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Joe Grandstaff

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On the cover:

From L to R: Brian Harnen; Anne Beckingham; Jonas Navarro; Bazyl; and Josh Wyatt, who together are responsible for Vassar College's 2012 STMA College Soccer Field of the Year. We only have one cover but two Soccer Field of the Year winners' stories in this issue so congratulations also to Noel Brusius of the Waukegan (IL) Park District for leading the effort in his Schools/Parks Soccer win.





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From the Sidelines



Eric Schroder
Editorial Director

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Promoting yourself is not a sin

ACROSS THE PAGE Dr. Goatley writes about increasing the awareness of STMA members' (and therefore of all sports turf managers) good works. He mentions how the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has improved their members' profiles by advertising and working with broadcasters to highlight superintendents' professionalism at the courses being shown on television. As the good doctor points out, sports turf managers at every level could get similar, commensurate recognition if they are willing to either work with a communications staff at their facilities or go outside their comfort zones and promote themselves.

Knowing as many sports turf managers as I do, I would say that last idea might be a tough sell. Readers of this magazine, with few exceptions (you know who you are!), may make up the least self-promoting profession in the country. If only bankers and lawyers were so humble.

I understand and appreciate the position that if no one is talking about your fields, that's a good thing and you are fine with that. Like umpires and referees you prefer not to make yourself "part of the story." But remember how many hours you put into your fields! Think of the little things you do to improve the playing experience that no one ever sees, the improvements only you are responsible for despite limited resources. Players, administrators, fans, boosters—everyone should know! A higher profile just might mean a better raise come your next review, too. See the media advisory template on www.stma.org that you can use as a guide.

STMA EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

We are always searching for new ideas for articles and just as importantly, experts with the necessary knowledge to write those articles. Often we can kill two birds with one stone by turning to the STMA's Editorial Committee, a group of volunteer members to whom I turn frequently for advice (and articles, natch).

This year's committee is led by Chairman Phil McQuade, a Board member and turf manager for the Colorado Rapids. The members include: Brad Park, sports turf research & education coordinator, Rutgers University; Jim Cornelius, CSFM, Fisher & Sons, Inc., from here in PA; Jason Henderson, PhD, University of Connecticut assistant professor, turfgrass and soil sciences; Gwen Stahnke, PhD, from the Puyallup Research and Extension Center, Washington State University; Cale Bigelow, PhD, Purdue University associate professor of agronomy-turfgrass science; Jamie Mehringer, president of J&D Turf, Fishers, IN; David Schwandt, Green Concepts, Libertyville, IL (birthplace of yours truly!); Mark Frever, CSFM, Albion College (MI); and Joey Fitzgerald, Chattanooga Lookouts. They deserve recognition for the time they devote to the magazine and educating turf managers across the country. Thank you!

AWARD TIME

Deadline for several STMA award programs is October 15, which will be here faster than a kickoff return for six. Programs include Innovative Awards, Field of the Year Awards, and SAFE Scholarship and Founders Awards. See the STMA's website for more information. ■

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Get the recognition you deserve

STMA CEO KIM HECK delivered an excellent professional development exercise at our summer Board meeting. She asked us to identify what the Board wanted most for our membership. On this particular day, the answer was "recognition." We want appropriate recognition for you from your clientele, your employers, the public, etc., for your expertise and professionalism in sports turf management. The exercise included an "in your wildest dreams, what could you visualize?" segment. One suggestion was a weekly sports turf management show on ESPN, followed by having our own network. Then we discussed a more realistic target. How about a screen shot describing the field, the playing surface, AND the sports turf manager; similar to that seen almost every week on televised golf events? The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has done a wonderful job of gaining recognition for its superintendents. The public's perception of the value of golf course superintendents has never been higher.

Most successful sports turf managers are very much like an umpire or referee at the top of their profession: if you do your job well, you typically are not noticed and it is only when mistakes occur that "recognition" follows. This is not a profession dominated by outgoing personalities eager to talk about themselves or their jobs.

Another challenge is that far too often the "recognition" we get occurs due to elements beyond our control (weather extremes, overzealous event scheduling, vandalism, etc.). Your Board continues to explore ways that STMA can refine its steps to more quickly and efficiently respond on behalf of its membership regarding crises and unforeseen problems that arise on sports fields.

As a member, YOU must be ready to educate others about our profession as well. If you work at a facility that regularly hosts televised or radio-broadcast events, develop (and deliver to your Sports Information Director or similar contact) a brief information sheet describing the field, its maintenance, and most importantly, include background information on YOU (experience, education, staff, CSFM?, etc.). Even if you don't have a SID to work with, it is likely that your fields will host tournaments or events that will be featured in local or regional print media. I regularly see articles in our local paper touting the economic impact of hosting a regional baseball tournament, and you can bet that out-of-town teams won't (at least not for long) come to play on sub-standard sports fields. Your efforts should be recognized and appreciated! STMA has a media advisory template on its website that you can use as a guide to provide this important information to media outlets.

What else can we do? Consider contacting local sports stations and news shows. I reached out to hosts of local sports-themed radio shows, suggesting interviews with the sports field managers at Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia on how they get their fields game-ready for the football season. Within 4 days both had responded positively asking for the contact information for Emerson Pulliam (VT) and Jesse Pritchard, CSFM (UVA). If we all take small steps such as these, significant positive recognition could be generated for our profession. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Goatley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

30+ year STMA members' influence spreads far and wide

We asked some men who have been members of the Sports Turf Managers Association for 30 or more years to respond to two questions: What is your general philosophy on the art and science of turf management? Who are the most memorable turf managers you have mentored and why are they so memorable?



▲ Steve Wightman

STEVE WIGHTMAN

I do believe that turfgrass management involves both, art and science.

Having been in the business of managing

sports fields at many levels over the past 39 years, I found that to be a successful field manager one must have a comprehensive knowledge of the scientific aspects of plant growth in order to meet the demands of today's professional sports business. With that being said, I have also found that a great deal of sports field acumen is necessary, as well. Making intelligent decisions by quickly and accurately deciphering and filtering through all of the variables that a field manager faces on a daily basis is truly an art form.

Possessing the expertise and knowledge of how turfgrass grows is essential. As everyone knows, there are numerous variables that come into play when dealing with turfgrass management (climatic conditions, soil conditions, turfgrass types, irrigation systems, stadium and field orientation, financial resources, team and management expectations and field activity, to name a few). Understanding the potential consequences of drought, heavy rain, heat, cold, frost, snow, shade, high temperatures, clay soils, high salts, low/high soil organic matter, mow-

ing, aeration, topdressing, fertilization, pesticide applications, field use, tarping, resources and expectations are critical in making quick sound decisions on sports fields, especially high-profile game fields.

Having the basic tools and a dedicated staff to properly and efficiently manage the field is as essential to turfgrass management as one's expertise and knowledge. And, there is a myriad of scientific tools and equipment that can assist the field manager in making decisions that may help diagnose conditions and/or problems.

One must also have the willingness to seek out detailed information from others in the industry for verification, tips, ideas and experiences with similar situations so all options in solving problems can be comprehensively examined. Networking with academia and other field managers in the industry can be a big help in determining one's best course of action in providing an optimal playing surface in many challenging situations.

In addition to the scientific aspects of growing turfgrass, I believe there is another important part of being a successful field manager. That is what to do and when to do it in certain situations. Experience plays a big part in this and is a great teacher. I do believe that experience teaches the art of managing turfgrass.

One example of applying the art of sports field management would be how much water to apply on a football field during the days of game week or a practice field during the early season practices sessions. From the scientific side of turfgrass management the grass prefers to be irrigated to field capacity and then allowed to dry down before irrigating again. However, irrigating to field capacity a day or two before heavy field activity most likely would be disastrous to the grass, the soil, field playability and player safety. In my opinion, knowing how much water to apply during

game week throughout the season to prevent grass decline yet provide optimal playability and soil strength is definitely an art form.

I think the art of turf management is based on knowledge gained from education and experience along with predicted information for the future of field conditions (weather and field use). Art is calculating and formulating at least three contingency plans to overcome changes that may occur with future predictions.

I've often thought that the art of turfgrass management could be defined in scientific terms by correlating all of the variables in turfgrass growth and field use to come up with the lowest common denominator that could be expressed scientifically in every situation. However, because turfgrass management involves manipulating so many variables that constantly change day by day and even within any given day I'm not sure if this would ever be possible. Managing various situations, I feel, is the art of managing the turfgrass.

I'm not sure that I've ever mentored anyone and I don't consider myself a mentor (maybe that notion just comes with old age and hanging around so long).

I have always willingly shared my experiences, both successes and failures, with other industry professionals for three reasons: 1) to learn from others so that I might be better at what I do; 2) to help those that reach out to me to, hopefully, make them better; and 3) to help make the industry (STMA) become better, stronger and more professional.

I'm sincerely proud of where STMA and the sports turf industry are today! The quality and professionalism of the people involved today has elevated sports turf management to a new level.

The leadership of STMA over the past many years has guided STMA the pinnacle of support and opportunity for the membership and continues to do so. And the membership, with their involvement and support, are keeping it there. I'm proud to have been a part of that growth and will continue my involvement and support.

I'm sincerely proud of where STMA and the sports turf industry are today!

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PAUL ZWASKA

Education, the vehicle of change...

In my 34 years in the industry and 31 years with the STMA, the one driving force that has changed the industry to what it is today is education. The number of college educated groundskeepers in sports turf has

▲ **LONG-TIME** Baltimore Oriole head groundskeeper Pat Santarone, left, hands over his rake to his successor, Paul Zwaska.

skyrocketed in the past three decades. When I entered the industry in 1979, there were few in the sports field end of the turf industry with any significant formal education in turf. They often relied on what had been passed on to them from previous sports field managers or what worked for them. Back then they weren't always willing to share their secrets or methods of management. But during the 80's, the tide turned.

As I maneuvered my way through turf school at the University of Wisconsin in the early 80's, my advisor, Dr. Jim Love, alerted me to a new organization called the Sports Turf Managers Association, which peaked my interest since my desire was to get into that end of the business upon graduation. Information was slow to flow in the early years from the organization but luckily, due to my close proximity to the Milwaukee Brewers' ballpark, County Stadium, I was able to meet with Harry Gill and arrange an internship with him in my last summer before my senior year. As one of the founding fathers of the STMA, his willingness to take on an intern (something that was hardly ever done in MLB back then) was admirable. While my time there was brief, the experience was invaluable.

You see, it was actually Harry who got me my job with the Baltimore Orioles. In August 1984, I had sent resumes out to several ball clubs including the Orioles. Their head groundskeeper, Pat Santarone, was looking to hire someone to train to take his position upon retirement. Thanks to Harry's recommendation to Pat, I was interviewed and quickly hired onto the Orioles as the assistant. Pat had said he had wanted someone with a degree in turf to take his place. He could see changes that were occurring in the industry and how much

more technical it had become since his glory days. And so it began.

While I was one of the earlier turf graduates in the sports turf industry back then, I was the "drip before the deluge." As the 90's came along, so did a building wave of turf graduates vying for jobs in sports field management. And it wasn't just men coming from the college campuses; female graduates were breaking the barrier of the once male-dominated profession. And soon, we would see them at all levels of the profession. Along the way, the STMA was rapidly growing and offering an ever-expanding variety of educational opportunities from their annual conference in January, to regional and state chapter events, a monthly magazine and other printed educational materials. The educated sports turf managers were riding the wave into the 21st century.

With the advent of the younger, more tech savvy sports turf managers came their demand to academia for more sports turf specific research. They required better and more diverse equipment, better performing field drainage systems, improved turfgrass varieties, and more eco-friendly and effective turf chemicals and fertilizers. Where education initiated the wave, science would build the intensity. The sports turf industry had come of age. Tasks that seemed impossible just two decades before would become common practice in some cases by the turn of the century.

I left my post with the Orioles at the start of the new millennium. In my final 2 years with the club I had been spending more and more of my off seasons teaching and speaking about field maintenance. It was something I loved doing because I remembered how I was in the early years, hungry for any information about sports field management. And I knew there were plenty of groundskeepers out there with lots of questions. One of the reasons I left the Orioles for Beacon Athletics (then called Beacon Ballfields) was because of Beacon's desire to have someone like me to help educate their customers. It was an opportunity I was anxious to embrace and move forward. Thirteen years later, after a couple hundred seminars and now a new online groundskeeper training program, I still get the thrill each time I get to gush my knowledge and experience to those interested in learning. It is a thrill for me to help those struggling with their field maintenance to understand why something is happening and how to solve the problem. It is a great way to give back to the profession and keep it moving forward. For me, it is a tip of the hat to those

who taught me, Dr. Jim Love, Harry Gill, Pat Santarone and so many others in the profession that it would be impossible to name them.

One could say I've helped mentor many people in the industry, I would probably laugh at that. I was merely helping them understand their problems either through science or common sense. It doesn't always take a college education to figure out a problem and its solution. But like the inquisitive groundskeepers that come to me looking for answers, I still continue to learn new things every time I step on to someone else's field or attend educational conferences. As groundskeepers, we need, no, we *have a duty* to continue to talk to each other, network and seize every opportunity to further our own education. Education pushed the science, and both pushed the change in our industry. The "art of groundskeeping" has become the "science of groundskeeping." It is our education that will continue to move this industry forward for better performing, safer and more aesthetically pleasing fields.



◀ **MIKE SCHILLER**, CSFM, left, with Harry Gill

MIKE SCHILLER, CSFM, STMA PAST PRESIDENT

I really have been blessed to be part of STMA since nearly the inception of the organization. Eric asked for my "philosophy on the art and science of turf management"; my whole career I tried to provide the safest playing surfaces possible within the constraints of our budget. Whether I was working on the fields during my Air Force career, or for one of the Park Districts or schools I have had the privilege to work at, my goal was to provide a safe, aesthetically pleasing playing facility.

This goal was because I felt a recreational player or student athlete deserved to be playing on the best surface we could provide. I always felt each participant deserved to feel like a pro, and we tried to provide a safe consistent surface for them to showcase their talent as this may be the highest level of competition they may play at.

And I tried to instill these thoughts in each of the talented people I had the opportunity to work with. I felt we were in the business to