Meticulously maintained natural turfgrass in-front of The Alamo, San Antonio, TX. San Antonio was the site of the 2007 Sports Turf Managers Conference.

A women’s field hockey event prompted the decision to use a large pavement roller to smooth (read: compact) the surface of this field. Several weeks later, following a rain event, internal drainage was severely compromised.

Has the crop circle phenomenon invaded the sports turf world? Even though you may “want to believe”, don’t attribute aliens to this one. A poorly operating irrigation system can be blamed for the circular patterns of wilting turf on this North Jersey sports field.

The Rutgers Turfgrass Club was given a tour of the Shea Stadium playing surface by Head Groundskeeper Bill Deacon in April 2007. Don’t pout Mets fans, the Yanks didn’t win the World Series in 2007 either.

There has been a significant increase in the use of netted sod for sports fields in New Jersey raising concerns over athletic safety and owner and sod grower liability.

A large crowd was on-hand to observe the latest sports turf equipment demonstrated at the Rutgers Lawn, Landscape, and Sports Turf Research Field Day held at the Rutgers Adelphia Research Center, Adelphia, NJ on August 1, 2007.

The morning before a big game, the American flag flies proudly behind the baseball field at Spotswood High School, Spotswood, NJ.

Brad Park, Rutgers University (l) and Floyd Perry, nationally-known speaker and sports turf guru (r) at a Storr Tractor sponsored-event in Bergen County, NJ in March 2007.
Calendar of Events

NJ Turf & Landscape Conference and Expo 2007
December 4-6, 2007
Trump Taj Mahal Casino-Resort
Atlantic City, NJ
www.njturfgrass.org

SFMANJ Synthetic Turf Forum
December 12, 2007
Rutgers University - Cook Campus Center
New Brunswick, NJ
www.sfmanj.org

Sports Turf Managers Association
19th Annual Conference and Exhibition
January 15-19, 2008
Phoenix, AZ
www.stma.org

Three-Day Athletic Field Construction and Maintenance
February 19-21, 2008
Rutgers University - Office of Continuing Education
New Brunswick, NJ
732-932-9271

Understanding Synthetic Fields
March 6, 2008
Rutgers University - Office of Continuing Education
New Brunswick, NJ
732-932-9271

Baseball/Softball Infield Skin
Construction and Management
March 12, 2008
Rutgers University - Office of Continuing Education
New Brunswick, NJ
732-932-9271

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Sports Field Maintenance, Renovation & Construction
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908-722-9830 Fax: 908-722-9847

TOTAL CONTROL, INC.
Athletic Field Consulting & Management
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totalcontrolnj@earthlink.net

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Bermudagrass is being used and considered for use in the mid-Atlantic region more and more for athletic fields. The idea of bermudagrass in this region is not new. Golf courses have tried utilizing bermudagrass for fairways and tees only to discover that harsh winters resulting in winterkill, slow recovery and poor transitions in the spring made bermudagrass more trouble than benefit. New varieties of bermudagrass are giving turf managers new choices. Some considerations need to be made before making the decision to utilize bermudagrass for athletic fields. Of the new varieties, ‘Patriot’ is the most popular; ‘Celebration’ and ‘TifTurf’ are still close rivals. All the new grasses are evaluated on www.ntep.org (National Turfgrass Evaluation Program) - which is a great resource to view trials on turfgrasses. The benefits of bermudagrass are many: heat and wear tolerance, recovery and overall playing surface are unparalleled with proper maintenance and sustained soil temperature. There are considerations that are well justified. After a stand of bermudagrass has developed a thatch layer, other than winterkill or physical damage, killing it is nearly impossible. The maintenance on bermudagrass is reduced by seasons; in the winter there is really no maintenance after a fall preemergence herbicide and fertilizer is applied. It overwinters relatively well whether or not it has been overseeded. In the summer, bermudagrass is unstoppable under lots of heat, water and fertilizer. It reproduces/spreads with above and below ground runners. An existing stand can be thatched and sprigged into bare spots for the cost of labor. Simply cutting-in sprigs with a sprig cutter (flat solid discs pushing sprigs straight into loose soil) or even burying with loose soil, the sprigs will propagate growth with proper maintenance. You will have an acceptable stand of turf in 6 to 8 weeks. In the south, sodding is always the second choice. Considering $19/bag bermudagrass is $0.09 per square foot without freight or $3900 an acre without freight; 419 sprigs are $0.60 per bushel and the recommended rate is 1000 bushels per acre; this is probably a smaller of amount in the mid-Atlantic region because of the shorter growing season. As with all turf, fertilization is a must. The more air, water and nutrients you supply to the plant the healthy the plant is. Topdressing is not mandatory but it smooths out the surface very well and helps draw higher soil temperatures which increases lateral growth. Mowing can be 3 or 4x per week job in the summer and is usually dependent on preference of mowing height and fertility. Bermudagrass is a sun-loving plant and can only survive in well drained surfaces. This plant typically does not grow at all in shade.

Being a construction contractor, I usually shy away from recommendations that involve choosing between warm-season and cool-season turfgrasses. I have planted one field in Philadelphia this year with Patriot bermudagrass as specified by the owner. I am interested in the outcome and hope my customer will tell the truth on that issue. I did not notice any trials at www.ntep.org specific to the mid-Atlantic or northeast. Even in Atlanta, 600 miles south of Philadelphia, they have winterkill on bermudagrass on a large basis in 5 to 7 years cycles. Big Arctic blasts from Canada with zero temperatures are rare but still happen in the south and can lead to winterkill. When conditions are perfect for winterkill, it is dry enough in the fall which weakens the grass stand, there is not enough irrigation water to supplement, and the grass turns dormant in the heat further stressing the plant. Fertilizing and applying a preemergence herbicide to dormant bermudagrass with no water does not seem reasonable or beneficial to the turf or the turf manager. By definition, bermudagrass is a warm-season turfgrass and its optimum growing temperature is 85-degrees and above. One inch (1.0”) of water is a minimum per week to keep green turf. The nitrogen requirement for the growing season is around 5 lbs to 7 lbs per 1000 square feet; this is probably a smaller of amount in the mid-Atlantic region because of the shorter growing season. As with all turf, fertilization is a must. The more air, water and nutrients you supply to the plant the healthy the plant is. Topdressing is not mandatory but it smooths out the surface very well and helps draw higher soil temperatures which increases lateral growth. Mowing can be 3 or 4x per week job in the summer and is usually dependent on preference of mowing height and fertility. Bermudagrass is a sun-loving plant and can only survive in well drained surfaces. This plant typically does not grow at all in shade.

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Webster defines aeration as supplying or impregnating the soil with air. As turf managers, we know it is much more than that. Aeration is the process that allows respiration for the roots. Without proper aeration, soil oxygen is depleted and a build-up of carbon dioxide and other toxic gases occurs. Adequate soil aeration is needed to create a healthy environment for the turfgrass roots and plant – and the beneficial microbes living in the soil.

Soil compaction is one of the most serious problems turf managers must deal with. When the soil porosity is reduced, irrigation is not as effective, organic matter decomposition is slowed, and the nutrients are not used effectively.

What causes the compaction? Running turf maintenance equipment on fields and foot traffic are the main causes of compaction. A black layer develops in the soil profile that the root system cannot penetrate. There are a number of mechanical methods available to remove the black layer. Slicing machines such as the Groundbreaker or the Vertiquake put a vertical slice in the ground and then heave the ground horizontally which fractures the soil in another direction creating the needed air space for gas exchange drainage and efficient use of nutrients. Slicing machines allow for soil penetration up to about ten inches, allowing the root system to develop deeper to provide a healthier turf.

Instead of using blades for deep tine aeration, other machines use solid or coring tines. The solid tines are capable of penetrating regularly maintained turf up to 16 inches with a ¾ inch to 1 inch hole. Most of these machines have a kick to fracture the soil further and allow for better drainage and gas and nutrient exchange.

Coring tines are another option. These are especially useful when you are trying to change the soil profile. Cores can be pulled and the soil recycled. Topdriving, then sweeping the newly generated material into the core holes makes for an enhanced way to change the soil profile. For optimum results, the deep tine aeration should be done early spring and late fall. These methods are more aggressive than other methods including slicing and use of pencil tines.

The slicing aeration can be used in between the deep tine aeration to stimulate the root growth and encourage the roots to go deeper. This aids the turf in the time of drought when the moisture is far below the surface. The latest innovation to enhance root growth is a system that actually injects air into the soil with hollow tines that have air holes on each side of the tine. This is the way the soil is penetrated from the top and then fractured side to side giving the roots new directions to spread.

There are so many good mechanical devices on the market for aeration which truly enhance the root growth and lead to healthier turf. All you need is the time and money to do it. By having a healthier root system you reduce the need for chemicals and water.

Jim Gates is President, Jim Gates & Co., Inc.; and SFMANJ Treasurer

DID YOU KNOW?

A rhizome is an underground elongated stem (or shoot) with scale leaves and adventitious roots arising from the nodes.
A Look Back at the SFMANJ District 4 Synthetic Infill Maintenance Field Day

By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

It was a beautiful, sunny day on September 19, 2007, a perfect day for the SFMANJ District 4 Synthetic Infill Maintenance Field Day at Recchino Field in Haddon Township, N.J. Over 70 members and guests participated in a discussion of real world synthetic infill sports field maintenance issues, problems and solutions hosted by Haddon Township Head Groundsman Joel Taylor and his capable crew consisting of Geoffrey Taylor and Tom Springer Jr. We were given a glimpse of the day-to-day challenges of a typical sports field management operation that includes a synthetic infill sports field. These guys also maintain natural grass sports fields in other locations town-wide as well as perform maintenance chores for the Board of Education that includes furniture moves and assisting the building custodians when necessary. It takes quite a bit of hustle, dedication and know-how to keep-up with their customer service demands and this group takes it all in stride, competently, and with a good attitude.

Although the program got off to a late start because of some traffic delays it gave the attendees an opportunity to visit, enjoy refreshments sponsored by Lawn and Golf Supply as well as meet and greet our other sponsors, Philadelphia Turf, and the Jim Gates and Co., Inc. After the opening comments, Joel Taylor explained the reasons why Haddon Township chose to build a synthetic field, the installation of the underground storm water retention and storage and how the sub-base of the field was constructed. Joel went on to discuss the importance of the customer’s representative personally overseeing the construction process to ensure that the work is done correctly.

We watched a demonstration of different synthetic field maintenance procedures and equipment. There were sweepers for trash and debris, a machine that loosened the infill material, topdressers for spreading the infill material and brushes to move the infill material into place and groom the field. It was an opportunity to see what works best in a particular situation.

The program concluded with lunch and an additional opportunity to meet the sponsors and further demonstrate the products shown. Our thanks go out to Philadelphia Turf for their generosity as our lunch sponsor.

Don Savard is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM); Certified Grounds Manager (CGM); Director, Athletic Facilities and Grounds, Salesianum School, Wilmington, DE; member of the SFMANJ Board of Directors; and much-appreciated frequent contributor to SFMANJ Update Newsletter.
The Sports Turf Manager as a Crisis Communicator
Sports Turf Managers Association Editorial Staff

Perhaps you will never be faced with responding to a crisis. But, if you ever have an athlete get injured during play, an employee who gets hurt on the job, a disgruntled employee, a weather-related disaster, or an environmental incident you just might find yourself in the spotlight and under scrutiny.

As a manager of people, you may have to deal with an employee’s death or illness, a sudden change in top management, or employee issues of sexual harassment. Each one of these can constitute a crisis. You must be prepared for that decisive moment when your response can lead the crisis to better or to worse. An initial negative perception is nearly impossible to reverse.

Crisis Communication Response Tips
- Respond within 24 hours.
- Don’t point fingers.
- Always be available to the media.
- Be visible and on-site.
- Tell the absolute truth.
- Never say “no comment.”

You are judged within the first 30 seconds of speaking if you and the information you are providing is trusted. Appearing empathetic and caring are the most important characteristics you can exhibit to show “trustworthiness.” Your audience will also assess your competence, your honesty and your commitment. Your goal as a communicator is to demonstrate these attributes.

It is important to recognize that the media is usually more interested in covering opposing viewpoints and that bad news and conflict are more newsworthy. Most reporters are working under a tight deadline, have limited scientific and technical knowledge and can be a bit cynical. When preparing to talk with the media, address the principal underlying concern of the audience/reader/listener keeping your responses short and concise.

In many crisis situations it is important to bring in a third party and to tell the media who you have contacted.

Crisis Communication Interviews
- Take control early by educating the reporter and correcting misunderstandings.
- Clarify the questions.
- Prepare two to three main messages.
- Frame your answers in the positive.
- Tell how fast you responded, how much has been done and what you will do about it in the future.
- Thank or give appreciation to any assistance.
- Avoid words with negative connotations such as lethal, risky, deaths, maimed, toxic.
- Do not repeat the “charges” or any negatives words, such as no, not, never.
- Be conscious of your body language. Do not place your hands in a “fig leaf” in front or in back of you, but keep your hands/palms open and above the waist. Avoid touching your face, clapping or clenching your hands and pointing your fingers.

Remember these phrases. You want to give a sense of more to come, which will help to establish your trustworthiness.
- “What can I tell you is …”
- “So far, what we know is …”
- “So far, what we have done is …”
- “What we are planning to do next is …”
- “We will be able to tell you more when …”
- “I’ll be glad to talk with you again after we conduct …”

Source: Susan Santos, Ph.D., FOCUS GROUP, Medford, MA

Crisis Example and Response
Situation: You have a major event that is being hosted in your stadium the next day. As a set of temporary bleachers is being installed, they collapse and your assistant has been critically injured. A reporter is at the stadium asking what happened and why, and if the event is taking place.

Your first response must show concern for the worker and his family. “Our first concern is for Joe Smith and his family. Joe’s safety and the safety of all of our workers is always our top priority. What we do know is that a temporary set of bleachers being installed here at King Stadium collapsed about an hour ago. Joe has been taken to Mercy Hospital.”

So far, we have cordoned off the area to protect the public. A team of OSHA inspectors are on their way. We’ll cooperate in any way to find out what happened. We have also called in a safety engineer to help. We will be able to tell you more about the accident after OSHA and our safety engineer has evaluated the situation.

Your response to whether or not the event will be held the next day depends upon your management teams’ decision. If you are going ahead with it, you need to respond with how you are insuring fan safety: “We are going ahead with the concert tomorrow; however to insure the safety of our rock fans, we will be limiting the seating to the built-in seats in the stadium grandstands and offering on-the-floor seating in the end zone.” If you are not going ahead, “We will not be holding the concert tomorrow. Fan safety is paramount and until we know why the bleachers collapsed, we will not be holding any events.”

We appreciate the help of the city’s emergency response team. I’ll be glad to talk with you again when we know more.

Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA), Laurence, KS
Kevin Trotta, North Rockland School District and recipient of STMA’s President’s Award for Leadership will be speaking Wednesday afternoon on Environmental Turfcraft for Sports Fields.

A morning sports field managers networking session has again been scheduled for this year’s Expo beginning at 7:00 am on Thursday, December 6. Education on synthetic fields will be presented on Thursday afternoon by Ken Mathis, Brick Township on Selecting a Synthetic Infill System and Kevin Malone, CSFM, Columbia University, on Management of Synthetic Infill Systems.

The entire Sports Field Managers Program is shown on Page 4 of this issue of SFMANJ Update.

Trade Show

The NJ Green Expo Trade Show is one of the largest Green Industry events in the tri-state area. With over two hundred projected exhibitors, you will have an opportunity to see new products and services to help you make purchasing decisions and to develop important relationships in the Green Industry.

Make your plans now to come to Expo 2007!

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

The 32nd Annual
Turf & Landscape Conference 2007

(continued from front page)

New Jersey Turf & Landscape Conference and Expo 2007:
Sports Field Managers Program
December 4-6, 2007
Trump Taj Mahal Casino-Resort, Atlantic City, NJ

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2007
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2007
THURSDAY PM

1:00-1:30  SFMANJ Business Meeting
1:30-2:15 Management strategies for high traffic fields
Dr. Mike Goatley, Virginia Tech
2:15-2:45 A cost-based approach to assess task management
Don Savard, CSFM, GCM, Salesianum School
2:45-3:30 Environmental turfcraft for Sports Fields
Kevin Trotta, North Rockland School District
1:00-1:30  Early bird Sports Field Managers
Networking roundtable
7:00-8:00  Elements of Sports Field Construction
Dr. Mike Goatley, Virginia Tech
8:30-9:00  Renovation of a little league infield
Jim Hermann, CSFM, Total Control, Inc.
9:00-9:30  Low-impact pesticides for turf
Brad Park, Rutgers University
12:00-12:30 Bermuda grass use for Sports Fields in the Mid-Atlantic
Mike Kelley, Poly Tech High School, Delaware
12:30-1:00 Selecting a synthetic infill system
Kim Nethers, Brick Township Parks
1:00-1:30  IPM at a NJ high school: Myth vs. reality
Rich Velastin, Pine Hill School District
1:30-2:00 Management of synthetic infill systems
Kevin Malone, CSFM, Columbia University

THURSDAY PM

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DID YOU KNOW?

A *dicot* is a plant having two cotyledons in the seed, as in broadleaf species.

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Sports Field Managers Program

**December 4-6, 2007**
Trump Taj Mahal Casino-Resort, Atlantic City, NJ

**Wednesday, December 5, 2007**

**1:00-1:30** SFMANJ Business Meeting

**1:30-2:15** Management strategies for high traffic fields
Dr. Mike Goatley, Virginia Tech

**2:15-2:45** A cost-based approach to assess task management
Don Savard, CSFM, GCM, Salesianum School

**2:45-3:30** Environmental turfcraft for Sports Fields
Kevin Trotta, North Rockland School District

**Thursday, December 6, 2007**

**7:00-8:00** Early bird Sports Field Managers
Networking roundtable

**8:00-8:30** Elements of Sports Field Construction
Dr. Mike Goatley, Virginia Tech

**8:30-9:00** Renovation of a little league infield
Jim Hermann, CSFM, Total Control, Inc.

**9:00-9:30** Low-impact pesticides for turf
Brad Park, Rutgers University

**12:00-12:30** Bermuda grass use for Sports Fields in the Mid-Atlantic
Mike Kelley, Poly Tech High School, Delaware

**12:30-1:00** Selecting a synthetic infill system
Kim Nethers, Brick Township Parks

**1:00-1:30** IPM at a NJ high school: Myth vs. reality
Rich Velastin, Pine Hill School District

**1:30-2:00** Management of synthetic infill systems
Kevin Malone, CSFM, Columbia University

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Crooked permanently in-laid lines could be found at various locations throughout this synthetic infill field.

A multitude of permanently in-laid lines designating the playing areas for several sports, painted lines, and use of skin infield-colored carpet for a softball field all in one area creates a visually confusing surface.

Currently we have 310 new & renewed members. In November SFMANJ mailing invoices for 2008 membership dues to all current members. If you do not receive an invoice, please contact us at 908-730-7770 or download the membership form available at www.sfmanj.org. Remember to mail your renewal/payment direct to:

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PO Box 370
Annandale, NJ 08801

Belton, Howard
Howell Township

Ozoroski, Mark
Summit, City of

Pidgeon, Francine
County College of Morris
Student

WELCOME NEW & RENEWED SFMANJ MEMBERS

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SFMANJ at (908) 730-7770 or Brad Park at (732) 932-9711, x127
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Editor: Brad Park, Rutgers University
Email: pof@aesop.rutgers.edu
SFMANJ does not necessarily support the opinions of those reflected in the following articles.

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Email: hq@sfmanj.org
Ph/fax: 908-730-7770
National Organization
Sports Turf Managers Association
www.stma.org
Email: stmainfo@sportsturfmanager.org
Phone: 800-323-3875

SFMANJ Annual Membership Registration Form
(receive update information by email)

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