

# SportsField

## MANAGEMENT

January 2025

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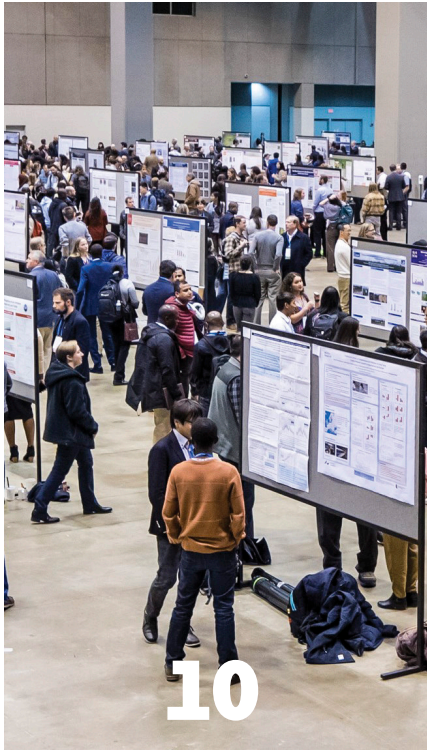
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# Editor's Note



**John Kmitta**

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This month turned out to be the ideal time for our focus on turfgrass science, as so many things related to turfgrass research and education are taking place.

As depicted on the cover, the upcoming SFMA Conference and Exhibition will be the site of the 2025 SFMA Student Challenge, which features students from 2- and 4-year colleges and universities throughout the country. Students will compete in an exam that challenges knowledge in the sports field management industry, and the winning teams receive a cash award, a plaque and medallions for each team member. The prize money benefits the institution's turfgrass program and creates opportunities for students pursuing a career in sports field management.

This issue also includes a recap of the 2024 ASA, CSSA, SSSA International Annual Meeting (now called CANVAS), which brought together approximately 4,000 of the brightest minds in their fields to share their research. My thanks to SFMA Education Manager Jennifer McLendon, M.Ed., for her report on the event and its impact on the turfgrass industry.

We also look ahead to the inaugural National Turfgrass Science Invitational, which will take place next month during the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Conference and Trade Show in San Diego (and which will alternate with the

SFMA Conference beginning in 2026). This competitive event for high school agricultural education students will emphasize skills in turfgrass science.

Carson Letot, Ph.D., National Turfgrass Science Invitational event superintendent, not only shared information about the event, but also spoke with me about the future of turfgrass science education.

Speaking of the future, Toro recently partnered with Brentsville District High School to cultivate the next generation of turfgrass managers. This issue shares the news of Brentsville District High School rebranding its turfgrass program to be named the Brentsville Turf Toro Grounds Academy.

And in case you missed it, last month we shared news regarding students from the Turf/Field class at Atwater High School (Atwater, California) teaming up with students from Golden Valley High School (Merced, California) and experts from West Coast Turf for a field renovation project.

Please continue to keep us in the loop on similar programs and events in your area, or feel free to reach out with information regarding current research initiatives.

As we head to the SFMA Conference, what better time to build excitement regarding industry research and education? I look forward to seeing you in Palm Springs.

Happy New Year! **SFM**

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# President's Message



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Happy 2025 SFMA!

January marks the start of a new year, and it also brings the start of a new term for the SFMA Board of Directors. I am thrilled to pass the baton to Adam Thoms, Ph.D., as your new president at our annual membership meeting in Palm Springs, California. Adam is a steadfast supporter of growing the sports field management profession on all levels, and is going to be a great leader of SFMA.

Reflecting on my term serving as president, it was honestly nothing like what I thought I signed up for. Having the opportunity to serve two years in this seat was certainly not on my bingo card — neither was going through two CEO transitions. Talk about stretching outside my comfort zone!

However, it has been incredibly rewarding to dive in, learn more about the association business workings, and work more closely with SFMA HQ staff and more great board members. I've learned and grown professionally more than I ever could have guessed. I believe that sports field managers are resilient and able to tackle additional challenges because we are wired to be prepared for situations A, B, C



**Sun Roesslein, CSFM**

SFMA President

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and more! We also have great teams to work with, along with support networks that are truly the strength behind the scenes. Nothing has been truer for the past couple of years. I also wouldn't change or trade this adventure for anything different.

When asked how she navigated her business through the pandemic, Mary Lou Bohn of Titleist golf said she continued to make decisions to "do the right things, in the right ways, with the long view in mind." That has been a driving mantra for me the past couple of years.

Our membership is full of stories that inspire, and examples of grit and triumph that are excellent real life sources of motivation. When plans A, B and C don't work out, I encourage you to lean on your support network, look to peers for inspiration and keep the long view in mind.

Thank you all for your support these past couple of years. It has been one of my greatest honors to serve the members of SFMA. **SFM**

*Sun Roesslein, CSFM*





## SFMA Mowing Patterns Contest Winner

SFMA announced that Jeff Ross, head groundskeeper at the Great Lakes Loons, is the winner of this year's Mowing Patterns Contest with his "Fan Appreciation Pattern." Ross credited his assistant groundskeepers, Ryan Wolter and TJ Fairchild, for helping with the design.

"The pattern was mowed with our John Deere 2500B triplex mower in the outfield and a John Deere 260B walk-behind greens mower on the infield," said Ross. "The 'Fan Appreciation Pattern' was a poll on our team's social media where I came up with three patterns and the fans got to choose which one would be on the field for the final home game of the season."

Ross won complimentary registration to the 2025 SFMA Annual Conference in Palm Springs, California.

## 2025 SFMA Innovative Award Winners

Congratulations to Hunter Industries and Wiedenmann North America, LLC, on being named this year's SFMA Innovative Award Winners. The award is given to one or more SFMA Conference exhibitors whose innovation has made the sports field manager more effective or the playing surface safer.

### HUNTER WIRELESS VALVE LINK (WVL)

Running wire from the controller to field valves can be time consuming, labor intensive and expensive. The Hunter Wireless Valve Link (WVL) system uses LoRa Technology so you can easily connect valves without running additional wires or cutting into hardscape. It features simple, wire-free connections, works with Hunter ICC2 and HCC controllers, and is compatible with Centralus and Hydrowise Software. The WVL adds up to 54 valves (+P/MV) up to 2,000 feet line-of-sight or more with a repeater. License-free LoRa Technology enables wireless communication directly to the valve box — no copper field wiring required. WVL combines with conventional ICM or two-wire EZDS modules for ultimate flexibility.



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## SFMA Membership Renewal

If you are an SFMA member and have yet to renew your membership, please login and do so quickly as member drops will take place soon. Your SFMA membership is an investment in your future, and SFMA takes



pride in offering a membership that connects you with a network of like-minded professionals that are eager to share their best practices. The SFMA knowledge center provides educational opportunities to enhance your skills, and offers quick access to valuable information and resources to help you save time.

SFMA has a new AMS system that requires you to “set up a new account” even if you have been a longtime member. Visit <https://members.sportsfieldmanagement.org/welcome> to sign up or login. If you have any questions regarding membership or need assistance with the joining/renewal process, contact SFMA HQ at 800-323-3876 or [sfmainfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org](mailto:sfmainfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org).

## Post-conference Virtual Education

Extend your SFMA conference experience with four weeks of virtual education. Two sessions will be featured each Tuesday following the 2025 SFMA Conference. These sessions are available for free to anyone who signs up for a full conference registration. Register on the SFMA website at [sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference/](https://sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference/).

### **JANUARY 21**

**2-3 p.m.: Baseball and Softball Pitcher's Mound and Batter's Box Construction**, presented by Keith Fisher, Central Regional School District

**3:15-4:15 p.m.: The Financial Kitchen Sink - Strategies for Effective Cost Management**, presented by Barry Gardner, Policy Analytics, LLC, and Jamie Mehringer, Advanced Turf Solutions.

### **JANUARY 28**

**2-3 p.m.: Dollars and Sense, Practical Math to Maximize Savings**, presented by Dan Sandor, Ph.D., Virginia Tech University, and Jada Powlen, Ph.D., Purdue University

**3:15-4:15 p.m.: Measuring and Managing Soil Carbon on Sports Fields**, presented by Quincy Law, Ph.D., Iowa State University, and Tim VanLoo, CSFM, D&K Turf Products

### **FEBRUARY 11**

**2-3 p.m.: Potential Ways to Reduce Inputs on Athletic Fields**, presented by AJ Lindsey, Ph.D., University of Florida

**3:15-4:15 p.m.: Toxicity? Are Fertilizers and Pesticides Harming Soil, Plants, Participants, etc.?** presented by Bryan G. Hopkins, Ph.D., Brigham Young University

### **FEBRUARY 18**

**2-3 p.m.: Leveling the Playing Field: How Pests and Stresses Impact Playability**, presented by David McCall, Ph.D., Virginia Tech University, and Ava Veith, graduate student, Virginia Tech University

**3:15-4:15 p.m.: Pesticide Potions Class: A Journey into Pesticide Formulations and Mixing**, presented by Chrissie A. Segars, Ph.D., PBI Gordon, and Dale Sanson, Ph.D., PBI Gordon **SFM**



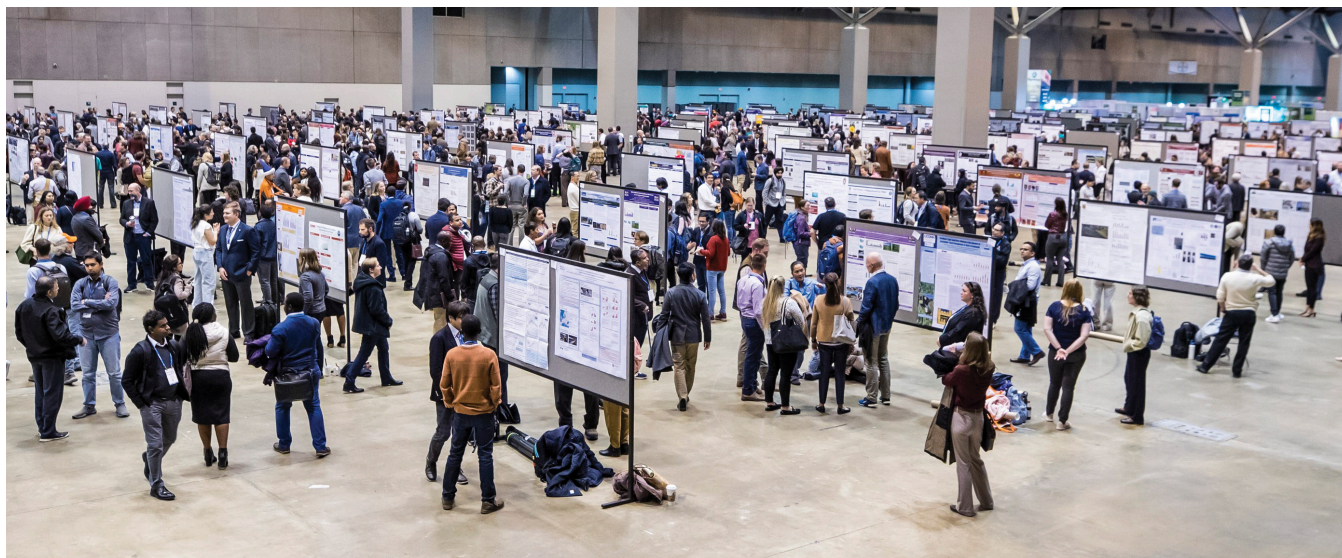
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# Inspiring Change

## *The 2024 ASA, CSSA, SSSA International Annual Meeting*

The 2024 ASA, CSSA, SSSA International Annual Meeting was held in San Antonio, Texas, November 10-13, 2024.

The meeting is hosted by the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA). These

three scientific associations of soil, crop and agronomic scientists brought together approximately 4,000 of the brightest minds in their fields to share their research.

The event theme, "AI Innovations for a Changing Climate," focused on the role of AI in soil management, climate-smart farm-

ing, and forest mapping. The theme was to inspire change in agronomy, crop and soil sciences to impact scientific advancement.

According to meeting organizers, rapidly changing climate is one of the greatest challenges for modern agriculture around the world. But by leveraging advanced modeling tools, remote sensing, machine vision, autonomous machinery and robots, AI enables improved soil management, climate-smart farming, and accurate forest mapping.

Academic researchers comprise a majority of attendees, though the event includes many opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, including competitions and networking events.

More than 3,000 scientific abstracts covered a wide variety of disciplines. Authors of scientific papers summarized more than 2,500 papers at more than 500 sessions.







Some of the graduate student posters that were on display. The posters provided insight into current industry research.

"As a first-time attendee to this conference, I was overwhelmed with the flood of excitement and current happenings in the turfgrass industry," said Jennifer McLendon, M.Ed., SFMA education manager. "The rapid, 15-minute daily oral presentation sessions offered a glimpse into the various areas of scientific research and focus from the past year. The daily poster presentations also extended insight into current research and industry happenings."

According to McLendon, some of the education sessions that were of interest to the turfgrass industry were as follows:

- "Do Microbial Inoculants Improve Abiotic Stress Tolerance in Turfgrass?" presented by Chiara Ammaturo, Racheal Omoboyejo, Mussie Habteselassie and David Jespersen, University of Georgia and University of Padova, Italy.
- "Potential Gene Editing Targets for Developing Haploid Inducer Lines (HILs) in Warm-Season Turfgrass Species," presented by Mohammed Kyum and Kevin Kenworthy, University of Florida.
- "Impact of Short-Term Storage Temperature on Coated vs. Non-Coated Turfgrass Seeds," presented by Parul Mandaland and Ross Braun, Kansas State University.

- "Evolution of *Bacillus Licheniformis* as a Biostimulant to Improve Drought Tolerance in *Agrostis Stolonifera* Grown on Greens with Different Soil Types," presented by Florence Sessoms, Dominic Petrella, Maranda Berger, Tyler VanLandingham and Edward Nangle, The Ohio State University.

- "Hybrid Bermudagrass Dormancy Management in a Cool Season Climate," presented by Clarissa Peterson, Glen A. Wear, Ashley Beazer, Caden J. Seely, Neil C. Hansen and Bryan G. Hopkins, Brigham Young University.

- "Influence of Laser Intensity and Pattern for Weed Control in Ornamental Turf," presented by Juan R. Romero and Shawn Askew, Virginia Tech University.

- "Influence of Crabgrass (*Digitaria spp.*) on Golf Ball Roll," presented by James T. Sprague, Molly A. Biggs, Quincy D. Law and Adam W. Thoms, Iowa State University.

According to McLendon, the meeting also covered various industry updates including the president's report, CSSA board report, C5 editor report, C5 division reports, awards, partner association updates and new business.

The 2025 meeting, now called CANVAS, will be held November 9-12, 2025, in Salt Lake City, Utah. For more information, visit <https://www.acsmeetings.org/about> **SFM**



# 2025 National Turfgrass Science Invitational

The inaugural National Turfgrass Science Invitational will take place February 3-5, 2024, during the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Conference and Trade Show in San Diego, with participants having access to professional development opportunities at the conference and trade show in addition to the competition. The event will alternate between the conferences of GCSAA and the Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) in future years.

This competitive event for high school agricultural education students will emphasize skills in turfgrass science. During the event, competitors will engage in individual and team activities on topics such as turfgrass identification, playing surface set-up, equipment operation and best management practices. They will also travel to a San Diego-area golf course for practicums, which test the hands-on and observational skills of the competitors.

The 2025 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. Recognition of winners and teams who competed at the invitational will be held in conjunction with the GCSAA Conference.

According to Carson Letot, Ph.D., event superintendent, turfgrass science, FFA national competitions have typically been diverse competitions that include everything from row crops to livestock to forestry. These events provide an outlet for students to showcase demonstrated knowledge and skill sets, and give them insight into what that would be like as a career choice.

Turfgrass has been well represented in the National FFA organization, but typically through proficiency award applications that showcase their supervised agricultural experience (SAE) in turfgrass.

Students would develop and build upon those proficiencies over time, and proficiency finalists for turfgrass science would be judged at the national level. However, despite the rich tradition of the proficiencies, there was never a national competition or career development event (CDE) for turfgrass.

According to Letot, in fall of 2023, individuals from GCSAA, SFMA and university turfgrass science faculty members began discussing the possibility of a national competition centered on curriculum and needed resources.

At that point, however, the conversations didn't perpetuate

into the invitational. Letot, who is an instructor at Sandhills Community College in Pinehurst, North Carolina, and coordinator for the USGA Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program, leveraged his background as a former FFA advisor and member of the turfgrass industry to help launch this competition at the national level in partnership with an executive team.

"I started planning and helping out. We have a really good executive leadership team," he said. "Shelia Finney and Leann Cooper from GCSAA have been unbelievable advocates for this competition. Without them, this would not be happening. Will Waidelich and Madeline Young are the FFA emissaries who will observe the competition this year, help us out and give us guidance.





“This competition is being titled as an invitational, as a pilot, for it to be then proposed to National FFA for consideration to become a Career Development Event,” Letot added. “If it gets approved, it’ll join the portfolio of National CDEs. So the goal is that the ‘invitational’ moniker lasts a year, and after that it will be known as the National Turfgrass Science CDE.”

Letot also credited Geoff Rinehart and Chase Straw, Ph.D., as well as SFMA Education Manager Jennifer McLendon with communication and organization of the event — especially with university faculty and industry associations.

According to Letot, the unique aspect of this competition is that it involves both the golf course management and sports field management industries.

“Given that a lot of these students are looking at jobs in the golf course industry, it made sense to start out with golf courses and GCSAA as that host,” he said. “But SFMA is going to make a tremendous host because their arena is something that is on the doorstep of every high school in the United States. So we’ve

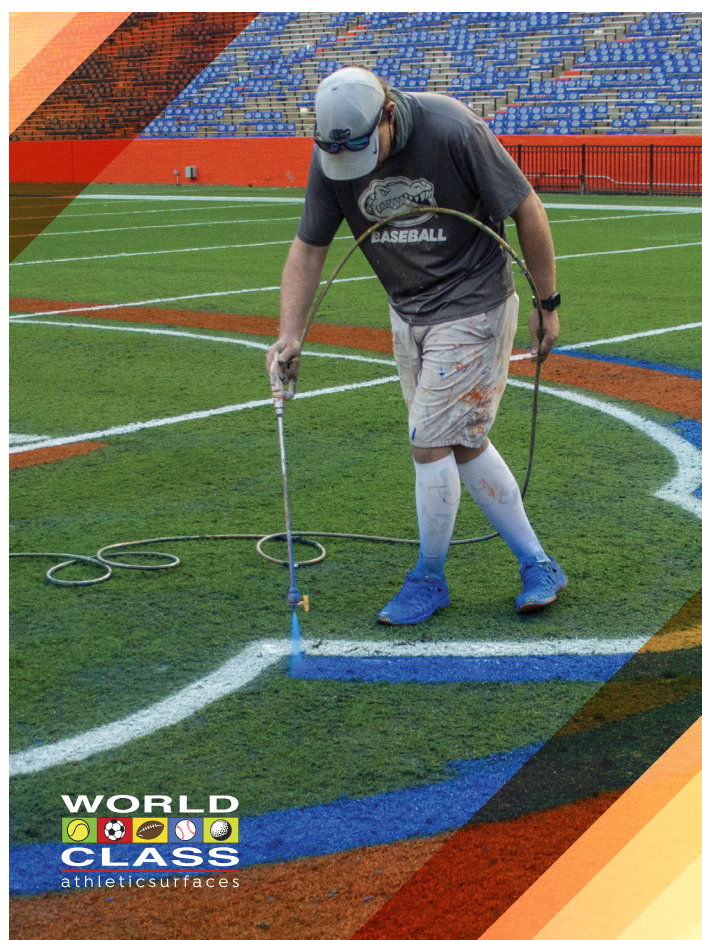
decided to have this alternate back and forth each year between the SFMA and GCSAA national conferences.”

According to Letot, having a national competition will hopefully have a trickle-down effect in future years that will foster more state competitions that are able to adopt the same competition model and resources. “Our goal is that we get most every state where turfgrass science is a viable industry hosting a state competition to send their winners on to national,” he said.

For the inaugural invitational, there are currently 12 teams of four registered to compete. Teachers will get to take classes while their students are competing; and on the following day the students and the teachers will be provided with continuing professional development before an award ceremony.

There are three things Letot would like to accomplish with the inaugural event.

“First is that the kids have fun,” he said. “And I’m not saying that just to be cliché. I have witnessed this competition at the state level and I have witnessed other FFA events and career development events. We



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try to do a good job at standardizing the competition to make it fair for everybody, provide a safe space for the students to compete, and for it to be a repeatable competition every year. But oftentimes it gets boring; they're out there for too long and it's not a simulation of the job — it becomes drudgery.

"So my goal as I'm watching the competition — and as I get feedback at the end — is that the kids actually felt like they were doing something and having fun," he added. "There are a lot of other times where we can be academic; this is not one of those times. We don't want them to play school; we want them to have a taste of the industry. It's a fast-paced, skill-involved industry, and we want them to see that."

Letot's second objective is to get the curriculum into the hands of the teachers and give them the confidence to bring turfgrass science into their classrooms in a significant way and find unique ways to teach the subject. He also hopes teachers are empowered to work with community members such as golf course superintendents and sports field managers — either via field trips or in the classroom — as partnerships that provide students with experiential learning opportunities.

Development of industry partnerships is the third thing Letot would like to come out of the invitational.

"If they have some unique ways that their industry or their company can provide some educational support to teachers and students, we would like for them to see it and jump on board. This is a train that we hope starts to leave the station slowly and they still have enough time to pick up the pace and jump on board."

According to Letot, the first year of the competition is going to be a learning opportunity, and it will be golf-centric because it is being held at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show. However, as the event shifts to the SFMA Conference in 2026, event organizers will be assembling a task force of sports field management industry professionals to guide the direction of the competition.

"We will have very unique skill sets needed to prepare a field," he said. "So we will need folks that are in the sports field arena to help us out as part of the working group and the committee that helps guide those practicums. We want to make sure those students are going to do something that's a preview and gives them a taste of the industry, but is also fun and engaging. We have a good deal of ideas, but we could use a good deal more; so we will need all hands on deck."

To learn more about the 2025 National Turfgrass Science Invitational, visit [gcsaaconference.com/gcsaa-turfgrass-science](https://gcsaaconference.com/gcsaa-turfgrass-science). **SFM**

## Fostering the growth of turfgrass education

According to National Turfgrass Science Invitational Event Superintendent, Carson Letot, Ph.D., partnerships between curriculum providers, such as iCEV, and university faculty has led to renewed interest in turfgrass education and development of improved curriculum for high school teachers. But when it comes to facilitating more interest in turfgrass science education and programs such as FFA, there are several routes that could foster the growth of agricultural education.

One of those routes is 4-H, which is typically run through the university extension system in each state and that particular state's individual counties. "It tends to be a surefire way to engage students no matter socioeconomic level or geography," he said.

FFA has a different process and structure from 4-H. High schools that don't have an FFA program go through a process of soliciting community support. That process then moves to the school

board level, a joint conversation with state staff and the state department of education.

"The great thing is that there are new programs that start all the time," said Letot. "It's a conversation that's complex, requires some planning and delivery, but it happens all the time."

One of Letot's former students — a recent graduate — helped launch an FFA program at a fairly urban school in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

"So it's definitely possible," he added. "When we see it happen, it's neat for the teachers who start the new program. Everything's novel and unique, and they start to tap into some of those students who are interested in turf."

The hope is that the National Turfgrass Science Invitational will generate interest among those who hear about it and follow the competition. Even if they are not an educator or school board member, they may be a stakeholder in their local area and push for an FFA program as a result.



Another route is for students to join an existing FFA chapter in their area — perhaps at a career technical education center, an intermediate school district or a neighboring school district.

“I’ve known plenty of students in the state of New York who will go between different FFA chapters and different schools,” said Letot. “They might spend the morning at their school and then go to a school in the next county over to participate in their FFA program, take a class and be involved in their chapter.

“I can’t speak for every state, but in Michigan — where I grew up and where I taught — we had career tech centers where 12 different high schools would send their students to one career tech center in each county. Those students are coming from very different places that might not have

offered that opportunity. They get to spend the entire morning or the entire afternoon studying at unbelievable facilities with unbelievable amounts of resources to do really cool, unique things.”

According to Letot, high school educators can push for these types of programs, but they have to be supported at the foundational level by local industries and local stakeholders.

“The great thing is that everybody has a field on the doorstep of their school,” he said. “I think that’s where sports turf has a unique advantage. Not every school is close to a golf course, but most every school has something to play a field-based sport on. Those are learning laboratories outside for our students that are a very underutilized asset and could be a tremendous learning conduit.” **SFM**

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# The Only One in the Room

Happy New Year! Although it is a new one, this spring I will attend my high school class reunion to remember and celebrate a year from long ago. I have connected with many of my classmates in anticipation of the event. In the process of reconnecting, I was reminded of a time early in my school years when a group of kids and I were playing tag or kickball on the playground.

There was one student who was noticeably taller and carried more weight than everyone else on the playground. I remember being told by another kid not to play with her. I asked why, and the response had to do with the ways in which she was different. It was early insight into how others view and handle differences.

Those of us who are perceived as “different” — whether by race, gender, ethnicity or other ways — often feel like the only one in the room. Being different in the sports field management industry brings an additional layer of complexity. On one hand, it is a source of pride to have reached a place where you can represent those who look, think or live differently from the majority. On the other, it can be intimidating to consistently feel like an outsider — especially in an industry that has historically been dominated by a narrow demographic.

Isolation is one of the most immediate challenges. Whether attending an industry conference or working alongside crews on a high-profile field, it's easy to feel like your voice is drowned out in a sea of sameness. This isolation can sometimes manifest as self-doubt. Do I belong here? Am I taken seriously? It doesn't help when assumptions are made about your skills or experience, or when comments and interactions reveal biases — whether overt or subtle.

There's also the unspoken pressure to represent an entire group. As the only person in the room who looks or thinks differently, your actions are often scrutinized as representative of your identity. A mistake feels magnified, while successes may be attributed to luck rather than merit. This additional layer of pressure can be exhausting, but it's also a powerful motivator to excel.

I have often retold the story of attending my very first STMA (now SFMA) conference. Rather than being a wallflower, I was motivated by my nervousness of being different to shake hands and introduce myself thinking it would draw attention away from my distinction.

Being the “different” person in the room offers a unique platform for creating change. Simply being present disrupts the norm and forces others to consider perspectives they might not have otherwise encountered.

It also encourages you to seek out allies and build meaningful connections. In my experience, I've learned to identify those who share my vision, regardless of their background. These allies have been instrumental in creating opportunities for collaboration, mentorship and mutual support.

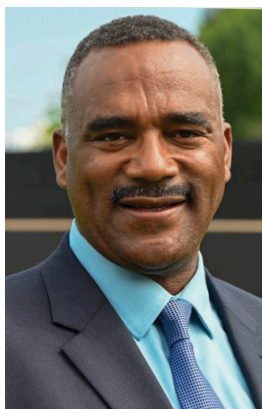
Mentorship has been a transformative experience for me, and I am thankful to have played a part in establishing a mentorship program within SFMA. Early in my career, I had mentors who gave guidance on navigating this industry. Now, I strive to pay it forward by connecting with others who may feel out of place in this industry. Sharing insights and experiences helps foster a sense of community and belonging, even when the numbers are small.

Early in my career, I felt a need to conform — to downplay my differences so that I did not stand out, if that were possible. Over time, I realized that my uniqueness is not a liability but an asset. Embracing who I am and what I bring to the table has not only helped me succeed but also inspired others to embrace their differences.

The isolation, scrutiny and pressure to prove oneself can be daunting. Yet it also provides an incredible opportunity to challenge norms, contribute unique insights, and inspire others to follow in your footsteps.

The journey is not always easy, but it is undeniably worthwhile. Insight into what someone else may be going through can help to create a more inclusive industry where everyone — regardless of background

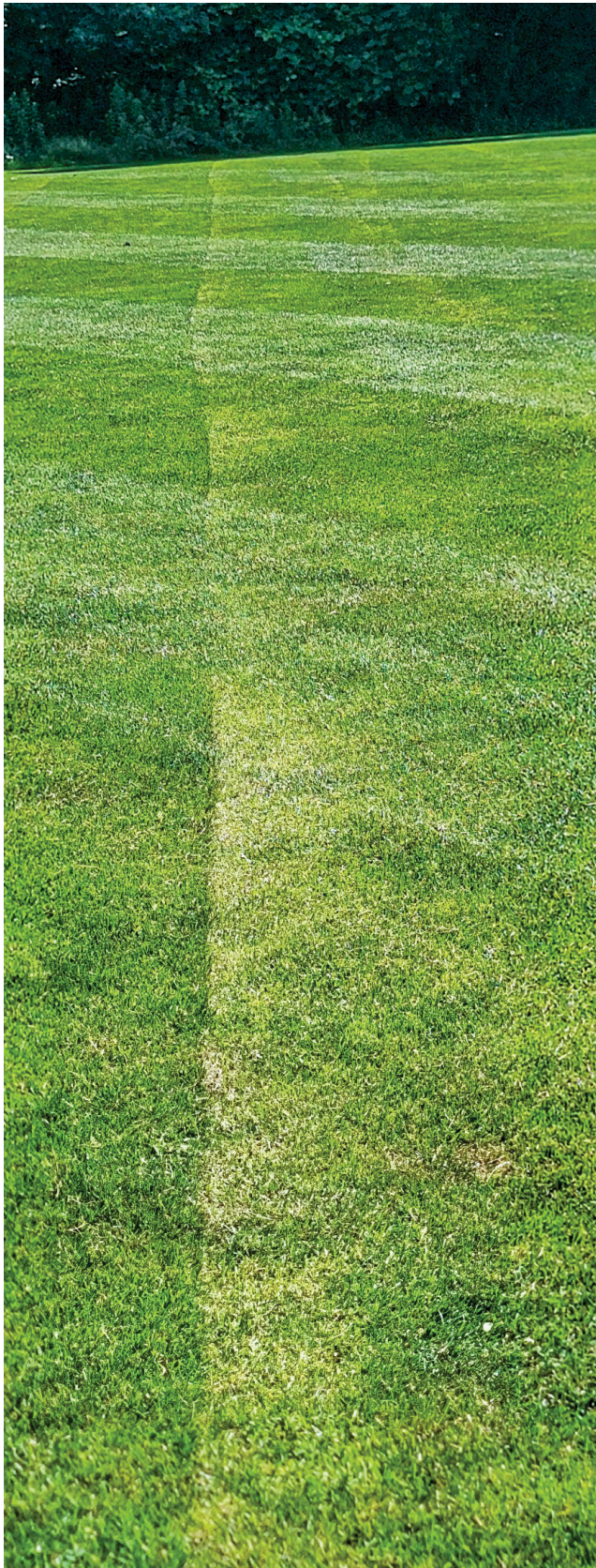
— has the chance to thrive. By embracing diversity, the sports field management industry can better serve the athletes, communities and users of athletic fields at every level of sports. **SFM**



*Alpha Jones, CSFM, is athletic field specialist at Duke University. He also serves on the SFMA Board of Directors as Secretary-Treasurer.*



## JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



### CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

**PROBLEM:**

Lower turf on right side of field

**TURFGRASS AREA:**

High school practice football field

**LOCATION:**

Dedham, Massachusetts

**TURFGRASS VARIETY:**

Bluegrass/rye mix

*Answer on page 33*

*John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International*

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Photo courtesy of Welch Tennis Courts, Inc.

# Court Considerations

## *Keeping up with the demand for pickleball and tennis surfaces*

By Mary Helen Sprecher

Because sports fields require extensive care in order to keep them in good repair, it's easy to concentrate just on them. As a result, the demand for a new type of facility — or for upgrades to existing facilities — may catch managers off guard. Case in point: Pickleball.

Pickleball is exploding; in fact, according to the most recent research by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) and its partner, Pickleheads, pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in America, showing a leap in participation of 51.8 percent from 2022 to 2023, and 223.5 percent in three years.

Pickleball is massively popular at the park level, in HOAs and in private clubs; and now colleges are adding courts to keep up with the demand. Although pickleball was initially associated with an over-50 age participation, the age group with the most participants, 2.3 million people, is actually the 25–34 age range. The sport also brought in more than 1 million children under the age of 18 from 2022 to 2023, and tournaments are adding more age categories for youth.

At the same time, tennis is growing. According to the United States Tennis Association (USTA), more Americans than ever are hitting the courts — nearly 24

million played in 2023, and USTA notes that another 25 million Americans are interested in trying tennis, meaning the potential for expansion, and subsequently for more courts. Various diversity initiatives have also helped change the game's image, making it less of a country club sport and more of an inclusive fitness and fun opportunity.

So, when you get the question about adding courts for pickleball and building or upgrading courts for tennis, what are you going to do?

One thing NOT to do — add pickleball lines to existing tennis courts.

"Many organizations are trying to use their tennis courts for pickleball as well," said Barbara Dobbs, CTCB, of Austin, Texas-based Dobbs Tennis Courts, Inc.

According to Dobbs, this can cause all kinds of problems. In addition to bringing tennis players and pickleball players into direct conflicts over court time, there are logistical reasons not to try to have courts multi-task for both sports.

"Some organizations are using the tennis center net strap to pull the tennis net down another two inches for pickleball play," said Dobbs. "That is a dangerous thing





*Photo courtesy of The Tennis Design Studio, David W. LaSota II*

to do if the tennis net is tensioned correctly. We recommend putting pickleball striping on each side of the tennis net and using portable nets.

“If the HOA or other organization supplies the portable nets, we suggest they be secured to the fence when not in use to make sure the wind does not blow them across the court and damage the surface,” Dobbs added.

In early 2023, the USTA created guidance around the issue of demand for tennis and pickleball facilities, with an eye to the best ways to address the needs of players across both sports. Options include the following:

#### **Option 1: Sport-specific sites**

According to USTA, the ideal solution is the development and/or expansion of sport-specific public sites (i.e., separate tennis facilities and pickleball facilities). Facilities can be offered either as one central complex (with different courts for each sport) or as two separate facilities.

#### **Option 2: Non-traditional spaces**

In the event that sport-specific sites are not possible, both tennis and pickleball can be played by creating courts for each in non-traditional spaces. USTA advises looking for hard surface areas that could possibly be converted, such as a concrete



*Photo courtesy of Cape & Island Tennis & Track*



*Photo courtesy of Lower Bros. Co., Inc.*



*Photo courtesy of the American Sports Builders Association*

slab, multi-sport court sites and/or vacant parking lot locations. A court contractor can be brought in to measure the space; mark it with lines; and, if possible, color-coat it for sports use. Pop-up nets for tennis, as well as pop-up nets for pickleball, can be obtained affordably online; a search will yield multiple possibilities.

Note: When contemplating any type of conversion affiliated with public facility infrastructure, safety must be at the forefront of all considerations. Further, local ordinances should be reviewed to ensure accessing the space for play is allowed. In the case of conversion of facilities, care must be taken





Photo courtesy of Robert Cohen Co., LLC/Sport Surfaces Distributing, Inc.



Photo courtesy of Lower Bros. Co., Inc.



Photo courtesy of Cape & Island Tennis & Track

to avoid removing critical infrastructure such as parking, as well as access for those with physical challenges.

### **Option 3: Shared use of courts**

In the event that sport-specific sites and non-traditional spaces are not possible — and in the interest of equitable offerings for both tennis and pickleball — facilities can still allow both sports to be played by having blended lines applied. (Note: Blended lines is the USTA term for multiple playing lines on any one surface.)

This recommendation is useful for sites with one or two tennis courts. For sites with three or more tennis courts, every effort should be made to utilize Option 1 or Option 2 because of the sustained growth and increasing public demand for both sports. Whenever possible, use the services of a skilled court-specific contractor to apply lines. Additionally, work with user groups to create playing hours for various populations; leagues, camps, lessons and open play times should all be taken into consideration.

### **PLAYING LINES ON COURTS**

In some cases, courts to be used in sanctioned competition must have only one sport-specific set of lines on the surface; if tennis courts, for example, will



host tournaments, it is essential to understand the rules prior to making arrangements for competition.

One problem in the tennis and pickleball space has been the issue of players, as well as facility owners and managers, marking out their own lines for play on existing courts, rather than having lines professionally installed. In one case, a pickleball player in Colorado used a permanent marker to make pickleball lines on a hardwood floor. He was accused of causing \$9,344 worth of damage, which is what the parks department said it would cost to refinish the gym floor.

Surface manufacturers, flooring installers and facility owners have long complained about people using everything from markers to chalk to paint to tape in order to mark playing lines on indoor and outdoor sport spaces — which has led to problems later on. (Tape, for example, can ruin the finish on wood flooring on indoor courts, and can damage the acrylic coating on outdoor flooring.)

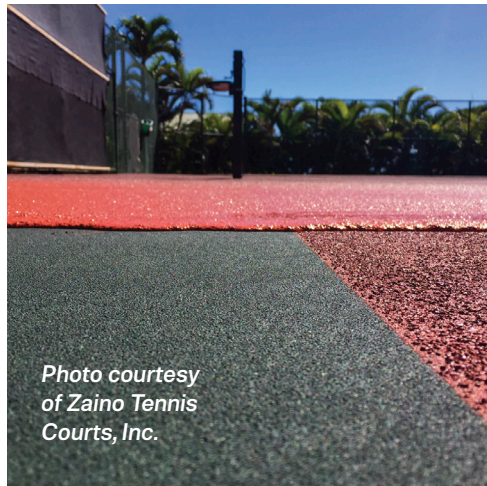
Facility owners should take an audit of space uses and demands each year, with a view to having lines professionally marked as needed, or to building separate playing spaces.

### **ADDING NEW COURTS TOO QUICKLY CAN CREATE PROBLEMS**

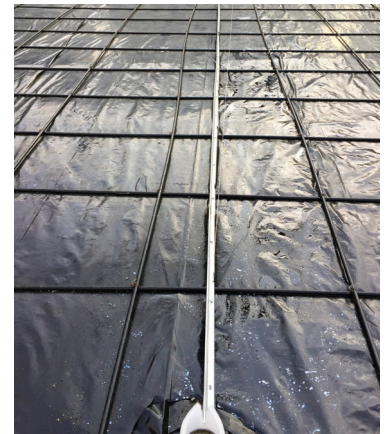
While requests for pickleball space have increased markedly, this has led to problems, particularly when new facilities are installed without thought to the amenities needed. Parking, restrooms, lighting and access pathways, as well as benches and other areas where players can wait for a game, all need to be considered during the design and planning stage; otherwise, a new facility may cause more problems than it solves.



*Photo courtesy of American Tennis Courts*



*Photo courtesy of Zaino Tennis Courts, Inc.*



*Photo courtesy of The Tennis Design Studio, David W. LaSota II*

If, for example, parking is an afterthought, pickleball players may wind up parking in nearby neighborhoods, irritating residents; or may cause too much pressure on existing parking lots that have not been enlarged to accommodate the increased use. If lighting is not installed, the playing hours of the courts may be severely curtailed, leading to congestion during daylight hours.

An issue that is often mentioned with regard to situating pickleball courts close to tennis courts, residences or other facilities is that of noise. While pickleball does not make a deafening racket by anyone's definition, the click of paddles hitting balls has been regarded as bothersome to some. Accordingly, USA Pickleball has noted that products are being designed to help quiet the game. **SFM**

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA). Information on the design, construction, marking and use of courts can be found in the books, "Pickleball Courts: Construction & Maintenance Manual" and "Tennis Courts: Construction and Maintenance Manual," both of which are available in hard copy or PDF from the ASBA at [www.sportsbuilder.org](http://www.sportsbuilder.org). (Note: Use the top blue toolbar to mouse over Resources, then select Publications from the drop-down menu.)

# Casey Reynolds, Ph.D.

## *Leading turfgrass innovation with Turfgrass Producers International*

By Cecilia Johnson

As Executive Director of Turfgrass Producers International (TPI), Casey Reynolds, Ph.D., leads an association that has been the cornerstone of the turfgrass production industry for nearly 60 years. With a focus on education, advocacy and resource development, Reynolds ensures that TPI supports sod farmers, equipment manufacturers and industry professionals worldwide while promoting the environmental and economic benefits of natural grass.

Reynolds' passion for agriculture began in high school while working on a strawberry farm. Internships on golf courses and sports field projects led him to study turfgrass at North Carolina State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, earning bachelor's and master's degrees. He then launched a landscaping company, handling yard spraying, lawn mowing and sod installation for five years before returning to NC State to complete his Ph.D. in 2013.

Reynolds' passion for education and research — along with advice from mentors — made pursuing a Ph.D. a natural fit.

"After 13 years at NC State University, I move to College Station, Texas, in 2013 where I served as a statewide turfgrass extension specialist and faculty member in the Soil and Crop Sciences Department at Texas A&M University."

The experience of being a faculty member helped Reynolds develop many of the skills necessary to running a non-profit. "You have to raise funds, create programs and publications that have value to the industry, and build relationships to become a trusted source of guidance," he said.

His time in the Lonestar State also offered him new perspectives on farming. "Texas is so large and I enjoyed the diversity and prominence of farming," he added. "It's something that kind of drew me to TPI — I've always really enjoyed working with farmers."



**Casey Reynolds, Ph.D.** All photos provided by Sod Solutions and Turfgrass Producers International

### **TURFGRASS PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL**

In 2016, industry colleagues encouraged Reynolds to apply for the executive director role at TPI. During his 2017 interview with TPI's board in Tucson, Reynolds was excited to learn that many familiar faces he knew in sod production were already members of TPI.

"It really was a natural fit," said Reynolds. "Working with farmers is something I have always enjoyed; and to have a chance to serve them full-time inspired me to pursue the position."

TPI hosts and participates in large conferences and meetings around the world, planned several years in advance. Reynolds emphasized the importance of TPI's conferences, which bring members together to share knowledge, explore the latest technology and reconnect with colleagues. "One of the things our members routinely tell us is that they have built relationships at TPI conferences that lasts a lifetime," he said.



Reynolds credits much of the success of these events to TPI's small but hard-working team: Administrative Manager Geri Hannah; Membership & Marketing Manager Allie Roed; Event Planner Liz Lonsbrough and her team; as well as Mike Blair and others. Steve and Suz Trusty, co-editors of TPI's bi-monthly magazine "TPI Turf News" are also a large part of TPI. During their tenure, they've led the magazine to numerous communication awards and have both earned a place in the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) Hall of Fame.

"Our small staff does a bit of everything, and I'm thankful for all they accomplish," said Reynolds.

### PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Advocacy is a core aspect of TPI's work. Since 2017, Reynolds has influenced state and federal policies, providing testimony on grass bans in Maryland, North Carolina, California, Utah, Colorado and Texas, just to name a few. He's worked with the Environmental



Protection Agency to maintain herbicide labels for sod production and sports fields, and influenced policy decisions at the Departments of Labor (DOL), Transportation (DOT) and Agriculture (USDA).

Perhaps most notably, in 2019, the DOT removed sod from its list of agricultural commodities, threatening farmers' exemptions from Hours of Service (HOS) rules.

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TPI spent three years with the federal government, meeting in person with officials in Washington, D.C., and submitting comments to successfully reinstate sod as an agricultural commodity. For Reynolds, getting sod included in the new definition of Agricultural Commodity was “one of the most worthwhile achievements” of his career. “I cannot stress enough how important these efforts are,” he added. “It’s very rewarding to be able to go into a city council, state legislature or federal agency and succeed at something like keeping farm plates and ag exemptions for sod producers. That is a tangible, positive impact that is felt back on the farm for producers all over the United States.”

Similarly, TPI successfully lobbied to include sod in USDA COVID-19 relief programs, securing up to \$210 million for sod farmers who lost sales in the early stages of the pandemic. According to Reynolds, this would not have happened without TPI efforts in Washington, D.C. Due to its importance, government relations take up a significant part of his time. While TPI’s advocacy focuses primarily on U.S. regulations, international members often note that U.S. policies tend to influence policy in their countries as well.

To ensure the next generation is engaged, TPI launched the Future Leaders Program, engaging younger

members in state-level public policy. This group of leaders travels to Washington, D.C., each year with Reynolds to visit in person with staff at legislative offices and agencies to make sure sod producers have a voice in policy.

#### **THE BENEFITS OF NATURAL GRASS**

TPI continues to emphasize natural grass’s environmental and safety benefits. According to Reynolds, athletes consistently prefer natural grass, with studies showing it’s safer for knee and ankle injuries, concussions and overall career longevity.

A TPI-published NFL case study found that most players believe synthetic turf increases injury risks and soreness. Reynolds is optimistic that the 2026 World Cup, played on natural turfgrass, will further showcase the advantages of grass fields on a global stage.

Rising concerns over plastic pollution have led to an increasing interest in synthetic turf bans, creating new opportunities for natural grass. “People are starting to realize that plastic pollution is a serious issue. It’s the perfect time to promote the environmental benefits of grass,” said Reynolds. It’s also important to participate in pending legislation in state and federal agencies around plastic pollution. “In my initial time at TPI, I



would only ever get called in to testify on grass bans, but in the last 12 to 18 months I've been asked to comment on artificial turf bans as well," he said.

TPI continues to advocate for the long-term benefits of natural grass.

#### NORTH CAROLINA SOD PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

Reynolds recently stepped in as interim executive director for the North Carolina Sod Producers Association (NCSPA) while continuing to lead TPI. During his time at NC State, Reynolds built close relationships with former NCSPA Executive Director Art Bruneau, Ph.D., and sod producers across the state. When Bruneau stepped down in 2022, NCSPA turned to TPI for interim leadership. Eager to help due to their shared goals and proximity, Reynolds took on overseeing communication, leading annual meetings and keeping members informed of industry news.

#### TPI MEMBERSHIP

Reynolds asks that all sod farms consider joining TPI. "TPI's work benefits every sod farm, and being a member

allows you to access critical resources and connections that can strengthen your business and our industry," he said. "We absolutely could not be successful in positively impacting laws or codes at the federal and state level, fighting grass bans or any of the other work we do without the support of the industry."

TPI was founded in 1967 at Michigan State University's Turfgrass Field Day, when 40 individuals formed the American Sod Producers Association (ASPA). It was renamed Turfgrass Producers International in 1994 to reflect its global reach. Today, TPI represents members across the United States and in many countries.

"I'm passionate about leading TPI and addressing the issues that matter most to sod producers," said Reynolds. **SFM**

*Cecilia Johnson is media and content manager at Sod Solutions, which is celebrating 30 years of successfully developing and releasing turfgrass varieties.*

*To learn more about TPI's resources and upcoming events, or to become a member, visit [TurfgrassSod.org](https://TurfgrassSod.org).*

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# Building Trust

*Examining the relationship between sports field managers and their vendors*



*All photos provided by Joe Churchill*

The relationship between sports field managers and their vendors and suppliers is essential to creating safe, high-quality playing surfaces. *SportsField Management* magazine recently spoke with Joe Churchill, fields & grounds specialist at Reinders, Inc., a full-line equipment and turf products distributor, about the essential components of a successful vendor/customer relationship.

**SportsField Management (SFM):** I know every relationship is different, but what is most typical of the relationship between sports field managers and their vendors or suppliers?

**Joe Churchill:** You could get a half dozen different answers depending on who you ask. But the relationship between the sports field manager and a vendor goes beyond the relationship between the two of us, because we are not operating in a vacuum. I'm not naïve to think that my very best customers aren't purchasing from some of my competitors. Part of what makes this work is that I appreciate and respect

my competition, and I consider most to be friends of mine. We don't share everything, but we are all in this together. The healthiest, most productive relationship is just building that level of trust. It doesn't have to be a friendship; it can just be understanding where each of us comes from and that we respect the needs and wishes of the other.

Transactional-type selling — I call it door-to-door peddling — is still out there, and always will be. I don't believe in that, but I respect any relationship between the vendor and the sports field manager that works for them. But to me that rings a little hollow. I need to get to know my customer. I have to understand their pain points and what is important to them. But there are times when it's just, "Here's what I'm looking for. What is your price, and when can you ship?" To me, there's not much fun in that. Knowing I had a good conversation with the customer, I helped them and got to know them better — there's a lot to be said for building trust and the relationship instead of just checking the box and going on to the next customer.





**SFM:** You mentioned that some people are just looking for the best price and they're not really into developing that relationship. What do you think are the most important factors for sports field managers when it comes to their equipment and supplies needs? Is it budget? Brand? Convenience and availability of product? Something else? And where does the relationship with their vendor/supplier rank in that?

**Churchill:** Again, you could ask six different people and get six different answers. My first step after trying to build some level of trust is to guide the conversation and provide information or knowledge. It's asking the questions, showing interest, and showing some empathy for the problems that they face every day. You build that trust level by being a resource and being someone they can talk to or that they trust enough to go beyond just talking about the products or services that they need. It's providing information, giving them the data or the specs, and then offering multiple solutions to fit their needs. There's more than one recipe for chocolate chip cookies, and they're all good. The same holds true with identifying turf management options. It's providing them the information that puts them in a place where they can

make an intelligent decision on what they buy. And, yes, it often comes down to price. If I have two comparable products that address the same need, except one is close to double the price, that may require a separate conversation. The adage, "you get what you pay for" is seldom disproved. There's a reason why the two products are significantly different in price. It's my job to provide the facts and explain the differences to help the field manager make the best purchase decision for them and their facility.

**SFM:** How much does the relationship vary based on the level of play and the related budget? Do you take a different approach with K-12 sports field managers than you do with parks and rec professionals, colleges and universities or professional sports stadiums?

**Churchill:** They certainly are different. When you're talking about K-12 schools, municipalities or parks and rec departments, you know they have very strict guidelines on their purchasing policies. I have a very dear friend who I've known for more than 25 years. He is a good customer of mine; but if my bag of fertilizer is 10 cents more per bag than the other guy, he'll buy from the other guy. I get it.

As a vendor or a sales rep, you have to understand that what they buy might be their decision, but who they buy it from might be totally out of their hands. That falls mostly within K-12 and any other tax-supported institution. Private schools, colleges and universities and pro teams may have a little more flexibility and can make that decision on their own. You have to know what the customer's purchasing policy is, respect it and follow along.





We would be naïve to think that price doesn't come into play at some point with most sports field managers. But even within tax-supported institutions there are varying degrees of their purchasing capabilities. I would much rather know that going into our conversation, and know what the requirements are. Gotta know the rules of the game before you begin.

**SFM:** A challenge for many sports field managers is getting the budgets for equipment and supplies approved and the amount of planning and foresight that requires. What's your advice?

**Churchill:** The ones that have the fewest number of unsuspected turns or missteps in the buying process are those that plan ahead. Big-ticket items such as equipment, irrigation systems or software take some advanced planning. It might take two or three years to decide what it is you want, get approval and then get it in the next year's budget. But product or service availability and delivery lead time could add another year or two to the whole process. It's just a matter of planning ahead.

**SFM:** You mentioned the established relationships and clients you've been doing business with for a while. What is your approach with new clients when it comes to building those relationships or figuring out their pain points and their needs?

**Churchill:** God gave us one mouth and two ears. You listen, you ask questions, and you get to know the person. And I say "person" because that's who they are. Sometimes I think we reduce someone's stature by referring to them first as a customer. It's important to establish that relationship and then just start showing interest. What are their challenges? Where do they need help? What's working for them and what isn't? What's getting in their way? There are so many different layers of the job and what they need to do. The sports field manager answers to people and has people answering to them. Sometimes, the sales rep goes in and just starts talking about product or keeps the conversation so one-tracked that they forget about all the other moving parts in the sports field manager's daily activities; and on the home front for that matter. Acknowledge that, show interest, and be there not as just a vendor or sales rep, but as a partner in their business. My goal is to reach a point in our relationship where they look at me as a true partner and confidant committed to reaching the same goals — not as a sales rep. I've told some of my closest customers that if I start acting or sounding like a sales rep to call me out on it. That trust might build in one or two visits, or it might take a year. I've been doing this for a long time, and I still have people with whom I just don't click. It doesn't mean I treat them any differently. Some sports field managers just want to be left alone and just know what they want. You're there as a product source or a service provider only; and if that works for them, then you have the honor and respect that.

**SFM:** You mentioned that most sports field managers have someone to whom they report. Have you seen a shift in terms of the level of respect that sports field managers are garnering when it comes to decision making, earning a seat at the table, or being viewed as the expert on what is needed to provide a safe playing surface?

**Churchill:** Yes. Our industry — like so many others — is becoming more sophisticated, and a good administrator will pick up on that and understand it. The challenge that I see, especially in K-12, is that many times there isn't a true sports field manager. They might be a lead custodian or the baseball coach or another role where managing the fields is just something they ended up being tasked



with. The people making the decisions — whether it's budget or purchase decisions — might be a buildings and grounds director who is more focused on the inside of the building than the outside. They don't understand what it takes to manage or maintain a safe, high-performing playing surface. But I think most good administrators understand that growing grass on a ballfield is much more complicated and technical than just jumping on a mower, and painting lines before the next game. I think we're shifting toward a better understanding between the sports field manager and administration.

**SFM:** What trends or shifts in the market are you seeing based on how sports field managers are approaching their equipment and supplies needs?

**Churchill:** Most of that would be on the environmental side. There are a lot of control products out now that have low application rates. There's a tremendous amount of effort and research being placed on water usage — and inputs in general, whether it's water, chemicals or whatever is needed to maintain the playing surface with less impact on Mother Earth. That is a big trend and it's not going to go away.

Minnesota was one of the first states to ban phosphorus use on all non-golf turf, and now there are many states that are that way. Some states have banned the use of all pesticides. I think that type of legislation is going to continue to grow. We're going to see more restrictions placed on nitrogen use. With equipment, carbon-based fuels are becoming more of an issue, and that's driving the electric and battery-powered side of the equipment business. Field painting robots and autonomous mowers are now on the market. All of these things are playing a part in changing the landscape, if you will, of how we grow grass.

**SFM:** What is the typical approach for sports field managers when it comes to their equipment fleets and those purchasing decisions?

**Churchill:** A lot of times those purchase decisions aren't necessarily based on the product features, parts, how it punches holes or how it sprays; a lot of times it's about financing. Who has the best lease package? There are equipment distributors out there who aren't really selling equipment, they're selling money. They know that the superintendent or sports field manager often gets passed over when conversations are taking place about financing or leasing or what the package might



be — especially when those conversations are had with the city council or school board. That's unfortunate, because big-ticket purchases are being treated as transactional and we forget about how one product might differ from the other. Maybe they're both equally high quality, but one fits the application or the need better than the other. A lot of times those things get overlooked. That can be a point of frustration for the sports field manager because they get cut out of the conversation if it's about money and not about finding the right piece of equipment for the job.

**SFM:** When you're dealing with your clients, how much information do you need about their fields and their management practices?

**Churchill:** I think it's very much dependent upon the client. Most customers are a quick read. You know what level they are at; and, even without expounding on the conversation, you can figure out what is important to them, what kind of buying power they have, whether they are a decision maker or just gathering information. But you can tell if a sports field manager is truly interested in the profession and it's not just a job to them by the questions they ask and how they engage. That's the kind of customer who I best connect with. I don't care if they have a \$3,000 budget or a \$300,000 budget. Either way, I get just as much joy out of those conversations and building the relationship. Most of us are in this business because we love it. We share a passion. There's a kindred spirit between us. I see it in private conversations, during local or regional events and, of course, the SFMA Conference every January. We're all human. We're all social animals. And at some level we all need each other. That's why I do what I do. **SFM**



# ASBA Honors Distinguished Sports Facilities

The American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) announced the winners of its annual awards — presented each year to facilities, built by ASBA members, which best exemplify construction excellence.

Awards are presented in various categories, including Sports Fields, Tennis Courts, Running Tracks, Pickleball Facilities, Multi-Purpose Facilities and Track & Field Facilities. Within some categories, there are divisions; for example, the Sports Field category recognizes single- and multiple-field facilities. Winners were announced at ASBA's 2024 Technical Meeting, December 3-6 in Orlando.

"We are proud of the work done by all members of ASBA, but this year's award-winning projects showcase true excellence," said Randy Resley, chairman of ASBA. "They are not only designed and constructed to exacting standards, as well as being aesthetically beautiful, but they provide an excellent playing experience for the athletes who use them and the spectators who come to watch them."

Projects are scored individually based on considerations such as layout and design, site work, drainage, base construction, surface, amenities, innovation and overall impression. Winners in the Sports Fields categories are as follows:

## OUTSTANDING FACILITIES OF THE YEAR — SPORTS FIELDS: SINGLE FIELD FACILITIES

### GOLD AWARD

**Purcell Marian High School  
Staubach Stadium**  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
Sportworks Design

### SILVER AWARD

**University of Maine – Softball**  
Orono, Maine  
Activitas Inc.

### BRONZE AWARD

**Goddard Field at the Park School**  
Brookline, Massachusetts  
Activitas Inc.



**Purcell Marian High School Staubach Stadium**



**University of Maine – Softball**



**Goddard Field at the Park School**



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Josh Tvrdik | Director of Turf and Grounds | Iowa State Athletics

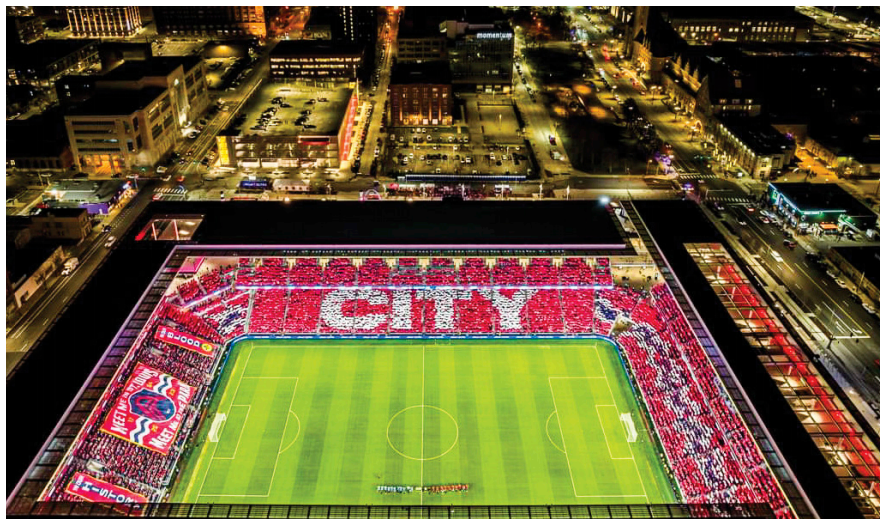


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*CITYPARK, home of St. Louis City SC.*



*Cyclone Sports Complex Field at Iowa State University*

**DISTINGUISHED FACILITIES —  
SPORTS FIELDS: SINGLE FIELD  
FACILITIES**

**Beach Field at Bishop Feehan  
High School**  
Attleboro, Massachusetts  
Gale Associates, Inc.

**CITYPARK MLS Soccer  
Stadium, home of  
St. Louis City SC.**  
St. Louis, Missouri  
SCG Fields, LLC

**Cyclone Sports Complex Field at  
Iowa State University**  
Ames, Iowa  
Iowa Sports Turf Management

**East Irondequoit Softball Field**  
Rochester, New York  
LaBella Associates

**Estill County High School**  
Irvine, Kentucky  
RossTarrant Architects

**Hughes Stadium at  
Sacramento City College**  
Sacramento, California  
Verde Design, Inc.

**Jacksonville High School**  
Jacksonville, Alabama  
HNP, LLC

**Joe Cannon Stadium at  
Matthewstown  
Harmans Park**  
Hanover, Maryland  
AstroTurf Corporation

**Larned High School  
Football Field**  
Larned, Kansas  
Mammoth Sports Construction, LLC

**Moon Valley High School**  
Phoenix, Arizona  
GA Sports Construction

**Orange Memorial Park  
Sports Field**  
South San Francisco, California  
Verde Design, Inc.

**Ripon College —  
Hopp Stadium**  
Ripon, Wisconsin  
Rettler Corporation

**University of Maine —  
Field Hockey**  
Orono, Maine  
Activitas Inc.

**Waverly High School**  
Waverly, New York  
Huntress Associates, Inc.

**West Hawkeye Recreation  
Fields at the University  
of Iowa**  
Iowa City, Iowa  
Shive-Hattery, Inc.

**Western Dubuque Field**  
Epworth, Iowa  
ISG

**Yogi Berra Stadium at  
Montclair State University**  
Montclair, New Jersey  
Suburban Consulting  
Engineers, Inc.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 34**



## JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



### ANSWER

*From page 17*

A seasonal summer worker on a rotary 3-deck fairway mower is the reason the turf is mowed at a lower height on the right side of the field. This private high school is located in Massachusetts and the sports field manager hires three to four summer employees each year — all between the ages of 17 and 20. This mower operator was on his third summer and was mowing the practice football field in the late morning when the turf was dry. As he was mowing, the blade bolt became loose and started to scalp the turf on the outside edge of the unit. Unaware that anything was wrong, the young man continued to mow five or six 400-foot-long passes until the bolt finally came all the way off and the mower blade dug into the ground (as shown in the second photo). Luckily, this occurred at the beginning of July when the field was being rested. The area was able

to recover on its own before it was used by the high school team. It was a good lesson for the employee to watch a little more carefully what they are doing, no matter how "jamming" the music is on their headphones.

**Photo submitted by Peter Thibeault CSFM, sports turf manager at Noble and Greenough School in Dedham, Massachusetts.**

*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](mailto: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.





Bill Noble Park



Woodhaven High School



Washington University Orthopedics High Performance Center

## OUTSTANDING FACILITIES OF THE YEAR

### — SPORTS FIELDS: MULTIPLE-FIELD

#### FACILITIES

##### GOLD

##### **Bill Noble Park**

Gardendale, Alabama

HNP, LLC

##### SILVER AWARD

##### **Woodhaven High School**

Woodhaven, Michigan

GMB Architecture + Engineering

##### BRONZE AWARD

##### **Washington University**

##### **Orthopedics High**

##### **Performance Center**

St. Louis, Missouri

SCG Fields, LLC

## DISTINGUISHED FACILITIES — SPORTS

### FIELDS: MULTIPLE-FIELD FACILITIES

##### **Bismarck-Henning High School**

##### **Athletic Complex**

Bismarck, Illinois

Byrne & Jones Sports Construction

##### **Burlington High School**

##### **Athletic Facility**

Burlington, Kansas

Mammoth Sports Construction, LLC

##### **City of Branson Recreation**

##### **Baseball & Softball Complex**

Branson, Missouri

Mammoth Sports Construction, LLC

##### **Fareway Fields at**

##### **Norwalk Central**

Norwalk, Iowa

Iowa Sports Turf Management

##### **Firestone Stadium**

Akron, Ohio

Vasco Sports Contractors

##### **Legacy Fields Sports Complex**

Tracy, California

Verde Design, Inc.



**Mt. Hebron Park —  
City of Rogers AR**

Rogers, Arkansas  
Byrne & Jones Sports Construction

**Natomas High School**

Sacramento, California  
Verde Design, Inc.

**School District of Washington —  
High School Baseball and  
Softball Stadiums**

Washington, Missouri  
Byrne & Jones Sports  
Construction

**Siloam Springs Athletic Fields  
and Courts**

Siloam Springs, Arkansas  
Mammoth Sports  
Construction, LLC

**OTHER ASBA AWARD CATEGORIES**

Facility of the Year winners in  
other categories were as follows:

■ Track & Field Facility of the Year  
— Mesa Verde High School, Citrus  
Heights, California, Verde Design, Inc.

■ Outdoor Track Facility of the  
Year — Wildcat Stadium at the  
University of New Hampshire,  
Durham, New Hampshire, Cape &  
Island Tennis & Track

■ Indoor Track Facility of the  
Year — R.A Murray Fasken Facility at  
Texas A&M, College Station, Texas,  
Geosurfaces

■ Outdoor Tennis Facility of the  
Year — Beachwalk at Manasota Key,  
Englewood, Florida, Welch Tennis  
Courts, Inc.

■ Residential Tennis Facility of  
the Year — Trustey Residence, Vero

Beach, Florida, Fast-Dry Courts, Inc.  
& 10-S Tennis Supply

■ Indoor Pickleball Facility of the  
Year — Pickle Ranch – Braker, Austin,  
Texas, CourTex Construction Inc.

■ Outdoor Pickleball Facility of  
the Year — Mt. Brook Club Pickleball  
Courts, Mountain Brook, Alabama,  
Lower Bros. Co., Inc.

■ Indoor Sports Surfaces: Multi-  
Purpose/Gymnasium Facility of  
the Year — The Alan Horwitz Sixth  
Man Center, Powered and Operated  
by Philadelphia Youth Basketball,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Jaypro  
Sports, LLC

■ Indoor Sports Surfaces: Multi-  
Purpose/Fieldhouse Facility of the  
Year — Hudsonville High School  
Fieldhouse, Hudsonville, Michigan,  
GMB Architecture + Engineering **SFM**

# Maximize Agronomic Benefit Minimize Surface Disruption



**imants**  
**RotoKnife**

Increase soil's aeration  
Excellent for managing thatch  
Versatile and effective linear aerator  
No PTO makes it fastest aerator in the industry  
Flexible aeration depth can be varied between 3/8" - 6"



**imants**  
**ShockWave**

Reduce bulk density  
Increase water movement in soil  
Heavy-duty linear decompactor  
Fastest PTO driven rotary, linear decompactor  
Flexible working depth of 4.5" to 15" (depending on model)





# Blowers, Sweepers and Vacuums

## HONDA VERSATTACH MULTI-PURPOSE SYSTEM

Featuring two powerhead options and six different attachments, the Honda VersAttach multi-purpose system combines the power and reliability of Honda 4-stroke engines with a robust lineup of tools to fit a wide range of needs. The VersAttach system offers two powerhead models, the UMC425, powered by a Honda GX25 mini 4-stroke engine, and the UMC435, powered by a GX35 mini 4-stroke engine. The design of the Honda mini 4-stroke engine provides for full, 360-degree operation, allowing the VersAttach to be used — and stored — upright, sideways or even upside down. It also eliminates the need to mix fuel and oil, saving the operator valuable time, money and the frustration of trying to get the right fuel/oil mixture. Each model can be paired with an optional interchangeable blower, edger, line trimmer, hedge trimmer, pruner and cultivator that fit quickly and securely into the attachment shaft by way of Honda's SureLoc joint locking system, saving time and effort.



## HUSQVARNA 590

Introducing the powerful Husqvarna 590 backpack blower, featuring 56 Newtons of blow force and 1,245 cfm air volume. The 590 is powered by a 79.4-cc X-TORQ engine that delivers 5.5 hp., all within a 26.2-pound frame for optimal power-to-weight ratio. The Husqvarna 590 comes in two variants, the 590BTS



with a tube-mounted throttle, and the 590BFS with a frame-mounted throttle. Equipped with an AutoTune carburetor, the blower automatically adjusts the fuel mixture for consistent performance in varying conditions. The easy “start” button simplifies starting, eliminating the choke. Comfort is key with an ergonomic padded harness, customizable straps, ventilated back pad, LowVib technology to reduce fatigue, and adjustable right handle. Additional features include cruise control, a three-stage air filter, and the industry's largest fuel tank. The Husqvarna 590 combines power, precision and comfort for the ultimate blower experience. Available March 1, 2025.

## MILWAUKEE M18 FUEL DUAL BATTERY BACKPACK BLOWER

The M18 Fuel dual battery backpack blower, designed for outdoor trade professionals, offers higher blowing force than up to 60cc gas, providing the power needed for demanding applications. Featuring a customizable design, it enhances operator comfort and productivity with a fully adjustable harness, load lifter straps, telescoping nozzle and adjustable handle. Powered by a Powerstate brushless motor, the blower delivers 650 cfm, 155 mph, and 20.5 Newtons



of force, maintaining high performance throughout battery discharge. Redlink Plus intelligence ensures quick throttle response, increasing control and efficiency. This battery-powered blower eliminates pull starts, engine maintenance and excessive noise, operating at just 62 dB(A). The Mode Select capabilities and variable-speed trigger offer enhanced control for various tasks, making it ideal for boosting productivity and ease of use.

## REDEXIM VERTI-AIR 960

The Redexim Verti-Air 960 leaf blower has immense power, perfect for quickly clearing leaves and debris. The hydraulically adjustable reverse spout allows the operator





to effortlessly change the direction of the airflow from the seat. The ability to blow in either direction or both at the same time saves valuable time. As the largest and most powerful of Redexim's three point leaf blowers, it's a great fit for large fairways, parking lots and even roads. Moreover, its

385m<sup>3</sup>/min air capacity and adjustable gauge wheels enhance its performance and adaptability, ensuring thorough and efficient debris management.

### SCAG WINDSTORM

The Scag Windstorm stand-on blower makes quick work of clearing leaves and debris from driveways, parking lots, lawns, parks, sports fields and more. This machine features the exclusive

Nozzle Direction System (NDS), providing control of the air discharge tilt and rotation.

Fingertip controls enable quick and easy adjustment. A mechanical lever provides

16-degrees of vertical tilt adjustment; and two electric switches allow for automatic left/right horizontal rotation or manual rotation adjustment. Air output of up to 6,000 effective cfm paired with ground drive speeds up to 10.5 mph deliver optimum productivity. Windstorm's spacious operator platform with coil-spring suspension ensures a smooth ride. A 37-hp. Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Big Block EFI engine delivers power and efficiency. The Scag Windstorm features a 2-year commercial warranty.



### TRILO M4 FROM STEC

With one machine, and the change of a rotor, the Trilo M Series vacuum mower/sweeper from STEC is able to serve sports field managers throughout every season. The M4 can be fitted with a flail mowing rotor, as well as



a verticutting rotor for the spring and summer months when grass is growing rapidly. This rotor can be replaced with a brush rotor for sweeping up leaves in the fall. The large hopper on this machine provides 4.3 cubic yards of capacity and is equipped with a high dump point for easy disposal of collected material and debris into most standard containers. The Trilo M4 comes standard with a 6.5-yard suction hose that is perfect for collecting litter and unwanted materials from fence lines, drainage grates, next to buildings or other hard-to-reach areas.



### TURFCO TORRENT 4

The new Torrent 4 turbine blower from Turfco redefines power and productivity. Designed to help the operator get the job done fast, its Magnapoint technology combined with one-click nozzle rotation, wireless remote start/stop, and patented instant idle down/resume button work seamlessly together to provide control and precision.



Instantly adjust direction, start or stop the engine, or manage power levels — all while maximizing productivity and fuel efficiency. Powered by an EFI engine, the Torrent 4 ensures optimal fuel economy and consistent performance. Its heavy-duty frame, rugged tongue, and adjustable hitch guarantee durability and compatibility for years to come. Whether it's dispersing grass clippings, handling wet or dry leaves, managing aeration cores, clearing cart paths, or tackling other debris, the Torrent 4 delivers power, precision and reliability to keep your grounds in pristine condition.



#### **TURF PRIDE SWEEP-RITE**

Turf Pride Sweep-Rite — available in single unit or triple gang — are durable, robust sweeper for lawns, tees and sports fields. Options include magnets and grooming brush to easily pick up grass, leaves, twigs and debris. Sweep-Rite sweepers are designed for use on medium to large residential lawns, sports turf and artificial turf fields. For synthetic turf, options include magnet, rear-mounted brushes and grooming tines. Equipped with 10-cubic-foot-capacity mesh-bottom basket and optional hopper extensions for bulky debris. Pick up heads are polypropylene steel-backed brushes. Sweep-Rite sweepers feature eight brushes staggered in four rows, variable height adjustment independent of the frame, sealed ball bearings on brush axle for extended life, 10-1/2" x 2-1/2" drive wheels, and heavy-duty rear casters. The units are easily towed by any equipment with a rear hitch hole, and can be towed by a front engine tractor, zero-turn mower, ATV or golf cart. Parts are interchangeable with the Parker Suburbanite Sweeper (Turf Pride claims no association with Parker).

#### **TURF TEQ POWER BROOM**

Brush pressure, brush speed and pivot angle (left/right) can all be adjusted easily from the operator position on the Turf Teq Power Broom.

The Power Broom features a hydrostatic transmission, differential lock and a Honda commercial-grade GXV390 engine.

There is an additional kit available for grooming and topdressing synthetic turf as well as dethatching. The multi-use capability of the Power Broom allows the operator sweep debris, snow or dethatch lawns. The Power Broom attachment can also be removed allowing the operator to mount a Power Edger, Power Rake, Brush Cutter or Plow attachment.



#### **WIEDENMANN TURF SWEEPERS**

Wiedenmann offers a full line of natural and artificial turf sweepers. Its largest sweeper/verticutter/flail mower collection system is the Super 600 with a multi-purpose head and a high dump 5.9-cubic-yard hopper. Other available

sweepers for natural grass include the Super 500, Super 490 and Super 1300. For artificial turf, the Terra Clean 100 and the Terra Clean 160CM use a rotary brush

to bring debris and crumb rubber to a vibrating screen, which separates and distributes the crumb rubber back onto the field while collecting the debris. Blowers include the Whisper Twister and the Mega Twister, which are quiet while producing exceptional blowing capacities (cfm). Both units can swivel 270 degrees on the ground, thus directing airflow. In addition to these products, Wiedenmann makes a full line of verticutters, fraise/flail mowers, groomers, brushes, rakes, spikers and deep tine aerifiers for turf maintenance. **SFM**





**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.**



**@CREEDY95**

MLB Groundskeeper Meetings here we come.



**@Adamculpepper1**



**@BattsAndrew**



**@DukeGroundsCrew**



**@Areagan\_22**





**@VTTurfTeaching**

THANK YOU to the @VirginiaSFMA for kindly supporting the @VTTurfgrass Club in helping them attend the 2025 @FieldExperts Conference and compete in the Student-Challenge competition!



**@GroundsJeremyj**



**@SportsTurfSun**



**@W\_Jeff\_Jackson**



**@HokiesWSoccer**

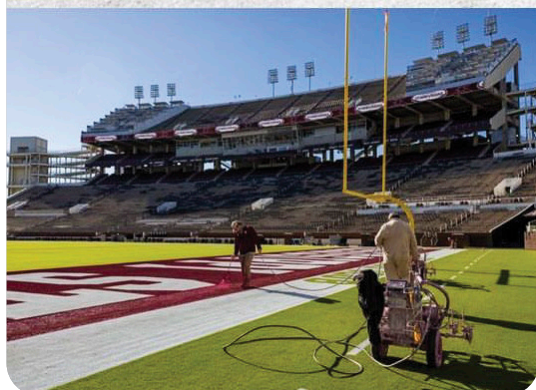
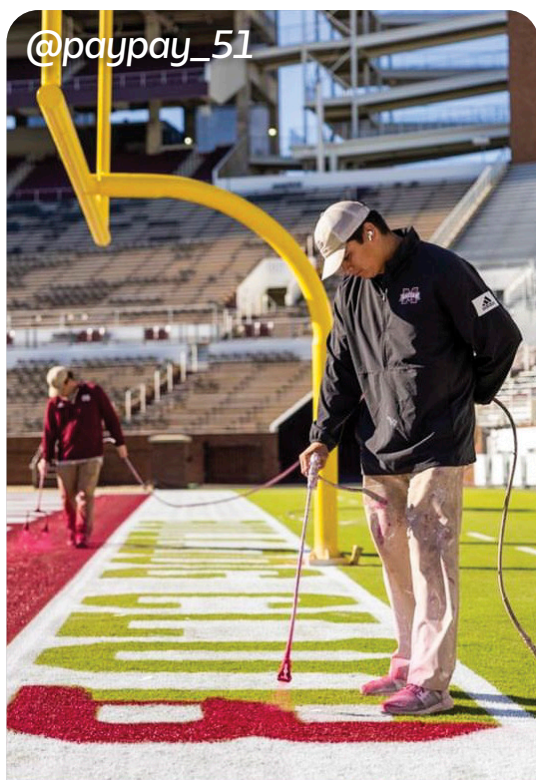
Huge congratulations to Ava Veith '24 on being part of the first all-female grounds crew at the NWSL Championship



**@drewsky18**







@TIMMMAY8

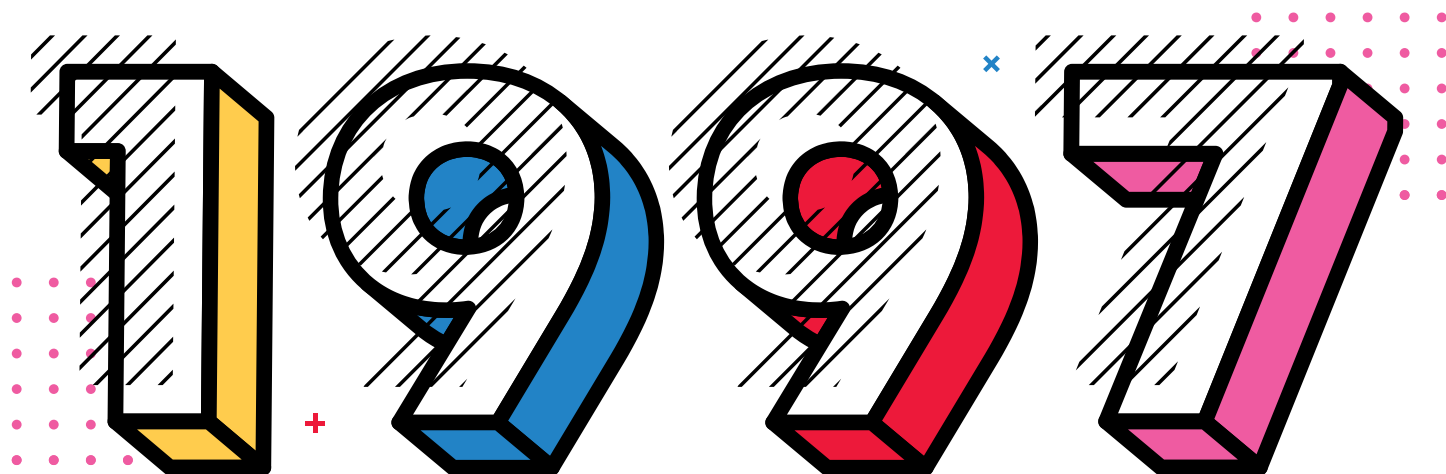
This past weekend we got a call to Black Mountain to help restore love and hope for a small community that lost it all from hurricane Helene. Left a piece of my heart out there Can't wait to go back. Thank you all for the life lessons



@mitchhooten



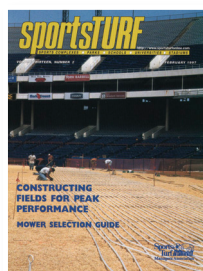




In this retrospective, we take a look at historic issues of *SportsTurf* magazine, predecessor to *SportsField Management* magazine. In this issue, we delve into the archives for 1997.

The January 1997 issue of *SportsTurf* chronicled the efforts of George Toma and others to save the Olympic stadium field at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. A cover had been left on the field for several days at a time for opening ceremony rehearsals. In addition, the in-ground sprinkler system was inoperable due to damage. According to the article, "There wasn't time to strip off the old sod, regrade, soak the sand field with water and allow it to settle. The new sod would be laid on top of the old sod, after verticutting to get the dead grass out of the field, sweeping up the debris, bringing in five- to six-ton rollers to ensure a smooth surface, aerifying to allow water into the sand, topdressing with sand, and fertilization."

The January issue also previewed the 8th Annual STMA Conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado; profiled *SportsTurf* "Manager of the Year," Floyd Perry; and highlighted the new turf field at Arkansas' Razorback Stadium.



The February 1997 *SportsTurf* cover story was "Constructing Fields for Peak Performance." In the article, three sports turf specialists — Michael DePew, Steve Guise and Steve Wightman — shared their experiences on what it takes for fields to survive the test of multiple use. They addressed topics such as compaction, usage, safety and playability, the rootzone and more. The piece included profiles of two successful fields.



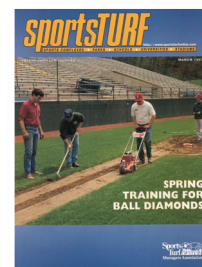
In the March issue, the focus was on preparing baseball fields for the season. Tips outlined lip removal, surface leveling, applying additives, rolling and dragging, turf maintenance and much more. The theme continued with articles on infield grooming and spring seeding; and the March issue also showcased the Professional Baseball Field of the Year, Thomas J. Dodd Memorial Stadium, home of the Norwich Navigators.



Sports field drainage was the lead topic in the April 1997 issue. "The secret to good field drainage is planning," the article stated. "Obviously, the best time to solve drainage problems is before they happen, when the field is being built. On existing fields with serious drainage problems, the wise course is to identify the most serious underlying problem and to plan ways to correct it. Stop-gap measures can provide a temporary fix, but unless a plan is developed for correcting the big problems, the Band-Aid fixes will have to be done over and over."

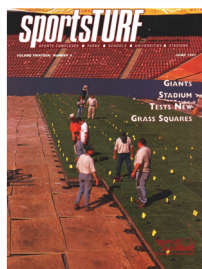
The May 1997 issue of *SportsTurf* examined, "Trends in Fitting Fields to Stadiums." The article stated that fields must be able to host appropriate athletic events by providing a safe, highly playable surface that allows participants to play to the best of their ability.

In addition, the field and stadium must be able to accommodate other revenue-raising events to justify the





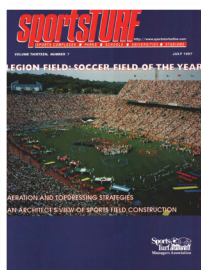
financial commitment necessary to build and maintain the facility. Overall, the piece examined design elements of older stadiums and alterations to accommodate the multi-use nature of “modern sports.”



In the June issue, the cover story detailed how Giants stadium was testing a portable grass system to accommodate the needs of the New York/New Jersey MetroStars soccer club (later rebranded as the New York Red Bull in 2006), to meet the natural grass requirements of Major League Soccer. The

transportable natural field consisted of square, interlocking plastic modules containing a prescribed growing medium and turfgrass.

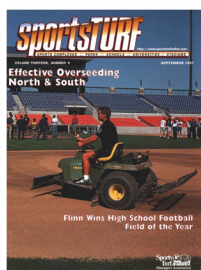
The transformation of Birmingham's Legion Field to an international soccer venue was the highlight of the July 1997 issue. At the time, the field underwent a \$1.2 million renovation project to replace artificial turf with a natural grass playing surface that FIFA heralded as “one of the best in years.”



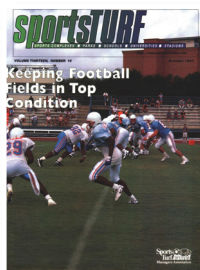
Iowa State University's Jack Trice Stadium made the cover of the August issue. It, too, was converted from artificial turf to a sand-based natural grass surface prior to the 1996 football season. By the end of that year, the field had earned College Football Field of the Year honors.

Athletic Turf Manager Mike Andresen was hired by Iowa State University (ISU) in 1996; and the award-winning sports field manager was drawn to the position by the challenge of the multiple fields at ISU and the field conversion.

Jim Puhalla and Mike Goatley wrote about effective overseeding in the north and south for the September 1997 issue. “Overseeding has different meanings in different areas,” they wrote. “In the south, overseeding means applying ryegrass seed to bermudagrass so the field will stay green during colder months when the



bermudagrass is dormant. In the north, overseeding means applying more seed to an existing field to thicken the turf. Wherever you live and work, overseeding has a common goal: turf enhancement.” The article took a detailed look at effective overseeding procedures.



Then-STMA-President, Mike Schiller, wrote the October cover story on “Keeping Football Fields in Top Condition Through Fall Play.” He wrote, “Unfortunately, while expectations of field quality have escalated among field users, facility owners and fans, field maintenance budgets too often

have remained static or declined. So, doing more with less is the norm, and sports turf managers at all levels must tap every available resource to keep fields.”

In November 1997, *SportsTurf* magazine looked at perception versus reality, and how spectator perception of your maintenance program's success or failure is often based on field performance during the biggest games of the year. The article delved into proper communication with supervisors and user groups to keep them informed of processes, abreast of challenges and updated regarding field status.



1997 wrapped up with the December issue offering tips for how to analyze your records for what worked and what worked during the past year. “Change always starts with analysis. Establishing and maintaining a comprehensive record-keeping program gives you the data to

analyze,” the article stated. “Once your analysis is complete, not only will you know what worked and what didn't, you'll have the tools to minimize your failures and build on your successes, including a written summary report you've developed for future reference.”

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>. **SFM**





## Toro partners with Brentsville District High School

Toro has entered into a partnership with Brentsville District High School, Prince William County, Virginia, to cultivate the next generation of turfgrass managers. Brentsville District High School has rebranded its turfgrass program to be named the Brentsville Turf Toro Grounds Academy.

Since 2016, Dr. Drew Miller has served as director of the Turfgrass Management Program at Brentsville District High School. The program has an attendance of more than 200 students annually, and graduates have gone to top college turf programs and into professional roles in the industry. Currently, 18 graduates are enrolled in full-time turf programs at top U.S. colleges and universities, and eight graduates have taken roles in professional sports, university athletics and golf courses.

The Turfgrass Management Program takes students beyond the classroom and provides them with real-world experience in environments, equipment and grounds teams. Some experiences the students have had in recent years includes field prep for the ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference) Championship Game and the CONCACAF (The Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football) Gold Cup as well as SFMA (Sports Field Management Association) Student Challenge. Brentsville students have competed against collegiate programs around the country and have won several awards.

"Working with Toro is a dream, both for myself and for the students," said Miller. "The dedication that Toro has to quality products, training and safety is critical to inspiring and educating the next generation of professionals in this industry."

In support of the Brentsville Turf Toro Grounds Academy, Toro and its local distribution partner, Turf

Equipment and Supply Company, are dedicated to helping the program transition to a complete fleet of Toro equipment. Toro will also be helping to develop classroom sessions, which will include topics such as safety, maintenance, career development and more. Finally, Toro is investing in Brentsville students beyond their time in the Grounds Academy through two \$2,500 scholarships. These scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors who will be pursuing a two- or four-year degree in turf management or engineering programs.

"We are invested in the future of turfgrass professionals," said Lindsay Tucker, marketing manager at Toro. "In order to fully prepare students for a career in turfgrass, we believe they should learn on the best equipment possible and we are proud to partner with Brentsville District High School to help achieve that goal."

## On Deck Sports acquires Beacon Athletics and Aer-Flo Sports

Beacon Athletics and Aer-Flo Sports are joining forces with On Deck Sports. According to a joint statement issued by John Maher, president of Beacon Athletics/Aer-Flo Sports and Tim Allen, CEO of On Deck Sports/ProMounds, the move will deliver:

- **A bigger team, better solutions:** Decades of experience and customer understanding to provide advanced products and cutting-edge technology.
- **Improved customer support:** The united teams strengthen their commitment to delivering high-level service and support.
- **Operational excellence:** Setting the standard with industry-leading turn times and national installation capabilities, On Deck, Beacon and Aer-Flo's combined manufacturing strength and efficient systems will ensure faster and more reliable service for customers.



■ **More comprehensive resources:** The unified teams, infrastructure, and products and services offered allow the company to better serve customers nationwide and deliver solutions more effectively.

In the coming months, the teams will formalize the details for how they will work together. No changes to either the leadership or the teams is expected.



## Michael Huie named Triple-A Groundskeeper of the Year

Minor League Baseball named Tacoma Rainiers' Director of Field Operations Michael Huie the Pacific Coast League and Triple-A Groundskeeper of the Year for the 2024 season.

Huie was given the award over nine other PCL teams, bringing home the award for the first time in Tacoma's history. It was the first time a team in the Pacific Northwest won the award since Spokane won in 2015.

"Industry standards are only on the rise. Maintaining a quality playing surface is essential and goes far beyond the aesthetics," Huie said. "The priority is to protect the players that come out to compete day in and day out."

In his eighth season with Tacoma, Huie is proud of winning the award for the organization but acknowledged that it is a complete team effort that goes into getting the field prepared.

"I may have won the award, but there is a tremendous cast that is dedicated to putting out the final product that we do," Huie said. "Bring on 2025!"

Team President Aaron Artman stated that Huie is a perfectionist, and he is thrilled that all his hard work is being recognized.

"He has very high standards and is extremely detail oriented, elevating our entire organization with the work he does on the field."

## Central Turf & Irrigation Supply announces new COO

Central Turf & Irrigation Supply, a wholesale distributor of green industry and landscape supplies, announced

Tim Minnema as chief operating officer. In this newly created role, Minnema will continue to elevate the company framework set forth by the Luciano family by focusing on new opportunities for optimization, streamlining processes, and efficiencies.

"We are thrilled to have Tim join our executive team," said Bernardo Luciano, president of Central Turf & Irrigation Supply. "He brings a deep operational knowledge and a proven track record of driving results in every element of business."

Minnema brings more than 25 years of experience in retail, distribution and operations. Throughout his career with companies like Bosch, Valspar, and Specialty Building Products, he demonstrated exceptional leadership, customer focus and a strong commitment to continuous improvement.

"Over the past 25 years I have had the privilege of helping private and family companies from \$30M to \$500M in revenue grow their top and bottom line," said Minnema. "I knew one day I wanted to find a company that had the same value system, energy level and passion for business that I do. I believe that is what Central Turf & Irrigation Supply has. The Luciano family has done an amazing job growing the business and developing a lot of very talented people. I really look forward to being part of the next stages of growth at Central Turf & Irrigation Supply."

## Duane Otto promoted to president of Turf & Soil Diagnostics

Turf & Soil Diagnostics (TSD) promoted Duane Otto to president. In this new capacity, Otto will be responsible for the overall direction and performance of the company.

The company stated that Otto will provide the leadership and direction needed for the staff, company and clients to succeed in the future.

Prior to this promotion, Otto was Turf & Soil Diagnostics' vice president, performing soil testing and supervision, and providing customer support since 1996. In addition to his new responsibilities, Otto will continue his testing, quality and management functions.

Sam Ferro, who has been TSD president since 2000, will remain with the company as vice president, performing lab management duties and providing support to the president, staff and customers. This somewhat reduced role should allow Ferro more free time for family and other outside endeavors. **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.

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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).
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- 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.
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- Opportunity to participate in volunteer leadership positions.
- Opportunity to join one of SFMA's affiliated chapters for a strong local network. (Each chapter sets its own local dues.)
- Purchase SFMA branded apparel.
- *SportsField Management Magazine* each month.
- The ability to apply for scholarships (students only).
- Discounted exhibitor booth at the annual conference (commercial members only).

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



# 2025

## **JANUARY 13-16**

### **SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

Palm Springs, California

<https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference>

## **FEBRUARY 9-13**

### **TURFGRASS PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FIELD DAY**

San Antonio

<https://turfgrassod.org/>

## **JULY 1-3**

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

San Antonio

<https://ncs4.usm.edu/events/annual-conference/>

## **OCTOBER 13-15**

### **SYNTHETIC TURF COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

<https://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org/>



## **OCTOBER 22-24**

### **EQUIP EXPO**

Louisville, Kentucky

<https://www.equipexposition.com/>

## **OCTOBER 22-24**

### **PGMS SCHOOL OF GROUNDS MANAGEMENT**

Louisville, Kentucky

<https://pgms.org/page/AnnualConference>

## **NOVEMBER 2-5**

### **ELEVATE (NALP)**

Phoenix

<https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/ELEVATE>

## **DECEMBER 1-5**

### **AMERICAN SPORTS BUILDERS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL MEETING**

San Antonio

<https://sportsbuilders.org/page/UpcomingEvents>

## **DECEMBER 8-11**

### **IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK**

New Orleans

<https://irrigation.org/IA> **SFM**



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 Phil Busey ([phil@philbusey.com](mailto:phil@philbusey.com))

**Florida #2 (North Florida):**  
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**Intermountain Chapter STMA:**  
 Gavin Gough ([gavin.gough@utah.edu](mailto:gavin.gough@utah.edu))

**Iowa SFMA:** [www.iowastma.org](http://www.iowastma.org)

**Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org.  
 (KAFMO):** [www.kafmo.org](http://www.kafmo.org)

**Mid-Atlantic SFMA:** [www.masfma.org](http://www.masfma.org)

**Michigan SFMA:** [www.misfma.org](http://www.misfma.org)

**Minnesota Park and Sports Field Management  
 Association:** [www.mpsfma.org](http://www.mpsfma.org)

**Mo-Kan STMA:** [www.mokanstma.com](http://www.mokanstma.com)

**Nebraska SFMA**  
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**New England STMA:**  
[www.nestma.org](http://www.nestma.org)

**North Carolina SFMA:** [www.ncsportsturf.org](http://www.ncsportsturf.org)

**Northern California SFMA:**  
[www.norcalstma.org](http://www.norcalstma.org)

**Ohio Turfgrass Foundation:** [www.ohioturfgrass.org](http://www.ohioturfgrass.org)

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**Oregon STMA:**  
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**Sports Field Managers Association of  
 New Jersey:** [www.sfmanj.org](http://www.sfmanj.org)

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## JOHN DEERE



# Justifying Our Management Practices

**Q:** We have a baseball field with a multi-use outfield. The field is used regularly by the high school baseball and softball teams and the outfield is used as a practice field for football, soccer and marching band. Physical education classes also spend time on the field. As a town employee, I handle some of the on-site work with an assistant, but we also contract out work since we do not have a sprayer and other specialized equipment. Can you help us justify minimum maintenance practices, prioritizing the most important practices for this field to sustain a reasonable condition?

**A:** As a follow-up to the question, an on-site field visit was made. I was very pleased that the person who handles the on-site work, his assistant, the contractor who sprays the field, and an administrator (i.e., person with the money) were available for the field visit. As the group discussed the field, the complexity of the field's management became clearer to me.

It has been my experience that field managers sometimes need more help with their administrators than my agronomic advice. This was partially the case, but there were also a lot of field management products and ideas being presented that were not core to maximizing their resources for this field. This was further complicated by their need to contract out some routine maintenance. I felt my primary role was to prioritize their management practices to maximize the field's condition with their given resources.

I began with a reminder that a safe field is the ultimate goal of a good sports field. Foremost in my assessment was that this native soil field needed to be aerified. In some areas, I managed to insert a long Philips-head screwdriver to the handle; in other areas, I would have needed a hammer to insert it more than an inch. The dormant stand of bermudagrass was pretty good in areas that were not overly compacted, but was full of annual bluegrass in the compacted areas.

My advice was to contract out a deep-tine aerification, as the town did not have the equipment. Deep-tine aerification would not only soften the field, but it would also reduce some weeds, discourage spring dead spot, increase water infiltration, and improve plant stress tolerance. Once they sufficiently reduced compaction, they could use their

rolling aerator to try to minimize re-compaction. I do not believe the outfield could be aerated too often considering the amount of wear and compaction it receives.

Nitrogen fertilizer will maximize turfgrass density, and a denser field is a safer field. Increased density discourages weed encroachment; plus, regular nitrogen fertilizations will help the turfgrass recover from damage faster. A field manager needs to be purposeful when picking their fertilizer products. My suggestion is to price fertilizer products per pound of nitrogen rather than per pound of product. Although some slow-release products may be cost effective, soluble nitrogen sources are financially hard to beat. With available labor, good results may be achieved by splitting the soluble nitrogen applications and going out more frequently.

The next most important item on the list should be weed control. The herbicide program will depend on the decision to overseed with ryegrass or to allow the field to go dormant in the winter. Since the field was not overseeded this year, they have a great opportunity to effectively and inexpensively clean up annual bluegrass and other winter weeds. Looking ahead a few months, planning a pre-emergence herbicide program combined with post-emergence herbicides as needed will maximize maintenance dollars and will help ensure an attractive, safe field.

After compaction relief, fertilization and weed control, a good mowing program is essential to maintain quality. The more frequently bermudagrass is mown when it is actively growing, the better the turfgrass density. Regular mowing also discourages broadleaf weeds from getting a foothold. If you do have some weeds, mowing makes them less noticeable.

These four management practices should take priority in scheduling, even when a contractor is necessary to complete some of them. **SFM**



**Grady Miller, Ph.D.**

Professor and Extension Turf Specialist  
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## Questions?

Send them to Grady Miller at North Carolina State University, Box 7620, Raleigh, NC 27695-7620, or e-mail [grady\\_miller@ncsu.edu](mailto:grady_miller@ncsu.edu)

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



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