM lessons and horticulture career tools. These materials introduce students to rewarding, purpose-driven careers in plant sciences and the green industry, blending science, sustainability, creativity and technology. One teacher using these lessons can inspire dozens of students to explore green pathways.

- \$85 equips 10 students with career exploration tools
- \$250 provides plantable paper for a school career fair
- \$850 impacts 100 students exploring horticulture careers
- \$1,700 empowers 200+ students with career pathways
- \$5,000 covers the cost of one teacher attending the Seed to STEM immersive program

“Every donation helps us cultivate curiosity and career exploration in students while strengthening horticulture's future workforce,” said Jazmin Albarán, executive director of Seed Your Future. “From classrooms to careers, your support directly enables teachers and students to discover the power and purpose of plants.”

Impact Since 2014:

Seed Your Future has opened doors for students by providing 147 career profiles showcasing diverse horticulture opportunities, a national da-

tabase of internships and scholarships, the Plant Power Career Quiz, helping students discover their green pathway, engaging videos and a Horticulture STEM Career Documentary Series.

Individuals, companies, and industry partners can contribute through personal donations, corporate giving, or introductions to others passionate about cultivating green talent. Every contribution puts career-focused materials in teachers hands to give students hands-on learning experiences. To donate, visit: https://givebutter.com/SYF_Fundraiser

Jordy Smith retires from Wiedenmann North America

Wiedenmann North America announced the retirement of Jordy Smith, who served the company as the West Coast territory sales manager for the USA and Canada with exceptional dedication and leadership for more than 23 years.

Throughout his career, Smith has played a key role in promoting Wiedenmann's full line of turf and grounds maintenance equipment, earning the respect and appreciation of colleagues, dealers, and customers alike. His passion for the industry and commitment to excellence have made a lasting impact on the company's success and reputation across North America.



“Jordy has been an integral part of the Wiedenmann family,” said Will Wolverton, president of Wiedenmann North America. “His professionalism, knowledge, and enthusiasm for our products have helped strengthen our brand and build enduring relationships throughout the industry. He will truly be missed.”

Smith's retirement will be effective December 31, 2025. A successor has not yet been named. In the interim, customers and partners are encouraged to contact their territory sales managers or Wiedenmann North America's headquarters with any questions.

Deere and Douglas Dynamics expand Western partnership

John Deere announced the continued expansion of its strategic partnership with Western Products, a division of Douglas Dynamics, to delivering best-in-class snow and ice control solutions.

Douglas Dynamics remains a cornerstone of the John Deere winter solutions portfolio. Its Western brand of snow and ice control equipment, including snowplows and ice blades, is now

integrated across a growing range of John Deere platforms, including Gator utility vehicles, compact utility tractors and construction equipment. This alignment ensures customers have access to high-quality, high-performance snow and ice control equipment through the John Deere dealer network.

As the partnership evolves, both companies are collaborating to push the boundaries of snow and ice control with expanded capabilities and unmatched performance, especially in areas where precision and efficiency are critical. As a result, a newly designed sidewalk machine is in development to meet the needs of municipalities, campuses, and commercial contractors looking for compact, maneuverable and powerful snow and ice control equipment.

“We are confident that our partnership with Douglas Dynamics will continue to exceed the needs of our customers in snow and ice management,” said Luke Gribble, go-to-market manager, John Deere. “Our customers rely on us to deliver game-changing solutions that address demanding weather environments, and therefore, we will continue to collaborate and develop industry-proven solutions that provide enhanced productivity and performance.”

Project EverGreen launches mobile drawing tool for Clean Air Calculator

Project EverGreen unveiled a new feature for its Clean Air Calculator (CAC): a mobile drawing tool that allows users to easily map their green spaces and learn the amount of clean air they generate directly from their smartphones or tablets.

The new “mobile paint brush” makes mapping properties of any size simple and fun. Whether you service or manage a city park, natural grass sports field, corporate campus, residential lawn, or golf course, the CAC is the only platform that measures how much carbon green space sequesters, as well as the amount of clean air it produces.

“Healthy green spaces — grass, trees, and shrubs — are one of the most effective natural ways to capture carbon and improve air quality in our communities,” said Cindy Code, executive director of



Project EverGreen. “With our new mobile drawing tool, anyone can now see the measurable environmental benefits of their green space right at their fingertips.”

Once a property is mapped, users receive a customized environmental impact report detailing:

- Carbon sequestered by the landscape
- Clean air produced annually
- Miles of emissions offset
- Number of people benefiting from the green space

In addition, the CAC can enhance team training by helping crews understand how proper turf, tree, and shrub care contributes to cleaner, healthier communities. The CAC’s data-backed insights position your organization as a trusted partner in environmental stewardship and community well-being.

Getting started with the Clean Air Calculator is quick and simple. In just a few easy steps, you can map your property and discover its environmental impact:

1. Create a free account at www.ProjectEverGreen.org/CleanAirCalculator
2. Watch the short tutorial
3. Enter your property address
4. Draw your property boundaries using the new mobile-friendly tool
5. Submit to receive your personalized report

Users are encouraged to share their results on social media and challenge friends and family to see what their properties are doing for the environment. **SFM**

2025

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



MARCH 11-12

REINDERS 27TH TURF CONFERENCE

Waukesha, Wisconsin

<https://www.reinders.com/turf-conference/>

JUNE 23-25

NATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY AND SECURITY CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

Palm Desert, California

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

SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 1

2026 NRPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

www.conference.nrpa.org/

OCTOBER 20-23

EQUIP EXPO

Louisville, Kentucky

www.equipexposition.com/

OCTOBER 20-23

TRANSFORM, THE PGMS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Louisville, Kentucky

www.pgms.org/page/2025AnnualConf **SFM**

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/

MARCH 3-5

29TH ANNUAL NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL TURFGRASS CONFERENCE AND SHOW

Providence, Rhode Island

www.nertf.org

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Colorado SFMA: www.csfma.org

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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.CFSTMA.org or CentralFloridaSTMA@gmail.com

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(dan@rafriversod.com)

Iowa SFMA: www.iowastma.org

Kentucky Sports Field Management Association:
www.kysfma.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: <https://mokansfma.org/>

Nebraska SFMA:
<https://nebraskaturfgrass.com/about-nesfma>

New England STMA: www.nestma.org

North Carolina SFMA: <https://ncsfma.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@springfieldcardinals.com)

Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey:
www.sfmanj.org

Southern California SFMA: www.socalsfma.com

South Carolina SFMA: www.scsfma.org

Tennessee Valley SFMA: www.tvstma.org

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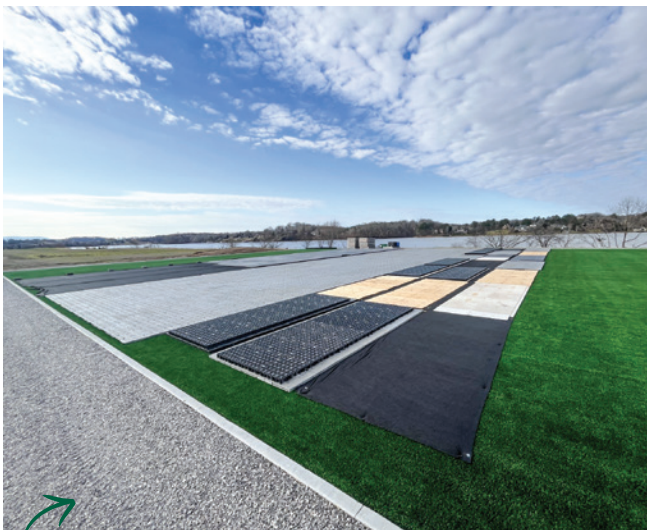
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- 1 THE ROAD TO FIFA WORLD CUP 26
- 2 BACK TO NATURAL GRASS
- 3 KEEPING BERMUDAGRASS GREENER ALL SEASON
- 4 THE RISE OF HIGH SCHOOL TURFGRASS EDUCATION PROGRAMS
- 5 FIFA WORLD CUP TRAINING PITCH MANAGEMENT
- 6 SFMA 2024 FIELD OF THE YEAR WINNERS
- 7 RISING STAR WINNER PROFILE: JUSTIN DANELUTT
- 8 SFMA NAMES NEW CEO
- 9 IRRIGATION IMPROVEMENTS
- 10 INSIDE THE FIELD CONVERSION PROCESS AT METLIFE STADIUM

- 11 SFMA MOWING PATTERNS CONTEST WINNING DESIGN
- 12 HOW FIELD VARIABILITY IMPACTS THE ATHLETE
- 13 USING COMPOST ON NATIVE SOIL FIELDS
- 14 FIFA PRESIDENT VISITS UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
- 15 SFMA CONFERENCE POST-SHOW RECAP
- 16 USING PLANT GROWTH REGULATORS TO MANAGE FACILITY LANDSCAPES
- 17 INDUSTRY MOURNS THE PASSING OF DR. TONY KOSKI

- 18 MOW, MOW, MOW

- 19 THE EVOLUTION OF TRACK AND FIELD FACILITIES

- 20 PLANNING A DOG PARK? START HERE

- 21 PICKLEBALL DESIGN SOLUTIONS

- 22 COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TURFGRASS: MT. SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE

- 23 SFMA CEO PAULA SLIEFERT BRINGS INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTIONS TO LEADERSHIP ROLE

- 24 EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPORTS FIELD MANAGERS AND THEIR VENDORS

- 25 ADAM THOMS, PH.D., BRINGS ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE TO ROLE AS SFMA PRESIDENT [SFM](#)



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