

2011 *Field of the Year*

By Scott Bills, CSFM

Hammonton High School's Frank Capoferri Field

Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ) received three applications for 2011 Field of the Year. The entrants included Somerset County Park Commission, Torpey Athletic Complex, Softball Field, Somerville, NJ from David Kuczynski; Northern Burlington County Regional School District, Varsity Soccer Field from Don Czehut and Bernard Luongo; and Hammonton High School, Frank Capoferri Football Field by Frank LaSasso.



Hammonton High School's Frank Capoferri Field: The 2011 SFMANJ Field of the Year

After personal interviews and visits to each field, the SFMANJ Board of Directors chose Frank Capoferri Football Field, Hammonton High School as the 2011 Field of the Year. Somerset County, Torpey Softball Field and North Burlington County School District, Varsity Soccer Field were both awarded runner-up.

Dave Kuczynski from the Somerset County Park Commission was the Field of the Year winner in 2010 for the Torpey Athletic Complex Baseball Field. Dave has transformed both the softball field and baseball field into very playable surfaces that are perhaps two of the best public ball fields in New Jersey. Both fields have natural turf, with the baseball field having a grass and skin infield and the softball field being all skin. Dave credits his years working with Ray Cipperly and Dan Purner at TD Bank Ballpark, home of the Somerset Patriots with giving him the skills and confidence to become a superior sports turf manager. When asked, Dave still helps at the ballpark.

In addition to both ball fields, which are lighted, Dave is responsible for a lighted synthetic all-purpose field. From late April until late October, Dave estimates 25-30 ball games are played on his two fields, 7 days a week.

Like many experienced groundskeepers, Dave performs much of the infield grooming by hand. His pre and post-game routine, learned at TD Bank Ballpark, included making sure all displaced infield mix is swept from the grass to prevent lip build up. Dave will then make sure the pitcher's mound and home plate area are leveled with moistened clay and compacted. If no game is scheduled during the day, Dave tarps these areas, to keep the clay moist. SFMANJ congratulates Dave for his being a runner-up for the 2011 Field of the Year award.

In Columbus, NJ, the Northern Burlington County Regional High School has made great strides improving the safety and playability of their sports fields. Don Czehut, Facilities Director and Bernard Luongo, Grounds Supervisor have worked together to provide students of the school district with quality fields.

Several years ago, Don and Bernard, began following a comprehensive turf management program that included cultural practices such as aeration and over-seeding, applications of nutrients required by soil testing and the responsible use of pesticides, only when necessary. In addition, maintaining a regular mowing schedule which includes returning clippings to the soil and keeping mower blades sharp, have improved the health of the turf.

The results of their diligent efforts allowed Don and Bernard to submit an application for 2011 Field of the Year for the varsity soccer field. Speaking with both gentleman 3-4 years ago, I don't think either of them could have imagined then, that one of their fields would be up to the standards required to be a Field of the Year candidate.

The North Burlington County Regional School District should be proud of Don and Bernard, their efforts and more importantly, their results. In a time when all we hear about are budget issues, Don and

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2011 Field of the Year

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Hammonton High School's Frank Capoferri Field

Bernard were able to improve their fields. SFMANJ congratulates Don and Bernard for being a runner-up for 2011 Field of the Year.

For the second time, Frank LaSasso, Sports Turf and Grounds Manager at Hammonton High School, Hammonton, NJ submitted an application for Field of the Year. The first time Frank sent his application for the Frank Capoferri football field, the SFMANJ Board of Directors was forced to make a tough decision. That year, Frank was chosen as runner-up and the Field of the Year award went to Lacey Twp. When I visited Frank's field the first time in late November it looked as if no one played on it. That same year I visited 4 other applicants' football fields, all in November. They asked me why we inspect them in November after they have been played on. Frank was happy to show his field off in November. It looked like it had never been played on. That year Frank estimated the field had already hosted over 20 games.

Fast forwarding 3 years, Frank's budget and manpower has been cut. Sound familiar. Despite the budget woes, the worst heat spell in recent memory, 12 inches of snow at Halloween and no letup in usage, the Frank Capoferri football field still looked perfect in November. In fact, I show pictures of the field to other school districts and they think it is synthetic.

Frank LaSasso has figured out how to manage turf, regardless of the obstacles. Aside from his mowing schedule, fertility program and cultural practices, Frank is a great communicator. He has won the respect of the administration and coaching staff. As a result, Frank is able to manage field usage and is rarely denied funding because the administration sees results.

The SFMANJ Board of Directors would like to congratulate Frank LaSasso and The Hammonton School District for being awarded the 2011 Field of the Year for the Frank Capoferri Football Field.

The SFMANJ Field of the Year program recognizes the efforts of member sports turf managers throughout New Jersey. Applications are due by the end of October 2012 and are awarded at the NJ Green Expo in Atlantic City, NJ in early December. In addition to a plaque, the winner will receive a complimentary registration to all education sessions, the two day trade show, dinner and one night's lodging at Trump Taj Mahal.

If you have any further questions regarding the program please feel free to contact the SFMANJ office at 856-514-3179.

Scott Bills is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM); Sports Field Consultant, Sports Field Solutions LLC; and Secretary and Public Relations Committee Chairman, SFMANJ Board of Directors

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