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# Sports Turf Manager

FOR BETTER, SAFER SPORTS TURF. WINTER 2012.

The colour of springtime is in the flowers; the colour of winter is in the imagination. ~Terri Guillemets



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Opinions expressed in articles published in Sports Turf Manager are those of the author and not necessarily those of the STA.

Deadline for Spring 2013 Sports Turf Manager: March 8

WHAT'S ONLINE  
[www.sportsturfassociation.com](http://www.sportsturfassociation.com)

#### Log-in to the Members Only Section

- Registration Form for STA members for the Sports Turf Managers Association Annual Conference & Exhibition in January
- Call for Nominations and information for the STA Annual General Meeting in February as it becomes available

# Sports Turf Manager

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voice mail system. Please include  
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telephone number with area code,  
and time of calling. The office may  
be reached at any time by faxing  
(519) 766-1704 or via e-mail.

# President's Desk

BY PAUL GILLEN

**A**s we close out our 25th anniversary year, my thanks to Lee Huether, Cheryl Machan and everyone involved who made this such a special time. It has been wonderful to see old faces and renew so many acquaintances among those people who worked tirelessly to lay the foundation to make this organization what it is today. Our banquet was well attended and enjoyed by everyone. While speeches were kept to a minimum, it was inspiring to hear Annette Anderson and Michael Bladon take us back through our history and see their resolve to make sports turf just as safe and playable as science and economics allow. Now it's up to us to build on this foundation for the next generation.



**Paul Gillen addresses guests at the  
STA's 25th Anniversary Banquet on October 25.**

We have included in this issue Dr. James Beard's article "The History of Sports Field Turfgrass Surfaces", presented at the 2012 Ontario Turfgrass Symposium (OTS). How appropriate is that to bring our anniversary to a fitting conclusion!

Our Field Day was again a tremendous success and the third highlight article "Strategies for Managing Heavily Used Fields" is inside. While we recognize that this topic has been

addressed in previous issues, best cultural practices for safety and playability cannot be stressed enough. Whatever it takes to get this message through to the management and budget people is essential for a safe environment for users of every age and gender – that's our responsibility.

Education is paramount to our ability to produce the best playing surfaces that we can within whatever budget restrictions that we have to deal with. To that end, we recently took the Sports Turf Management and Maintenance Course to Moncton, New Brunswick, drawing participation from that province, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. 2013 course dates include April 29 to May 2 at the University of Guelph. Three conferences – that of the Sports Turf Managers Association in January, the OTS in February, and the Western Canada Turfgrass Association in March – provide a wonderful opportunity, not only to get updated on the latest and most cost-effective maintenance information, but to meet and share experiences with others who are facing similar problems. See the Event Calendar for details. I urge you to try to take advantage of at least one of these opportunities – it might be the best investment that you ever made. Just to get things started, we've included in this issue an article by OTS 2013 speaker Beth Rajnovich – "Developing a Long-Term Plan for Sports Fields in Waterloo". I wonder how many of you have this type of strategic thinking in place?

The Annual General Meeting of your association is scheduled for February 20, 2013 during the OTS. Members will have now received the Call for Nominations. Watch your mail or log-in to the "Members Only" section of the website for up-to-date information.

As always, a special welcome to all of our new members. And a reminder that membership invoices will be going out in January. Please watch your mail and remit payment in a timely fashion.

From all of us to each of you, have a safe and happy holiday season.





**SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM THE STA**

As we approach the end of 2012, on behalf of Lee, Cheryl and the STA Board of Directors, we wish you all Season's Greetings and the very best in 2013.

## NEW & RETURNING MEMBERS

**Marija Brkic**  
Downsview Park  
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**Dave Boe**  
Strathcona County, AB

**Dave Alexander**  
City of Edmonton, AB

**Mark Goretski**  
City of Medicine Hat, AB

**Ernie Mansueti**  
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Chad McIntosh  
District of Squamish, BC



# STA Commemorates



Sports Turf Association executive and members, past and present, together with staff, colleagues, family and friends gathered on October 25 to celebrate the organization's milestone anniversary at a commemorative banquet in Guelph, Ontario.

With historical story boards providing a retrospective of the past, both founding President Michael Bladon and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Annette Anderson (pictured at left) reflected on the association's beginnings, growth and many accomplishments. Bladon challenged the STA executive "To continue our commitment and our mission to provide educational and networking opportunities for our members and the promotion of better, safer sports turf to those involved in sports field management and to the general public".

"The STA is an organization of volunteers", added Executive Manager Lee Huether, "from the visionaries of 1987 to the current Board of Directors and everyone in between, the association has grown and benefited from the dedicated service of so many".

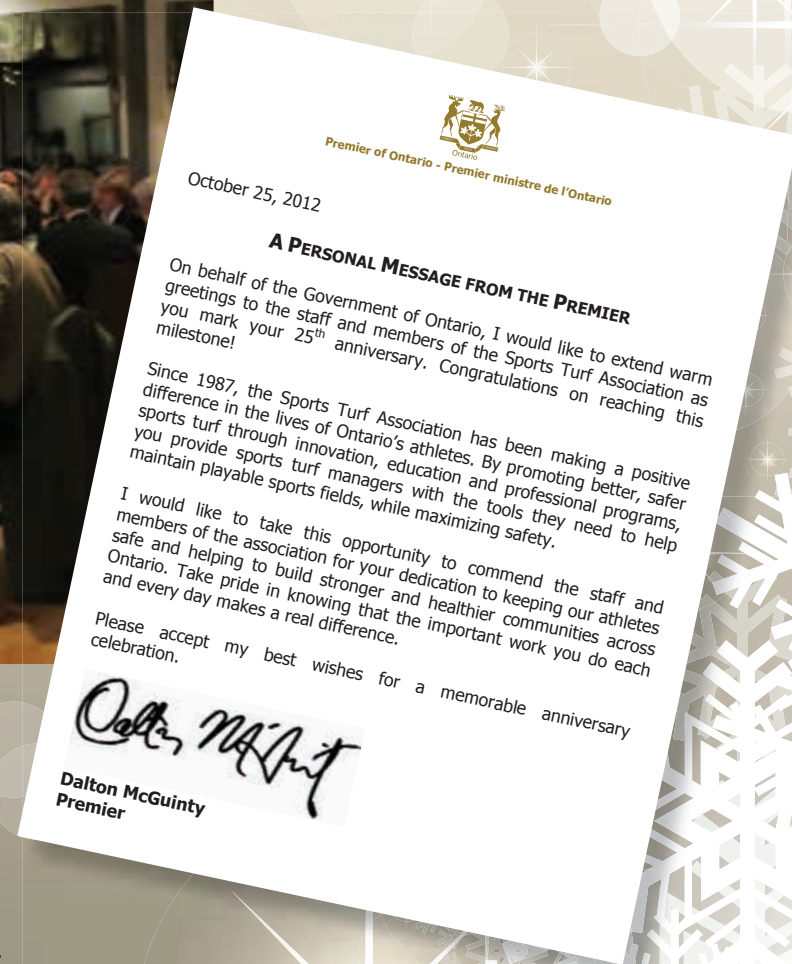
Paul Gillen, current President, relayed greetings from Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, "Since 1987, the Sports Turf Association has been making a positive difference in the lives of Ontario's athletes providing sports turf managers with the tools they need to help maintain playable sports fields, while maximizing safety... Take pride in knowing that the important work you do each and every day makes a real difference".



Attendees at the Celebratory Banquet included (L-R) Paul Turner/Past President, Gordon Dol/Past President, Paul Gillen/current President, Michael Bladon/founding President, Jane Arnett/Past President and Robert W. Sheard/first Executive Secretary. Bladon, Arnett and Sheard are also Honorary Life Members of the STA.



# its 25th Anniversary!



As the year draws to a close so does our reminiscence regarding the establishment, growth and development of the Sports Turf Association over the past quarter-century. And while Henry David Thoreau counsels “Never look back unless you are planning to go that way”, we hope that you have enjoyed our retrospective as much as we have enjoyed wading through the old files to bring it to you. But Henry is right and we set our sights on the future. For 25 years the Sports Turf Association has been dedicated to the promotion of better, safer sports turf. That commitment continues. For a look at the retrospective timeline in its entirety, visit [www.sportsturfassociation.com](http://www.sportsturfassociation.com).



# Event Calendar

ASSOCIATION EVENTS ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN GREEN

## December 15

**Early Bird Registration Deadline  
Sports Turf Managers Association  
Annual Conference & Exhibition**  
Details below.

## 2013

### January 8 – 10

**Landscape Ontario Congress**  
Toronto, Ontario  
[www.locongress.com](http://www.locongress.com)

### January 11

**Early Bird Registration Deadline  
Ontario Turfgrass Symposium *Cultivate Your Mind***  
Details below.

### January 15 – 18

**Sports Turf Managers Association  
Annual Conference & Exhibition**  
Daytona Beach, FL  
[www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org), [www.sportsturfassociation.com](http://www.sportsturfassociation.com)  
**Note: STA members can register at STMA rates!**

### January 28 – February 22

**University of Guelph Turf Managers' Short Course**  
Guelph, Ontario [www.tmsc.open.uoguelph.ca](http://www.tmsc.open.uoguelph.ca)

### February 20 & 21

**Ontario Turfgrass Symposium *Cultivate Your Mind* - See page 20**  
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario  
[www.turfsymposium.ca](http://www.turfsymposium.ca)

### February 20

**Sports Turf Association Annual General Meeting at OTS 2013**  
Info: 519-763-9431, [www.sportsturfassociation.com](http://www.sportsturfassociation.com)

### March 3 – 5

**Western Canada Turfgrass Association  
50th Annual Conference & Trade Show**  
Penticton, British Columbia [www.wcta-online.com](http://www.wcta-online.com)

## Conferencing 2013

The approach of year's end brings with it the approach of the winter conference season. Begin your planning today to attend one of the following educational and networking events.

### Early Bird Deadline in December!

The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) is headed to Daytona Beach for the **2013 Annual Conference and Exhibition January 15 to 18** at the Ocean Centre Convention Center. Registration and Program Information is available at [www.stma.org/2013-conference](http://www.stma.org/2013-conference).

Receive early bird discounts by registering by December 15, 2012. And remember, the Sports Turf Association (STA) is an International Affiliate Organization of the STMA. As such, STA members may register for the US organization's annual conference and exhibition at member rates. To access the STMA/STA member conference registration form log-in to the "Members Only" section of the STA website [www.sportsturfassociation.com](http://www.sportsturfassociation.com).

### Registration for OTS 2013 is Now Open!

Sports Turf Managers interested in attending the **Ontario Turfgrass Symposium, February 20 and 21** can register now by going to [www.TurfSymposium.ca](http://www.TurfSymposium.ca). The website is easy to use and provides both online and printable registration opportunities. Save money by taking advantage of the early bird fee when you register before January 11, 2013 and don't forget to indicate your STA membership on the registration form for the association discount.

Look to the website to provide other important information as it becomes available: continuing education credits, association functions and more. The print brochure for *Cultivate Your Mind*, OTS 2013, which we have excerpted on page 20, is now being distributed. Watch for your copy in the mail!

For further information contact the University of Guelph's Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support at 519.767.5000, [info@coles.uoguelph.ca](mailto:info@coles.uoguelph.ca).

### Watch for Details!

**The 50th Anniversary Western Canada Turfgrass Conference and Trade show will take place March 3 to 5** in sunny Penticton, British Columbia. Event organization is underway. Visit [www.wcta-online.com](http://www.wcta-online.com) for details as they become available from our Strategic Partners.



# History of Sports Field Turfgrass Surfaces

Continued from page 1

**OTS HIGHLIGHT**  
Presented February, 2012  
Guelph, Ontario.

Sport	First Played	
	Rules As Now Known	On Turfgrass
Lawn Bowls	c. 1600's	c. 1700's
Cricket	late-1600's	c. 1700's
Horse Racecourse	c. 1700's	c. 1800's
Soccer	1815	1815
Field Hockey	mid-1800's	mid-1800's
Baseball	1845	c. 1870's
Australian Rules Football	1858	1858
Lacrosse	1860	late-1860's
Rugby	1865	1865
Croquet	c. 1860's	c. 1860's
Lawn Tennis	1870	c. 1870's
American Football	c. 1880's	c. 1880's
Polo	c. 1860's	?
Softball	1934	1934

**Table 1.** Approximate time when team sports were played (a) with rules comparable to those now used and (b) on turfgrass.

wicket surface prior to play was a very early cultural practice. Eventually patches of excessive grass growth not removed by grazing sheep would have been cut by manual scything.

### Turfgrass Cultural Practices Evolve.

Team sports ground construction and cultural practices probably did not come into common usage until the 1850 to 1900 period. This coincides with nationalization of rules and extensive organization of sports clubs. Just how many of the groundsmen were employed part-time versus full-time is unclear. Dual use of sports fields was commonly practiced in the formative years from 1850 to 1900, with cricket outfields being used in the winter for soccer, field hockey, and/or even rugby.

### Sodding.

One may be surprised that a number of pioneering basic cultural practices originated for use on sports surfaces other than golf courses. Sodding was practiced on bowling greens by at least 1663. However, it was in Scotland that sodding came to the fore in the early-1700's via the use of natural sea-marsh turfgrass. The seaside salt marshes were preferred sod

manual scything would be minimized. This was a reasonable approach in the early days of relatively light usage and low turfgrass quality expectations of those who played on what were usually pasture areas. In-season shoot growth could vary significantly depending on the rainfall pattern, as supplemental irrigation was not available. Removal of excess vegetative growth was by the grazing of rabbits and/or sheep. As animal grazing also results in animal excrement, "sweeping" the bowling green and cricket

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Known Year	Cultural Practice
1660's	Sodding of bowling greens
early-1700's	Rolling of bowling greens
1700's	Sheep grazing of team sports fields
mid-1700's	Rolling of cricket wicket tables
late-1700's	Sand patching of thinned and damaged surfaces
1800's	Systemic method of root zone construction for bowling greens
1870's	Construction of surface contoured sports fields for drainage
1880's	Field surface markings for team sports fields - internal
c. mid-1800's	Manual-push mowing with reel units
late-1800's	Manual graiping/forking
late-1800's	Horse-drawn, single reel mowing
early-1900's	Horse-drawn rolling of sports fields
1912	Horse-drawn, gang-reel mowing
1920's	Light-weight sports field motorized power units
1935	Manual core cultivation
late-1930's	Tractor-drawn spiking and slicing units

**Table 2.** Chronological stages in the initiation of turfgrass cultural practices on various sports field surfaces. Year listed is when written documentation is available, but may have been utilized earlier.

harvesting sites as they were dominated by salt-tolerant bentgrass with a minimum weed content, plus fine-textured silt soils that facilitated ease of turfgrass cutting, lifting, and trimming.

For centuries turfgrass sods were manually harvested using a long-handled “turving iron” and “gauge box” plus “sheering knife” for underside soil trimming. Then a sled-like harvesting device was developed in the early-1900's that was attached to a set of long handles with a crossbar for kicking the fixed sod blade forward via a foot action. Larger horse-drawn sled cutters eventually evolved. It was not until 1944 that a motor-powered, mechanical sod cutter was invented.

### Rolling.

A second pioneering turfgrass cultural practice first used on bowling greens in Great Britain was rolling. It was being practiced by at least 1700 using heavy, carved stones. Rolling of cricket wickets followed by at least the mid-1700's, and was widely practiced in the early-1800's.

The rollers used evolved from carved stone to solid elm wood, to cast iron, to metal water ballast types. These rollers were manually pushed until the 1920's when motor-powered tractors became available to pull gang units.

### Patching.

What evolved to the practice of topdressing an entire green or cricket wicket probably originated as what was termed “sand patching”. When this practice was introduced lacks documentation. However, the need for smooth bowling greens probably led to patching by at least the late-1700's when rolling

use expanded. When organic materials were used in patching bare areas, they also were beneficial in stimulating turfgrass recovery as this was the only external source of key nutrients.

Early topdressing was applied by slinging in an arc with a flat-mouth shovel. Eventually a manual-push, side-wheel mechanical topdresser was developed in the early-1900's. The practice of topdressing declined during and after World War II. Its use did not increase until the development of the motor-powered, mechanical topdresser in the 1960's.

### Manuring.

The early nutrient application practices used animal manure. Aging in piles allowed particle fractionation that facilitated more uniform applications. This approach eventually evolved to what is now known as composting in the 1800's. The source of organic material for composting ranged from animal manures/scraps, as from abattoirs, to plant materials such as leaves and seed by-products. Layering of various organic

sources with sandy soil in piles became a common procedure, followed by periodic mechanical turning.

Use of manures declined in the 1920's, due to expansion of motor-powered vehicles and a resultant major reduction in the horse population, especially in urban areas. Consequently “artificial manures” or fertilizers came into common usage. The primary composition of these early fertilizers was from mineral sources.

### Grazing/Mowing.

Animals were the original biological mowers for sports played on grassy surfaces. Primitive turfgrass bowling greens were probably located on sites grazed by “cunnigers” or rabbits. The same probably occurred for cricket wickets. Early cricket outfields and soccer fields were biologically mowed with sheep.

An undulating, grazed pasture would have patches of excessive vegetative growth. As the desire for improved playing surfaces emerged, these patches would probably have been cut manually with a scythe. Just when this evolved is unclear.

The first manual-push mower was invented in 1830. Bowling greens were probably the first to be uniformly cut with a mechanical mower, since ball roll is a very basic aspect of the game. Just when or if push, reel mowers were used on other types of sports turfgrass surfaces is unclear. The horse-drawn, reel mower was invented in 1843. It was in use on some sports fields by the late-1800's. The multi-gang, horse-drawn, reel mower was invented in 1912, and was converted to a tractor-drawn variation in the 1920's. Development of the multi-gang, reel mower was a major advance in the maintenance of turfgrass sports fields.