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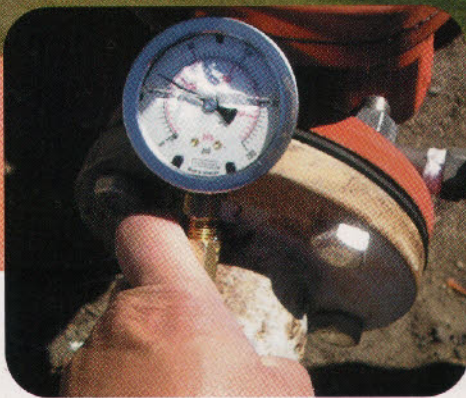
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On the cover: Bryan High School, Bryan, TX, won the STMA's Schools & Parks Field of the Year Award in two categories—football and softball.

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Ericson remembers STMA's roots



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That was a long time ago," responded Dick Ericson, the Sports Turf Managers Association's first president, when asked about the group's formation 25 years ago. Ericson, now retired and 77 years young, had been a groundskeeper in Minnesota since 1946, and was one of a handful of men, led by the late Dr. William Daniel of Purdue University, credited with founding STMA.

"George Toma, Harry Gill, Dr. Kent Kurtz, and Dr. Jim Watson were other drivers behind STMA," Ericson said. "The goal was to share information. A lot of the old timers back then wouldn't share, but George and I had always shared ideas, and we thought sharing information and becoming better educated was what STMA should be all about. And having who we called 'the turf doctors' involved from the university level really improved our ability to do that.

"I became the first STMA president when we were all in a room together, talking about who it should be and everyone looked at me and said, 'You're it!' Ericson said.

"I miss talking with Harry Gill; he was old school but he wanted to learn as much as possible," Ericson said. "Kent Kurtz also was invaluable; he made his rounds every year and always had something new to impart."

Ericson believes his career was enhanced greatly by the fact that he was superintendent of the facilities in which he managed the turf. "I had to get educated about plumbing, heating, and electrical matters as stadium superintendent," he said. "And you have to know your equipment and how to maintain it.

"I know a lot of today's groundskeepers, especially in the minor leagues, are still in charge of these stadium operations. And those duties should be reflected in their salaries," he added. "I would tell today's young groundskeepers to enjoy your work, join STMA, and keep searching for good information, and lots of it."

Ericson keeps busy in retirement by boating, fishing, reading, tooling around with his 1965 Mustang, and spending time with his five children. "I think being outdoors really helped me be healthy at my age," he said.

What's your excuse this year?

I'm looking forward to heading to San Antonio for the STMA Conference and Exhibition in January. By then I'll be ready to escape the Northeast winter for a few days and talk turf. If you've always found an excuse to miss this event, stop it and go. Almost as a rule the people you will meet are fun, and you won't find more relevant educational information anywhere.

And if you like golf, the SAFE Foundation scramble at The Quarry Golf Course is worth the dough. It's for a good cause, the course is unique, and the Jacobsen folks manage the day well. I hope to see you there.

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President's Message

What do 3, 12, 66, 140, 1,200 have in common?

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MIKE TRIGG
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They are significant ingredients in the STMA Annual Conference and Exhibition. The 18th STMA gathering in San Antonio is where you will want to be January 17-20, 2007.

3. STMA members tell us the three reasons the conference is a must-attend event is the excellent education, the ability to network with peers, and to see the products, equipment, and new technology at the trade show.

12. During STMA's annual meeting January 18, you will meet the new STMA board members who you elected to serve as your leadership in 2007.

66. This is the number of educational sessions, workshops or training sessions included in the conference package, which is the same low price as last year, \$350. And, it includes almost all meals, all breaks, receptions, and the banquet. In addition, pre-conference there is a Seminar-on-Wheels and a golf tournament fundraiser for the SAFE Foundation.

140. There will be at least 140 exhibitors for you to talk with about new products and technology that will help you with field management. The Exhibition also hosts the SAFE Silent and Live Auctions. STMA would like to thank all the exhibitors and SAFE contributors and bidders for their support. We also would like to recognize the Tournament and Conference sponsors. A huge thank-you goes to Barenbrug, Beacon Athletics, Covermaster, Cygnet Turf Equipment, Ewing, Hunter, Jacobsen, Kubota, Midwest Rake, Pro's Choice, The Toro Company, Turface Athletics, West Coast Turf, and World Class Athletic Surfaces. Their sponsorships have enhanced our event tremendously.

1,200. STMA is expecting more than 1,200 sports turf managers to attend this year, which will provide to you an excellent opportunity to network and problem solve.

Another highlight of the Conference is the Sports Turf Networking Kickoff, which brings together your peers from facilities similar to your own on Wednesday, January 17. These interactive sessions offer a place for each segment of our membership to discuss issues specific to them.

New this year is a special networking breakfast for women in the industry on Thursday the 18th. Also new this year is a format change for the conference. Thursday morning will offer six concurrent educational tracks followed by the STMA Annual Meeting and lunch. Then STMA hosts two consecutive general sessions: International Development in Sports Turf Management, and keynote presenter Roy Firestone.

I hope you will join us in San Antonio in January and make 2007 our best conference ever.

Mike Trigg

How to prep fields for winter

By Chris Harrison

All summer long you coddled and nursed your turf. The playing fields looked great. Now, however, it's time to put that grass to bed for winter.

Several experts shared a comprehensive look at what turf managers should now do to prepare their fields for winter. Their tips range from fertilizing to using blankets to prepping the irrigation system.

"The most important part of your fall program is to have a plan," says Dave Minner, professor in the Iowa State University Horticulture Department, and a *SportsTurf* "Q&A" columnist. "Autumn is the best time to prepare the field for the rest of the year." Whether football, soccer, baseball or softball, he recommends starting the program right after the last game of the season.

"Cleaner is better," says Jay Warnick, CSFM. He is the grounds supervisor at BYU-Idaho and STMA Board member. He oversees the maintenance and construction of the landscape for the 200-acre central campus, including 35 acres of athletic fields and 200 acres of campus satellite facilities. Before his current position, Warnick was director of fields for the Seattle Seahawks.

Warnick is referring to everything from the field itself to the irrigation system.

"I like to see a shorter mowing height going into the winter," he says, adding that he has his best luck with verticutting, lowering the mowing height and cleaning up leaf matter.

While turf managers might hear about cutting heights from normal levels down to scalping a field to the crowns, Warnick says a post-dormancy mowing at normal height will be beneficial.

"I like to get out there with a rotary mower that has some lift to get old divots and clippings," he says. He follows with a basket or vacuum for cleaning. "It helps on the disease issues," he says.

On that front, he recommends a preventive application of a good granular fungicide, especially in areas where pink snow mold can raise its ugly head. He speaks from experience—at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City the field was heavy in ryegrass. "I lost 60% of the field. It was completely down," he says.

"Especially in areas that have more moisture than we do, a preventive application is a must," he continues.



Ross Kurcab checks his turf under its blanket at Invesco Field at Mile High in Denver.

While a clean field is important, Warnick says, "The biggest thing to do for winter is to make sure you have an adequate nutrient reserve down for the field."

At BYU-Idaho, that means application of one pound actual N per 1000 square feet. "That is slow-release nitrogen," Warnick explains. Because their pH's are very high, in the upper 8's to lower 9's, he does not use any P. But he does put K on the field at a one-to-one ratio with the nitrogen.

The high pH makes his job interesting. "I don't add acid. We manage the pH rather than try to correct it," Warnick says. They do use sulfur-coated fertilizer to help out a bit.

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"THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR FALL PROGRAM IS TO HAVE A PLAN." - MINNER

Another recommendation from Warnick is to keep field moisture levels as high as practical. At BYU-Idaho, they frost at the end of September. "We are looking at irrigation blowout in early October," Warnick explains. "We try to get moisture onto the field before blowout."

Sometimes Mother Nature has other plans. They will do the blowout and then the weather warms up and the hoped-for rain does not come. "You have to avoid desiccation," Warnick says. "It's a real struggle with disease when the fields get dry."

He gets a double whammy since the winters are quite harsh, with wind chills in the minus-15 to minus-20 degree area. Snow falls only an inch or two at a time, meaning his

fields are open and exposed to cold, windy conditions for much of the winter.

Minner notes that on baseball fields the mound and batters box areas should be reconditioned in the fall and then covered with a tarp for the winter. Worn areas in front of the pitcher's mound, and first and third bases, should be sodded in the fall so they are ready to go in the spring.

A bit controversial among sports turf managers right now is the need to aerify. "I'll do some aerification on severely compacted areas," Warnick says. "I like to slice it to get some oxygen in there."

Other turf managers will question that, saying that slicing or coring can cause the roots to die back. "I've never found it to be the case," Warnick says.

Given the time, he will pull cores to 2 inches deep. "If we run a vertaslicer, we will set it at three inches by three inches and core out on a 3-by-6 inch spacing."

Minner agrees with Warnick that aeration is worthwhile. He recommends using a hollow core unit and topdressing with one-fourth to three-eighths inch of either sand or compost. "This is the best time to use a leveling drag to smooth out depressions and divots in the field," he adds.

Minner says solid tine aerification can be used during the fall season with minimal disturbance to the field. "Solid tines reduce surface hardness, increase initial water infiltration, and prepare holes for seeds to establish," he says.

His recommendation is to seed worn areas with two pounds of Kentucky blue grass per 1000 square feet and/or 10 pounds of perennial rye. The seed should be broadcast and then dragged into the aerifier holes.

If drilled, Minner recommends drilling the seed in multiple directions, or combining a drill with broadcast seeding.

Of course, it is best if divot mix and seeding are used as soon as bare spots develop. "This will usually occur after the first game," Minner notes, adding that pre-germinated seed that is not used on the game field can always be used on practice fields.

"Cover worn areas of the field," he adds. There is about 20,000 square feet between the hash marks of a typical football field.

Blankets for turf

Turf blankets are a great help for all sorts of sports turf, both as the grass goes into dormancy and as it comes out the following spring.

"In the early spring, the grass is firmly established up to three weeks sooner than uncovered," says Bob Curry, president of Covermaster. A greenhouse-like effect allows grass to breathe and retain the right amount of heat and moisture. The result is faster germination of newly seeded areas and deeper root development, Curry says.

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