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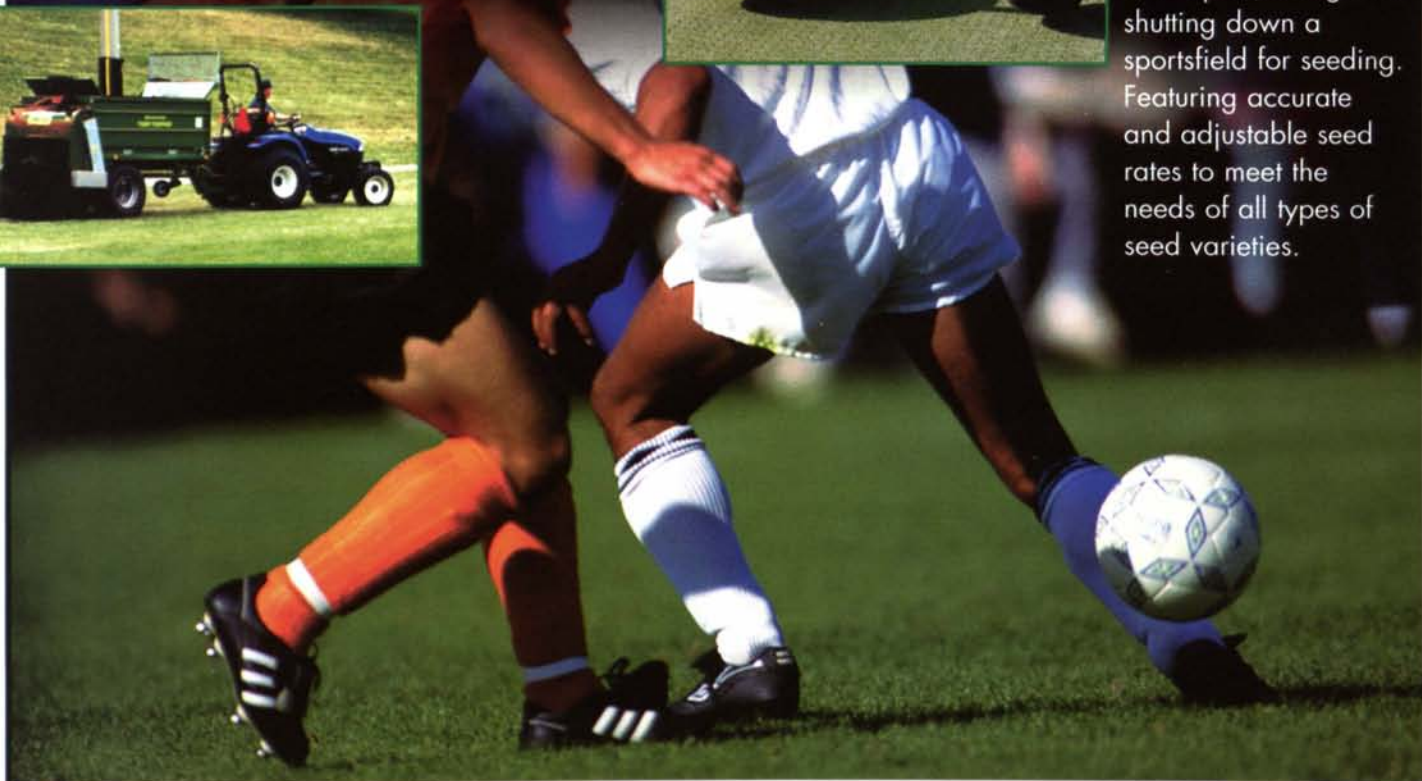


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VOLUME 17, NUMBER 6

JUNE 2001

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## August 22

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## September 2-4

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# sportsTURF *The Front Office*



## Goals

This magazine covers sports fields, but I'm not referring to soccer goals here. Rather, I'm referring to the goals I have in mind for this publication. The goals for *sportsTURF* magazine are fairly simple—publish sports facility profiles, technical articles, and product and industry news sections that are of value to you, the readers; promote the value of your industry association, the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA), and each of its many chapters; and foster the professionalism of the industry as a whole.

Achieving those goals, on the other hand, will be a much greater challenge. Please bear with me as I learn about the sports turf industry and determine what types of stories are of value to your day-to-day work lives and your overall operations. I'd like to hear your ideas about the magazine, so drop me a line if you get the urge (*sportsTURF*, P.O. Box 2429, Milford, CT 06460, tel. 203-882-9485, e-mail: [moswald@mail.aip.com](mailto:moswald@mail.aip.com)).

I got a jump start on the learning process when I attended STMA's spring board meeting in Denver, CO, in early April. The board members deserve a good deal of credit for allowing myself, editorial director Jo Treadwell, publisher Steve Brackett, and division manager Rick Schwer to "crash" the meeting for a couple hours. Since then, the board has e-mailed me several story ideas and general suggestions for the magazine, all of which are greatly appreciated and are being considered.

One interesting and timely article, that I cannot take credit for, begins on page 8 of this issue. It's interesting, because it provides an exclusive insider's peek at the maintenance and care of Wimbledon's grass courts. It's timely, because Wimbledon is played from June 25th through July 8th. The story was written by the head groundsman at The All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, F.E. ("Eddie") Seaward. Some of you may recognize Eddie from his visit to the STMA 12th Annual Conference & Exhibition last January in Tampa, FL, where he made a presentation entitled "The Wimbledon Year."

Someone once said that change is the only constant, and this magazine is no exception. In September, *sportsTURF* will make its debut in a larger, junior-tabloid size—10 x 13.75 inches. In addition to the size increase, the new *sportsTURF* will feature a redesigned appearance, reorganized layout and more clearly focused content. Readers and advertisers alike are sure to appreciate the changes planned.

Again, I welcome the challenge I have outlined for myself, and hope to eventually live up to your, and my own, expectations for *sportsTURF* magazine. Being far from perfect, I am sure to make a few mistakes along the way, as I'm sure all of you have made at some point in your profession. But with lots of hard work, a good deal of patience and a dash of luck, I'm hopeful I can meet your expectations.

Michael Oswald  
Editor



## STMA Message

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### Things Are Heating Up

**S**ummer heat is here. It may be combined with heavy rainfall or high humidity levels or with dry or even drought conditions. Either set of extremes adds more challenges for the sports turf manager.

Working with the whims of Mother Nature calls for flexibility, ingenuity, and resourcefulness—attributes that are never posted on a job description, but which are a key part of being successful in this profession. Developing a field management program to produce the best possible playing surfaces in an ever-changing environment is complex. It demands a solid understanding of turfgrass science and the experience to adapt those scientific principles to meet existing conditions. The field maintenance program is based on planning ahead and trying to be prepared for every possible scenario. Sports turf managers sometimes must work against basic agronomic practices to produce a playable field for the next game knowing they will need to alter or even reverse the results of their actions to preserve the long-term playability of the field.

One of the greatest resources in accomplishing all this is networking, tapping into the knowledge and expertise of other sports turf managers. The Sports Turf Managers Association was formed to help facilitate this sharing of information. An important function of the association is making it easier for sports turf managers to connect with each other.

Things are heating up with action in multiple areas to do just that. The comments and suggestions provided through the survey earlier this year have been very beneficial to the STMA Board, Committees and Headquarters in this process.

STMA Headquarters maintains a database of contact information on our members and has asked every member to review their information and make any changes or additions necessary to bring it up to date. Members can use the membership roster or contact Headquarters to get the information for one-on-one communication. The STMA Website Committee currently is in the process of upgrading the website ([www.sportsturfmanager.com](http://www.sportsturfmanager.com)) to make it more "user-friendly" as a communications tool and to increase the information posted there. The STMA Membership Committee is working on developing methods to make interaction between members easier and to enhance membership benefits.

The Chapters have just completed a series of regional Conference Calls to share ideas on programs and services. The Chapters are expanding their outreach to provide educational resources not only to their members and potential members, but also to those in job positions that interact with the sports turf manager, to field user groups, and to the general public.

The Marketing Committee is interacting with all of the other committees to build public awareness/image awareness for our profession. This heat wave of action is already producing positive results and more are sure to follow.

**Rich Moffitt**  
STMA President

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# Behind the Scenes at Wimbledon

A special insider's peek at the maintenance and care of Wimbledon's grass courts.

by F.E. ("Eddie") Seaward  
Head Groundsman, The All England  
Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club

For two weeks every summer, the tennis world and its millions of followers are focused on The Championships played on the grass courts at Wimbledon. More than 400,000 will make a personal visit and many millions more throughout the world will watch daily on their televisions. But there remains a story behind the public spectacle—a tale of careful turf cultivation practices and a methodical management of logistics—of which the public at large remains unaware.

To begin with, the vast majority of fans do not realize that The All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club is really a membership-based club, with tennis being played throughout the year. This puts additional requirements on the turf preparation practices for both the public and private tennis events.

The grass court season starts in mid-May and finishes in mid-September, during which time there are a number of Club matches and other private events taking place, many of them after The Championships. When the grass surfaces are not available, tennis is played on a variety of surfaces consisting of European Clay, Shale and Fast Dry, each of which requires its own particular maintenance program.

Preparation of the grass courts starts within a few weeks of The Championships being played. The all-important autumn renovation commences on Centre Court and No. 1 Court at the beginning of August. This program, which is carried out on each court, consists of scarification, deep tine aeration, overseeding (or "over-

sowing" as we sometimes call it in the UK) and topdressing. Our ProSeed 48-inch seeder/dresser completes both operations in one pass and gives the random seed dispersal and excellent germination rates that we require.

Once the two main courts are completed, work progresses on the remaining 32 courts. The sequence of the courts that are taken out of play is planned in advance in order to cater to the requirements of Member and Club events, ensuring there are always sufficient courts available for play. As the season comes to an end, approximately 10 courts remain that still require autumn renovation work.

Once the autumn work is completed, the winter maintenance routine for the grass courts is put into operation. This consists of deep tine aeration with solid tines using our Verti-Drain aerator. We typically use it until the end of January, whenever the soil and weather conditions allow. Aeration with this type of equipment any closer to playing season can cause problems with holes opening up as the clay loam that forms the root zone is allowed to dry out prior to The Championships. Mowing takes place on an "as and when required" basis; ideally the height will be 14 mm (5/8-inch). Whenever possible after mowing, surface aeration takes place using the ProSeed Sorel Roller machine, though without seed. Throughout the winter, we keep a careful watch for fungal diseases, mainly fusarium, and administer a chemical treatment if required.

During the winter months, much of the organization for the next Championships and beyond will be



F.E. ("Eddie") Seaward, Head Groundsman at The All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, shows off the pristine condition of Centre Court.

dealt with, avoiding the need to do this work once life becomes busy again in the spring with the preparation of the courts. Many review meetings are held at this time to ensure that all arrangements for The Championships are examined and decisions made and implemented.

Recruitment of grounds crew is another major undertaking that requires our attention. There is a need to employ, under contract, an additional 14 members of the staff for the summer season. Some of these are turf students from British colleges, while others are recruited from as far away as Australia.

In August, the Club hosts a three-





The Wimbledon grounds crew utilizes ProSeed equipment to help keep the grass courts in great shape. "Our ProSeed 48-inch seeder/dresser completes both operations in one pass, and gives the random seed dispersal and excellent germination rates that we require," Seaward says.

day seminar for the grounds crew on the construction and maintenance of grass courts. Speakers and topics are scheduled and usually completed by the end of March. With regard to turf management, orders are placed for marking compounds, grass seed, top dressing, etc., so the whole year is planned out well in advance. As the new playing season gets closer, along with The Championships, the majority of time can then be spent concentrating on that all-important event.

The opening of the grass court season is one of the highlights of the year and on that Sunday in May, the majority of the courts are required. Members' play will then continue until two days before the start of The Championships. For the opening of the season, the courts are prepared with the height of cut at 8 mm (3/8-inch). At this stage, the courts are not as hard as they will be for The Championships, because the moisture levels within the soil are a great deal higher at this time than they will be for The Championships.

To reduce the moisture in the soil, covers will be transported from storage in the north of England, installed and gotten ready for operation approximately two weeks before the event. The actual timing of the start of using the covers is very dependent on the weather. If the pressure is high with no rain, then there is no need to use them. But if the weather is unsettled, then the covers will be used each time rain falls, day or

night. This results in the grounds crew having to work long hours as the covers cannot be put on the courts in the evening until after Members have finished playing, which can be as late as 8:15 p.m.

At the time of the final court preparations for The Championships, there are many other important operations that have to be completed. Television crews arrive to install cameras, and many miles of cables for public address and information technology purposes are installed throughout the grounds. Some of this equipment is attached directly to the umpires' chairs. Hospitality units have to be completed, canvas surrounds erected at the courts and scoreboards installed.

One little known fact is the "rabbit warren" of hidden, underground tunnels and access corridors that run below the courts. These are particularly useful during The Championships, as they allow turf maintenance and other equipment, as well as personnel, to be moved rapidly from one area to another—all out of the view of the cameras.

Two weeks before the start of The

Championships, 120 students (employed as court attendants) have to be trained in their duties, which include operating the covers, supplying the players with towels and ice, and operating the scoreboards. At this stage there are a large number of people working throughout the grounds on a variety of activities. All this, and much more, has to be completed before the players arrive for practice on the courts prior to The Championships.

Practice officially starts one week before The Championships, on the 14 designated practice courts. The players



Eddie Seaward (left) and John Souter, outside the entrance to The Institute of Groundsmanship display at SALTEX, last September.



are also given allocated times when they are able to use the match courts, with the exception of Centre and No. 1 Courts. These allocated times will commence on the Wednesday before The Championships and continue until 6:30 p.m. that Saturday. That afternoon, a traditional ladies Members' match will take place on Centre and No. 1 Courts, with two sets of tennis being played on Centre Court and one set on No. 1 Court. This provides the opportunity for us to ensure that all the equipment on the courts is functioning properly. It also allows the ballboys and ballgirls, who have been training since February, a chance to get used to the surroundings before going onto the courts on the first Monday—in front of a worldwide television audience and 14,000 people in the Centre Court stadium itself.

During this practice week, the Qualifying Tournament takes place at another facility a few miles away on 16 grass courts, which have all been prepared in a similar manner (including use of the covers) by



The Wimbledon grounds crew uses the Verti-Drain aerator—which has solid tines for deep tine aeration—during its winter maintenance routine.

another grounds team. Weather permitting, this will start on a Monday and finish on a Friday. The effect of all this tennis, and the final prepara-

tions, ensures that the week before The Championships is extremely busy for all concerned.

(continued on page 14)



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