



# A Message from the President

By Matt Olivi

Spring has come and gone and we are off to another great start. We're starting to see the positive results of our off-season preparation efforts and the results of applying newly acquired ideas and field maintenance concepts to our facilities. As the dog days of summer are rapidly approaching, we'll be prepared to adjust our maintenance programs accordingly.

The adjustment of a field maintenance program is a regular practice of a sports field manager. However, there are basic cultural practices that all field managers center their fine-tuning around. This was the theme of the recently held SFMANJ annual Spring Field Day on April 19, 2012. Members of the Association gathered this year at Ginty Field in Morris Township to collaborate on the concepts of regular mowing, aeration, topdressing, overseeding and pest control. After a quick breakfast sponsored by Green Pro Materials and the Viersma Companies, the field day began with an introduction and background presentation of the Ginty Field facility by host Bill Foelsch. Bill shared the site-specific turf maintenance and pest control challenges faced by his field managers with attendees.

Once everyone had become familiar with the facility and its needs, the field day program kicked into action with equipment demonstrations by Storr Tractor Company, Wilfred MacDonald and The Viersma Companies/TurfTime Equipment. Attendees had the opportunity to see some of their options for the high quality equipment that is available to them to perform regular infield skin maintenance. After the demonstrations, there was plenty of time to take a closer look at the equipment and speak with the professional representatives of each company.

After infield skin maintenance options were explored, the focus shifted to pest control. Tech Terra Environmental introduced attendees to a new mechanical form of broadleaf weed control as an alternative to traditional broad leaf weed herbicides. As we all know, some turf pests can be controlled simply by regular mowing. This gave TrimaLawn from Staten Island, NY an opportunity to introduce their Ventrac equipment to NJ sports field managers and demonstrate the versatile tractor/mower options available to them. During this segment, Wilfred MacDonald also demonstrated the Smithco Sweepstar 60 as an effective option for removing any kind of debris from playing areas in order to maintain a safe and healthy turf grass.

A safe and healthy natural playing surface begins with good soil. The next segment of the SFMANJ Spring Field Day program focused on educating attendees on soil properties and how to interpret soil analysis reports. Attendees had an opportunity to hear from Brad Park from Rutgers University and Scott Bills

CSFM from Green Pro Materials. Their thorough soil analysis presentation was followed by a presentation from Professor Craig Tolley from the County College of Morris. Craig reiterated some of the concepts introduced by the other speakers, stressed the importance of good cultural practices and explained how to apply them to a successful IPM program.

Once attendees had digested the theory behind maintaining a healthy turf grass, the commercial members in attendance again assisted in demonstrating some of the best equipment on the market to help field managers implement their turf maintenance programs. Storr Tractor, TrimaLawn, and The Viersma Companies/TurfTime Equipment demonstrated aeration equipment that can be used to fracture the soil or pull cores which will improve air flow and drainage to the root systems of the turf. The cores that remained on the turf after the aeration equipment was demonstrated provided a great opportunity for Wilfred MacDonald to show-off the Sweepstar 60 once again. The machine removed the debris and prepared for the next step in the renovation project. The final segment of demonstrations included top-dressing equipment from both Storr Tractor Company and The Viersma Companies/TurfTime Equipment. The two machines effectively spread the top-dressing donated by Green Pro Materials.

Once the project was completed, attendees and vendors gathered for lunch and were provided with some timely legislative updates from the New Jersey Green Industry Council. After lunch, the educational program continued with an injury-risk assessment

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presentation by Dr. Neil Dougherty from Rutgers University. Dr. Dougherty identified some of the many other non-turf related safety hazards to athletes that we need to be aware of as sports field managers. The theme of safety continued into our final presentation of the program as Brad Park from Rutgers addressed the proper criteria for interpreting a pesticide label. At the end of the program, attendees were awarded NJ pesticide recertification credits for all of the education that they had received throughout the day.

The 2012 SFMANJ Spring Field Day proved to be a great success as we received a great deal of positive feedback from the event. Our sincere thanks to all of our commercial members who made the Ginty Field renovation project a huge success, our professional guest speakers who took the time to address and educate our membership and most importantly, the hard-working administration, staff and grounds crew in Morris Township that hosted the event. Our thanks to Geese Chasers, Cover Sports, Levitt's and Grass Roots for their support in the trade show portion of the program. For those of you who were able to attend, we thank you for your feedback on the day of the event. Please contact us and keep us updated on the challenges you're facing and/or any specific training that you may need. As always, feel free to contact me or any other SFMANJ board members directly. Our contact information is available on the SFMANJ website at [www.sfmanj.org](http://www.sfmanj.org).

*Matt Olivi is Sports Field Manager, Piscataway Board of Education, Piscataway, NJ; and SFMANJ President*

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