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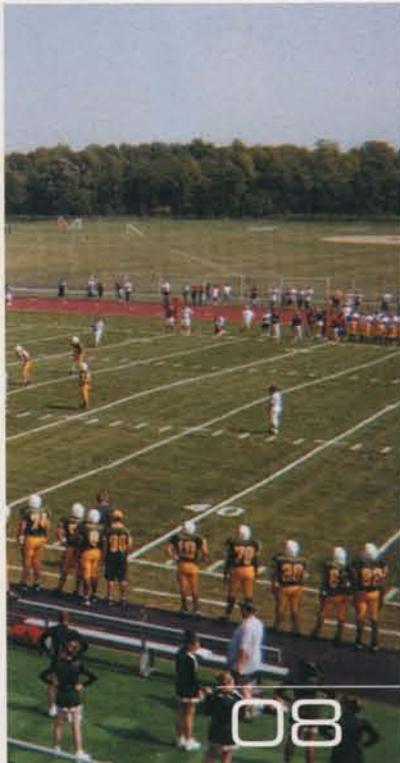
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**ON THE COVER:** Elmer Gordon Stadium, the Rush-Henrietta (NY) Central School District. Photo by Patrick St. Clair

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# Bannerman

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## Used correctly, crumb rubber can help

I recently tagged along on the Midwest Chapter of STMA's "Tour on Wheels" that included a stop at Brookfield-Riverside High School to check out their crumb rubber-amended football field. Athletic Director Otto Zeman was ebullient about how this soil amendment had helped improve conditions on a field that sees 45-50 games each fall and is maintained by a one-man crew, an old Kifco sprinkler, and ServiceMaster.

Later I talked to Jim Stepp, who supplied and put down the recycled tire rubber. A former asphalt contractor, Stepp has a custom-built machine he's trying to patent for this work. "It takes ten times more pressure to pull grass from these fields," he says. "The rubber migrates with roots and creates air pockets, which helps retain moisture or absorb moisture as necessary."

Stepp had mentioned the research that's been done on crumb rubber and turf, specifically at Iowa State and Michigan State, so I went straight to the sources:

In Ames, Dr. Dave Minner has seen successes and failures along the way. "Since it's being used in new fields as FieldTurf, Prestige, and AstroPlay, it might be more widely accepted for grass now," says Minner. "But rubber is not a cure-all for intense traffic. Don't use it with the expectation of having more events.

"Our research shows sand topdressing results in the same amount of grass survival as topdressing with crumb rubber. Both are significantly better than no topdressing at all," Minner says. "I suggest if you're interested in rubber that you buy a ton of material and put it between the hash marks, from the 50- to the 45-yard lines. Try it for a year and if after that the area has more grass, then buy enough for all high traffic areas."

In East Lansing, Dr. Trey Rogers says there's two ways to handle rubber: till into the rootzone profile or add as topdressing. "It's no magic bullet, but with topdressing we've seen improvements to justify using crumb rubber. There's an increase in wear tolerance. Of course you still have to maintain the turf," he says.

But it's a mistake to put down 1/4 inch and leave it at that, it won't work. "You must use 3/8 to 1/2 inch to see benefits," Rogers says. "It's not a case of half the material will yield half the results."

Like Minner, Rogers says it's a waste of money to use crumb rubber in non-high traffic portions of your field. And he adds a comment that might be said for many products: "We proved it works but it doesn't replace good turf management."

Credit due: Our September issue cover photo of Virginia's Scott Stadium was taken by Jill Calhoun.



*Eric Schroder*

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# president's message

## STMA is Reaching Out

September was an exciting month for many of you. On the international front, professional baseball finally settled the strike issue between owners and players. This was good news. But, at the same time, the International Olympic Committee put baseball and softball on the chopping block for the 2008 Olympics. Baseball industry leaders from all national federations including Major League Baseball and the Players Association met in Switzerland to discuss a strategy to present to the next council meeting in Mexico, in November. All looks positive that an effective case will be submitted at the meeting that proves baseball and softball should stay as Olympic sports. The entire development of removing these sports would have a rippling effect on everyone involved in maintaining softball and baseball fields around the world.

This issue of SPORTSTURF is packed with some great articles about people and their fields. Congratulations to Jon Strantz and his crew on the opening of Reliant Stadium! Jon and I spent a few years together at Disney before going different ways and, from the looks of things in Texas, he has accepted the challenge extremely well. Also congratulations to John Gaffney and his crew for the great work they do for the fields of the Rush-Henrietta Central School District. The football earned Field of the Year (FOY) honors in the High School division.

Speaking of FOY honors, October 15 is the deadline to get your FOY entry packet headed to STMA Headquarters. That's also the postmark date for sending in all scholarship application materials for the SAFE Scholarship Program. If you have questions about either of these programs, please call or email STMA Headquarters.

The STMA Chapters have been busy. The Pacific Northwest Chapter kicked off their first major event at Safeco. Catch the details in "STMA in Action," page 42. Both the Minnesota and Midwest Chapters report their Seminar on Wheels tours went very well. The Michigan Chapter notes that more than 150 attendees of the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation Field Day in Lansing joined in the Chapter-sponsored tour of the Michigan State University athletic fields and facilities. Obviously, the opportunity to view the results of the modular makeover at Spartan Field (featured in last month's issue) was a big draw.

In the area of professional development, everyone should review the article by Amy Fouty that discusses professional image and improving working relationships with staff and peers. Amy is sports turf manager for the University of Michigan and serves as the Michigan Chapter's president.

The STMA mentoring program for the professional member is wrapping up its first year and is looking for partners to join in as mentors for next year. The commercial member mentoring program got started the first week of October. As of this writing, there were still a few openings

for commercial mentors. Please contact STMA Headquarters if you are interested in serving as a mentor.

We are definitely reaching out to more and more people around the world through our organization. It's an exciting industry to be a part of. Next issue we will cover more details on the STMA Conference that EVERYONE will attend, January 15-19, 2003, in San Antonio.

You can contact me via email at [murray@brickmangroup.com](mailto:murray@brickmangroup.com)



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# High school Field of the Year

Photographs courtesy of Patrick St. Clair and the STMA

## Rush-Henrietta (NY) earns STMA distinction

BY STEVE AND SUZ TRUSTY

A passion for athletic field safety, quality, and playability has earned the 2001 STMA Football Field of the Year Award in the High School division for the field of Elmer Gordon Stadium. Under the direction of head groundskeeper John Gaffney, the Rush-Henrietta Central School District Grounds Department has set the goal of making this field the best that it can be—and better every year. Gaffney became a member of the grounds staff in 1982, and advanced to his current position in 1991, when his predecessor, Don Tobey, retired.

Gaffney says, “Henrietta is located in western New York, 10 miles south of Rochester. The native soil field was built in 1967 and has a heavy clay soil profile that continues to create a challenge for drainage, rooting, and compaction reduction. Don Tobey, who served as head groundskeeper from 1960-1991, had the vision of creating a top quality playing field. The district’s theory has always been, ‘As long as one of the main objectives of the game of football is to put somebody to the ground as hard as you can, we are going to provide a safe surface for them to land on.’

“The construction included establishment of a 18-inch crown for surface drainage, installation of drainage tile and a manual irrigation system. The field was seeded with a combination of Kentucky bluegrasses and perennial ryegrasses, and allowed to grow in for 2 years before it was used. Key to maintaining field quality, then and now, is limiting use.”

The stadium was originally built for varsity football and track and field events. A stone dust track surrounded the field. The grounds crew installed an automatic irrigation system in 1986 to replace the original manual system. Designed by a local irrigation supplier, the new system covers all the turf inside the track with 48 pop-up sprinkler heads, seven electric valves, a 24-zone controller and a booster pump. The system operates on municipal water. During the winter of 2001, the crew installed a larger pump and a new controller, with more programming ability.

Gaffney says, “More events have been added as the field has improved due to management and cultural practices to withstand more use without damage. Men’s lacrosse was added to the spring play schedule in the early 1970s. Women’s lacrosse expanded spring field use starting in 1995. Junior varsity football was added to the fall field program in 2000. An all-weather rubber running track was installed in 1996 to replace the stone dust track. The field is not lighted, though that has been discussed. The field now

# Elmer Gordon Stadium Field Maintenance Program

## April

- Soil tested for pH, fertility levels and organic matter content
- Apply granular fertilizer 18-24-12 at 1 lb. N per 1,000 square feet
- Apply biostimulant at 1 gallon per acre rate
- Mowing as necessary - generally three times per week at 2-inch height
- Chelated iron applied if necessary for green up
- Paint lines for men's and women's lacrosse for each game
- Broadcast overseed 50/50 bluegrass/perennial ryegrass weekly as necessary
- Aerify with shatter tines, one direction

## May

- Mow three times per week at 2-inch height
- Apply granular fertilizer 24-5-11 at 1/2 lb. N per 1,000 square feet
- Paint lines for men's and women's lacrosse for each game
- Broadcast overseed 50/50 bluegrass/perennial ryegrass weekly as necessary
- Irrigate as necessary depending on weather conditions

## June

- Mow three times per week at 2-inch height
- Paint lines for men's and women's lacrosse for each game
- Irrigate as necessary
- Analyze soil test results; adjust nutrient program as necessary

## At completion of lacrosse season

- Aerify with shatter tines in two directions
- Aerify with hollow tines four to six passes
- Topdress with organic compost approximately 40 cubic yards
- Drag mat to break up cores and mix with compost topdressing into aeration holes
- Overseed with slicer/seeder in three directions 50/50 bluegrass/perennial ryegrass at 8 lb. per 1,000 square feet
- Apply granular fertilizer 18-24-12 at 1/2 lb. N per 1,000 square feet
- Apply biostimulant 1 gallon per acre to speed germination and recovery



- Irrigate regularly until new grass is established
- Raise mowing height to 2-1/2 inches for off-season

## July

- Irrigate as necessary
- Mow three times per week at 2-1/2 inch height
- Apply granular fertilizer 18-24-12 at 1/2 lb. N per 1,000 square feet

## August

- Irrigate as necessary, deep and infrequent
- Mow three times per week at 2-1/2 inch height until third week of August, then lower to 2-1/4 inch
- Monitor for turf pests; treat with insecticide only if necessary following standard IPM practices
- Apply broadleaf herbicide if necessary following standard IPM practices
- Aerate with shatter tines in two directions

## September

- Apply biostimulant at 1 gallon per acre rate
- Mow three times per week at 2-1/4 inch height
- Irrigate as necessary, deep and infrequent
- Apply granular fertilizer 24-5-11 at 1/2 lb. N per 1,000 square feet
- Paint lines for each football game

- Repair divots immediately after games
- Aerify with shatter tine one direction
- Overseed center of field if necessary

## October

- Mow three times per week at 2-1/4 inch height
- Irrigate only if necessary
- Paint lines for each football game
- Repair divots immediately after games
- Blow out irrigation system at end of the month

## November

- Apply biostimulant at 1 gallon per acre rate
- Mow three times per week at 2-1/4 inch height until growth stops
- Paint lines for remaining football games, play usually ends second week of November

## At completion of football season

- Aerify with shatter tines in two directions
- Aerify with hollow tines two to four passes depending on condition
- Topdress with organic compost approximately 20-25 cubic yards
- Drag mat
- Apply granular fertilizer 18-24-12 at 1/2 lb. P per 1,000 square feet

"After every game the players walk the field from end to end replacing any divots."



hosts all modified, junior varsity, and varsity track and field events, as well as invitational meets and county meets."

Spring 2002 was one of the wettest ever in western New York. Field use began in mid-April and continued into early June. The men's and women's lacrosse teams played all their home games on the field, which is two to four games a week. Track and field events took over the facility on the non-game days.

Gaffney notes, "2002 also was one of the busiest ever for the field with 30 lacrosse

games played here. We wrapped up that season with good field conditions. Then, on June 1, we hosted the New York State track and field championships that brought 10,000 people here for a 2 days. Events took over the facility. We added a couple high jump and pole vault areas behind the grandstands. We also added a steeplechase event—for the student athletes—complete with water hazards and hurdles around the track. It was a popular event and showcased the facility. The field was used for warm ups and for all the judging. Again, it held up well."

Spring field renovation began at the completion of all these events to repair worn areas and improve the turf for football season. Steps included: shatter tine aeration in two directions, hollow tine aeration with from four to six passes, topdressing, drag matting, overseeding a combination of bluegrass and perennial ryegrass in three directions with a slice seeder, fertilization, irrigation, and mowing height manipulation.

New, single pole goal posts were installed to replace the old "H" style posts. Permanent, handicap accessible, bleachers were added on the visitors side of the field, upping seating there from 150 to 500 for an overall capacity of 3,350.

Gaffney heads a staff of six: John DaGama, Don Wheeler, Kent Porter, Ron Tirabassi, Bill Ladd, and Jeff Brown. He says, "They're an incredible team. Each brings his own unique talents, yet all are cross-trained to share all duties and responsibilities. They're willing to do whatever it takes to create and maintain top quality conditions."

And it takes a lot. The grounds department is responsible for maintenance at six elementary schools, two middle schools, the 9th grade academy, the senior high school, and the administration building, bus garage and building, and grounds facility. Duties include the mowing of 265 acres of turf spread over nine locations around the district, landscape installation and maintenance, lawn maintenance, playground construction and maintenance, irrigation installations and maintenance, repair of all grounds equipment and vehicles, snow removal in the winter, as well as athletic field



Gaffney's crew is responsible for 265 acres of turf.