How to Convince Your Employer to Send You to Expo 2006
Brad Park*

(Editors note: This article was adapted from materials provided by Sports Turf Managers Association)

It’s time to begin planning your trip to Expo 2006. The New Jersey Turf & Landscape Conference and Expo 2006 will be held at the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, NJ December 3-7, 2006. How can you convince your employer to send you? Continuing education and industry connections are crucial to your success and the success of your sports fields. Here are some suggestions to help your employer understand how your attendance at Expo 2006 can add value to the overall operation of your facility.

Educate yourself on the Conference and Exhibition
• Provide an overview of the size and scope of Expo 2006. It may be helpful to give your employer a copy of the brochure. This edition of SFMANJ Update provides the Sports Field Managers Program for Expo 2006.
• Pinpoint specific sessions you plan to attend, and tie their relevance to your sports facility. As part of the Sports Field Managers Program, School IPM will be featured on the afternoon of Tuesday, December 5. A representative from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) will be speaking and taking questions on the specifics of the current NJ School IPM Law followed by a panel of NJ school field managers who have implemented school IPM programs at their facilities.
• Highlight the trade show and cite suppliers and equipment manufacturers you plan to meet.
• Discuss the networking opportunities you will have with peers who share challenges similar to the ones you have.
• Note that NJ DEP pesticide recertification credits will be available.

Know the Cost
• Make a case for efficient and effective use of your facility’s training dollars. By attending Expo 2006, you will be exposed to the most relevant education and technology in one place, making it the most effective use of training dollars.
• Research travel times and hotel costs. While Atlantic City is a feasible day trip from almost anywhere in New Jersey, the New Jersey Turfgrass Association does its part to negotiate reasonable rates at the Trump Taj Mahal to make staying a night reasonable. Expo 2006 will feature online registration at www.njturfgrass.org

Have an Action Plan
• Develop a plan for how operations will continue in your absence. Make sure you are accessible by phone or by page to address any concerns that might arise in your absence.
• Consider preparing and presenting a report on the information you learned and how you plan to put it into practice at your facility.
• Demonstrate how you will apply the technical information learned with your staff for their continuing educational development.

END

Brad Park is Sports Turf Res. and Ed. Coor., Rutgers Univ.; SFMANJ Board Member; and Editor, SFMANJ Update

In order to have a successful topdressing program, it is essential to choose the right topdressing material for the job. Soils can vary from very heavy, heavy textured clay soils to very coarse, light textured sandy soils, depending on the location. Therefore, the same topdressing material may have different results on different locations.

It is important to know the texture of the soil in your root zone. A physical examination of your soil will give you this information. Soil testing laboratories provide this service.

In addition to the proportions of sand, silt and clay in a soil, the coarse- ness or fineness of the sand portion, has an effect on the physical properties of a specific classification of soil. Medium size sand with a relatively consistent particle size usually has a higher rate of hydraulic conductivity than a material containing a more diverse blend of coarse, medium and fine particle sizes. The more consistent the particle size, the more easily water and air can travel through a soil.

Soil structure is also an important consideration when choosing a topdressing material. Soil structure is a characteristic of a soil that is related to its physical properties. Soils are not all alike. A soil may have a positive effect on hydraulic conductivity. Soils with a low CEC (H) are able to retain moisture better than soils with a high CEC (H). This can allow for better root development and improved grass growth.

The addition of organic matter can decrease the compaction tendencies of a soil and over time help to improve the soil structure (H) of a heavy textured soil. This can be associated with the soft, fluffy texture of a well-maintained garden soil. A lack of till can be associated with the hard, crumbly clay of a golf course. The benefits of organic matter can be realized in all areas of an athletic field but more noticeably in high traffic areas where existing soil structure has been destroyed.

Once soil structure is destroyed the ability of the soil to drain and main- tain turf cover is severely compromised. The result is a wet, infested area of high compaction. A major cause of this destruction is placement of games in wet water logged conditions where the soil is actually smothered under the stress of heavy foot traffic.

Similarly materials to leaf compost are biosolids such as sewage sludge and composting mushroom compost. These materials are much the same as leaf compost in that they have high organic content but many have the added benefit of higher nutrient availability and therefore the potential for a greater "fertilizer effect".

As with any topdressing material, care must be taken when acquiring and applying compost. A quality compost material should be adequately aged prior to purchase and be properly screened to eliminate all twigs and debris. It should show no resemblance to its original components and have a clean earthy odor.

The results of a compost analysis report should be requested prior to purchase. These results should supply a minimum of pH, organic matter content, Cation Exchange Capacity [CEC], Total Nutrient Analysis (P, K, Ca, Mg, and the N:C ratio) and a Carbon:Nitrogen (C:N) ratio. Included with these test results, should also be a reference to the composting laboratory that performed these tests. The compost is a blended material it should also carry a physical(sand, silt, clay) analysis and have a texture classification such as loamy sand, sandy loam etc. A chemical analysis is also useful in determining the potential "fertilizer effect" of a topdressing material.

The C:N ratio is used as a barometer to measure the level of decompo- sition and should be less than 30:1. Higher C:N ratios can cause nitro- gen supplies in the soil to become temporarily unavailable to the turf until the C:N ratio is reduced through further decomposition. This can have a negative effect on turf quality.

With compost materials as with any other topdressing material, care must be taken to provide adequate cultivation in conjunction with the topdressing procedure. The more a topdressing material differs from the existing root zone, the more cultivation is necessary to blend the two. The benefits of incorporating compost into a soil is soil structure rather than a "fertilizer effect". Applying highly organic compost to a mineral based soil brings with it the risk of leaching. If adequate cultivation is not provided, this risk can become greater with each subsequent application. In this particular situa- tion more is not necessarily better. An anoxic organic layer (black layer) in the soil is a potentially devastating problem on athletic fields.

SELECTION OF TOPDRESSING MATERIALS
Jim Hermann, CSFM*

(continued page 18)
Topdressing Materials (continued from page 17)

Cultivation in conjunction with topdressing should be accomplished during the times of the year when there is adequate moisture available and when the turf is actively growing and in a position to repair itself. Topdressing materials with high organic matter content such as straight compost materials should not be applied when there are inadequate moisture levels or when there is the potential for drought stress. These materials have the ability to rob the turf of available moisture when moisture is in limited supply.

Core aeration is generally the recommended means of cultivation with any topdressing application. Multiple passes done in different directions are typically recommended. Again, the intensity of the aeration procedure is governed by factors such as the extent of texture variation between the topdressing material and the root zone and the degree of thatch buildup in the area to be topdressed. When root zone modification or turf renovation is the intent of a topdressing application, multiple passes to provide a coring pattern of a maximum distance between core holes of 2” and at a depth of 2” to 3” is recommended. The application of topdressing should be accomplished prior to core aeration. The cores, along with the topdressing, should be dragged into the core holes using a drag mat at the completion of the procedure. If a more rapid change in the surface conditions is desired, the soil cores can be removed after aeration; in this case it would be appropriate to topdress after soil cores are removed. Where severe soil structure damage has occurred such as in goalmouths, it is sometimes necessary to till the area in an effort to blend the topdressing material with the damaged soil and create an adequate seedbed.

Be wary of over-cultivating with the rototiller style of equipment, especially if the soil is dry. Rototiller style cultivators can destroy existing soil structure by polymerizing the soil into a fine grany (clayey) material if over used. As with most soil cultivation procedures, the soil should be moist enough to hold its shape after being climbed in your fist but dry enough to crumble if rubbed between your thumb and forefinger.

It is not uncommon among sports field managers and contractors alike to incorporate topdressing into a renovation project. Topdressing can be done not only on new sod but also on existing turf. This method provides a benefit not otherwise be achieved as effectively. The cost of these benefits must be justified when compared to all other available options.

Currently we have 321 new & renewed members. In the beginning of November 2005, SFMANJ mailed invoices for 2006 membership dues to all current members. If you did not receive an invoice, please contact us at 908-730-7770 or download the 2006 membership form available at www.sfmanj.org. Remember to mail your renewal/payment direct to SFMANJ, PO Box 370, Annandale, NJ 08801.

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Committed to enhancing the professionalism of athletic field managers by improving the safety, playability and appearance of athletic fields at all levels through seminars, field days, publications and networking with those in the sports turf industry.

Contact us at:
PO Box 370 • Annandale, NJ 08801
Web site: www.sfmanj.org
Email: bgg@sfmanj.org
Ph/fax: 908-730-7770

National Organization
Sports Turf Managers Association
www.sports turfmanager.org
Email: stmainfo@sportsturfmanager.org
Phone: 800-322-3875

Welcome New & Renewed Members
3
Membership Form
3
SFMANJ Board of Directors
3
How to Convince Your Employer to Send You to Expo 2006
4
Expo 2006: New Jersey Turfgrass Industry Unites in an Historical Joint Venture
5
New Jersey Turf & Landscape Conference and Expo 2006: Sports Field Managers Program
5
SFMANJ Student Scholarship Available
6
SFMANJ Field of the Year Contest 2006
6
Rutgers Corner - Broadleaf Weed Control in Cool Season Turfgrasses
8
2006 Proud Sponsor Directory
12
Calendar of Events
16
Selection of Topdressing Materials
17

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For information regarding this newsletter, contact SFMANJ at (908) 730-7770 or Brad Park at (732) 932-9711, x127

Editor
Brad Park, Rutgers University
Email: parkb@rutorgers.edu

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