

SportsField

MANAGEMENT

May 2026

Vol. 42 No. 5

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

The "Blue Book" Gets an Update **18** | The history of Raymond J. Cipperly Field **22**

How a near-death experience led to a career in turfgrass **30**



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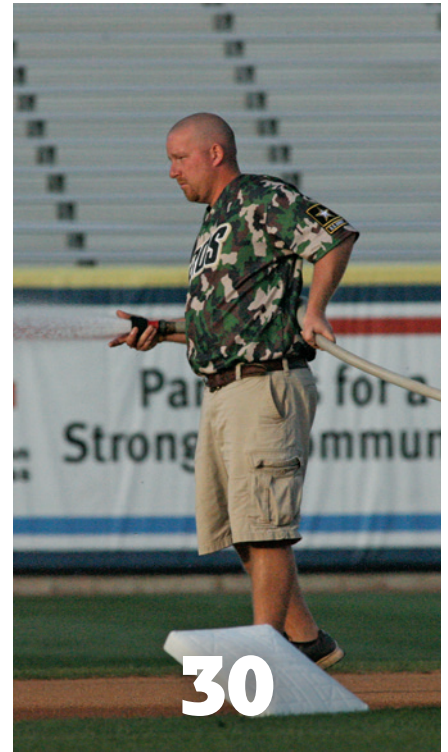
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Editor's Note



John Kmitta

Associate Publisher /
Editorial Brand Director
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I have some exciting news that will have a positive impact on the future of *SportsField Management* magazine.

Many of you may not be aware, but editorial direction for the magazine through the years has been assisted by the SFMA Editorial Committee. Under the association's committee structure, the editorial committee was tasked with "Ensuring that *SportsField Management* magazine contains information relevant to the sports field manager; to provide ideas and contacts for articles for publication; to provide aesthetic and other recommendations on functionality and readability."

The Editorial Committee has traditionally been selected and organized by SFMA, and members would serve the committee for one year — typically beginning around March.

However, as SFMA seeks to streamline and optimize its committee structure, we have decided to move from the SFMA-centric Editorial Committee format to a traditional Editorial Advisory Board structure managed on the *SportsField Management* side of things and overseen by me.

I am extremely thankful to everyone who has served on the SFMA Editorial Committee throughout the years, and I am pleased that several past members of the committee have agreed to stay on under the new Editorial Advisory Board structure.

The new format better aligns with industry standards, and will allow for greater consistency of advisors over time. This group of trusted industry professionals will serve a vital role shaping the editorial direction of *SportsField Management*. So, please welcome the inaugural *SportsField Management* magazine Editorial Advisory Board (in alphabetical order by last name):

■ **C.J. Buck**, territory manager, Harrell's, LLC

■ **Joe Churchill**, fields and grounds advisor, Reinders, Inc.

■ **Marcus Elswick**, head sports turf manager, University of Kentucky

■ **Maritza Martinez**, associate director of stadium grounds, St. Louis CITY SC

■ **Drew Miller**, Ed.D., program director, Brentsville District High School Turf Program

■ **Tyler Morris**, CSFM, head sports field manager, MetLife Stadium

■ **Chaz Perea. Ph.D.**, professor of Horticultural Science, and co-chair of Agriculture Science, Mt. San Antonio College

■ **Chase Straw, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of turfgrass soils and director of the Center for Sports Surface Research, Penn State University

■ **Brad Thedens, CSFM, CPRP**, park caretaker, City of Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation **SFM**

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President's Message



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Alpha Jones, CSFM

SFMA President

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There's a lesson I was reminded of recently that applies just as much to leadership as it does to our fields: What people hear isn't always what we say.

In a recent conversation about my role at Duke University, I found myself describing aspects of the landscape work connected to the property. That part is true, but it wasn't the whole truth. And when the full picture isn't clearly communicated, people will naturally fill in the gaps.

The reality is that my primary responsibilities are managing the maintenance of multi-use recreational sports fields and spaces. These areas carry the demands of athletic activity, heavy event traffic, and constant use. This work reflects the core requirements and professional standards that guide our industry at every level. That distinction matters. Not for title's sake, but because clarity defines understanding, and understanding shapes perception.

As leaders in sports field management, we deal in the details every day. We know that a field is more than grass. It's structure, preparation, recovery and intention. However, if we don't communicate that clearly — if we soften it, generalize it, or assume others will interpret it

correctly — we risk undervaluing the very work we're called to represent.

The truth is that our roles have evolved. We are no longer synonymous with traditional playing surfaces. Expectations today are defined by function, use and demands that extend into the surrounding spaces, infrastructure, event footprint and the overall experience. We are managing entire environments, not just fields. And with that evolution comes an even greater responsibility to communicate clearly what our work truly encompasses.

That's where ownership comes in. Ownership isn't just about taking responsibility for what we do on the field, it's about owning how we communicate our work, our roles, and our profession. It's about making sure that what we say reflects what we do, so others don't have to guess, interpret, or redefine it for us.

As members of the SFMA, we are responsible for representing our profession with clarity and accuracy. Whether speaking to peers, administrators or the public, our words shape how sports field management is understood and valued.

Here's the challenge to you and me: Say it clearly. Say it completely. And say it in a way that leaves no question about the impact of what we do.

Define the field. Own the work. Shape the profession. **SFM**

— Alpha Jones, CSFM

SFMA honors two members with 2025 President's Award

The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) proudly recognized two distinguished members, Greg Petry, CPRE, and Michael Goatley, Ph.D., as recipients of the 2025 President's Award during the SFMA Annual Conference held in Fort Worth, Texas, in January 2026.

Petry is owner of Greg Petry Consulting, LLC., and former executive director/CEO of the Waukegan (Illinois) Park District. Petry also served as president of the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) from 1994-95.

Goatley is professor and Extension turfgrass specialist, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, at Virginia Tech University. He served as president of STMA from 2012-13.

Presented at the conference by 2025 SFMA President Adam Thoms, Ph.D., the President's Award is a special honor acknowledging individuals who have made significant contributions to the association and the profession. Petry and Goatley were recognized for their instrumental roles and dedicated service in supporting SFMA through the extensive search process for the organization's new Chief Executive Officer, Paula Sliefert.

Both individuals devoted considerable time, expertise, and leadership to ensure a thorough and thoughtful process — helping position SFMA for continued success and strategic growth.

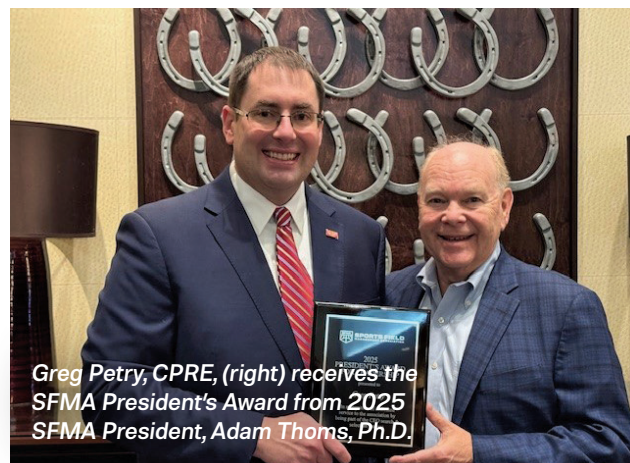
"Greg and Mike exemplify the very best of SFMA," said Thoms. "Their commitment, professionalism, and willingness to step up during a critical time for our association made a lasting impact. On behalf of SFMA, I am incredibly grateful for their leadership and the integrity they brought to the CEO search process."

The recognition took place in front of peers and industry leaders during the conference, highlighting the importance of volunteer leadership and member engagement in advancing the sports field management profession.

SFMA extends its sincere appreciation to Petry and Goatley for their exceptional service and ongoing contributions to the association.



**Michael Goatley,
Ph.D.**



SFMA Resource Centers

SFMA announced two new Resource Centers, available through the SFMA Member portal and administered through the Canvas app.

FIELD PAINTING RESOURCE CENTER

This one-stop hub is designed to bring together valuable field painting resources from throughout the industry — all in one easy-to-find place. Athletic field painting is a key part of the art and science of athletic field management. It goes beyond appearance by helping create precise boundaries and accurate markings that support fair play and confident calls on the field. Whether you're looking to sharpen your skills, explore best practices, or stay current with industry tools, this resource center is here to help.

SYNTHETIC TURF MANAGEMENT RESOURCE CENTER

SFMA's Synthetic Turf Management Resource Center is your go-to destination for trusted education, tools, and industry resources — all in one place. Whether you're new to synthetic surfaces or an experienced professional, this center is designed to support every stage of field management. From construction to maintenance, safety to sustainability, SFMA is here to help you make informed decisions and manage high-performing synthetic fields with confidence.

HOW TO SIGN UP FOR EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS IN THE SFMA MEMBER PORTAL

- Log in to your SFMA Member Portal account, or create an account if you are a new user.
- Navigate to Educational Offerings in the portal menu.

- Select your desired course from the drop-down menu.
- Complete the registration process.
- Once registered, you will receive an email with further instructions.
- If you have any questions or need assistance, contact Jennifer McLendon at jmclendon@sportsfieldmanagement.org

Upcoming Chapter Events

SFMA announced several upcoming chapter events:

MAY 12

GEORGIA SFMA SPRING FIELD DAY

Location: Georgia Christian School

A spring gathering for sports field managers focused on education, networking, and chapter engagement.
<https://www.georgiasfma.org/events>

MAY 14

VIRGINIA SFMA FIELD & DEMO DAY

Location: CarMax Park

Hands-on sessions, equipment demos, calibration training, and behind-the-scenes venue access.
<https://vsfma.starchapter.com/meetinginfo.php?id=66&ts=1774876780>

MAY 14

KENTUCKY SFMA FLORENCE Y'ALLS BASEBALL GAME SOCIAL EVENT

Location: Florence, Kentucky

A fun networking night with fellow members at the ballpark.
<https://www.kysfma.org>

MAY 27

TEXAS SFMA FIELD DAY HOSTED BY PRIME SOD

Location: Kopperl, Texas

An outdoor field day featuring sod production insights, sports field education, and peer networking.
<https://txstma.org/event/field-day-hosted-by-prime-sod/>

MAY 28

COLORADO SFMA SPRING SEMINAR

Location: Aurora Sports Park

Hands-on stations covering maintenance, irrigation, painting, and sports turf operations.
<https://cstma.starchapter.com/meetinginfo.php?id=78&ts=177501974>

JUNE 2

VIRGINIA SFMA RECERTIFICATION WEBINAR

Location: Virtual

Professional recertification training and continuing education.
<https://vsfma.starchapter.com/meetinginfo.php>

JUNE 10

MID-ATLANTIC SFMA SUMMER FIELD DAY

Location: Maryland SoccerPlex

A summer field day with education sessions, networking, and venue-based learning.
<https://masfma.starchapter.com/meetinginfo.php>

JUNE 24

KENTUCKY SFMA + TVSFMA UNIVERSITY OF THE CUMBERLANDS EVENT

Location: University of the Cumberland

A joint chapter education day focused on professional development and networking.
<https://www.kysfma.org>

JULY 1

MPSFMA / UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA TURFGRASS EXTENSION FIELD DAY

Location: University of Minnesota TROE Center

A technical field day focused on turfgrass research and practical field management updates.
<https://mpsfma.org/meetinginfo.php>

JULY 15

MPSFMA DEMO DAY

Location: M Health Fairview Sports Center

Live demonstrations, product education, and peer networking.
<https://mpsfma.org/meetinginfo.php>

JULY 23

NEW ENGLAND SFMA DEWOLF MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Location: Brookmeadow Country Club

A chapter golf outing honoring industry leadership.
<https://theturfzone.com/nesfma/?ascat=76&sub=event&pub=10372>

JULY 28

RUTGERS TURFGRASS RESEARCH FIELD DAY - GOLF & FINE TURF

Location: North Brunswick, New Jersey

Research presentations and demonstrations focused on golf and fine turf systems.
<https://sfmanj.org/>

JULY 29

RUTGERS TURFGRASS RESEARCH FIELD DAY - LAWN, LANDSCAPE & SPORTS TURF

Location: Freehold, New Jersey

Sports turf, landscape, and equipment demonstrations.
<https://sfmanj.org/> **SFM**

FIELD OF THE YEAR
SCHOOLS AND PARKS SPORTING GROUNDS

ED KARPUS FIELD

THOMAS DALE HIGH SCHOOL,
CHESTER, VIRGINIA



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



AS THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND modern field builds is constantly evolving, we are still working with a playing surface foundation that is 60 years old. As innovations in smart control irrigation and Cambridge drainage evolve, we have an outdated hydraulic irrigation system with crown and slope surface drainage into direct inlet basin drains. We manage predominantly a common bermuda base with a few new cultivars mixed in. With all of this said, we have learned to take what we have and make the absolute best playing surface for our student athletes. The largest obstacle to overcome with our field is the sheer hours of use our field endures without any breaks, as we are managing a very old field and playing surface. Spring sports begin the first of March with boys and girls soccer and lacrosse. Fall sports like football and field hockey start in mid-August, as well as PE classes, unified bocce, and we also hosted a countywide marching band exhibition. It is not out of the ordinary for PE students to be on the field for four hours during school, then games played on the field that evening. After daylight saving ends, our football team will move daily practices on the field

due to not having lights on their practice field. The amount of work our students put into this field is second to none. They are learning new approaches to field management; and how to adapt and improvise with heavy field usage, minimum budget, and very little industry-standard equipment. We take every approach to create a safe playing surface that can rival a higher-level field with a larger budget and better equipment. We are excited to share how hard work and determination can pay off to provide our student athletes with the best possible playing surface. Our class mantra is “Today someone will see your work for the first time.” Work in turf management creates a safe playing environment for athletes, and something pleasing for spectators to observe. Grass is never just grass — it serves a larger purpose. It is exciting to see students progress from a point where they might not have seen this as a career opportunity, to committing to what we do, and finally developing a passion for this field and becoming a lifelong learner.

– Bryan Sheetz, landscaping/turf management teacher



Level and category of submission:
Schools and Parks Sporting Grounds

Field manager:
Bryan Sheetz

Title:
Landscaping/turf management teacher

Education:
Bachelor of music

Original facility construction:
1965

Turfgrass:
Common bermuda, Riviera, 419

Overseed:
10 lbs. of perennial per 1,000 sq. ft. each fall

Rootzone:
Sandy loam

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

Bryan Sheetz: The SFMA Field of the Year award means a great deal to me. I have been so blessed to have a great team to work with at Thomas Dale and Chesterfield County Public Schools. Being recognized by our peers and the community for our hard work means a lot, and I cannot say enough about the kids that make our program so amazing. The playing surface that our student-athletes compete on can easily be overlooked and taken for granted. In a time when many localities move to synthetic turf, we have worked an old field to prime playing conditions that other teams talk about throughout the district. We work tirelessly and collectively to ensure Ed Karpus Field is second to none in safety, playability and aesthetics. We strive to have a field looking like it has never been played on with a surface that our teams have confidence in for them to play at their very best.

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

Sheetz: The number one challenge we face is how much the field gets used. During the school year the field gets used almost every day during the growing season for physical education classes, football, field hockey, soccer and lacrosse. We typically spray out the ryegrass the first of June and start pushing the bermuda for fall sports through the summer. Having so many hours on the field also makes nutrient management planning tricky as well. We have to be very exact with our timing in order to get our applications down in between activities. We try to prioritize our levels of maintenance based on season and the intended purpose of the field. For example, fall is football and field hockey where the entire field has divot repairs all season. For spring sports, such as soccer and lacrosse, we are constantly dealing with goal mouths and compaction. We work very closely with our school's athletic director with applications and cultural practices that will create the safest and most aesthetically pleasing field in central Virginia.

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SFM: Please detail for us the involvement of your students in the management of this field, and the benefits of the hands-on experience it provides for their turfgrass education.

Sheetz: In 2021, the program was born with the simple idea of creating a curriculum focused on hands-on experience in the green industry. There was a significant shift from the county's traditional agriculture/horticulture focus to landscaping and turfgrass management, where jobs all over Virginia were blossoming. Now, five years into the program, enrollment has skyrocketed as students gain a new passion for the turfgrass industry and take pride in their work.

As in all Career and Technical Education frameworks, the class is split between classroom and lab lessons. Classes are driven by workplace readiness skills and work-based learning opportunities. Students have many opportunities within the industry, whether it is the paint crew for that week's games, mowing patterns, or setting up for special events. Students learn how to use proper techniques and maintain a safe workplace environment. All students are a part of an effective learning environment that becomes their own space of creativity where they can thrive.

The program has been very successful at setting up students with internships and jobs post-graduation. Close collaborations between the school and employers directly helps students obtain internships and jobs. Over the last two years, students from this program have worked with the Richmond Flying Squirrels, Richmond Kickers, Chesterfield Parks and Recreation, and various golf courses around the Richmond area. Students are expected to take ownership of their education. This program empowers them to make their own work decisions, whether it is a simple decision such as a mowing pattern, painting various boundary lines for different sports, or creating the stencil for our football field for the entire season. Students take pride in their work, and this is creating more than just a field. Work in turf management creates a place for memories, a safe playing environment for athletes, and something pleasing for spectators to observe. It has a larger purpose — for sports and the environment — and that is critical.

SFM: What is your overall management approach to the winning field, and what have been the most important aspects to getting this field to an award-winning level?

Sheetz: On the back door of our classroom is a sign that says, "Today someone will see your work for the first time." This is a motto that gets repeated to our students often. Just because we are dealing with a high school playing surface does not mean that we make excuses or take shortcuts on anything. We strive to perfect all of the details that we can actually control. Every week on our board we have a schedule of cultural practices that need to be completed, as well as the schedule of field-use activities. We actively fill divots after all events to keep a smooth playing surface, and we are diligent at edging around the track, painting new logos and keeping field lines crisp. One of the biggest changes we made this year was more foliar applications over granular. We found that small spoon feeding dosages through the



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entire growing season was much more beneficial than our summer granular applications. We always work to keep the field “game ready” at all times, because you never know “who will see your work for the first time!”

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?

Sheetz: We utilize social media constantly within our program. While teaching high school students, this seems to be the most effective way of sharing what our program is doing, as well as the majority of student interest and growth. With that in mind, we take many pictures throughout the year. While keeping the idea in the back of my mind for applying for Field of the Year, I started a PowerPoint of pictures from January and simply listed the date and what was happening. As field managers, time can easily get away, but pictures are worth 1,000 words. Pictures do not lie — good or bad; they show greatness or imperfections that need to be addressed. Keeping all of the pictures in a PowerPoint helps document the year’s progress. I also keep a log of every application in a Google document. Once the SFMA Field of the Year application opened, I had a year’s worth of pictures and every application throughout the year at my fingertips. I feel that the Field of the Year application is an easy process as long as you keep up with everything throughout the year. Many people already do this, but it truly is a gift to see the progress of your crew’s hard work and dedication throughout the year. **SFM**



JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Hole in field

TURFGRASS AREA:

Collegiate track field

LOCATION:

California

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

Bermudagrass overseeded with ryegrass

Answer on page 29

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

turf-tec International
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The advertisement displays a collection of turf maintenance tools, including a vertical penetrometer, a hand-held penetrometer, a soil compaction tool, a soil moisture meter, a soil temperature probe, and a soil pH meter. Each tool is shown with its corresponding measurement scale and data display.

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www.turf-tec.com

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THE “BLUE BOOK” GETS AN UPDATE

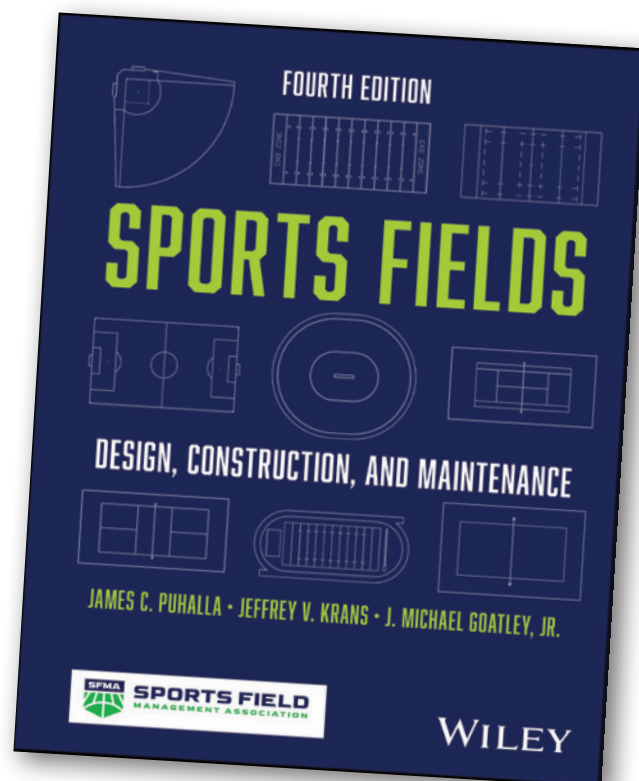
“Sports Fields: Design, Construction, and Maintenance,” fourth edition, expands the book’s global appeal and includes new content for the modern sports field manager

By John Kmitta

“Sports Fields: Design, Construction, and Maintenance,” by James C. Puhalla, Jeffrey V. Krans and J. Michael Goatley, Jr., boasts a long and storied history as a resource for sports field management professionals.

Known by many in the industry as “the blue book” for its signature cover color, the book has evolved with each edition to meet the changing needs of the sports field manager. The new fourth edition of “Sports Fields: Design, Construction, and Maintenance” introduces a wide range of updates. It expands the book’s global appeal; includes information on sports not previously covered, such as cricket, rugby, pickleball and beach volleyball; features a revised pest management section; and delves into current technological issues such as autonomous equipment, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI).

For a better understanding of what the “blue book” has become, it helps to understand its origins, as well as its impact over the past several decades.



FROM IDEA TO REALITY

In the late 1970s, Puhalla owned a landscape construction company and was asked to renovate an infield for a youth baseball association.

“We were more than halfway done when I saw that the base paths weren’t lining up with the foul poles,” said Puhalla. “I assumed a baseball field was a diamond shape, so we made it a diamond instead of a 60-by-60-foot square. We tore up all the sod and re-laid it so everything lined up.”

The following year, Puhalla ran into similar issues with football field dimensions during an irrigation project. His search for information was to no avail.

“Back then, there was no Google, no YouTube, and we didn’t have Windows,” he said. “I went to a library, and the only thing I found was a pre-World War II engineering book with a tiny baseball field diagram showing the field grading toward the outfield fence.”

Throughout the 1980s, Puhalla continued to learn from his own mistakes and the mistakes of others. He eventually joined the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) in 1987, and began reading articles in *SportsTurf* magazine.

But the true turning point for Puhalla came in 1993 when he lost a bid to build a new baseball field. The company that was chosen due to its lower bid ultimately

made mistakes, and the field was unplayable for years.

“That’s when I realized someone needs to teach people how to do this, and how to do it right the first time,” said Puhalla. “I drew 10 hand-sketched diagrams, added some basic text, and that became the seed of the book.”

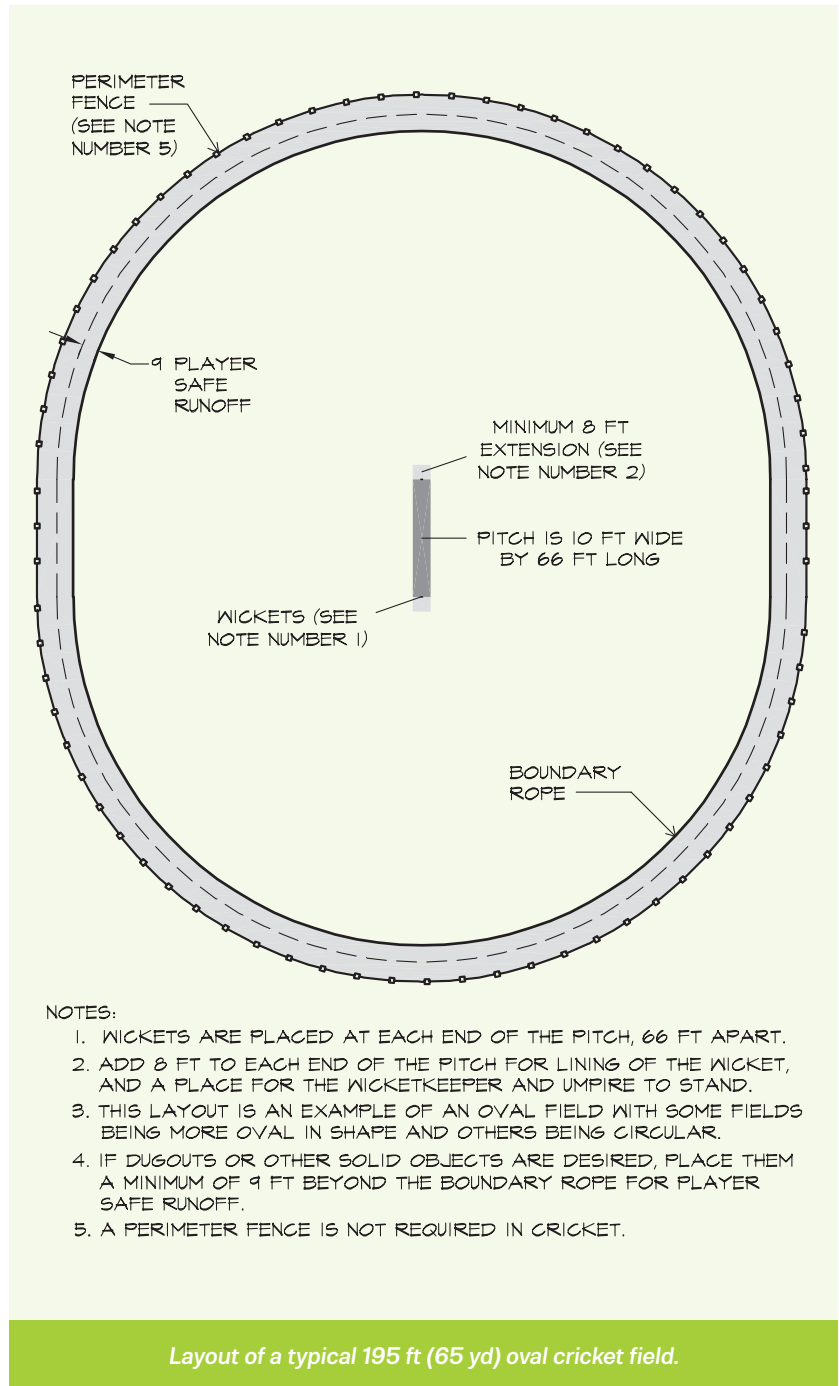
In 1995, while in Florida to accept his STMA Schools and Parks Baseball Field of the Year award, Puhalla saw a trade show booth for Mississippi State University (MSU) Golf and Sports Turf Management. After the conference, Puhalla sent his 10-page booklet to MSU. As a result, Krans called Puhalla and invited him to speak to MSU students about the sports turf industry. Krans and Puhalla were soon discussing the possibility of collaborating on a book, and reached out to Goatley to gauge his interest in joining them.

“Sports field management was a small part of the industry,” said Krans. “It hadn’t really caught on yet. We were interested in establishing programs and educating young men and women in the industry. But up to that point we were mainly training people to be golf course agronomists or superintendents.”

According to Krans, Puhalla’s drawings were unlike anything he and Goatley had seen before. They realized there was an opportunity to create something that could be an educational resource for practitioners and students alike.

“From that point, we just kind of plowed our way through with Jim’s drawings,” said Krans. “Jim was a design/build person, and that was a great advantage for us because we had someone to keep us on track, and show us what he’s doing and what he’s done. The three of us came up with what you see today, and we’ve been trying to make it better with time. We’re at the fourth edition because everything changes.”

According to Goatley, development of the book also led to the development of a network of people in the sports field management industry.



“We were probably 90% golf, 5% sports field and 5% lawn care at that time,” said Goatley. “But we found out that sports field managers were as passionate as any other segment of the industry in terms of what they were doing. We had a lot of advice coming from people who were actually doing sports field management.”

RECEPTION, GROWTH AND LEGACY

The book was initially published in 1999 by Ann Arbor Press, and early reaction was fantastic. The authors were soon offered a contract to write three additional books, including “Baseball and Softball Fields: Design, Construction, Renovation and Maintenance,” which is still in print today.

The contract for the books was eventually sold to John Wiley & Sons publishing, which soon moved forward with a second edition of the book that now included involvement and review from STMA.

According to Goatley, the book quickly became an important tool in preparation for the Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) exam.

“Through my engagement as an STMA board member, I was able to tell people that we’ve got a one-stop shop that you can have as a reference, and is as complete as anything that’s out there,” he added. “The really cool thing about this book is how comfortable people are coming up and talking to us about what’s in there, and giving us ideas and feedback. That has been a great way to meet a lot of people and to have that connection. A lot of those people have had that book now for close to 30 years since the first edition.”

And although the agronomic strategies have for the most part remained the same throughout the subsequent editions, technological changes and other industry advancements drove the need for updates.

“There would be new chemistries, new fertilizers, different release characteristics, new technology and new ways to deliver irrigation,” said Goatley. “We were always looking for ways to improve, update, and bring something new to the table.”

Added Krans, “The industry drives innovation, and one example is synthetic turf, which was not included in the first edition. As synthetic turf gained popularity on sports fields, rather than excluding it, we said we need to be inclusive such that the book would fit not only the people with the natural turf, but those who manage synthetic turf.”

According to Krans, as the skills of sports field managers improved and the industry grew, the authors continued to keep up to make the “blue book” more complete.

Said Goatley, “It was always evolving as an industry. So, how could we come up with a resource that would match where this thing is going?”

According to Krans, much of the success of the book was about timing.



The authors: (left to right) J. Michael Goatley, Jr., James C. Puhalla, and Jeffrey V. Krans

“When we met Jim, the time was right; towns and cities were building sportsplexes, soccer was getting big, and the industry was growing,” he said. “It all came together, not by purpose, but more by accident; and we took the opportunity that was presented to us.”

Added Puhalla, “It’s by accident, but it’s a lot of hard work, too. We gave people something different, and something that they could talk about.”

UPDATED FOR TODAY’S SPORTS FIELD MANAGER

Now people will be talking about the fourth edition of “Sports Fields: Design, Construction, and Maintenance,” which features international topics, additional sports, a refined pest management section, and information about technological advancements.

“We’ve got a lot of new topics that will be interesting to not just people in this country, but all over the world,” said Puhalla.

From the beginning, the authors have enlisted the assistance and expertise of industry colleagues to ensure the best and most accurate content possible. That tradition continues with the fourth edition.

“Scott McElroy from Auburn helped us write a chapter on robotics technology with mowers and painters,” said Goatley. “Brad Jakubowski from Penn State helped us with a chapter on weather. Mark Heinlein helped us with hybrid systems.”

The new focus on international offerings presented the authors with some challenges, especially when it came to the sport of cricket.

“We found a gentleman in Australia named John Shannon who had written about cricket,” said Goatley. “He jumped on Zoom meetings with us and let us tell him about the book. He helped us write our cricket chapter. We want the expertise of the folks that live in these different parts of world to partner with us on these efforts.”

According to Puhalla, part of the globalization of the book is that the printed book will remain the same, but the authors are looking for experts from other countries to write online chapters describing what’s different with their local climate, turfgrasses, soils and pests.

For the pest management chapter of the fourth edition, the authors have divided the continental United States into seven regions.

“I reached out to many industry colleagues and academics and asked them to tell me the most important sports-field-specific pests in their zone,” said Goatley. “We used this chapter to address all of the pests specific to those seven regions, as well as Hawaii and Alaska. I think that’s a change our readers are going to appreciate.”

“The pest management chapter in itself could become a book because of all the control methods and materials,” he added. “But we didn’t need this book to get larger, so we converted all of our pesticide recommendations into one of our Extension service publications.”

Readers will also appreciate that the fourth edition delves into topics such as autonomous equipment, robotics, and AI.

Said Goatley, “All aspects of that are going to change so fast that our goal was to make sure we’ve introduced a subject, talk about where we’re at, and prep the

sports field manager to pay attention. In this age of AI and remote sensing, never forget the importance of what you do because you’re still going to have to be the ultimate decision maker; but we’re going to have lots of tools to help us make better decisions. You might as well embrace it, because the AI genie is not going back in the bottle.”

In addition to the other updates, the book also now features a chapter devoted to SFMA.

Said Goatley, “We’ve always talked about them, but we asked SFMA to help us write a chapter telling SFMA’s story and why people should join.”

With its expanded global scope, updated technologies, and expert contributions, the fourth edition continues legacy of one of the most trusted resources in sports field management. **SFM**

“Sports Fields: Design, Construction, and Maintenance, Fourth Edition” is available now through Wiley publishing (<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/>), Amazon, or via local booksellers.

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A New Jersey Gem

The history of Raymond J. Cipperly Field

By Bradley S. Park

Photo courtesy of Bradley S. Park

Positioned between New York City and Philadelphia, Middlesex County New Jersey is proud of its nickname: The Greatest County in the Land. Middlesex County has a Magnet School system in which its premier baseball field was deemed the Greatest Field in the Land on two occasions by the Sports Field Management Association (SFMA), having twice won the Schools and Parks Baseball Field of the Year award. Raymond J. Cipperly Field, East Brunswick, New Jersey, has a rich past filled with well-deserved accolades. It also has a history of well-documented efforts to control annual bluegrass (*Poa annua* L.).

FIELD HISTORY AND NAMESAKE

The flagship natural turfgrass baseball field in the county's Magnet School System, the former Tiger Field was re-dedicated as Raymond J. Cipperly Field in May 2016 following the untimely passing of Raymond "Ray" Cipperly in October 2015. Cipperly began teaching physical education at East Brunswick Magnet School (formerly East Brunswick Vo-Tech) in the early 1970s, and became the school's base-

ball coach in 1975. Cipperly stepped down as coach in 1996 to become athletic director for Middlesex County Magnet Schools (formerly Middlesex County Vocational Technical Schools) (Tufaro, 2016).

An article from *mycentraljersey.com* noted that Cipperly attended a World Series game in the 1950s at Yankee Stadium, and that this visit fueled his passion for the game of baseball, as well as his interest in the particulars of baseball diamonds. He was inspired to design, build and oversee substantial upgrades to the field that was re-named in his honor (Tufaro, 2016). A plaque on the third baseline dugout reads, "The Field that Ray Built."

Further illustrating his work ethic and skill set, Cipperly also served as head groundskeeper for the Trenton Thunder and subsequently the Somerset Patriots in Bridgewater, New Jersey (now the Double-A affiliate of the New York Yankees). Cipperly's abilities in the area of baseball skin surface management and his communication skills were quickly recognized by Dr. Henry Indyk, longtime Extension specialist at Rutgers University, and 1994 recipient of the

SFMA Harry Gill Award. Indyk was curriculum coordinator for Rutgers' Annual Athletic Field Maintenance and Construction continuing education course, and Cipperly served as an instructor in the course for many years. During that time, Cipperly delivered practical "how-to" baseball and softball skin surface management education to hundreds of school, municipal, and county park sports field and grounds managers that attended the course. Many of the images associated with this article are scans of 35mm slides Cipperly used during his Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education course lecture.

But Cipperly's commitment to sharing his knowledge and expertise extended beyond the Rutgers Continuing Education classroom. He hosted two highly successful Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ) baseball infield-focused education events at what was then Tiger Field. A 2011 Infield Maintenance Clinic featured presentations by Bill Deacon, head groundskeeper of the New York Mets, and Mike Boekholder, head groundskeeper of the Philadelphia Phillies. In 2013, Cipperly hosted the SFMANJ Fall Field Day with Deacon and other professional baseball groundskeepers such as Dan Purner (Somerset Patriots) and Mike Morvay (Lakewood BlueClaws).

For his efforts, Cipperly was posthumously awarded the inaugural (2015) SFMANJ Dr. Henry Indyk Memorial Award, which honors an individual who has demonstrated "a tireless commitment of service and hard work contributing to the advancement of both sports fields and sports field managers in New Jersey."



AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

Sports Turf Managers Association (which later became SFMA) selected Tiger Field as its Field of the Year in the Schools and Parks Baseball category for 1990. A detailed article in the May 1991 issue of *Golf & sportsTurf* titled "Tiger Field earns its stripes," noted that organized baseball at East Brunswick Magnet School began in the mid-1970s and the need for a home playing surface became recognized (Trulio, 1991). Cipperly and a school administrator examined an unimproved turfgrass stand on school grounds late one afternoon and sited locations for the bases relative to the position of the soon-to-be-setting sun. The playing surface had humble beginnings: weeds, bare spots, rocks scraped away by players before every game, and an infield created using a sod cutter.

Under the direction of Cipperly, playing surface quality and field definition improved. In subsequent years, conventional infield mix was imported, improved turfgrasses were introduced, and a warning track was installed. Fencing was established



Raymond "Ray" Cipperly served in various roles, including baseball coach and athletic director, for Middlesex County Magnet Schools, and was instrumental in the early development and upgrades to the baseball surface named in his honor. Photos courtesy of the Raymond J. Cipperly slide collection.

and carpentry students built two dugouts and a backstop. By 1990, pre-game skin surface watering was being practiced, a robust turfgrass fertilization schedule was in place, and mowing was performed eve-



Bill Deacon, head groundskeeper, New York Mets, headlined an Infield Maintenance Clinic sponsored by the Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey in 2011 at then Tiger Field. Photos on pages 24-26 courtesy of Bradley S. Park.

ry other day at 1.5-inch. The 1991 article concluded, “Judging from the Tigers’ pristine diamond and winning record, feeling ‘almost like a pro’ has its advantages. Tiger Field, the 1990 high school/park/municipal Diamond of the Year, is a training ground, not only for hopeful ballplayers, but also perhaps for future sports field superintendents. It’s a living classroom for students of the game, from the ground up.”

Soon after winning the Field of the Year award, Cipperly was presented with the New Jersey Turfgrass Association Recognition Award for 1992. Four years later, the National High School Baseball Coaches Association named Cipperly and his field as the Region 1 National Groundskeeper/Field of the Year for 1996.

The Field that Ray Built was named the SFMANJ Field of the Year for 2016. Ryan Radcliffe managed Cipperly Field in 2016, as well as the sports and grounds at five Magnet

School campus locations throughout Middlesex County. Radcliffe’s professional baseball dossier included time spent with the Reading Fightin’ Phils (then Reading Phillies) and Lakewood BlueClaws. Scott Bills, CSFM, noted that efforts put forth by Radcliffe and his staff continued the tradition of excellence established by Cipperly and that, “the result is arguably the absolute best high school baseball field in New Jersey.”

Four years later, Keith Fisher, whose professional resume consisted of time served as an assistant groundskeeper with the New York Yankees, was in charge of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools’ sports fields and grounds. Under Fisher, Cipperly Field was selected as the SFMA Field of the Year in the Schools and Parks Baseball category for 2020 (*SportsField Management*, 2021). Fisher noted that “Cipperly Field was held to a very high standard in the community and the stand-

ard is maintained by being passionate about the success and playability of the surface — which rivals Minor League Baseball fields and compares to Major League quality.”

Today, in addition to East Brunswick Magnet School home games, Cipperly Field hosts the Greater Middlesex County (GMC) High School Baseball Tournament each May. Many in the local high school baseball community are well aware of Cipperly Field’s national recognition. Vinnie Abene, head baseball coach of Edison High School and co-president of GMC Baseball Coaches Association, stated, “We’ve obviously known about this gem for the past 25 years or longer, and we look forward to playing as many games as possible on that field. It’s well taken care of. The staff at East Brunswick Tech does an unbelievable job keeping that field in the best shape.” (Tufaro, 2020).

ANNUAL BLUEGRASS

Throughout much of its history, annual bluegrass has been a long-term, nagging problem in the baseball outfield of Cipperly Field. Elevated cultural practices that are common in professional baseball — including a mowing height that has rarely exceeded 1.5-inch, automatic irrigation, and the supply of ample plant nutrition — are among the factors contributing to the persistence of annual bluegrass. As the grassy weed has taken hold — even where efforts have been made intermittently over the years to arrest the problem — the persistence of a significant annual bluegrass seed bank in the soil has allowed successive iterations of the population to reestablish.

As reported in the March 2005 issue of *SportsTurf*, the first — and most aggressive — effort to control annual bluegrass (both the baseball outfield turf cover and the soil seedbank below) involved the application of dazomet (Basamid G) in late summer 2004 (Park, 2005). Similar to practices employed for golf course fairway renovation, dazomet was applied to the surface of the outfield in August 2004 to provide nonselective control of the existing turfgrass and annual bluegrass cover, as well as control of the underlying soil seedbank. The application was watered in, and irrigation runs over subsequent days were made to seal the fumigant in the soil and improve control of the annual bluegrass seedbank. A blend of five Kentucky bluegrass varieties was seeded two weeks after the dazomet application. Kentucky bluegrass establishment was rapid that autumn and a playable surface formed by spring 2005. This strategy, however, did not provide a permanent solution to the annual bluegrass dilemma.

Cipperly Field and annual bluegrass were again the subjects of an article in *SportsTurf* in 2015. The article detailed the renovation efforts during 2004, annual bluegrass re-incursion, and a new strategy that involved mesotrione (Tenacity Herbicide) applied four weeks in a row during spring 2013 followed by three applications of amicarbazone (Xonerate Herbicide) every 10 days during autumn 2013 (Himes, 2015). Cipperly was quoted as observing “a lot less *Poa annua*” the following spring, and he and Radcliffe repeated the mesotrione and amicarbazone application program during 2014, with a modification during au-

turn of that year that included a tank mixture of the two chemistries. Short term success? Perhaps.

RECENT EFFORTS

The calendar eventually turned to 2024, and a new crop of annual bluegrass, emanating from the ever-persistent annual bluegrass seedbank, had taken hold in the Cipperly Field outfield. The prolific nature of an annual bluegrass seedbank should not be underestimated; one researcher suggested that the surface layer of soil might contain 30 million annual bluegrass seeds per acre where annual bluegrass has persisted (Renney, 1964). The next generation of annual bluegrass was met with new tactics and a new sports field manager, Mike Morvay.

A graduate of the Rutgers University turfgrass program, Morvay's career included extensive time working in professional baseball. Morvay and I concluded that a late summer and autumn nonselective renovation

program was the best course of action per visual inspection of the outfield (and my knowledge of prior renovation efforts). Research conducted at Rutgers would serve as the blueprint for the renovation strategy (Park and coworkers, 2019). The crux of the plan involved changing the species composition of the outfield to perennial ryegrass and capitalizing on the tolerance of perennial ryegrass to the herbicide ethofumesate (Prograss 1.5 EC), which has selective postemergence activity on annual bluegrass, particularly at elevated rates and when annual bluegrass is in the seedling stage.

A nonselective herbicide was applied to the Cipperly Field outfield in mid-August 2024. Following complete control of the outfield, a blend of three perennial ryegrass varieties was slit-seeded on August 28, 2024; two of the three varieties had demonstrated elevated tolerance to gray leaf spot disease in research trials. As expected, perennial ryegrass seedling



Annual bluegrass was the predominant grass species that comprised the Cipperly Field outfield by early summer 2024 (images taken June 26, 2024). A plan was devised for nonselective control of the outfield in August 2024 and establishment of perennial ryegrass, which is known to exhibit exceptional tolerance to ethofumesate.



Three applications of ethofumesate were made at 30-day intervals in autumn 2024 following perennial ryegrass seeding in late August. Uniform perennial ryegrass cover was observed in the outfield approximately 1 year after seeding (image taken on September 18, 2025); annual bluegrass control was estimated to be >95%.

development was rapid during late summer and early autumn; the first mow occurred on the new outfield surface on September 16, 2024. Three applications of ethofumesate (Prograss 1.5 EC; 170 fl. oz./acre) were made in October, November and December roughly 30 days apart. Application and seeding deadlines were met within a day or two of intended targets and Cipperly Field, as in previous years, successfully hosted the GMC high school baseball tournament semifinals and final over Memorial Day weekend, 2025.

A visit was made to Cipperly Field in mid-September 2025, one-year after renovation. Morvay and I estimated annual bluegrass control was >95% throughout the outfield. Additional ethofumesate applications were made in mid-October and mid-November 2025 for control of any new annual bluegrass emergence. The status of annual bluegrass incursion as of the writing of this article? So far, so good. What will be the next chapter in the storied history of Cipperly Field? Stay tuned.

Author's note:

Raymond J. Cipperly Field has served as a case study on many levels: Field upgrades, skin surface material selection and management, annual bluegrass control, the list goes on. The success of the field continues to demonstrate the importance of trained sports field managers with a vested interest in maintaining and improving their playing surfaces and the ongoing commitment on the part of Middlesex County Magnet Schools to invest in sports field management personnel with advanced training and experience. **SFM**

Bradley S. Park is research and outreach agronomist, Rutgers University; a member of the Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ) Board of Directors since 2003; SFMANJ Historian; and recipient of the New Jersey Turfgrass Association Recognition Award (2016) and SFMA Dr. William H. Daniel Founders Award (2024). He can be reached via email at bradley.s.park@rutgers.edu

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Curtis Industries adds air-conditioned cab for Ferris ISX3300 mowers

Curtis Industries, LLC — a manufacturer of cab enclosures, attachments and accessories for compact vehicles — released its new air-conditioned cab for Ferris ISX3300 mowers equipped with the Kawasaki FX1000V EFI engine. The new model expands the company's growing line of climate-controlled enclosures designed to enhance operator comfort and productivity in demanding mowing environments.

The new cab enclosure offers the same premium features and rugged construction found in Curtis Industries' existing ISX3300 Vanguard-powered model, while providing compatibility with the widely used Kawasaki FX1000V EFI engine platform. This addition allows landscaping professionals and commercial mowing operators greater flexibility when selecting equipment, without sacrificing the comfort and protection provided by Curtis Industries' air-conditioned enclosures.

Designed specifically for commercial mowing applications, the Premium A/C Cab boasts weathertight, full-perimeter sealing and automotive-style air conditioning that protects operators from heat, dust, debris, insects and unpredictable weather conditions. With scratch-resistant polycarbonate windshield and doors, durable construction, and a precision fit for the Ferris ISX3300 platform, the enclosure helps crews stay comfortable and productive throughout long workdays.

"Adding compatibility for the Kawasaki FX1000V EFI engine was a natural next step," said David Breault, director of sales and marketing at Curtis Industries. "Many customers rely on this engine platform, and this release ensures they can experience the same comfort, performance, and reliability our premium cab enclosures are known for." **SFM**



Trimax launches OptiAdjust

Trimax Mowing Systems introduced OptiAdjust, an in-cab cutting height control system designed to transform efficiency and precision in sports field management.

Developed as an advanced feature for the Pegasus S5 mower platform, OptiAdjust allows operators to adjust mowing height instantly — without leaving the tractor seat. Controlled via the Trimax Connect app on the operator's phone, the system enables seamless height adjustments from 3/8" to 3-1/8", reducing setup time and increasing cutting accuracy between operators.

For sports field managers, OptiAdjust delivers a new level of control. Operators can adapt quickly from cutting playing surfaces at one height to cutting the surrounding areas at another, ensuring optimal playing surfaces with every pass.

OptiAdjust introduces several key benefits for sports turf professionals:

- **Increased productivity:** Make real-time height adjustments without stopping, reducing downtime and maximizing efficiency.

- **Consistent cut quality:** Achieve precise, repeatable height settings for a clean, uniform finish across the entire field.

- **Smarter turf management:** Easily adapt to growth patterns and field requirements for year-round performance.

- **Enhanced safety:** Minimize operator interaction with the mower by adjusting settings safely from the seat.

By allowing smaller, more frequent height adjustments during periods of rapid growth, OptiAdjust also supports turf health — reducing clipping size and helping lower the risk of disease.

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



ANSWER

From page 17

The hole in this collegiate track field was caused by the hammer throw. For those of you who do not have a track field, they are quite interesting to maintain. In addition to track meets on the running track, the grass portions of these fields host events such as the javelin throw, the shot put, the discus, and the hammer throw as shown here. The hammer consists of two steel balls connected with a steel chain with total weight of 16 pounds. The winner of the event is the athlete who throws the hammer the greatest distance while ensuring they stay inside a seven-foot-diameter circle. The hammer can be launched over 200 feet from the athlete and leave quite an impression on the turfgrass landing area. According

to Irish legend, the history of the hammer throw dates back more than 4,000 years to around 2,000 BC when Cuchulainn threw a chariot wheel an enormous distance at the Tailteann Games in Tara, Ireland.

Photo is from John Mascaro's collection.

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

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



How a near-death experience led to a career in turfgrass

By Matt Duncan, CSFM

How can the worst thing that has ever happened to you also be the best thing that has ever happened to you? This is a question I ask myself when reflecting on more than three decades in the turfgrass industry.

The year was 1995. I was a sophomore majoring in Sociology and Criminal Justice at Lock Haven University in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. Then, in April of that year, my life took a turn I could have never expected.

On April 6, 1995, I went to the doctor back home in Williamsport and was told I had bronchitis with an infection in my lungs. He put me on some medicine and told me to go back to school.

After the appointment, two of my friends and I went to the Old Lycoming County Jail in downtown Williamsport to see the prison. As we walked around, my friends were a little ahead of me. I looked into one of the cells, and jumped back. There was a priest standing in the cell. He had a black suit with white collar, was carrying a Bible, and wore glasses. Not expecting to see anyone in there, I made a bit of small talk then caught up with my friends. I looked back and the priest was gone. I asked friends where he went, and they said there was no one in the cells — they were empty and locked.

I was still not feeling well when I went to bed on April 7, and I didn't wake up for a couple of weeks. I had fallen into a coma, lost the ability to breathe on my own, had a tracheotomy, was placed on a respirator, and lost brain activity.

It was during that time that I had an out-of-body, near-death experience. I remember floating above my body and seeing myself lying there. I could hear doctors and nurses talking, and see what they were doing to my body. During this experience, I was able to move around the hospital floor and made my way to the waiting room. I could see and hear my parents, family and friends, but I could not interact with anyone.

I then drifted from the hospital to a setting that was white and cloud-like. I was near what looked like a gate, and everyone around me was wearing white religious robes. I was in a wheelchair, which made sense later when I woke up from my coma paralyzed from my neck down. I also could not speak to anyone, which made sense with my trach in my throat. Despite this, I felt comfortable in that surrounding.

There were many people there that I didn't recognize, but eventually a familiar face came to me. His name was Walter Tempesco. He was my next door neighbor growing up, and his wife Mary used to babysit my sister and me until my parents got home from work. He was like a grandfather to me, and I was very close to him. When I was nine years old, Walter fell off of a ladder and died. Being young, I didn't know how to react to the news, as he was my first experience with death.

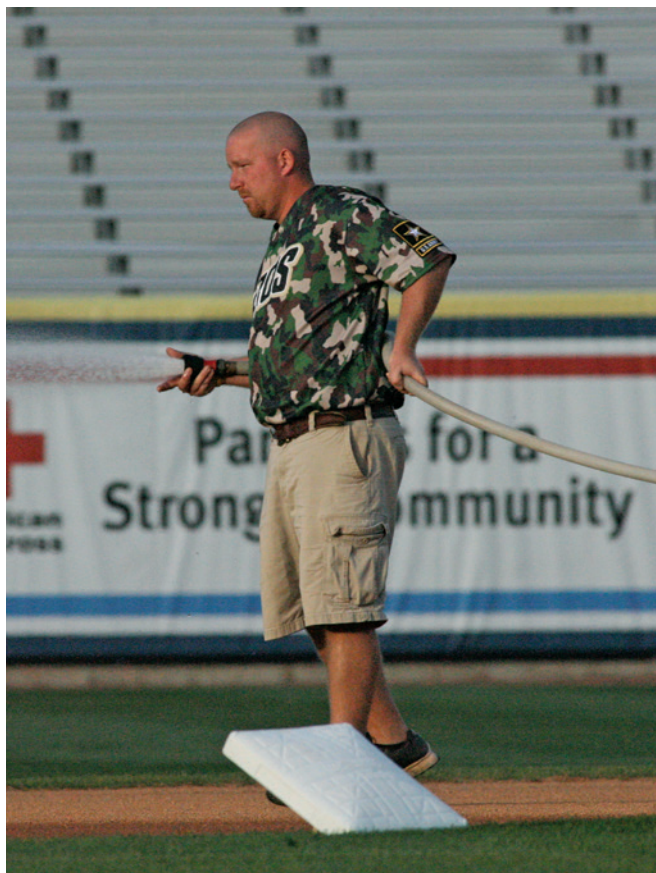
Walter asked me, "Matt, what do you want? What do you want to do?" As mentioned, I couldn't speak, but I was very comfortable there and wanted to stay. He kept asking what I wanted. He came back to me later and told me that I could not stay there, and that it was not my time, but I would have a chance again another day. The next thing I remember, I opened my eyes. I'm not sure how much time had passed between that experience and waking up. But it was later suggested to me that I had been pretty far gone.

I can't adequately describe the feeling I had when I opened my eyes. I went from a feeling of comfort in the clouds to one of terror and fear. My eyes were the only thing I could move. I had a trach in my throat, a feeding tube in my stomach, a central line in my chest, catheters, IV's — tubes everywhere.

To make things worse, I didn't recognize my parents right away, didn't know where I was, didn't know what happened to me, and couldn't understand what the doctors and nurses were telling me.

What my doctor missed on April 6 was that I had viral encephalitis, which is inflammation of the brain. I was told





that the particular strain I had contracted kills more than 80% of the people who contract it. Of those who live, more than half end up with mental disabilities.

I could not feel my body from my neck down. Over time, the fog that I was in lifted. I remembered my parents, and could understand things, but I could not yet communicate. Feeling slowly came back to my hands, then arms, then legs, and finally my feet. I eventually needed therapy to learn how to walk, how to talk, and how to eat food again. I continued with speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy after I was released from the hospital.

It was a grueling recovery that took time, tears, patience and prayers. My family and friends were warriors helping me get through it, and I cannot imagine what they went through or how they felt.

A NEW JOURNEY BEGINS

By summer I was well enough to walk, and was released from the hospital. But I was bored back at home while I was recovering. So, I decided to visit my fraternity brother, Roy Silvis, who was working as head groundskeeper at Bowman Field, the Minor League Baseball stadium in Williamsport that was home to the Short-Season Class A affiliate of the Chicago Cubs. It was far enough from my house that I normally would not have walked, but since I just re-learned how to use my legs, I wanted to keep them moving.

I walked to Bowman Field just to see Roy, but he asked if I wanted to be his assistant. It would mainly involve game day help watering, lining, moving screens, etc. I gladly accepted. I had played baseball during my freshman year of college, and wanted to be around the game.

That summer introduced me to a couple of people who would become mentors to me. First was Don Fowler, a Penn State Extension Specialist who also coordinated all of the volunteer efforts for the Little League World Series, which was played across the river. Don showed me how to work the clay on the mounds and plates, and gave me a lot of advice. The other was Lubie Veal, a former MLB head groundskeeper in Cincinnati, Montreal, and in Chicago at Wrigley Field. The Cubs would send Lubie to all of their minor league parks to ensure the fields were up to par.

For the next three summers, I got to continue working at Bowman Field as head groundskeeper thanks to General Manager Doug Estes taking a chance on a hometown

kid with a strong work ethic and a desire to learn. I got to spend time with Lubie and pick his brain, and I learned a lot of the basics that I would build upon from there and carry with me to my next stops.

I then moved to Ohio to be head groundskeeper for the Mahoning Valley Scrapper, Class-A affiliate for the Cleveland Indians. They are now part of the MLB Draft League; and things have come full circle, as my son Connor is now the head groundskeeper at 17 years old.

From there, I went to the Akron Aeros, Double-A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians, and I also started working for the Cleveland Browns.

Prior to my hospitalization, I had no idea the turfgrass industry even existed, let alone that it would provide me with the chance to have a career in professional baseball. Through it all, the people of this industry have been the best part. They have given me so much, and have expected nothing in return. I would not be working in this industry if it weren't for those who have taken chances on me. As a result, I always make it a point to give people a chance and stand up for those who are just looking for experience and a shot.

A general manager once asked me to recommend someone for his head groundskeeper position. His response about the person I recommended was, "He doesn't have much experience." I told him that nobody has experience until given a chance. He hired who I recommended, and that person eventually went on to be a Major League Baseball groundskeeper.

Through my experiences, I have learned to be grateful. When everything is taken away from you, you learn to not take life for granted and be appreciative of what you have. I also learned to tell the people around me what they mean to me and that I appreciate them. In addition to Don and Lubie, I am grateful for Darian Daily, Brian Gimbel, Brent Packer, Paul Curtis, Bob Hudzik, Jeff Fowler, R.D. Slingerland, Pam Sherratt, Dr. John Street, Chris Powell and Neal Pate. Some of them are no longer with us, but I hope that they know they were appreciated by me and many others. All of these people taught me not only how to be a better turf manager, but how to pay it forward and help others.

I will never fully understand why I was saved and given a new lease on life. What I do know is that I am eternally grateful for my second chance at life and all of the people I have in it. But you don't have to go through a near-death experience to understand the importance of taking time to appreciate the gifts you have been given and the people who impact you every day.



Matt Duncan, CSFM, (right) with his son Connor.

"When everything is taken away from you, you learn to not take life for granted and be appreciative of what you have."

For the rest of my career, I will continue to think back to 1995, how my life took a turn, and how the worst thing that has ever happened to me became the best thing that has ever happened to me, because it brought me into the turfgrass industry. **SFM**

Matt Duncan, CSFM, is a professional turf account manager for DLF, and serves as vice president – commercial on the SFMA Board of Directors.

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month:

PROTECT YOUR SKIN



Photo credit: ©GettyImages - New Saeitew Moment

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month, reminding everyone — especially those who work outdoors — to protect themselves from the sun's harmful rays, and reduce their risk of developing skin cancer.

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, exposure to UV radiation while at work raises a person's risk of non-melanoma skin cancers by 60 percent.

Nearly one in three deaths from nonmelanoma skin cancer is related to exposure associated with working outdoors, according to research conducted by the World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization. Of these deaths, 65 percent of people were male, mostly older men whose skin had been damaged by years of chronic UV exposure while on the job.

Additionally, in the U.S., about 50 percent of outdoor workers reported getting sunburn, according to a survey by the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). A person's risk for melanoma doubles if a person has had more than five sunburns.

According to the AAD survey, one in 10 outdoor workers has had sunburns severe enough to cause blisters, a rate double that of the general population. And nearly 80% of outdoor workers got a tan or darker skin as a result of sun exposure.

"Sun damage is cumulative, so people who spend hours working outside every day are at a higher risk for developing skin cancer," said Deborah S. Sarnoff, M.D., president of The Skin Cancer Foundation. "It is imperative that outdoor workers practice rigorous sun protection while on the job. The Skin Cancer Foundation also recommends that employers take steps to educate the workforce about the dangers of sun exposure and support sun-safe habits in the working environment whenever possible."

Globally, 1.6 billion people are exposed to UV radiation while working outdoors — roughly 28 percent of all people of working age. In the United States, nearly 45 million people are exposed to the outdoors as a regular part of their job. The Skin Cancer Foundation advises that these workers



should take precautionary measures to help them prevent this disease.

“Since most outdoor workers are exposed to the sun during peak hours of the day, it’s vital they adopt sun protection measures as part of their daily routine to safeguard against skin cancer,” said board-certified dermatologist Bruce Brod, M.D., MHCI, FAAD, a clinical professor of dermatology at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

When not diagnosed and treated early, skin cancer can be locally destructive and, in some cases, metastasize (spread) or even become fatal. But there is good news: Skin cancer is often preventable. While working under the sun is unavoidable for many, outdoor workers can make efforts to keep their skin safe throughout the workday. Those whose professions mandate that they are outside for part of the day should ensure that they are protecting themselves from the sun’s harmful rays.

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends that outdoor workers:

- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 50 or higher to all skin not covered by clothing, including hands.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours or more often if heavily sweating.

- Cover up with clothing made of dark, tightly woven fabrics. When possible, choose clothing certified with an ultraviolet protection factor (known as UPF) of 50 or higher.

- Wear a broad-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV-protective lenses.

- Take breaks indoors or in a shady spot, especially during peak sun hours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Skin Cancer Foundation also recommends that employers provide access to areas shaded by tents, awnings or trees during the workday. The Foundation suggests that employers provide training for their workforce about the dangers of unprotected UV exposure. If employees are required to wear uniforms, management can consider choosing tightly woven, long-sleeved shirts and pants, and allow employees to wear sun-protective hats and sunglasses.

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends that everyone see a dermatologist at least once a year for a professional skin exam. Outdoor workers who have experienced extensive sun damage might be instructed by their physicians to have their skin examined more frequently. Outdoor workers should also examine their own skin from head to toe every month, looking for anything new, changing or unusual.

“If you have a lot of moles or growths on your skin that you’re not sure about, a family history of skin cancer, you’ve spent a lot of time in the sun, or you’ve had even one severe sunburn, you owe it to yourself to get your skin checked by a board-certified dermatologist,” said Brod.

To find a board-certified dermatologist in your area, visit aad.org/findaderm.

Some important days during Skin Cancer Awareness Month:

- **Melanoma Monday** — The first Monday in May is “Melanoma Monday,” raising awareness about this potentially deadly form of skin cancer. It is estimated that more than 200,000 cases of melanoma will be diagnosed in the U.S. in 2026. The good news is that melanoma is highly curable when detected early.

- **Don’t Fry Day** — The Friday before Memorial Day is “Don’t Fry Day.” If you are headed outdoors for the holiday weekend, remember to protect your skin from the sun’s harmful UV rays. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, just five sunburns doubles your risk of melanoma.

- **AK Day** — Take the “Hats On” challenge on “Actinic Keratosis (AK) Day,” May 24. Wearing a hat helps to prevent this common skin condition that can develop into skin cancer. AK is a precancerous skin condition that commonly appears as rough, scaly patches on the face, scalp and ears.

For a downloadable handout, “Outdoor Workers: Protect Your Skin,” visit <https://www.skincancer.org/risk-factors/working-outdoors/#pdf>

For more information about Skin Cancer Awareness Month, visit SkinCancer.org. **SFM**

Enabling Autonomy



Autonomous solutions are one of the fastest-growing outdoor power equipment (OPE) segments — especially when it comes to mowing and mower technology. Behind the latest mowers is software that enables the autonomous features.

For example, Greenzie — a software platform that enables commercial mowers to operate autonomously — features a current partner lineup that includes Wright Manufacturing, Bobcat, Mean Green Mowers, and Greenworks Commercial.

According to Greenzie CEO Charles Brian Quinn, this allows OEMs and their dealers to “bring autonomy to market through the equipment and channel relationships contractors already trust, without the added cost and complexity of building autonomy infrastructure themselves.”

The software allows the operator to define the mowing area by mowing the job boundary and identifying any keep-out zones, then enables one or more autonomous mowers to handle the repetitive mowing while the operator focuses on edging, trimming, blowing and other detail work. The Greenzie system allows operators to move between manual and autonomous operation as needed.



“The result is a workflow that fits into how commercial landscape work already gets done, rather than forcing crews to adopt an entirely new process,” Quinn stated.

According to Quinn, software updates deploy automatically with no planned downtime or interruption to availability. As a result, operators continue to benefit from the



latest software improvements without needing to bring machines out of service for a manual update.

The landscape industry is still in the early adopter phase when it comes to autonomous solutions, but it is clearly moving toward broader market acceptance, Quinn stated.

“Autonomy is no longer theoretical to most people,” said Quinn. “Consumers now see autonomous systems in everyday life, whether it’s Waymos in cities, self-driving features in Teslas, or robot food delivery systems. That familiarity is helping reduce skepticism, and making commercial autonomy easier to understand. In landscaping specifically, the growth driver is practical, not novelty-based: contractors are looking for ways to do more with the crews they have in a market where labor remains constrained.”

According to Quinn, OPE dealers should understand that autonomy is fast becoming a legitimate commercial equipment category, and there will be a significant advantage for those who learn how to position it clearly and confidently.

“Autonomy is no longer theoretical to most people. Consumers now see autonomous systems in everyday life.”

– CHARLES BRIAN QUINN

“The sales conversation is not about replacing crews,” he said. “But rather about improving output, consistency, and labor efficiency by reducing labor needs and helping contractors continue to serve and grow their business without relying on additional hard-to-find staff. This is more than a technology conversation; it is a productivity conversation.”

On the service side, the OEMs and dealers continue to support the machines and own customer relationships. The software provider offers training, support and resources to help manufacturers and dealers sell, demo, and support the autonomous machines. **SFM**

This article originally appeared in OPE+, sister publication to SportsField Management magazine.

Nominate a Rising Star

Help recognize the next generation of sports field managers by nominating a Rising Star today.



SportsField Management magazine will once again profile the best up-and-coming young leaders in the sports field management industry for its Rising Star Awards.

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of 40, must have been new to the sports field management industry within the last 10 years. Candidates are evaluated based on professional accomplishments, leadership, community and industry involvement, philanthropic efforts and other exemplary qualities.

Nominate a Rising Star at <https://form.jotform.com/233533766280156> or by visiting the "Programs" page on SportsFieldManagementOnline.com.

Questions about the program? Please email John Kmitta at jkmitta@epgacceleration.com and include "SportsField Management Rising Star" in the subject line.

John Deere partners with Major League Baseball

Deere and Company (NYSE: DE) announced a new multi-year partnership with Major League Baseball (MLB), connecting two legacy brands rooted in everyday American life, from ballfields and backyards to farms and green spaces across the country.

As the Official Tractor of MLB, Deere's marketing assets across digital and linear media will highlight the work that goes into every season, from maintaining backyards to caring for ballfields across communities where the game is played.

Together, John Deere and MLB recognize the people whose care and consistency make these places ready for

play, work, and everyday life, which will be further illustrated through a new creative campaign developed by Deere.

"For nearly two centuries, John Deere has stood alongside the hard-working, dedicated people who care for the land and who build our communities," said Jon Chase, John Deere's head of turf and utility equipment. "Now, through our partnership with Major League Baseball, we're able to celebrate America's favorite pastime, America's favorite teams, America's favorite players, and the people who show up every day to build and grow America."



Throughout the season, a 360-degree multimedia advertising program will showcase the new partnership, including experientially on the ground at both the iconic 2026 MLB at Field of Dreams game in Dyersville, Iowa and MLB All-Star Week in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

"Baseball has always been deeply connected to America," said Uzma Rawn Dowler, MLB CMO and senior vice president, global corporate partnerships. "As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, partnering with John Deere brings together two brands that are truly woven into the fabric of this country. Deere represents the individuals who shape our communities where baseball is played every day and we're proud that we can celebrate the people who keep America moving forward."

Additional details on programming, community engagement and in-stadium experiences will be announced throughout the year. Follow along for details by visiting JohnDeere.com/MLB.

Turf Trade joins United Turf Alliance

United Turf Alliance (UTA) announced that Turf Trade, a New Jersey-based distributor, has joined its growing network of premier independent distributors. The addition strengthens UTA's position in the Northeast and reinforces its commitment to delivering high-performance solutions and supply chain excellence to the turf professionals it serves.

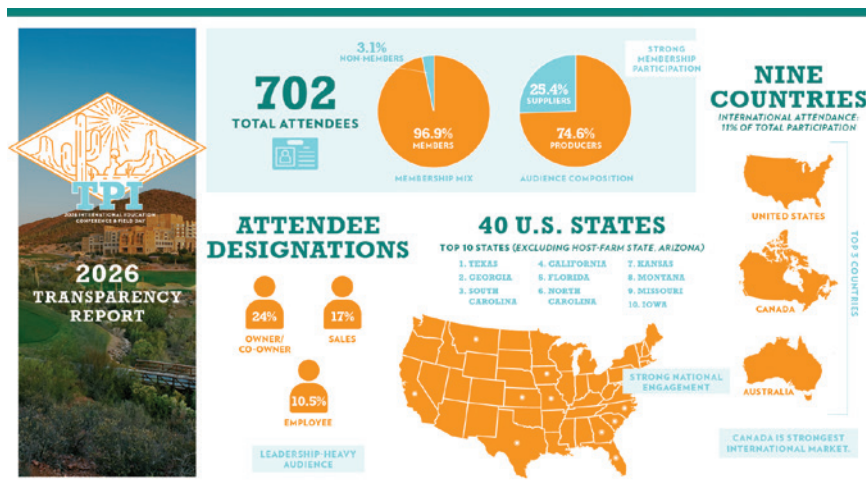
Turf Trade is widely recognized across the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast for its strong customer relationships, technical expertise, and consistent delivery of quality products to golf courses, sports fields, lawn care operators, and landscape professionals. Its alignment with UTA reflects a shared focus on performance, service, and long-term growth.

“Joining United Turf Alliance is a natural next step for Turf Trade,” said Al Phillips, president and owner of Turf Trade. “UTA’s model allows us to enhance our purchasing strength with the ArmorTech brand while continuing to provide the high level of service our customers expect. We’re excited to collaborate with other members and leverage the collective capabilities of the alliance to drive growth and deliver even greater value in our market.”



UTA continues to expand by aligning with best-in-class regional distributors that bring market leadership and a customer-first mindset to the table. Turf Trade’s addition deepens UTA’s distribution capabilities and strengthens its ability to support both supplier partners and end users.

“We are proud to welcome Turf Trade to United Turf Alliance,” said Nicholas Strain, CEO of UTA. “They are a highly respected organization with strong market presence and a clear commitment to their customers. Turf Trade exemplifies the type of partner we look for: independent, strategic, and focused on delivering results. Their addition enhances our network and positions us for continued growth.”



TPI 2026 International Education Conference and Field Day recap

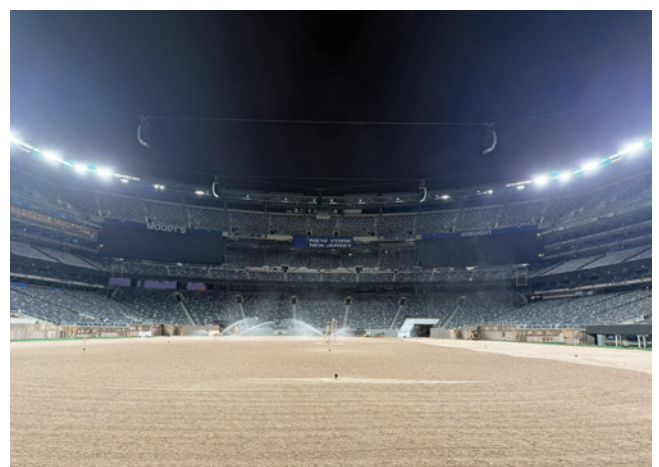
More than 700 turfgrass producers and industry professionals came together at the TPI 2026 International Education Conference and Field Day, Feb. 15-19 in Tucson, Arizona. The event highlighted new speakers, engaging networking and expanded education tracks. Here’s how this year’s attendance breaks down:

- 96.9% of attendees were TPI members, making this a great opportunity to connect with fellow members.
- 74.6% of attendees were turfgrass producers, with 25.4% as suppliers, providing lots of chances for networking while also allowing plenty of time to try out new equipment and build business.
- More than 35% of attendees were leaders, including owners, co-owners, presidents, CEO/CFOs and general managers.
- Nine countries were represented, including the U.S., Canada and Australia. Canada makes up the strongest international presence, with 11% participation.
- 40 U.S. States were represented, including Texas, Georgia and South Carolina among the top spots.

Beyond those numbers, attendees heard more than 15 expert speakers across the preconference and general sessions, covering topics such as pricing, human resources and farm-ready tips. They took part in four optional activities, including a golf scramble, a pickleball tournament or a hike of scenic trails. They spent several hours connecting and talking shop at the Supplier Solutions Showcase, and an entire day trying out new equipment at host farm Evergreen Turf for the Field Day.

“Our International Education Conference and Field Day is a great opportunity for sod professionals to improve their skills while networking and building their business,” said Casey Reynolds, Ph.D., TPI executive director. “We’re so grateful to have so much of the industry represented and sharing their experiences and expertise.”

The TPI 2027 International Education Conference and Field Day will be at the Omni Amelia Island Resort and Spa in Amelia Island, Florida, Feb. 15-18, 2027. Visit <https://turfgrasssod.org/events/> for more information. **SFM**



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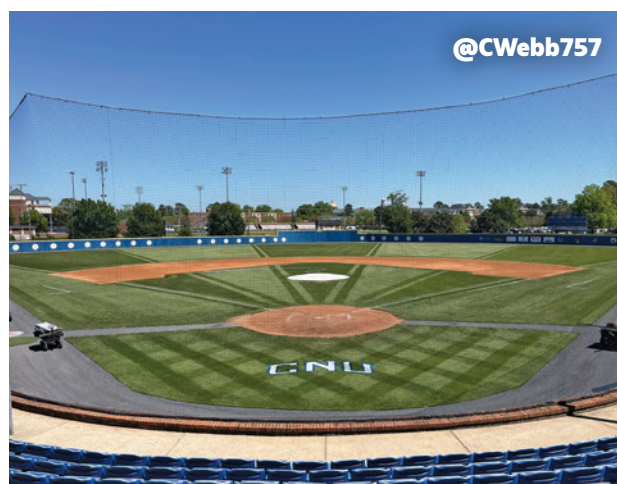


@Flpiratesturf

I'm so proud of my staff at Lecom. The field is glowing you would've never guessed we had the tarp on for 6 hours today!! Happy opening day @The_Marauders



@tdickherber18



@CWebb757



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@ZonaGrassGuy

8 years goes by quick. I'm going to miss these individuals. The heart hurts today. #BearDown #LaFamilia







2026

JUNE 23-25

NATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY AND SECURITY CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

Palm Desert, California

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

SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 1

2026 NRPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

<https://conference.nrpa.org/>

OCTOBER 20-23

EQUIP EXPO

Louisville, Kentucky

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

NOVEMBER 8-11

ELEVATE (NALP)

Tampa, Florida

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

NOVEMBER 8-11

TRANSFORM, THE PGMS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Tampa, Florida

<https://pgms.org/>

NOVEMBER 11-12

SALTEX 2026

Birmingham, UK

www.saltex.org.uk

DECEMBER 1-4

AMERICAN SPORTS BUILDERS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL MEETING

Tampa, Florida

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

DECEMBER 7-10

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

Las Vegas, Nevada

<https://irrigation.org/IA>

2027

FEBRUARY 1-4

SFMA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Tampa, Florida

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

FEBRUARY 15-18

TPI 2027 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FIELD DAY

Amelia Island, Fernandina Beach, Florida

<https://turfgrasssod.org/event/tpi-2027-international-education-conference/> **SFM**



SFMA Affiliated Chapters Contact Information

Arizona SFMA: www.azsfma.org

Colorado SFMA: www.csfma.org

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Florida #2 (North Florida): 850-580-4026,
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georgiasfma@gmail.com

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Intermountain Chapter STMA: Dan Farnes
(dan@rafttriversod.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.sportsfieldmanagement.org/interactive-chapter-map/>

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Ryegrass Removal Techniques

Q ■ Is there anything new for ryegrass removal on overseeded fields?

A ■ Every year, when weather conditions become warm enough to stress ryegrass, I begin receiving questions about transitioning overseeded fields back to bermudagrass. I still visit sites that do not chemically transition fields, but instead rely on Mother Nature to provide sufficiently high temperatures to weaken the ryegrass while concurrently fertilizing the bermudagrass to increase competition.

This approach can work well in warmer climates that warm early in spring and remain warm. However, in the more northern regions of the transition zone, newer perennial ryegrass cultivars can often survive through spring and into summer, with a high percentage regrowing in the fall once temperatures moderate. Increased competition from ryegrass in mid- to late spring can reduce bermudagrass stands, so a more aggressive approach may be warranted to optimize long-term turfgrass health.

A routine management practice is the use of selective herbicides as a transition aid. Several products are labeled and marketed for reducing perennial ryegrass with no adverse effects on bermudagrass color or overall turfgrass quality. These products include Certainty, Katana, Kerb, Manor/MSM, Monument, Revolver and TranXit. All of these products, except for Kerb, belong to the sulfonylurea family of herbicides. Kerb is by far the slowest-acting product in this group, with Manor/MSM being the next slowest.

You specifically asked, “what is new?” A newer product, not belonging to the sulfonylurea family, has been labeled for ryegrass transition. This product is Sapphire (trade name penoxsulam). Although Sapphire is in a different herbicide family, it still functions by inhibiting the acetolactate synthase (ALS) enzyme, similar to the sulfonylureas.

While transition products have improved over the last 20 years, they are still not foolproof. Depending on geographic location and event timing, most managers apply these prod-

ucts between mid-April (e.g., Florida) and mid-May (upper transition zone). Repeat applications may be necessary to achieve complete control. Sulfonylurea herbicides are rate- and temperature-sensitive; therefore, higher labeled rates and warmer temperatures generally result in faster perennial ryegrass removal. Always review the label before using any pesticide.

For those seeking greater assurance of transition without chemical use, fraise mowing has been identified as a cultural practice that can aid ryegrass removal in spring or summer. Research suggests that fraise mowing to a depth of 0.5 to 0.6 inches in late spring or summer is the optimum depth and timing. Shallower fraise mowing (approximately 0.3 inches) has been slower and less effective at complete ryegrass removal compared to deeper depths. Managers should note that deeper fraise mowing can delay bermudagrass recovery; therefore, later removal dates should be used to take advantage of improved bermudagrass growing conditions. If the field will experience continued use during the transition period, fraise mowing may not be a suitable option.

In summary, there are several new tools — both chemical and cultural — available today, along with many older, proven methods. The choice of tools will depend on location, budget, desired speed of removal, and the level of field use during the transition period. **SFM**



Grady Miller, Ph.D.

Professor and Extension Turf Specialist
North Carolina State University

Questions?

Send them to Grady Miller at North Carolina State University, Box 7620, Raleigh, NC 27695 or e-mail grady_miller@ncsu.edu

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