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JULY 1999

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Sylvania Area Joint Recreation District's Pacesetter Park.

Courtesy: Sylvania Recreation

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Ozone Action

The other day, my clock radio ushered me into the morning with the weather report. I don't remember what the temperature was, or was supposed to be that day. I don't even remember whether or not it was going to rain. But the commentator caught my attention when she said that it would be an ozone action day.

The term, ozone, isn't foreign to me. The hole in the ozone layer has been in the news since the '80s. I've heard and read plenty about the theory of global warming, who believes it, who doesn't, and what everyone has at stake. I'm even familiar with the term ozone action — these days you can't make it through a summer without hearing it.

It occurred to me, though, that I had no idea how to respond to the meteorologist's warning. I hit the Internet to find some answers, and ended up at the Environmental Protection Agency's Web site, www.epa.gov, and the United Nations Environmental Page, www.unep.org.

I found lots of great information, like the fact that there are two types of ozone that are cause for concern. The two are identical in composition, but their location separates them, and this makes all the difference in the world.

Approximately 90 percent of ozone (O₃) lies 10 to 50 kilometers above the Earth in the stratosphere. This is what we commonly call the ozone layer. The remaining 10 percent sits in the troposphere, which extends 10 kilometers from the planet's surface.

We rely on ozone in the stratosphere to protect us from the sun's ultraviolet radiation, but ozone in the troposphere is toxic to humans, plants, and animals. In fact, it's one of the major components of smog.

While ozone in the protective stratosphere continues to decrease, tropospheric ozone has been steadily rising. Scientists have yet to find a viable solution to either problem; unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be a way to export the damaging ground-level ozone into the stratosphere to plug the hole.

There are ways individuals can help reduce tropospheric ozone formation when meteorologists issue warnings. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources provides the following ozone action day tips:

- **Don't drive.** When possible, take the bus, car pool, walk, or ride your bike to your destinations. When you do drive your car, use cruise control whenever practical, and stay within the speed limit. Avoid sudden stops and starts, and avoid idling for long periods. Combine short trips whenever possible.
- **Avoid grass cutting.** This one is tough for sports turf managers, but there are steps you can take. Use hand-powered or electric equipment whenever possible. If you must use gas-powered equipment, wait until after 6 pm.
- **Tune equipment.** Keep vehicles and lawn equipment tuned up. Engines that are well maintained are more fuel efficient and they emit less air pollutants.
- **Refuel after dusk.** Postpone refueling vehicles and equipment until after 6 pm. This reduces emissions during peak daylight hours, when ozone formation is most likely. Don't top off the tank after the pump has automatically shut itself off. This will avoid gasoline spills and unnecessary emissions.
- **Avoid solvents.** Use water-based paints and cleaners instead of solvent-based products.
- **Conserve electricity.** Set your thermostat to the highest comfortable temperature (try 78 degrees). When away or asleep, set the thermostat at a warmer temperature. Use a ceiling fan to circulate cool air. Turn appliances off when not in use.

Don't wait for somebody else to take the lead. The environment is our business, so let's do our part to protect it.

Steve Berens, Editor
(773) 755-4611



July 27

Midwest Regional Turf Field Day, West Lafayette, IN. Contact Bev Bratton: (765) 494-8039.

August 16-20

Floyd Perry's Groundskeepers Management Academy, Bethel, CT. Other dates and locations: Aug. 23-27, Colonial Heights, VA; Aug. 30-Sept. 3, Orlando; Sept. 12-16, Dallas; Sept. 19-23, Denver; Oct. 10-14, Davis, CA. Contact Grounds Maintenance Services: (800) 227-9381.

August 17

Cornell Field Day, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Contact Joann Gruttadaurio: (607) 255-1792.

August 18

Michigan Turfgrass Field Day, Hancock Turfgrass Research Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. Contact Kay Patrick: (517) 321-1660.

August 18

Ohio State University (OSU) Turfgrass/Horticulture Research Field Day, OSU Turfgrass Research Facility, Columbus, OH. Contact Kevin Thompson: (888) 683-3445, ext. 3151.

August 31

Central NY Poa Annual Tournament, Rogues Roost Golf Club, Bridgeport, NY. Contact New York State Turfgrass Association (NYSTA): (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229.

September 14-15

Turfgrass Research Conference and Field Day and Landscape Management Research Conference and Field Day. University of California, Riverside, CA. Contact Susana Aparicio: (909) 787-4430.



I'm Inspired

I'm always inspired when an individual chooses the right and moral decision over ones that are wrong, even if they seem easier on the surface.

As many of you know, I'm a big California State University-Fullerton baseball fan. My team has made its way into the College World Series this year, but the road to that goal had a few bumps in it.

The last hurdle the team faced was the suspension of four players prior to the game against Ohio State. The print media reports that these four talented individuals found their way onto the rooftop of their hotel in South Bend, IN, following their win over Notre Dame. While on the rooftop, they decided to practice their throwing ability by tossing rocks at a specific tree in a nearby park. Their actions caught the attention of local authorities, who tracked down the source of the rocks and arrested the rock throwers.

The news reports I read didn't mention it, but Coach George Horton probably consulted others on his coaching staff and members of the University's administration before choosing how to respond. There was no long, drawn-out debate. Coach Horton decided that the offending players should be dealt with immediately.

The four student athletes, including two of the team's starting pitchers, were suspended from playing the Regional Finals game with Ohio State. They were all sent home to Fullerton.

Coach Horton could have argued that local authorities were making an extraordinary exception for his players. He could have claimed that, from the viewpoint of the general public, the arrest was out of proportion to the severity of the offense. He could have argued that, just maybe, the arrest was made to attract coverage in the national news. But that's not what he did.

Instead, he made the call and immediately sent the young men home. This prompt decision sent a message to his young team and to future players that Cal-State Fullerton expects you to uphold certain standards. The action clearly stated that what they did was wrong, no matter how harmless it appeared to some people, and that this kind of behavior would not be tolerated.

I commend George and his colleagues for that decision. It's a reminder to us all that no matter who is involved — our children, our employees, or anyone else with whom we are associated — there is a right way to behave and a wrong way.

Making the right decision in this case had to be a tough call for this very competitive coach. It could have cost the team the game, but it was the only way for George Horton to lead the team.

I'm glad to report that Cal-State Fullerton survived the Buckeyes and reached its goal — the College World Series — without those four athletes. I was inspired, and I hope you will also be inspired as you continue to let your actions and your decisions reflect the integrity and professionalism on which the STMA is founded.

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Growing Pains

by Scott Gaunky

As if dealing with budget limitations isn't enough, finding space to accommodate all of your facility's athletic activities can be a persistent headache.

At the high school level, community growth can compound the problem. As schools grow, playing fields often have to yield space to make way for building and parking area expansion.

Athletic facilities shrink, while athletic programs grow and become more diverse, and the sports turf manager must come up with new solutions to a growing problem. Sometimes, the only choice is to turn fields into multi-use sites.

Mundelein

Situated 40 miles north of Chicago in Lake County, IL, Mundelein High School is one of several schools in the area that faces this problem. The area is among the fastest-growing communities in the country.

At Mundelein, the football stadium doubles as a soccer facility. Baseball and softball outfields handle football practice, lower-level games, and track and field events.

The high school even negotiated with a local grade school to use its grounds to support two more soccer areas and two softball fields. This added 14 acres to the area already maintained by a staff of only two people.



Mundelein High School, Lake County, IL.

Courtesy: Images Laboratories, Inc.

Common ground

One of the first issues that needs to be addressed is communication. It's extremely important to maintain a regular dialogue with your athletic director and the coaching staff. You'll need their cooperation when you want to repair or renovate a field.

All coaches will support improvements on *their* fields, but they are generally not as quick to support

work at other locations. These people may have so-called higher education behind them, but they don't always use common sense — and unfortunately, they're the ones you have to convince to move practices and drills to other locations.

The football coach is a good example. He runs the same drills on the same yard lines every day — sometimes twice a day — for 10

weeks. This creates trenches on every five-yard line from the end-zone to the 50-yard line, from sideline to sideline.

Of course, the football practice field is also a baseball outfield. The baseball coach sees the damaged field, and wonders how the outfielders will avoid these trenches.

At Mundelein, the trenches are repaired late every fall. We've always called them the garden plots because of the resemblance.

Now, when the football team isn't using this practice field, it's used for physical education classes. To create their own foul lines for softball, the phys-ed teachers use any 90-degree angle formed by football or soccer markings, or even the baseball foul lines.

You can guess what happens next. Every base, pitching area, and batter's box turns into a hole or a bare spot.

The teachers, many of whom are coaches, tend not to rotate the fields, despite the obvious damage. This creates more holes in the outfield, and more areas to be repaired before fall is over.

These same fields are used by the community. Weekend warriors will play rain or shine, and they can do significant damage to the turf. The junior football league also uses the stadium, and they play as many as three or four games a day, rain or shine. With the combined schedules of football, soccer, and junior football, the field averages 80 events in the fall.

I am not against community field use; after all, they're the ones paying the taxes that support the fields. But their activities add further stress to the fields, and they shorten a field repair window that isn't open long in the first place.

The high school season ends by mid-October, but junior football stretches into mid-November. In this temperate zone, that's too late to properly overseed and repair a heavily used field.

Communication

You can see that effective communication with all of the groups that use your fields would make all of your lives a lot easier. I can't claim to have solved all of these problems through communication alone, but it's very important to make your case heard. If you sit

back and let problems continue, you are just as guilty as the ones who are damaging your fields.

Wouldn't it be great if you could get the coaches and others who use your fields into a classroom to educate them in turf survival? You could show them what you go through year in and year out to provide safe playing surfaces. You could convince the people who

make the money and development decisions to invest in your fields.

Sounds like a dream, right? I still like to think it's possible, but you've got to get the right people to listen.

Now what?

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Simple. Keep doing what you can with your available resources.

If you don't have the equipment you need, call around and see if you can borrow it. So many of us share the same over-usage problems, and most of us are willing to also share not only equipment, but expertise to help solve problems.

If you can't afford a piece of equipment, consider a co-op purchase with another facility. I've borrowed equipment from several people over the years. I've also solicited advice from people like Ken Mrock of the Chicago Bears; he has always made himself available to those who need help.

I've also often looked to my commercial suppliers for advice on any turf problems I couldn't solve. Don Michaels from Conserv FS supplies my seed and fertilizers, and he and his staff have always been happy to provide advice. Jim Tanner from AIMCOR supplies Turface for my fields. He has always been very generous with his time and material.

These are just examples of posi-

tive relationships I've had. I would bet that you have the same type of connections in your area.

The resource pool can also put experts across the country at your fingertips. If you're a member of STMA, you receive a directory that you can turn to to find just about anything or anybody. If you pick up the phone and call, I'm sure you'll find that help is closer than you think.

Budgeting

If you don't have the funds to get things done, be creative.

When I wanted to rebuild the infield on the varsity baseball field, I was told there was no money available. This didn't stop me.

On my days off, I got on the phone and drove to different places asking for donations. My effort paid off in soil, sod, calcined clay, and even money to complete the project.

One day, I stopped at a construction site where a big subdivision was being built near the school. I asked if I could take some of the fill

dirt they were hauling away. The response was tremendous.

The foreman said, "Tell me where you want it, and when you want the trucks to stop coming." He wound up sending 14 truckloads of good, clean fill dirt free of charge.

Another local subdivision contractor gave me topsoil. He even blended it with sand, screened it, and delivered it to my site.

If you think you're up for the old "beg, borrow, or steal" end of sports field maintenance, I say go for it! Sometimes it's the only way to get what you need to get the job done.

Maintenance

• **Aeration:** One of the most important maintenance practices on multi-use fields is core aeration. I aerate as often as possible, and I make sure to go over the severely worn areas more than once.

If you think the turf will bare it, aerate after each event. Just remember, if you don't have irrigation, put this aggressive program on hold during periods of drought, high heat, or wind.

Continued on pg. 13

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