

SportsField

MANAGEMENT

November 2025

Vol. 41 No. 11

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

Special Section: SFMA Conference Preview **18** | Fort Worth Visitors Guide **28**

Celebrating the Career of Keith Winter **34**

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Arizona State University grounds
crew showcases artistic talent
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Editor's Note



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Here in Illinois, we experienced a long, hot, dry summer with warm temps that lasted well into October. Then, in a single afternoon, fall arrived. A storm moved through, temperatures dropped 20 degrees overnight, and all of a sudden we were in hoodie season (and pumpkin-spice-everything season).

The time has arrived where I look forward to cooking the turkey, playing flag football with the family, and taking a nap on the couch. Thanksgiving can be stressful for those hosting, but it's always a great time to celebrate the season and connect with family and friends.

Which brings me to another annual event to connect with others — the Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) Conference and Exhibition. It's time to dust off your cowboy boots, because the 2026 SFMA Conference is heading to Fort Worth, Texas.

In this issue, we provide a detailed overview of the conference education lineup. SFMA has planned an extensive education offering across multiple tracks: Turfgrass Management, Research and Technology, Synthetic, Sustainability/Best Management Practices, Professional Development/Career Development, and Pest Control.

In addition to top-notch industry education, SFMA Conference offers tours of a variety of nearby fields/facilities, hospitality events, an expansive exhibition hall showcasing the latest equipment and products, the annual

SFMA Awards Banquet, and, as mentioned, plenty of opportunities to connect (and reconnect) with other industry professionals.

Ask anyone who has attended a past SFMA Conference, and they will tell you that it is a great place to meet new faces, see old friends and exchange ideas throughout the week.

Also in this issue, Joe Churchill outlines even more reasons you should attend the annual conference; and we provide a mini travel guide of things to see and do while in Fort Worth for the conference.

For first-time attendees, I recommend planning ahead. Review the education lineup and highlight the sessions you hope to attend. Add each item to the calendar on your phone so that you have it handy at all times. But allow plenty of time to see new things, walk the show floor, and, of course, network with others. Most importantly, be open to introducing yourselves to others, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

I will be on hand, covering all aspects of the event. I look forward to seeing many of you there. Please don't hesitate to seek me out or stop me to say hello if you see me wandering the hallways or exhibit hall floor.

For more information about the 2026 SFMA Conference and Exhibition, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference/> **SFM**

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Adam Thoms, Ph.D.

SFMA President

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It is hard to imagine that fall has gone by this quickly and it is already November. My time leading SFMA is winding down, and I have been thankful to work with so many of you. I appreciate all the time members have spent on committee calls, boardroom discussions, task force efforts, and other services to our organization. Your efforts have helped us move this organization in the past year. I also want to thank our headquarters staff for their efforts during the past year, they have helped to keep our organization moving in the background.

October was a busy month for SFMA headquarters staff, as well as the SFMA Board of Directors.

Paula Sliefert and Jennifer McLendon represented SFMA at the National Recreation Park Association (NRPA) Annual Conference. They met with the NRPA's education team to explore potential collaboration opportunities, discuss strategies to increase member engagement through education, and identify ways to engage with members through webinars and other offerings. Paula and SFMA Past President Abby McNeal coordinated several networking opportunities with industry partners, including the NRPA Chair's Reception. Jennifer had the chance to connect with members of their education committee to learn more about the metrics they use for

presentation selection. This was a great week to build future collaboration between the SFMA and NRPA.

A couple weeks later, Paula, in her role as an Executive Board Member of the City Parks Alliance (CPA), represented SFMA at the CPA gathering in Detroit. The CPA is a leading national organization dedicated to advancing urban parks, with representation from metropolitan areas throughout the United States, Canada and Saudi Arabia. The event provided an excellent platform to elevate SFMA's presence on the national stage. Paula's engagement reinforced our commitment to building meaningful partnerships, and reintroduced SFMA to key metropolitan organizations that play a vital role in the future of public green spaces.

Looking ahead, these relationships will be instrumental in advancing SFMA's strategic priorities — expanding our reach, showcasing the essential role of sports field management in urban environments, and ensuring our profession has a strong voice in shaping the next generation of community green spaces.

In addition to this very busy schedule, our headquarters staff is hard at work enthusiastically planning for the upcoming SFMA Conference and Exhibition, and I look forward to seeing many of you in Fort Worth. **SFM**

— Adam Thoms, Ph.D.

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



WE WILL LIKELY BE renovating/ resodding every year moving forward because of our event load. However, in this unprecedented year we were asked to pull off a groundskeeping miracle of handling that increased event load amid staffing shortages and budget struggles. I also like to think we are one of a kind when it comes to logo painting. I began school as a graphic design major, and to combine those skills with being a sports field manager has opened up a whole new avenue. The unique field designs we pull off several games per year separate us from other schools — and we always do the work freehand. We all know how expensive stencils can be; and to change it up as much as we like, those costs couldn't be justified if we had to use stencils. I love how we've become known for our field designs. This past year, ASU365 Community Union asked



us to design a Topgolf-style event for them on the field, and to paint exactly what we designed. We painted seven ASU-themed logos on the field (four of which were done freehand), end-zone letters that were freehand, and several other words (also freehand) to make the event happen. The ASU Commencement Ceremonies group also asked us to design an endzone graphic that could be painted for all commencement ceremonies. This has become an annual thing. Several vendors that host events at our stadium have asked us to paint their logos. A safe and playable surface is, of course, always our main focus. However, to combine that with our ability to bring any design to fruition on our football field is what separates us from others.

— Josh Lenz, athletic field manager



Level and category of submission: College Football

Field manager: Josh Lenz

Title: Athletic field manager

Education: Master's degree in Horticulture

Experience: Student groundskeeper, Iowa State University; graduate assistant groundskeeper, Iowa State University; won the Toro Super Bowl Internship while at Iowa State; NFL International Series grounds crew; assistant groundskeeper, University of Colorado – Boulder; assistant groundskeeper, Arizona State University; athletic field manager, Arizona State University Athletics.

Original facility construction: 1958

Full-time staff: Mike Kuhn and Michael Klakulak

Turfgrass: Bermuda 419 (May to mid-October) overseeded with a three-way blend of perennial ryegrass from Seed Research of Oregon.

Soil amendments: Humate, wetting agents

Rootzone: Sand

Drainage: Yes

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

Josh Lenz: I'm most proud of our crew and the challenges we overcame in 2024. Most of the time this is a behind-the-scenes, thankless job. I did not tell the crew I was applying for this award. They just continued to buy in and show up each day, and performed at an incredibly high level despite all our challenges. I'm incredibly thankful for them, and it's so rewarding for me to see them receive this honor. It's a team effort, and they deserve all the recognition for an unbelievable year and a job well done.

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

Lenz: Staffing, event load and weather. We spent most of 2024 significantly understaffed. I think there were a lot of moments when most of the crew questioned whether they'd make it through the year — or if they even wanted to do this job anymore. When you struggle with staffing, a heavier workload with more events, and some of the harshest weather in the country, it takes that much more of a toll on the crew.

With all the changes in college athletics recently, it's making the job more challenging. We're seeing more frequent

events and stage setups, and longer durations of those events. It's difficult to keep up with budgets and staffing while maintaining or even raising expectations. One of the biggest event challenges we faced was a stage and more than 6,000 chairs on the field for more than 10 days, each day over 100 degrees and limited water, and the inability to resod following the event.

The weather has always been a challenge in the desert. We're trying to grow a tropical grass in conditions with little to no humidity. The last two years our summer monsoon has been almost nonexistent. And in 2024 we set a record for 113 straight days over 100 degrees. Not only does that take a toll on the grass, but a major toll on the staff working in those conditions.






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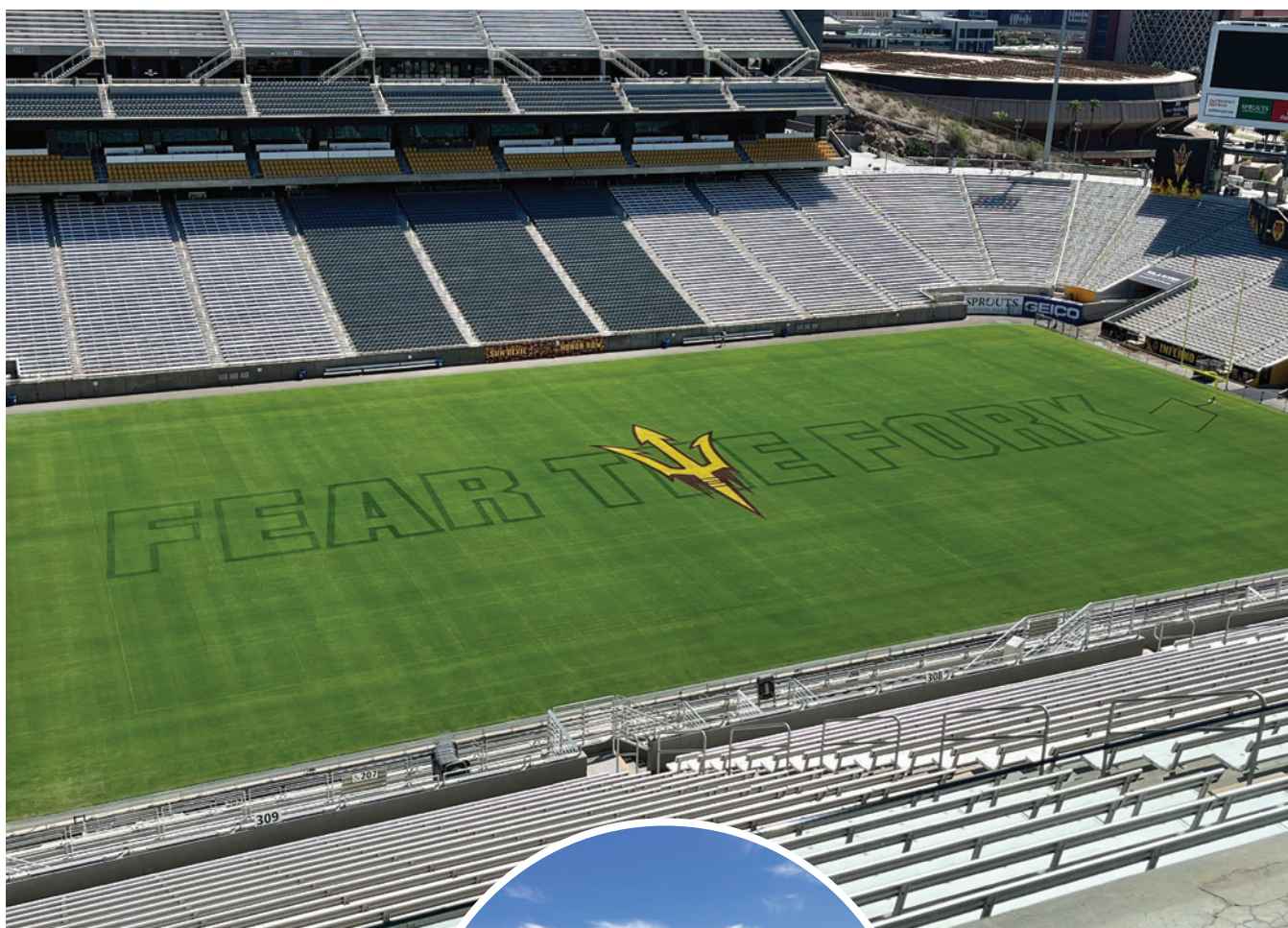
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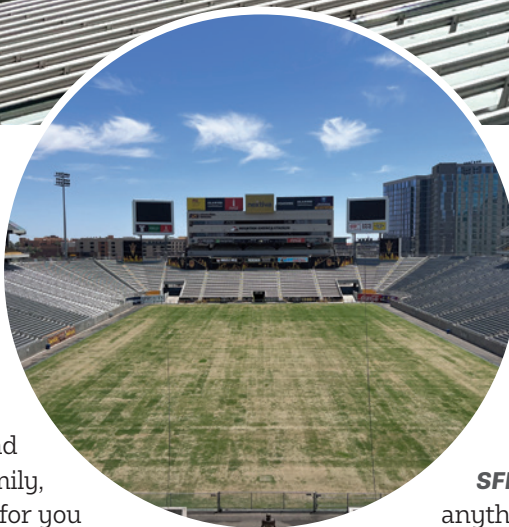

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SFM: Can you share a little about your overall management approach to the winning field and what you feel have been the most important aspects to getting this field to an award-winning level?

Lenz: For me, it's always the employee first. I truly believe if you're sincere and care for the employee like a second family, they're going to perform at a high level for you and give you all they have. I ask a lot of our crew. I think we all take a lot of pride in what we do, and we strive to do even the finer details to the highest level. But I also understand that everyone has a life and dreams outside of this job. Nobody wants to come to work miserable every day. In my opinion, we do a really great job of balancing work and life the best we can, and making sure we're covering for one another to prevent employee burnout. That's the key



to success. When you have people who want to be here and enjoy what they're doing, and they also know they don't have to sacrifice life outside of this job, it makes for a healthy environment and sets a crew up for success.

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

Lenz: We have a special bunch right now, and they all complement each other so well. Our crew is made up of three assistant field managers, three full-time groundskeepers, a handful of student workers, and part-time helpers. We're associated with nine different sports teams and oversee about 25 acres of highly maintained natural grass fields,



eight acres of artificial grass, four beach volleyball courts, and some facility common areas. I can't say enough about the current group we have. They are all such great workers, and they deserve this award and recognition. I'm so thankful we can celebrate a tough 2024 in this way.

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

Lenz: Not quite what I was expecting, but not surprised and thankful for the in-depth questions and testing required. I know groundskeepers all over strive to keep athletes safe; it's the number one goal. The process is lengthy and makes you think it's not something you can sit down and do in one sitting. And I'm glad it wasn't — it makes the award feel that much more special. If I were to offer tips, start early and keep in-depth and accurate notes throughout the year, because the application process is considerate of the entire year. Notes certainly help to look back and reflect on to give accurate answers. Reading the questions early on gives you a better idea of what to make note of as you manage the field throughout the year. **SFM**



Communication: Gotta Have It

Communication. It's one of those words that shows up in every leadership book, crew meeting, and company vision statement. But in sports field management — where timelines are tight and stakes are high — it's more than a buzzword. It's the difference between efficiency and waste, safety and accidents, a game without a hitch and one marred by preventable mistakes.

Just like stolons spread to strengthen turf, communication spreads understanding and purpose to strengthen a team. In our world — “Where the Game Begins” — communication sets the tone before the first whistle is ever blown. I first wrote about work ethic, then accountability as stolons of leadership. The third stolon is communication, and it ties the first two together. Without clear communication, work ethic lacks direction, and accountability has no framework. You can have the hardest-working crew in the state, but if they don't understand the “why” and “how,” their efforts may still miss the mark.

Communication isn't just saying something; it's making sure the other person fully understands it. That requires clarity and listening. Too often, communication is treated as a one-way broadcast when it should be a two-way exchange. Think about game-day prep: a supervisor tells a staff member who normally works baseball, “Paint the soccer field.” Simple enough, right? But does that mean painting the boundary lines, or the full layout with penalty boxes and logos? Are they expected to pull string lines, or is there a stencil system in place? Ambiguity in sports field work doesn't just create frustration — it can leave you with missed details, crooked lines and even a very unhappy coach.

Now picture someone getting an irrigation assignment. A manager says, “Check the irrigation on the lacrosse practice field.” One person might run a quick cycle and assume the system is fine. Another might walk zones, looking for leaks, broken heads or soft ground. If the expectation isn't defined, the risk of showing up on Monday morning to a soggy baseball infield or dry, heat-stressed grass is high. A single misstep in communication can cost hours of repair time and put the field's playability and safety on the line. Clear words upfront prevent costly and embarrassing fixes later.

When accountability falters, it often means communication failed first. If expectations weren't clearly explained, how can anyone be held accountable? Accountability only sticks when expectations are defined in specific, measurable terms. Work ethic and accountability aren't abstract values; they're lived out through communication. Effective communication is specific, timely, respectful, and leaves room for clarification. It never assumes understanding — it checks for it. Bad communication, on the other hand, is vague, inconsistent or dismissive — it leaves confusion where clarity should live. Receiving conflicting instructions for the same task is stressful. An example of poor communication is a manager making a single announcement in the break room and assuming the team will spread the message. Another example is a coach complaining about sidelines that are muddy because no one told the field manager about extended irrigation runs. Bad communication erodes trust. And once trust is lost, accountability collapses, and work ethic feels wasted.

Most crews don't fail because directions weren't given — they fail because leaders didn't listen. Listening is the most important ingredient in communication, and it's often overlooked. Listening prevents small issues from turning into big ones, and it applies not only to crews but also to administrators, coaches and CEOs.

Communication becomes part of the culture when it's modeled by leadership and encouraged at every level. Crews should feel safe asking clarifying questions. Leaders should value clarity over speed when giving directions. And everyone should see communication as a matter of safety, quality and respect.

When communication is valued as culture, accountability improves, work ethic is channeled correctly, and performance rises. Communication is the bridge between effort and results. Without it, even the best crews struggle. With it, teams are successful.

[Editor's note: This article is part of an ongoing series. The next article will focus on integrity. Because when communication takes root, integrity has space to grow.] **SFM**



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

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



MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE AS AN SFMA MEMBER

- A network of peers who share their best practices.
- Opportunities for education.
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- Access to the Member's Only section of *sportsfieldmanagement.org*, which has a real-time membership directory and hundreds of technical educational resources.
- Access to Michigan State's Turfgrass Information File, a resource for up-to-date technical information.
- Ability to enter your field in the nationally recognized Field of the Year awards program.
- Opportunity to become a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and to have your facility certified as environmentally responsible.
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- Purchase SFMA branded apparel.
- *SportsField Management Magazine* each month.
- The ability to apply for scholarships (students only).
- Discounted exhibitor booth at the annual conference (commercial members only). **SFM**

For more information, visit:

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

ASBA publishes padel court installation manual

The American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) announced the publication of its inaugural *Padel Courts: Installation and Maintenance Manual*.

The book is available for purchase on the association's website for \$39.95, in both hard copy and electronic format (<https://sportsbuilders.org/page/OnlineStore>).

"Padel is one of the fastest-growing sports worldwide and its entry into the U.S. market has awakened a need for solid technical information," said Randy Resley, chairman of ASBA. "ASBA continues to offer the best content and to build on its record of success in providing excellent publications that serve every sector of the sports industry."

The new manual, written by an editorial committee that included representation from the United States Padel Association, as well as builders and suppliers in the industry, covers padel court dimensions, planning and design, base construction, maintenance, discussion of the installation of court kits, indoor and outdoor facilities, amenities and accessories, lighting and a wealth of information on industry sources, including professional organizations, trade publications and organizations of teaching professionals.

In addition to offering comprehensive information, the manual is illustrated with photos and detailed diagrams.

The goal of the publication is to provide readers with the facts they need to make informed decisions on issues such as contractor selection, court placement, wind and soil considerations and other factors — and to avoid having them try to source unverified information.

Interest in the sport of padel has grown rapidly, prompting ASBA to include an educational session, "Padel Court Installation in the U.S. and What to Know Before You Build," in its upcoming Technical Meeting, to be held December 2-5, 2025, in San Antonio, Texas at the Grand Hyatt San Antonio.



Transforming a KU icon into a game-day destination

David Booth Kansas Memorial Stadium has served as the heart of Jayhawks football for more than a century. Opened in 1921 as a living memorial to the University of Kansas (KU) students and alumni who gave their lives during World War I, it is one of the nation's oldest college football venues.

Now the stadium is undergoing a new era of transformation. Renovations are reimagining the fan experience with updated seating, enhanced accessibility and modern design elements.

To bring that vision to life, Sightline Commercial Solutions delivered more than 17,000 linear feet of railing in a wide range of styles. Woven mesh infill adds a distinctive architectural statement to the custom VIP stairs, while anodized aluminum finishes in the bowl and brown-bronze powder coating in the back-of-house areas ensure design cohesion and durability. By incorporating SC Pro Risers, the stadium gains a flexible, demountable platform system that supports a variety of seating and event configurations. At the entry points, custom sunshade canopies now welcome fans and staff with protection and comfort.

The reconfigured seating bowl now places suites up to 80 feet closer to the field, while individual seats gain 50 percent more space and legroom. New wheat-stalk-inspired lighting poles further connect the stadium's refreshed look to its Kansas roots. **SFM**

FOR MORE "BEYOND THE FIELD" CONTENT,
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JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Blue areas on cement

TURFGRASS AREA:

Home lawn

LOCATION:

North Florida

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

Centipede grass

Answer on page 33

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International



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2026 World Cup Pitch Prep

Tahoma 31 at Mexico's Stadium Monterrey

Ahead of the 2026 World Cup this summer, Manager of Pitch and Natural Areas Carlos Castillo explains why he chose Tahoma 31 Bermudagrass as the surface for his new pitch. "It's the best," he says.

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Photo by Austin James

2026 SFMA Conference and Exhibition

THE 2026 SFMA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION will be held January 18-22, 2026, in Fort Worth, Texas. SFMA's Annual Conference and Exhibition allows attendees to share information with other successful members of the sports field management industry.

The full-day Seminar on Wheels on Monday will tour Toyota Stadium (FC Dallas); Riders Field (Frisco RoughRiders); and Southern Methodist University. The half-day Seminar on Wheels on Thursday will tour AT&T Stadium (Dallas Cowboys) and Globe Life Field (Texas Rangers).

This year's keynote speech will be a presentation by SFMA CEO Paula Sliefert, SFMA President Adam Thoms, Ph.D., and SFMA President Elect Alpha Jones, CSFM. They will provide an SFMA update on the future plans for the organization.

Graduate students will present project posters during the SFMA Conference. Submissions must be sports field focused and present either industry research or a case study that explains the project's purpose and significance.

The following preview provides insight into the 2026 SFMA Conference & Exhibition education lineup, but for more information or to register, visit www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference.



All other photos by Mark Skalny Photography

EDUCATION SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2026

Jump start your conference with pre-conference Power Learning Sessions from 1:15–5 p.m. on Monday.

1:15-1:30 p.m.: Rapid Preview of Speaker Topics Plus Extras

1:30-2:15 p.m.: Speaking Session 1; presented by Dan Sandor, Ph.D.

■ **Core Aeration by the Numbers.** In this presentation attendees will learn the relationship between tine size and spacing and how aerator tine setup impacts the amount of actual playing surface affected by aeration.

■ **The ABC's of GDDs.** What are growing degree days (GDDs) and are they right for your chemical programs?

■ **Back to School: SFMA and Secondary Education.** In this presentation, Dr. Sandor will share his experience in connecting with more than 20 high school programs teaching turfgrass management in Virginia.

2:15-2:30 p.m.: Rapid Review of Speaker Topics Plus Extras

2:30-3:15 p.m.: Speaking Session 2; presented by Pawel Petelewicz, Ph.D.

■ **Herbicide Headaches.** This session will focus on how to manage and control the use of herbicides and their application in the field.

3:15-3:30 pm.: Rapid Review of Speaker Topics Plus Extras

3:30-3:50 p.m.: Poster Project Showcase Presentations/Break

3:50-4:35 p.m.: Speaking Session 3; presented by Geoff Rinehart

■ **Fertilizer Product Basics.** This presentation will cover distinguishing among major, secondary, and minor nutrients needed for a sports field and major "fast-" and "slow-release" sources of nutrients.

■ **Using Variety Trial Data to Select the Best Cultivars.** This presentation will discuss how to use the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program data and data from other national programs to select the best cultivars for sports field performance.

■ **Turf Disease Basics.** This presentation will cover the basics of where different pathogens can infect the turfgrass plant (leaf, crown, root), the "disease triangle" and how that should inform management decisions.

4:35-4:50 p.m.: Rapid Review of Speaker Topics Plus Finale

4:50-5 p.m.: Closing



TUESDAY, JANUARY 20

8-9:30 a.m.

General Session: Inside the Pitch — Field Managers' Perspective on Preparing for FIFA World Cup 2026; presented by John Wright; Tyler Morris, CSFM; Ryan Bjorn; Robert Heggie; Alan Ferguson; Weston Appelfeller, CSFM; Shaun Ilten; David Graham; Ewen Hodge; Trey Rogers, Ph.D.

9:45-10:45 a.m.

Time to Take PCI Off the Shelf; presented by David Pinsonneault, CSFM, CPRP, CPWP-M

This presentation will discuss the Playing Conditions Index (PCI) tool used in natural grass and synthetic turf athletic field assessment. A real-life example will be presented to outline what the PCI is, why it is an important tool to use in your program, how to complete the PCI forms and how to interpret and use the results.

Renovating Cool-Season Turfgrass Dominated by Annual Bluegrass; presented by Brad Park

This presentation will explore Rutgers research results and a case study involving integration of perennial ryegrass overseeding and herbicide applications for the purposes of renovating cool-season sports turf dominated by annual bluegrass.

Simplified Soil Science for Superior Sports Surfaces; presented by Bryan Hopkins, Ph.D.

The focus in this session will be to teach advanced soil science concepts in a practical, applied manner to help participants become more effective managers of turfgrass and the soils they grow in.

Optimizing Mowing Practices for Turfgrass Species: Autonomous vs Conventional; presented by Tessa Hospod and Jason Henderson, Ph.D.

This presentation will describe if mowing regime and height of cut have different effects on turfgrass quality, mowing quality, and stress tolerance on four different cool-season turfgrass species.

It's Not About the Paycheck; presented by Jeff McManus

Through real-world stories and leadership lessons, McManus shows how high-performing teams thrive — not because it's easy, but because passion leads the way.

Ensuring Peak Performance Through Weed Control in Warm-Season Turf; presented by Gerald Henry, Ph.D. and Pawel Petelewicz, Ph.D.

This presentation will discuss the impacts of weed infestation on athletic field performance and use with a focus on holistic strategies to address troublesome and/or common weeds of warm-season turfgrasses.

11 a.m.-Noon

Work/Life Balance for the Sports Field Manager; presented by Lisa Goatley, LPC and Mike Goatley, Ph.D.

This presentation will discuss the challenges in work/life balance and present strategies to maintain healthy family relationships while also meeting the demands of work.

Sports Field Irrigation A to Z — Including the Things You Were Afraid to Ask; presented by Brad Jakubowski

This workshop will take you through all of the major concepts of irrigation: Why we water. Why it's important for the field, society, and beyond.

Utilizing Autonomous Mowing Technology for Sports Field Management; presented by J. Scott McElroy, Ph.D.

In this presentation, Dr. McElroy will cover the major types of autonomous mowers, discuss how they are utilized, and how they will change the way the turfgrass is managed.

Trust the Journey: Navigating Career Transitions with Confidence and Finding Success; presented by Paula Sliefert and Ava Veith

Ava and Paula will share their personal experiences with career transitions, offering insights into how they navigated change while staying open to new opportunities.

Managing Sports Fields More Effectively with PGRs; presented by Aaron Hathaway

This presentation will take an in-depth look at why and how plant growth regulators (PGRs) can be specifically used to potentially prime a sports field for heavy traffic, aid the transition to and from overseeding, favor the desired turf species, help establish seeding and sodding projects faster, as well as other uses for PGRs.

Leave it Better Than You Found it!; presented by Drew Miller, Ed.D. and Travis Hogan

The presenters will discuss the key components of how they have grown in their careers with different components, from leadership to technological advancements.

2-3:15 p.m.

Measured Maintenance: Turfgrass Mathematics for Peak Performance; presented by Quincy Law, Ph.D. and Nick Christians, Ph.D.

This presentation will work through common turfgrass calculations using both the proportional method and dimensional analysis. Participants will solve a string of applied turfgrass math problems to link and build on concepts including area, volume, fertilizers and pesticides.

Suncorp Stadium — Australia's Premier Multipurpose Rectangular Stadium; presented by Matthew Oliver

Go behind the scenes of Suncorp Stadium — Australia's premier rectangular stadium and one of the busiest natural turf venues in the world. In this session, Matthew Oliver shares real-world insights from leading the sports turf operations at a venue that hosts over 60 major events annually across rugby league, rugby union, soccer, and concerts.

Ballfields on a Budget: Practices and Products to Get the Most Bang for Your Buck; presented by Gregg Munshaw, Ph.D.

This presentation will focus on the practices that are critical for healthy turfgrass and discuss other practices that may be reduced based on labor and budget.

Indoor Turf Management: What We Have Learned Preparing for FWC26; presented by John Sorochan, Ph.D.

Discussion will focus on the research being done at the University of Tennessee to grow grass in five domed sta-



diums for the 2026 World Cup. Topics will include light levels and light quality needed of growth. Indoor turfgrass performance and playability characteristics will also be defined.

Managing and Leading Young Workers and Dealing with Turnover; presented by Colin Boak

Tools and tricks used to relate to, and get the most out of, your younger-age crew. It will also discuss the challenges that occur from constant turnover and the retraining process with a steady flow of high school age workers.

3:30-4:30 p.m.

Clean Air, Healthy Fields: Leveraging Science to Support Natural Turf; presented by Cindy Code and Scott Bills, CSFM

An overview of the Clean Air Calculator (CAC) — a science-based tool developed by Project EverGreen to quantify the environmental benefits of professionally managed natural grass.

Fraise Mowing Strategies: Improving Recovery and Field Performance; presented by Jada Powlen, Ph.D. and Ray McCauley, Ph.D.

This presentation will prime field managers for fraise mowing and will cover its uses (organic matter management, weed control, and renovations), effects on field performance, and strategies for improving bermudagrass recovery (i.e., fertilization, timing, depth), especially in the transition zone.

Pesticide Formulations and Mixing; presented by Chrissie Segars, Ph.D. and Dale Sanson, Ph.D.

There are over 30 different pesticide formulation types worldwide. The top five formulation types used in the turf industry will be reviewed.



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Improving Synthetic Turf Through Research: Key Findings from 15 Years of Research; presented by Kyle Dickson, Ph.D. and Taylor Williams

The University of Tennessee evaluated various types of synthetic turf, infill, and shock pads to determine uniformity and player performance. Maintenance challenges and strategies will be discussed in detail.

The Sports Field Manager: Gratitude or Despair?; presented by Keith Winter

This presentation will include a look at the Seven Realms of Human Emotion and how they impact our personal and professional life.

Generational Intelligence: Leadership for a Multigenerational Workforce; presented by Nick McKenna, CSFM and Holly Kasperbauer

Whether you're a seasoned manager or an emerging leader in the industry, this workshop offers essential insights to help you unlock the full potential of your workforce.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21

8-9 a.m.

Boots on the Ground with Turf Maintenance and Turf Renovations in a No Pesticide Part of the World; presented by Trevor Warner

An overview of turf maintenance and turf renovations through videos and pictures of what the presenters do to combat weeds and promote turf grass growth in a part of the world that has a pesticide ban.

What is Soil Health and How can it Benefit my Athletic Fields?; presented by Gregg Munshaw, Ph.D.

This presentation will discuss what soil health is and what it is not, how soil health can benefit turfgrasses on our athletic fields, and how our turfgrass management practices can affect it.

Overseeding Cool-Season Athletic Fields: Strategies to Transition to Better Grasses; presented by Jada Powlen, Ph.D. and Cale Bigelow, Ph.D.

This session will cover the various cultural strategies that one could utilize to successfully add newer grasses and genetics in tired old sports fields.

New Technology: Not Always the Easy Button; presented by Ben Boeding, CSFM and Paul Miskimen

This session will share real-world insights on early adoption of new technology, common hurdles, and lessons learned.

Smart Spending: Cost-Effective Management and Negotiation Strategies for Turf Professionals; presented by Barry Gardner, Jamie Mehringer and Joey Stevenson

This session is designed to equip sports turf managers with practical strategies for stretching budgets without sacrificing quality.

Successful Community-Level Fields: Working with Volunteers, Teams and Low Budgets, Making it all Work!; presented by Brad Jakubowski, MS, CIT, JP Tambourine

This seminar will discuss the requirements and ingredients needed for succeeding with volunteers and low budgets.

9:15-10:30 a.m.

Beyond the Ballfields: Maintaining Modern Recreation Spaces; presented by Tony Ivey

This presentation is designed for facility managers responsible for maintaining non-traditional recreational amenities such as sand volleyball courts, cross-country tracks, skate parks, disc golf courses, and motocross tracks. It will provide valuable insights into both the planning and maintenance phases of these specialized facilities.

Grass Innovation: Exploring the Newest Varieties for Field Performance; presented by Kyley Dickson, Ph.D. and Gregg Munshaw, Ph.D.

This session will provide an overview of the latest advances in turfgrass breeding and development, focusing on new varieties that offer improved performance and sustainability.

Common Diseases of Cool-Season Sports Fields; presented by Geoff Rinehart

This presentation will cover the most common diseases of sports fields in the transition zone and northern (cool-season) zone — brown patch, summer patch, dollar spot, pythium-related diseases, and leaf spot.

Math Made Simple, or so we Hope!; presented by Mike Goatley, Ph.D. and Dan Sandor, Ph.D.

Mathematics are a routine part of sports field management but can often be challenging or stressful. The primary objective of this seminar is to make problem solving easy for everyone.

Sharing 25 Years' Experience with Hybrid Carpets; presented by Mark Major

This session offers a practical, no-nonsense discussion from someone who has been hands-on in every aspect of the hybrid carpet business for nearly three decades.

Texas A & M's Kyle Field: An "Eventful" Summer!; presented by Nick McKenna, CSFM

This presentation will outline the events and activities that occurred at Texas A&M's Kyle Field during the summer of 2024.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

8:30-10 a.m.

A Ride Through a Year in the Transition Zone with the Three Amigos; presented by Cale Bigelow, Ph.D., Mike Goatley, Ph.D. and Gregg Munshaw, Ph.D.

This "discussion session" (audience participation strongly encouraged) will review the 2025 growing season across the transition zone from Missouri to Virginia.





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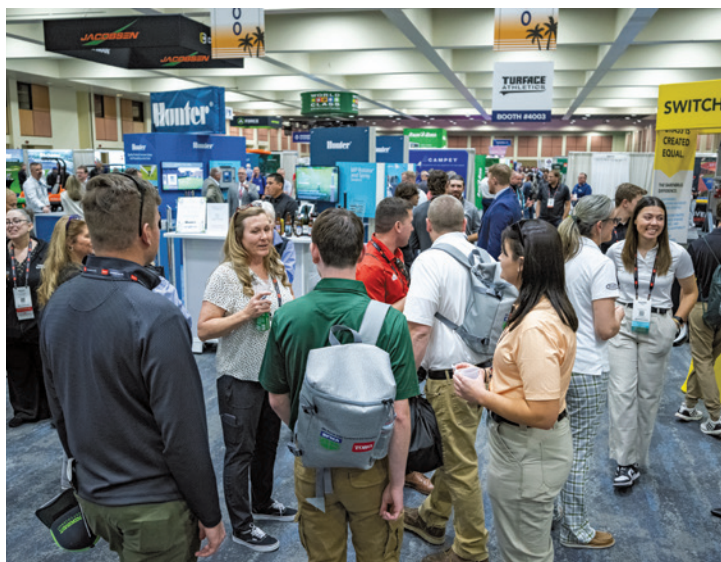





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Budget Like a Pro: Strategic Planning and Financial Advocacy for High-Impact Turf Investments; presented by **Barry Gardner, Jamie Mehringer and Joey Stevenson**

This session will dive into proven strategies for budget planning and securing financial support for large-scale purchases like equipment, infrastructure upgrades, and long-term field improvements.

Services No Longer Needed — The Aftermath and Landing Back on Your Feet; presented by **Eric Harshman, CSFM, CGM, James Bergdoll, CSFM, Peter Thibeault, CSFM and Neil Cathey, CSFM**

This panel discussion brings together seasoned CSFMs who have faced unexpected career transitions. They will share their experiences of job loss or choosing to leave a position, providing insight into how they navigated these difficult situations, rebuilt their confidence, and found new opportunities.

*Earn up to 1.5 CEUs through SFMA. In addition to SFMA, the following professional organizations may be providing CEUs for attending education sessions at the conference:

- American Sports Builders Association (ASBA)
- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)



Bridging the Gap: Empowering Groundskeepers Through Data-Driven Dialogue with Performance Teams; presented by **Reece Watson and Greg Elliott**

This session explores how grounds crews and performance staff can work together to optimize field conditions for athlete performance and safety.

Panel Discussion: Strategies for Poa annua Management in Sports Fields; presented by **Gerald Henry, Ph.D., Scott McElroy, Ph.D., Chrissie Segars, Ph.D. and Pam Sherratt**

A panel of turfgrass experts from both academia and industry will discuss Poa annua control options from within their respective locations throughout the country.



- Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA)
- Irrigation Association (IA)
- Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS)
- National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP)
- Pesticide Recertification Credits: Texas, Oklahoma (Pending Approval) Note: Pesticide Recertification credits are only available for the states listed above. If you are attending from another state and need pesticide recertification credits, you are responsible for contacting your state's Department of Agriculture for approval.

SFMA VIRTUAL POST CONFERENCE WEBINAR SERIES

SFMA will offer virtual education via a webinar series during the four weeks following the conference. (All times are Central).

FEBRUARY 10

2-3 p.m.: Importance of the Right Foundation: Principles of Athletic Field Rootzone Design and Maintenance; presented by Joshua Marden, CSFM

3:15-4:15 p.m.: Water Quality and Lack Thereof; presented by Marco Schiavon, Ph.D.

FEBRUARY 17

2-3 p.m.: What is Nanotechnology and How Can it Help My Sports Fields?; presented by Geoff Rinehart

3:15-4:15 p.m.: Soil Health of Sports Fields: Are Pesticides and Fertilizers Killing our Soils?; presented by Bryan Hopkins, Ph.D.

FEBRUARY 24

2-3 p.m.: Cool-Season Turfgrasses for Reduced-Input Grounds and Sports Fields; presented by Brad Park

3:15-4:15 p.m.: Relationship Goals: How to Improve the Success of Your Sports Field by Communication; presented by Keith Fisher

MARCH 3

2-3 p.m.: Budgeting Fundamentals: Knowing What Goes Where and How; presented by Brad Jakubowski

3:15-4:15 p.m.: How to Plan Athletic Field Management for an Effective Integrated Pest Management Plan; presented by Amanda Folck **SFM**



STUDENT CHALLENGE

The SFMA Student Challenge is presented in partnership with the SAFE Foundation, founding partner Hunter Industries, and supporting sponsor Ewing. Each year, students from 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities throughout the country compete in an exam that challenges knowledge in the sports field management industry. 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. The Study Guide for the SFMA Student Collegiate Challenge is available online. Be sure to thoroughly review the Study Guide in preparation for the exam. A maximum of four undergraduates can compete on a team and must declare if they are representing a two-year or four-year institution. Competitors receive complimentary conference registration. You must be an SFMA member to participate. The 2026 Student Challenge will take place Wednesday, January 21 from 2-4:30 p.m. **SFM**

Can the SFMA Conference Jump Start Your Career?

Why you should attend and how to sell it

By Joe Churchill

[Author's note: The following is an excerpt from an article I wrote in 2017. Although the dates have changed, the benefits of attending the SFMA Conference remain the same.]

If you want to step out of the crowd and accept that there is more to your job than being stuck in the same mind-numbing routine every day, make it a personal goal to attend the 2026 Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) Conference and Exhibition in Fort Worth, Texas.

Commit to learning more about the conference and its educational and networking opportunities. Meet with manufacturers who serve our industry and the people who drive this great professional association. Develop an understanding of the conference's value — not only to you, but also to your employer.

Yes, it's easy for me to say you should attend, and to assure you the value of this opportunity far exceeds the financial and time investment. Your silence and eye rolls are not lost on me. Right now, you're making a mental list of multiple reasons why it just isn't going to happen:

- It costs a lot of money.
- I don't know how to ask. My boss will say "no" anyway.
- There's no budget for that.
- My employer has a policy against this sort of travel.

- It's time away from my job and my family.
- I would probably have to take vacation days to go even if it were approved.
- It's frivolous and is just a vacation in sheep's clothing.

IT COSTS A LOT OF MONEY. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ASK. MY BOSS WILL SAY "NO" ANYWAY.

Yep. There is a cost attached to attending. And, head's up, anticipate your employer factoring in the wages you'd make if you were back home working.

As you set off to present your case for attending, be careful when talking about costs or expenses. These are negative-sounding words. Use words like "investment," "opportunity," or "return on investment."

Speaking of ROI, why not turn the tables on this cost/benefit model and refer to NOT attending as a "COI"—Cost of Inaction. In other words, by not attending the SFMA Conference, what could it possibly be costing you? Do your research and be prepared to talk about making an investment in yourself and the institution for which you work.

Visit www.sportsfieldmanagement.org and explore the conference education tracks, and identify several topics that resonate with you. Think about how learning more about these topics could help you address ongoing sports field

management challenges you struggle with at your own workplace. There are presentations each year about how to save on fertilizer, chemicals or water; how to save labor dollars; or how to manage scheduling challenges. What you learn will more than offset the cost of attendance.

Showing your boss that you've done the research will show how serious you are, how important you feel it is to attend, and how committed you are to finding ways to do your job better. Attendees who purchase a full conference registration receive free on-demand access to education sessions that are recorded during the conference. You can share what you learn with your boss and colleagues.

THERE'S NO BUDGET FOR THAT.

This may be a valid point. Companies, municipalities, schools, etc., all operate within an expense budget. If the money just isn't there, it can't be spent. Creative budget managers can find ways around this by shifting dollars between accounts or deferring an expense. Maybe this is an option for you. If not, at least have the discussion this year and ask your boss if funds could be added to next year's budget for educational purposes or personal improvement. When you put it that way, it's a bit harder to say "no" — especially after you've thoughtfully presented your case. You may have to plan ahead.

MY EMPLOYER HAS A POLICY AGAINST THIS SORT OF TRAVEL.

You got me there; you probably have an uphill climb in front of you. But don't assume that just because it has always been done that way that that's the way it's always going to be. Lay your groundwork now and be first in line when the moratorium is lifted or the money begins to flow again. Perhaps these sorts of training opportunities are available only to those of a certain pay grade. Ask if an exception can be made once you've presented your case. Maybe you can negotiate or barter for what you want. Are there other "value-added" things that your employer routinely offers that you could trade or give up for a ticket to the SFMA Conference?

IT'S TIME AWAY FROM MY JOB AND MY FAMILY.

They'll do just fine without you at work while you're gone for three or four days. The SFMA Conference takes place in January. If you feel it's your calling to attend and you want it bad enough, you'll figure out a way.

I'D PROBABLY HAVE TO TAKE VACATION DAYS TO GO.

Yes, you might. I know a few sports field managers who have taken PTO days to attend the SFMA Conference. Many of them also paid their own travel expenses. These are personal decisions to make. I also know sports field managers who have had their attendance fully covered by their employer once their bosses saw the value. Perhaps you could negotiate some of these expenses with your employer. Maybe they handle conference registration and you pick up the airfare and hotel. Showing your boss you're willing to put some skin in the game will show how important this is to you. Use "airline miles" and find a roommate.

IT'S FRIVOLOUS AND JUST A VACATION IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

Not so. Do your homework, present your case, and figure out the return on investment. Your prep work will help combat this mindset. Take the focus off the conference location and place it back where it needs to be — professional growth and learning new ways to become a more valuable asset to your employer. Defuse the vacation mindset by suggesting to your boss that they come along. I've seen this work. It's a great way for them to see the value firsthand.

Companies and institutions that invest in key personnel know they have a better chance of retaining those employees. Some of the mainstream methods of investing in employees include continued education opportunities that result in personal growth, more job satisfaction and making them feel they are more involved and part of something important. They may not vocalize this, but most employers understand this. The cost to hire and train people, pay them and provide non-salary benefits (insurance, retirement accounts, pensions) becomes more staggering each year. Employers invest regularly in professional consultants and leadership coaches to help them motivate and retain great employees. Ignoring employee development opportunities only creates a work culture equipped with a revolving door, costing companies and institutions millions annually. Making a pitch to attend the SFMA Conference isn't a career-changing event, but it could be a first step toward getting to where you want to go.

Reach out to any one of us who have been there. I hope to see you in Fort Worth. **SFM**

Joe Churchill is Fields and Grounds Specialist for Reinders, Inc., Plymouth, Minnesota, and a member of the SFMA Editorial Committee.

Fort Worth

TEXAS-USA

**An inside look
at the SFMA
Conference
host city**

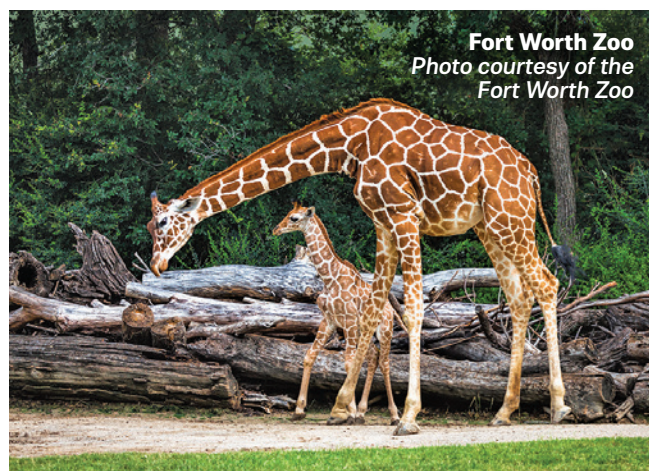
Fort Worth, Texas, host city for the 2026 SFMA Conference and Exhibition, is known for its hospitality and a dozen remarkable districts chock full of cultural experiences. The historic Fort Worth Stockyards feature the world's only twice-daily cattle drive; Billy Bob's Texas, the world's largest honky-tonk; and Mule Alley with restaurants, retail and the Hotel Drover. Downtown offers a variety of shopping, dining, live music and theater along the 37-block Sundance Square entertainment district. Enjoy world-class museums in the Cultural District, as well as a stunning Botanic Garden and award-winning Fort Worth Zoo, nearby. The following is an overview of things to see and do while in Fort Worth for the SFMA Conference.

FORT WORTH WATER GARDENS

Just steps from the Fort Worth Convention Center, the Water Gardens are a celebrated urban Texas masterpiece by architects Philip Johnson and John Burgee. With bold geometry, lush landscaping and captivating water features, this iconic destination offers a one-of-a-kind sensory journey. Wander by the Quiet Pool, where still waters invite calm and contemplation. Enjoy the playful fountains of the Aerating Pool, with its rising shapes and soothing currents. The Gardens' centerpiece is the Active Pool, with dramatic cascades of roaring water, inspiring awe whether viewed from above or down the thrilling walkway.

THE FORT WORTH HERD

See the Old West come to life with the world's only twice-daily cattle drive. Real Texas cowhands lead a herd of legendary longhorns down East Exchange in the Stockyards at 11:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. It's free for all, and every detail, from the drovers' saddles and chaps to their boots and hats, embodies authentic Texas heritage.



FORT WORTH ZOO

The Fort Worth Zoo, ranked one of the top zoos in the nation, provides an entire day of fun for any family. Visit all four great ape species in the 2.5-acre world of primates or get eye-to-eye with some of the most endangered reptiles and amphibians on the planet. With more than 500 species, including 68 endangered or threatened species, the Fort Worth Zoo offers an unforgettable experience for visitors of all ages. One of the biggest attractions is Predators of Asia & Africa, a breathtaking big cat habitat that allows visitors to get an up-close view of some of the most magnificent felines on the planet.

FORT WORTH BOTANIC GARDEN

This is a delightful respite in the busy city. You can meander through 23 specialty gardens such as the Japanese Gardens, Rose Garden and Cactus Garden. The oldest botanic garden in Texas, the Fort Worth Botanic Garden was recently selected as one of the South's most beautiful botanic gardens by *Southern Living* magazine.

BASS PERFORMANCE HALL

For more than 25 years, the Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Performance Hall has been a Fort Worth icon and nationally distinguished performing arts venue. Built entirely with private funds, the Hall serves as a premier venue for national touring artists and Broadway productions, as well as a permanent home to the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Texas Ballet Theater, Fort Worth Opera, the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and the Cliburn.

FORT WORTH MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY

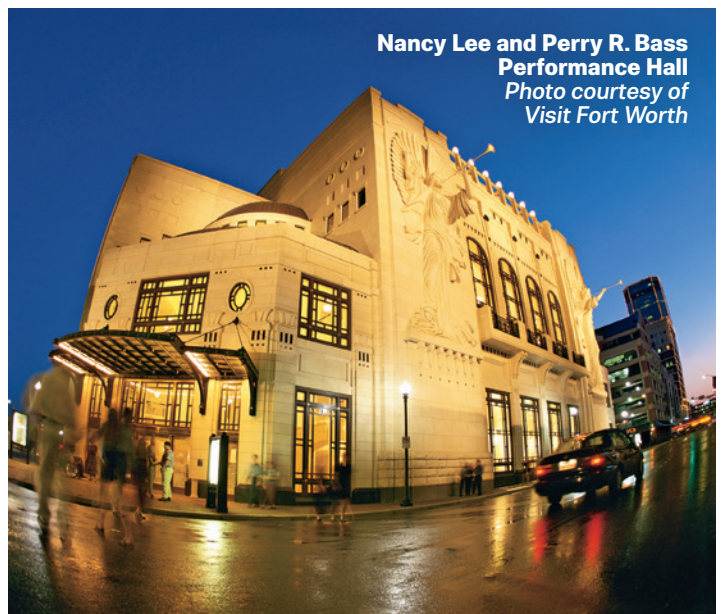
The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History is dedicated to extraordinary learning experiences for everyone. From engaging spaces in Innovation Studios to the Noble Planetarium where the mysteries of the cosmos unfold, exploration is what it's all about!

AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

This free museum offers the most diverse and extensive collection of American art in Fort Worth and includes collections featuring the Plains Indians.



Fort Worth Botanic Garden
Credit Austin James



**Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass
Performance Hall**
Photo courtesy of
Visit Fort Worth



**Fort Worth Museum of
Science and History**
Photo Nick Utter / N8 Visuals

KIMBELL ART MUSEUM

The Kimbell's permanent collection contains holdings ranging from the third millennium B.C. to the mid-20th century, and includes major works by Fra Angelico, Velazquez, Bernini, Rembrandt, Goya, Monet, Cezanne, Picasso, Mondrian and Matisse. It is also home to Michelangelo's first known painting. The museum features special and traveling exhibits on display throughout the year.

NATIONAL COWGIRL MUSEUM AND HALL OF FAME

The National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame is the only museum in the world dedicated to honoring trailblazing women of the American West. Its multimedia exhibits and historic photographs, papers, clothing, spurs and saddles tell the inspiring stories of remarkable women pioneers, ranchers, performers and rodeo stars.

SUNDANCE SQUARE

Downtown Fort Worth is not only a great place to dine or see a show — it's also a wonderful place to shop. Fort Worth's Sundance Square is a multi-block downtown destination where you will find vibrant art, entertainment, dining and shopping anchored around the world-renowned Sundance Square Plaza. Stroll from shop to shop along red-brick streets and discover unique international, national and local products.

FORT WORTH RESTAURANTS

Fort Worth's food scene reflects the city's layered identity. You'll find wood-fired pizza ovens, taquerías open past midnight, white-tablecloth spots focused on local ingredients, and casual kitchens specializing in world cuisines. Barbecue and Tex-Mex are still staples, but the scope is much broader, including West African and Korean restaurants, as well as no-frills diners serving up American staples.

The legacy of cattle drives and ranch cooking still shapes the menus at many old-school spots. Think chicken-fried steak, slow-cooked beans, and big breakfasts meant to last till sundown. Newer spots around Fort Worth lean into experimentation, with many places skipping the genre labels altogether. And if you're curious about craft beers, the Fort Worth Ale Trail will keep you busy.

A watering hole for downtown revelers, **Reata Restaurant** features a twist on ranch style cuisine. Don't miss the jalapeno and cheese elk sausage, tenderloin tamales and blackened buffalo rib eye. Be sure to visit the Reata rooftop for views of Sundance Square. **Grace** offers a comfortable-yet-



Downtown Fort Worth
Credit Austin James



Sundance Square
Photo by Darah Hubbard



Reata Restaurant
Photo courtesy Visit Fort Worth



Horseback riding
Photo courtesy Visit Fort Worth

modern setting, spectacular bar and outdoor terrace where guests can enjoy a seasonal cocktail like the pear martini, bacon wrapped dates, oysters and scallops. The sophisticated scene at **61 Osteria** is a perfect place to enjoy Italian food with a focus on simple, seasonal ingredients.

For the seafood lover, **Waters Restaurant** offers southwest flavors with a cajun twist like gumbo, crab-stuffed jalapenos and Oysters Texasfeller; **il Modo** is an intimate setting for traditional Italian fare; and **Picchi Pacchi** is a local favorite for massive pizzas, pasta, salads, calzones and sandwiches.

For barbecue lovers there is the legendary **Risky's BBQ**, serving up BBQ favorites for over 90 years. **Hopscotch**, a boozy snack bar in Sundance Square, features mixed and frozen drinks, wine, beer, pastries and snacks.

Little Red Wasp Kitchen + Bar offers straightforward food, beer and a full bar. For the brunch-goers, **Yolk** is a must-try for those looking for creative breakfasts and premium, private-label coffee.

Speaking of coffee, **Sons of Liberty** and **Buon Giorno Coffee** are great options for your morning java. Satisfy your sweet tooth at **Melt Ice Creams**, **La'Creamian** and **FunkyTown Donuts & Drafts**.

For a sortable database of Fort Worth restaurants, visit <https://www.fortworth.com/restaurants/>

NIGHTLIFE

Nightlife is electric in downtown Fort Worth and the Sundance Square entertainment district. Whether you want a cozy, intimate setting to listen to jazz at Scat Jazz Lounge, or to sit under the Texas stars with live music at Sundance Square Plaza, this district has it all. Catch dueling pianists at Pete's Dueling Piano Bar. Tap into your inner bootlegger at speakeasies Thompson's Bookstore and Curfew. Sip wine or a cocktail at one of the Omni Hotel's bars, Whiskey & Rye and Wine Thief. Be sure to try some of Fort Worth's craft breweries like Cowtown Brewing Co. or Flying Saucer Draught Emporium.

Learn about distilling at Acre Distilling Co., the award-winning distillery that offers tours and tastings. Hang out in Hell's Half Acre bar, which also doubles as an event space and retail store. T&P Tavern is a pub located in the T&P train station, an authentic rail station pub with craft beer, wine, spirits and eats in a historic setting. **SFM**



**Little Red Wasp
Kitchen + Bar**
Credit Nathanael
Gassett Photography



Hell's Half Acre bar
Photo by Acre Distilling



**Downtown Fort
Worth at night**
Photo by wobblycairnphoto

2025

NOVEMBER 2-5

ELEVATE (NALP)

Phoenix, Arizona

www.landscapeprofessionals.org/ELEVATE

NOVEMBER 12-13

SALTEX 2025

Birmingham, UK

www.saltex.org.uk

DECEMBER 1-5

AMERICAN SPORTS BUILDERS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL MEETING

San Antonio, Texas

www.sportsbuilders.org/page/UpcomingEvents

DECEMBER 8-11

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

New Orleans, Louisiana

www.irrigation.org/IA

2026

JANUARY 18-22

SFMA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Fort Worth, Texas

www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference

FEBRUARY 16-19

TPI 2026 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FIELD DAY

Tucson, Arizona

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



ELEVATE (NALP)



NRPA CONFERENCE

JUNE 23-25

NATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY AND SECURITY CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

Palm Desert, California

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

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2026 NRPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

www.conference.nrpa.org/

OCTOBER 20-23

EQUIP EXPO

Louisville, Kentucky

www.equipexposition.com/

OCTOBER 20-23

TRANSFORM, THE PGMS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Louisville, Kentucky

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

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

ANSWER

From page 17

The blue areas on this cement driveway were the result of a lawn maintenance company's attempt at spot weed control. As all of us know, tracker dye is a non-hazardous indicator dye added to spray tank mixes to properly identify areas covered with the application spray. This improves accuracy and aids in the ability to see areas treated with chemicals like this Glyphosate application. Most quality tracker dyes, when applied to turfgrass areas, will not stain long term, and the temporary color usually disappears with rain, irrigation or sunlight. However, as in this instance, when tracker dyes come onto contact with concrete, they can leave permanent or long-lasting stains. If tracker dye gets on concrete, the best course of action is to try and rinse it immediately with water or use a strong cleaning agent such as a sodium hypochlorite (bleach) solution. Common sense should be used when spraying weeds in cement areas like these driveway cracks. After application, this tracker dye was allowed to dry thoroughly and was visible on this driveway for a couple weeks. The only good thing you can say about this was that he had pretty good coverage.

Photo from John Mascaro's collection.

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

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



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Celebrating the Career of **Keith Winter**

**Award-winning Fort Wayne TinCaps
head groundskeeper retires**

By John Kmitta

The end of the 2025 season for the Fort Wayne TinCaps (High-A affiliate of the San Diego Padres) also marked the retirement of Head Groundskeeper Keith Winter, who wrapped up an award-winning career at Parkview Field, home of the TinCaps.

"Nobody has won more grounds crew of the year awards, groundskeeper of the year awards, or playing surface of the year awards than the Fort Wayne TinCaps," said TinCaps Team President Mike Nutter in an end-of-season video presentation to fans. "We are extremely grateful for his contributions over the years, we are in awe of the work ethic, and we would not have achieved the success without Keith Winter and all of his talented coworkers over the years."

Winter thanked the entire Fort Wayne TinCaps organization — including Nutter and owner Jason Freier with Hardball Capital — as well as TinCaps fans and the Fort Wayne community.

"This community has embraced this team and gives you the feeling — whether you're the groundskeeper, the facilities manager, the president or GM — that what you're doing matters to people," said Winter. "That's very rewarding. I will miss that a little bit; but I also know that my time has come, and I have no second thoughts."

INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

What Winter accomplished in his sports field management journey has been incredible, but his path to get there is just as amazing.

Born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, Winter attended Adrian College, where he played basketball and baseball. He then went on to graduate school at Ohio State University, as he pursued a career in journalism with a goal of working in baseball.

For the next 25 years Winter worked as a professional broadcaster for a cable television station in Columbus, while he and his wife, Kathy, raised their three sons. But in the process of raising those sons — all of whom played baseball into college — Winter coached them and took care of the fields on which they played.

“The more I took care of their fields, the more I was interested in it,” he said. “I became really passionate about learning more and doing more.”

In addition to managing the fields on which his sons played, from the late 1980s through the 1990s Winter was part of a group that took care of Lou Berliner Sports Park, a softball and baseball complex in Columbus.

“Over the course of my broadcasting career, I was always working on a field somewhere,” he said. “When my youngest son got out of high school and the reality of the empty nest was coming, I thought maybe I should try doing this professionally — much to my late wife’s chagrin at the time. I went up to Midland (Mich.) to work for the Great Lakes Loons to open Dow Diamond.

“I think I was incredibly qualified because I had done a lot of research, and I had 15 years of experience working on diamonds,” Winter added. “The head groundskeeper there at the time was thrilled to have me. He left after a year, and I moved into the role of head groundskeeper. I was 50 years old at the time. I was a mature man having raised a family. So I think I was qualified and equipped to take on that responsibility.”

Winter spent three years in Midland with the Loons, and the past 16 years in Fort Wayne.

“My wife called getting into professional baseball my midlife crisis,” said Winter. “But I think when you do that for 19 years, it becomes



more than a midlife crisis. It became my interest and passion. I’m very blessed by the opportunity to do that for such a long time.”

According to Winter, getting into the sports field management industry later in life was extremely beneficial to his career.

“As empty nesters, my kids were grown; so I had the luxury of devoting all of my energy, all of my passion, all of my experience into that,” he said. “I think part of why I was successful is because I entirely devoted my working life to that, knowing that baseball is a real grind, but it’s only a 5-month-long season. So I was willing to pay the price to grind for five months knowing that I had a seven month offseason where I had a lot of freedom, time to travel, time to spend with my wife and be together.”



INDUSTRY SUCCESS

Winter was successful at his job from the beginning. During his first year with the Loons, Dow Diamond won the Midwest League Field of the Year award. Then, during Winter's first year in Fort Wayne, as an assistant, Parkview Field won Minor League Field of the Year. As head groundskeeper, Winter and his crew went on to win Minor League Field of the Year in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2024.

"What was best about that is once you won the league award, that puts you on the stage to win the national award," he said. "We got national recognition in '13, '14, '15 and then in '24, That's a feather in the cap because then you are comparing yourself to all the other Class A fields in professional baseball."

Winter and the TinCaps also won the STMA Professional Baseball Field of the Year for Parkview Field in 2017.

Despite the awards and accolades, Winter said the "greatest joy" of his career was the opportunity to instill a good work ethic and knowledge into the people who have come across his path.

"Training and teaching and bringing not only my work ethic, but my faith and my belief in Jesus into the lives of these young people has by far been my best reward and what I will remember the most out of this," said Winter.

His message to others is that if you stay loyal and consistent, you're probably going to be successful.

"When I was done raising my sons, I was raising a field, and I was raising those who came to work for me," he said. "It's about being authentic and trying to instill integrity, character and work ethic into them."

Winter has also spent years giving back to the sports field management industry — part of which was handling communication and organization for the Professional Baseball Sports Turf Managers Symposium.

"One of my greatest victories was getting Major League Baseball to recognize the symposium to recommend that all 120 PDL team groundskeepers attend," said Winter. "Developing a working relationship and creating a sense of mutual respect with Major League Baseball was a big win in terms of keeping the symposium going."



Winter added that being involved with the symposium allowed him to introduce a bit of white collar into what was traditionally a blue collar network by teaching marketing and public relations skills, and raising awareness of the skill and professionalism of sports field managers. He has also used the symposium and the networking opportunity it provides to encourage and mentor young sports field managers.

Now, in retirement, Winter hopes to stay involved with the symposium and with the industry, and has had discussions with Major League Baseball about mentoring and continuing to give back to the industry.

MOVING FORWARD

But before he delves into future opportunities, Winter plans to take some time to slow down the pace of life.

"I've spent the last 40-plus years raising three sons and then getting into pro ball," he said. "I've been racing and running, and I'm literally slowing down. It's been almost a year and a half since my wife died. That has changed my future. It has changed my outlook. But I'm going to keep pressing forward, and I'm excited for the future."

Kathy Winter passed away May 3, 2024, following a multi-year battle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), more commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease.

"It took her five years to transition into empty nesting," Keith said. "Once she did, the next 10 years were unbelievable. We built our downtown condo in a 140-year-old building from the ground up. We took on this beautiful

project, and we shared so much joy. I'm so thankful for the time we had."

Kathy and Keith were open about sharing Kathy's story, and their journey in faith, with others.

"Our position was gratitude. Because if you live by faith and walk by faith, when you get dealt a tough hand, you can't say, 'woe is me,'" Keith added. "ALS is miserable. I hated it then, and I still hate it now. But that was the hand we were dealt, and I dealt with it the best way that I could. The goal was for her life to be an inspiration, and we did that well. And now I believe the best is yet to come.

"I was a forward mover. I'm still a forward mover. God has something more planned, and I'm going to keep moving forward until my last breath. She showed me how to do that in death, and I surely owe that to her to do that in life. We had plans, but plans sometimes change. Now I will move forward with a new plan, and look forward to that coming to fruition."

Keith is looking forward to spending time reconnecting with his five grandchildren, and just embracing the laughter and time with family and friends.

"I'm going to slow down, I'm going to take it easy, and then I'm going to see what opportunities God puts in my path," he said. "I'm going to be content with whatever comes my way." **SFM**

[Editor's note: To help in the fight against ALS, please visit <https://www.als.org/>]



The Minnesota Baseball Association is a celebration of civic pride for amateur baseball clubs and the fields on which they play

Amateur baseball has a rich and vibrant history in the state of Minnesota. In the 1800s, with the construction of railroads, towns in Minnesota popped up every six miles or so due to the need for water for the steam engines that traveled those tracks. As towns grew, local baseball teams formed. Soon they would begin playing against teams from nearby towns every Sunday. More than 100 years ago, those teams were organized into the Minnesota Baseball Association (MBA).

“By the heyday of the MBA in the 1940s and ‘50s, there were approximately 700 teams across the state,” said Mike Nagel, treasurer of the MBA. “Now we have a roughly 275 teams across three levels — A, B and C — and we have a state tournament that runs three weekends, culminating with championships on Labor Day.”

According to Nagel, all three classes are organized based on a point system, with points evaluated based on the population of the community, team success, and whether the

team goes outside of their community to get baseball players with college or professional experience.

The largest towns are in Class A, while Class B is mid-size towns.

“Class C is our bread and butter,” said Nagel. “That’s where half of our teams are, and they’re mostly located in towns with less than 1,000 people. They’re playing with their brothers, uncles and dads. It’s traditional town ball.”

According to Nagel, across the three classes, the current age range is 14 to 75 years old, and players range from ex pros to players who probably wouldn’t make their high school team.

Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota and North Dakota all have some form of town ball, but their leagues are much smaller than the MBA. “We are by far the most town ball or amateur baseball crazy in the country,” Nagel added.

Travel time for the teams varies widely. In some cases, a 30-minute drive might take you through three towns

that have teams. In other areas of the state, teams travel two to three hours for one game.

"It's a slice of Americana," he said. In some cases, "It's like time stood still and you can find a town that has a church and a bar, and at the crossroads there's a ballpark with no outfield fence and they have a chicken wire backstop. The people show up, bring their cooler and sit and watch their dad or their brothers or their kids or uncles all play baseball. Then some teams are playing in major facilities."

While some municipalities have a regular city crew that maintains their field, Nagel estimates that close to 90 percent of the fields in the MBA are maintained and managed by the team members themselves with help from the baseball board, parents and former players. The MBA's efforts are also supported by sponsors DuraEdge and Reinders, which provide resources and education.

"We have a town of 1,200 people, and I'll put my baseball field up against any minor league park in the country," said Nagel. "There's a lot of pride and there's a lot of one upmanship about wanting your field to be better than the next. When I started, our field was a sandlot. We didn't have a grass infield, we didn't have an outfield fence, and we didn't have dugouts. Now we have one of the best amateur fields in the state of Minnesota. And we've done that through a lot of volunteers, donations and community support. People want their fields to be



*Brownton, Minnesota.
All photos on page 39 provided by Doug Schuette.*

the best they can be. They put a lot of time, effort and money into making the fields wonderful."

The 2025 MBA state tournament was hosted by three towns — Hutchinson, Brownton and Gaylord.

According to Nagel, Gaylord started with a small town field, and now it has a beautiful grandstand and just spent \$300,000 on new LED lights.

"You're just not going to find this type of stuff out in a in a farm community in any other state," he said. "It's very unusual that you'll find a college or minor league-quality park in a town of 2,000 people."

According to Doug Schuette of the Brownton Baseball Association, Barney Tadsen Field/Facility is owned by the City of Brownton, but the Brownton Baseball Association serves as caretaker. Brownton has had a team since 1887, and Barney Tadsen Field was built in 1944-

45. The majority of upkeep and improvements are done and funded by the Brownton Baseball Association.

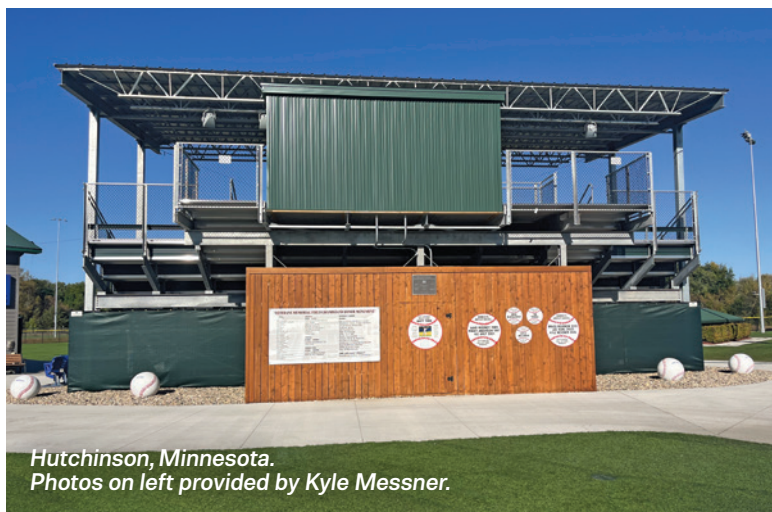
“Due to our fundraising, generous donations, help from the City of Brownton, and volunteer labor, we were able to make many improvements prior to the 2025 Minnesota State Amateur Baseball Tournament,” said Schuette, who is one of seven Brownton Bruins in the Minnesota Baseball Hall of Fame.

According to Kyle Messner of Hutchinson, Minnesota, Hutchinson amateur baseball started in 1985 and Veteran’s Memorial Field (VMF) at Dave Mooney Memorial Complex was built in 1985-86. Over the years, the facility has seen plenty of upgrades, including a new grandstand, scoreboards, dugouts, backstops and sound systems, as well as renovations to the mound and home plate areas.

VMF averages 70 games every spring/summer, and has hosted five state amateur tournaments.



Brownton, Minnesota.
All photos on right provided by Doug Schuette.



Hutchinson, Minnesota.
Photos on left provided by Kyle Messner.

“The hardest part about hosting a state tournament is getting a lot of volunteers to help out – especially when the tournament ends on Labor Day,” said Messner. “The tournament wouldn’t be successful without all those volunteers. The best part about hosting is the people you meet from other towns, and the stories they tell.”

According to Nagel, the state tournament draws between 20,000 and 30,000 over the course of the tournament. He invites others to come witness a bit of that hometown pride.

“If you like baseball and want to see some beautiful parks, for \$10 you get to watch four baseball games,” he said. “It’s amazing. You will not be disappointed.” **SFM**

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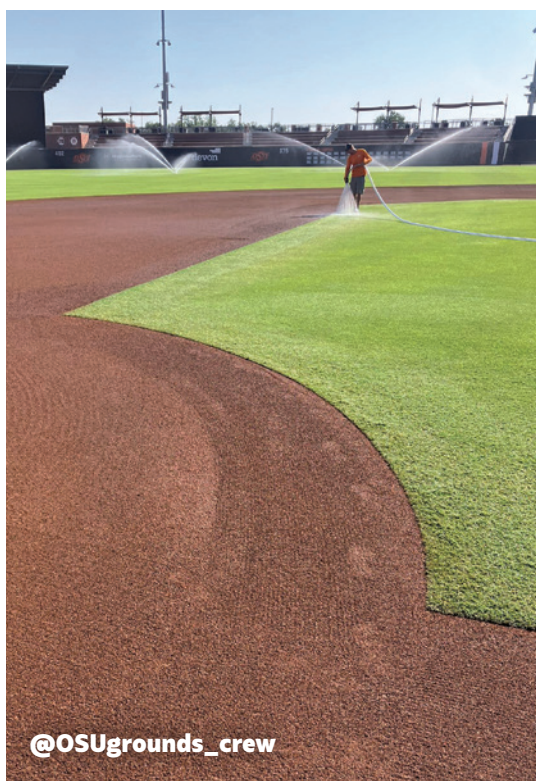
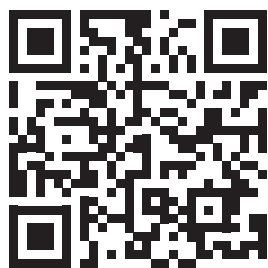
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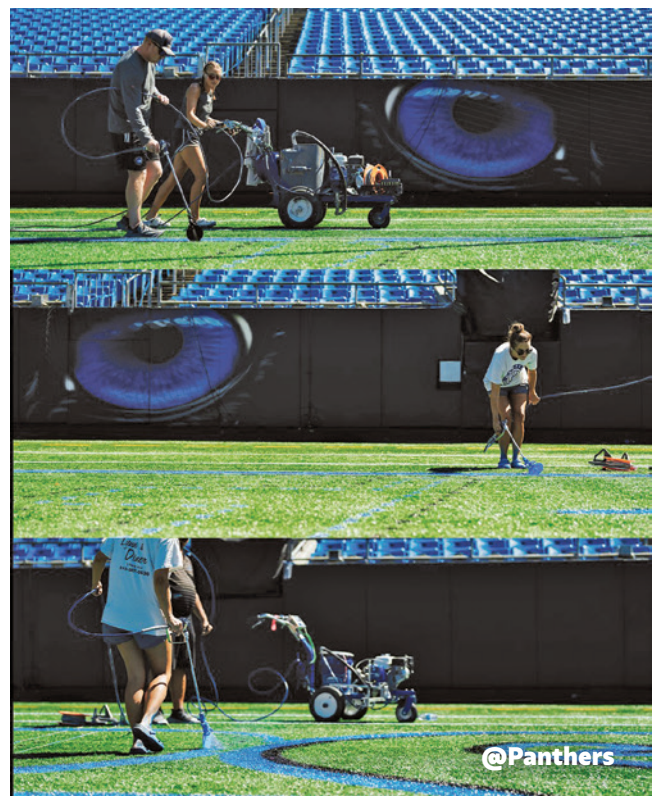
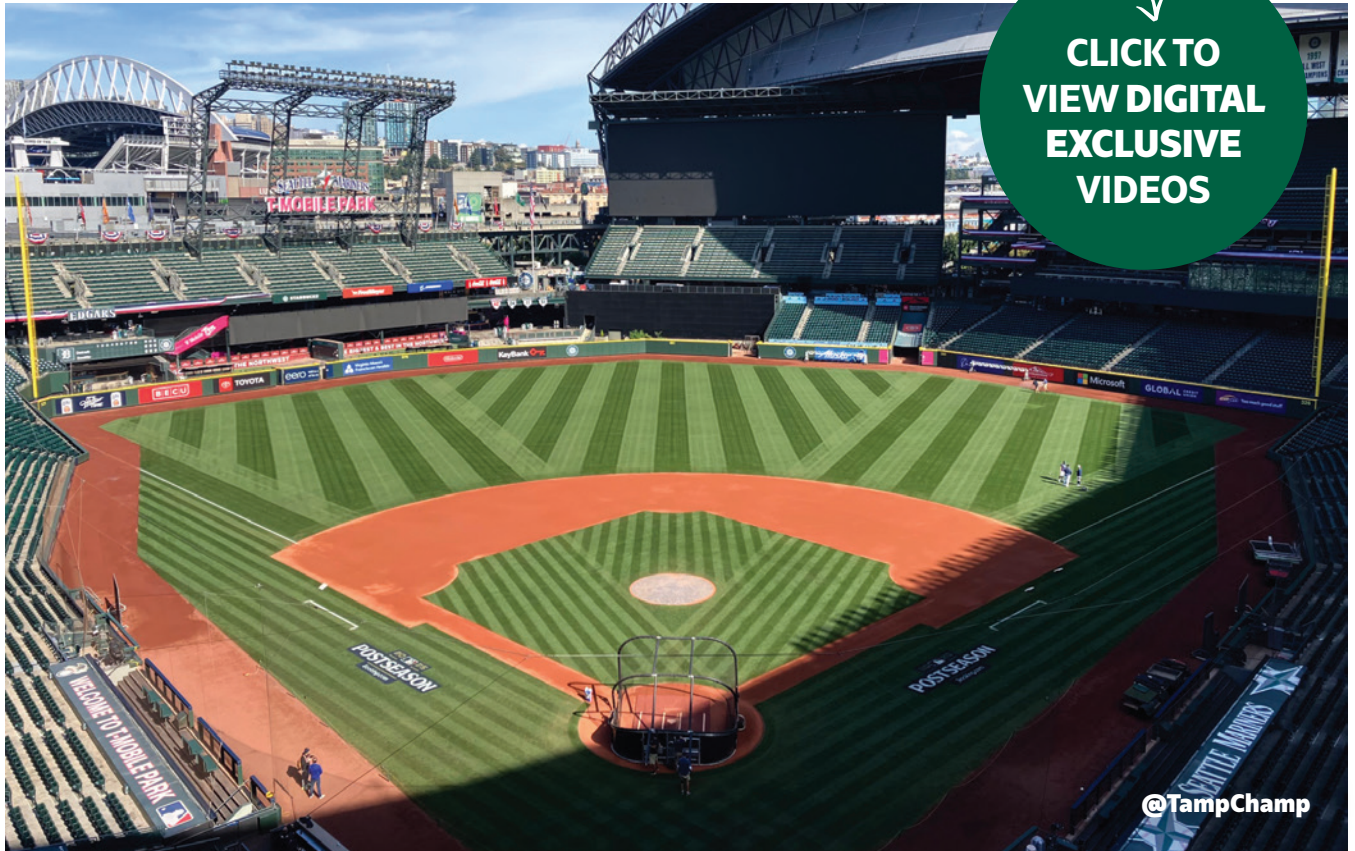
Beyond the Field will be distributed monthly on the final Friday of the month. The regular *SportsField Management* Insider newsletter will continue to be deployed weekly, and will continue to focus on sports field management news and products, SFMA updates, turfgrass science and research, industry education,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

FROM THE FEEDS

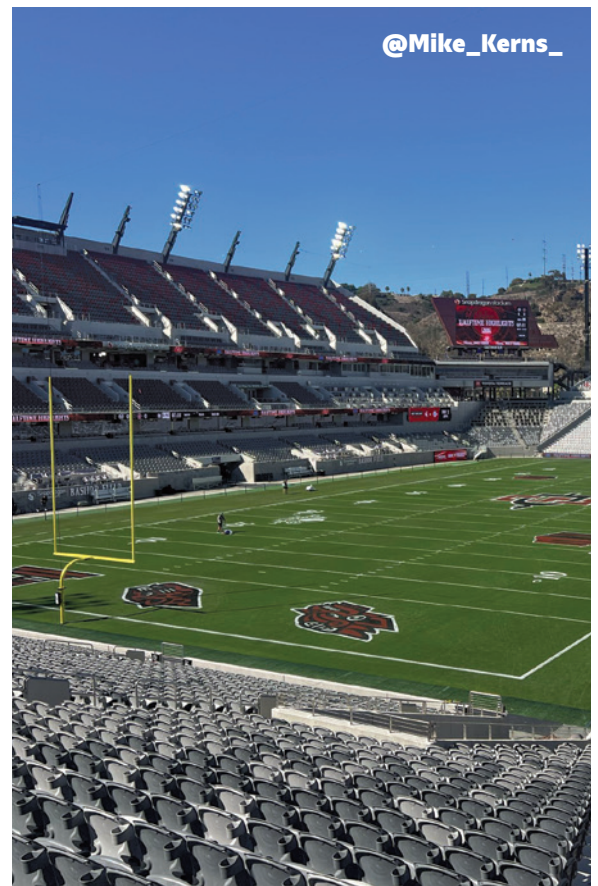
The following are photos and posts pulled from industry social media feeds during the past month.

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











ORSFMA Demo Field Day

On September 24, the Oregon Sports Field Management Association (ORSFMA) held an annual event at Delta Park in Portland, Oregon. Various product demonstration stations were set up around the infield and home plate areas on one of the softball fields, along with vendor stations around the warning track. There were also stations set up on the synthetic soccer field.

More than 45 people from local parks, schools and universities attended the event along with 19 vendors and exhibitors — which included autonomous mowers, robotic painters, logo removal equipment, and product information. Each vendor/exhibitor was given 5-8 minutes to do a quick presentation or demonstration, guided by the Oregon chapter board members. There were four stations with four to five vendors at each station. This allowed all attendees to visit each vendor without wandering off to other sites.

Registration began at 7 a.m. with introductions at 8 a.m. followed by a group photo around the ORSFMA painted logo. Groups then moved to their assigned stations. Stations ended around 11 a.m., at which time a box lunch was provided to attendees. This gave time for attendees to interact with ORSFMA members.

Kentucky Sports Field Management Association forms new chapter

The Kentucky Sports Field Management Association (KYSFMA) has officially been established as the newest state chapter of the national Sports Field Management Association (SFMA).

The formation of KYSFMA marks an exciting milestone for sports field professionals across the commonwealth, providing a statewide network dedicated to education, collaboration and professional growth. The chapter's mission is to connect sports field managers, parks and recreation professionals, schools, universities and commercial partners to share knowledge, showcase innovation and promote safe, high-quality playing surfaces for athletes at every level.

KYSFMA plans to host educational events, field days and networking opportunities throughout Kentucky, highlighting best practices in turfgrass and facility management while fostering community and leadership development within the industry.

The inaugural board of directors includes:

■ **President:** Deanna Trusty, NKY Pro Turf & Lawn / A & A Lawn-care & Landscaping

■ **Vice President:** Eric Harshman, Project Manager/Athletics — SSC Services for Education

■ **Secretary/Treasurer:** Marcus Elswick, Head Sports Turf Manager at University of Kentucky

■ **Commercial Vice President:** Marcus Dean, Advanced Turf Solutions

■ **At-Large Directors:**

- Aaron Fink, Senior Manager of Grounds for Louisville City FC & Racing Louisville FC

- Chase Watson, Turf Manager at Elizabethtown Sports Park

- Eric Varner, Varner's Turf Management

- Kenneth Clayton, Turfgrass Extension Associate at the University of Kentucky

For more information or to become a member, visit www.kysfma.org or connect with them on social media:

Facebook: facebook.com/groups/1287913436013710

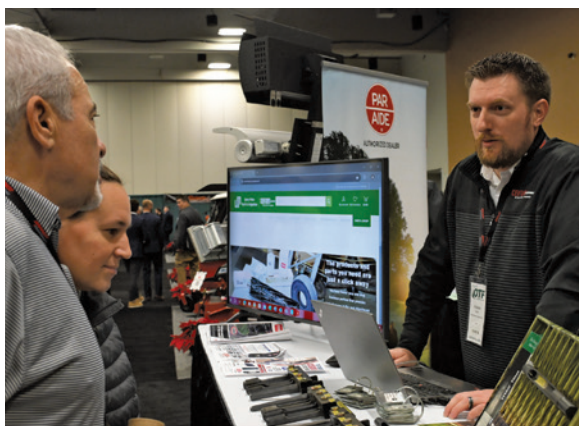
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2025 OTF Conference and Show coming soon

Join Ohio's premier green industry event for turfgrass and landscape professionals. The Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF) Conference and Show will be held December 9-11, 2025.

Connect with peers and discover cutting-edge education, networking opportunities, and one of the most impactful regional trade shows of its kind.



The OTF Conference and Show brings together leading experts and professionals from all sectors of the green industry. Whether your focus is turfgrass management, landscape design or grounds maintenance, you'll find the insights and connections you need.

OTF educational sessions are led by renowned researchers and industry experts. More than 50 hours of ODA pesticide recertification credits will be available.

Explore the latest products and services from exhibitors. The OTF trade show floor is the perfect place to immerse yourself in what's new and what's next in the turfgrass industry.

For more information, visit <https://ohioturfgrass.org>

All-female grounds crew at Women's Rugby World Cup

When the Red Roses lifted the trophy at the Women's Rugby World Cup Final, they did so on a pitch entirely prepared by an all-female team — a first in the history of the sport.

Brought together by the Grounds Management Association (GMA), this team of 15 women had complete ownership of pitch preparation, taking full responsibility for delivering the playing surface, making key decisions, and setting a new standard for what a collaborative, inclusive approach to grounds management can achieve.

These trailblazing women oversaw every detail as the Allianz Stadium team stepped back, empowering them to make independent decisions and showcase their expertise. The result was a world-class pitch that allowed players to perform at their absolute best, contributing to the high quality of play and the Red Roses' incredible victory.

"This project gave us the freedom to try things, make decisions, and trust our instincts," said Liddy Ford, a member of the group's leadership team. "It was empowering to know that every choice we made, from how we prepared the surface to how we presented it on matchday, had a direct impact on the game. Seeing the players lift the trophy on a pitch we delivered was an amazing moment."

As the tournament concluded, the team left with a shared commitment to work together to raise the profile of women in grounds management, to encourage more women to join this sector, and to ensure opportunities like this continue to grow. **SFM**



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Toro introduces Eagle Plus Series irrigation controller

Toro introduced the new Eagle Plus Series, a commercial-grade irrigation controller designed for centralized, internet-based irrigation management.

The Toro Eagle Plus Series is an expanded version of the previous Rain Master Series controller and now includes an enhanced user interface, expanded Smart Alerts and full iCentral and mobile maintenance app connectivity. This scalable irrigation controller is optimized for professional grounds maintenance teams and contractors for a variety of properties from the smallest city parks to sprawling college campuses and municipalities.

Toro Eagle Plus users can seamlessly connect to the iCentral web-based platform that allows two-way remote control and monitoring. The ProMax Connect app enhances convenience by allowing maintenance control, diagnostics and monitoring from anywhere via smartphone or tablet. Users can run tests, activate stations and programs, and troubleshoot in real time right from a mobile device.

The Eagle Plus Series also features Smart Alerts that notify users of flow errors, wire faults, or rain shutdowns via text or email. ET-based scheduling adjusts irrigation based on local weather with ZipET to optimize water usage without compromising turf quality.

Designed with flexibility and cost in mind, Eagle Plus supports both conventional and 2-wire configurations with scalable support for up to 200

stations. It is available in a variety of enclosure options, including a new, more economical plastic cabinet to suit a wide range of needs.

New Toro Eagle Plus customers will receive a 60-month free subscription to the iCentral system when purchased with iCentral card. The ProMax app is free to download for all android and Apple devices.

Redexim launches two new machines

Redexim launched two new machines: Verti-Cut Flex 2000 and Turf-Tidy 1100. The Verti-Cut Flex 2000 simplifies dethatching on undulating terrain and pivots around curves and bends with ease. The Turf-Tidy 1100 offers compact and maneuverable cut and collect. Its clamshell design allows for the quick release of material.

VERTI-CUT FLEX 2000

Precise and even verticutting on undulating surfaces that will not scalp the turf requires a flexible solution. The Verti-Cut Flex 2000 is that flexible solution. It offers exceptional maneuverability and consistent cutting quality over and around uneven surfaces, reducing the risk of scalping. Multiple points of flexibility and floating wings allow for easy undulation following.

The machine can also pivot around curves and bends thanks to Passive Pivoting Suspension, and it is ready to move over and around hills, slopes, and complex terrain, such as around trees or along the contours of a golf green.



TURF-TIDY 1100

The Turf-Tidy 1100 is a tractor-mounted, close-coupled cut and collect unit that sweeps, dethatches, flail mows and scarifies all in one. Its design makes it easy to pick up, take tight turns, lower it and get to work. The clamshell hopper is a low-dump design.

Simply use the hydraulics, open the back and release the material. No lifting required.

Quick-release knives enable fast switching between either a flail or a scarifier.

With a hopper capacity of 1,100 liters (290 US gallons) and a working width of 1.5 m (59"), the Turf-Tidy 1100 is compact yet capable. **SFM**

SFMA Affiliated Chapters Contact Information

Arizona SFMA: www.azsfma.org

Colorado SFMA: www.csfma.org

Florida #1 (South Florida STMA): www.sfstma.com
or Phil Busey (phil@philbusey.com)

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

Florida #3 (Central Florida STMA):
www.CFSTMA.org or CentralFloridaSTMA@gmail.com

Gateway STMA: <https://gatewaysfma.com/> or
info@gatewaystma.com

Georgia SFMA: www.georgiasfma.org or
georgiasfma@gmail.com

Greater L.A. Basin SFMA: www.sfmalabasin.com

Illinois STMA: www.ilstma.org or illinoisstma@gmail.com

Intermountain Chapter STMA: Dan Farnes
(dan@raffriversod.com)

Iowa SFMA: www.iowastma.org

Kentucky Sports Field Management Association:
www.kysfma.org

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

Mid-Atlantic SFMA: www.masfma.org

Michigan SFMA: www.misfma.org

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

Mo-Kan STMA: <https://mokansfma.org/>

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

New England STMA: www.nestma.org

North Carolina SFMA: <https://ncsfma.org/>

Northern California SFMA: www.norcalstma.org

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation: www.ohioturfgrass.org

Oklahoma STMA: oksfmasecretary@gmail.com

Oregon STMA: www.oregonsportsturfmanagers.org
or oregonstma@gmail.com

Ozarks STMA: Derek Edwards
(dedwards@springfieldcardinals.com)

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

Southern California SFMA: www.socalsfma.com

South Carolina SFMA: www.scsfma.org

Tennessee Valley SFMA: www.tvstma.org

Texas SFMA: www.txstma.org

Virginia SFMA: www.vsfma.org

Wisconsin STMA: www.wstma.org

To find the chapter near you, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagementonline.org/interactive-chapter-map/>



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In-Season Repair

Q: We have had several special events on our football field this fall that resulted in off-color turfgrass in some areas and bare ground in a few spots. Our field is bermudagrass that is not overseeded. What are our options for repairing the field during the season?

A: I've received several questions this fall related to repairing worn or damaged areas of fields. The causes have included mole cricket damage, sprayed-out crabgrass patches, vandalism, excess traffic from non-sporting events, and wear from sporting events.

Before discussing repair, let me first address prevention. The key to preventing worn areas is to keep the grass growing. Good cultural practices are the foundation. Most importantly, do not let the field get too dry; maintain adequate base fertility; use proper mowing practices; perform preventative core aeration; and implement integrated pest management programs. Increasing nitrogen fertility in high-wear areas can be especially helpful for promoting recovery from regular use. Control insects, diseases and weeds preventatively when possible, or scout and treat early after an incident is noted.

Of all the problems I've encountered, vandalism is the hardest to prevent. Fencing around fields is usually the first line of defense, but vandals may still find ways to bypass even the best preventative measures. Most vandalism involves either driving in circles ("donuts") with a vehicle or motorbike, spraying herbicide, or painting messages with aerosol paint. Treating these damages may require specialized tactics not presented in this article.

How to address field-use damage depends on the type and severity. Minor damage, such as discolored turfgrass, may recover over time. Additional irrigation, spiking and fertilizer can speed up recovery. If time is limited, applying a green turfgrass colorant may help mask the damage until recovery occurs. I suggest testing colorant dilutions on the sidelines before applying them to the playing surface to ensure they blend with the surrounding turfgrass.

When damage results in bare ground, repairs become more challenging — especially in late fall or winter. If pests (insects, diseases or weeds) are the cause, control them before proceeding with repairs. If the damage is widespread and occurs earlier in the fall, some field managers choose to overseed the entire field to provide a playable surface. In some cases, the bermudagrass base may recover over winter and spring. In others, this approach provides a good playing surface and allows for more aggressive renovation in the spring or summer when warmer weather supports better recovery.

If overseeding isn't an option, thick-cut sod (up to 2 inches thick) can be used to replace damaged areas, allowing immediate play without a lengthy establishment period. This sod is typically grown on a plastic base for root strength and density and costs two to three times more than regular sod. Although regular sod can be used, it requires growing conditions that allow rooting before it becomes stable for use.

Due to the expense, plastic-grown sod may not be feasible. In such cases, ensuring the surface is level and firm may be the best achievable solution during the season. To do this, topdress below-grade areas with soil similar to the field's profile and roll the surface until it is smooth and firm. These problem areas may need to be readdressed after each field use to maintain safety and playability. Once the season ends, more aggressive renovation and recovery should be undertaken when time and weather conditions allow for turfgrass establishment. **SFM**



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Questions?

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