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# Sports Turf Manager

FOR BETTER, SAFER SPORTS TURF. AUTUMN 2013.

**"I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers."** ~ L.M. Montgomery



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### REGULAR COLUMNS, DEPARTMENTS & SMALL FEATURES

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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 Winter 2013 Sports Turf Manager: November 1

Your email address must be registered with us to log-in to the Members Only Section

- Events – Your portal to our programs and events with all the details as they become available
- Sports Turf Manager of the Year Award – Criteria, purpose, eligibility, policies and the nomination form
- Board of Directors 2014 – Call for nominations and nomination form.

# Sports Turf Manager

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# President's Desk

BY PAUL GILLEN



STA President, Paul Gillen



Tab Buckner (R) presents Township of  
Langley Mayor Jack Froese with a small  
token of appreciation from the Organizing  
Committee of the West Coast Field Day.

**T**his has been a great year to be an Association member. Following up on the Halifax field day in the spring, at the end of August we sponsored the west coast field day in Langley, British Columbia with our Western Canada Turfgrass Association (WCTA) partners, and presented the 26th annual Ontario field day in Mississauga on September 19th.

The western event, their first, was an exceptional learning experience; not only with the guest speakers, but with five stations set around the exhibit area where one could gain first-hand insights into everything from field safety to irrigation to sand injection to synthetic turf maintenance. Kudos to Tab Buckner and Jerry Rousseau and their committee for a job well done; in spite of the adverse weather conditions! For all of those western members who missed this one, be sure to mark your calendars when you get the notification for the next as this is a concise short-cut to a lot of knowledge.

The Ontario day was great, as well. The venue at Mississauga was first class and ideal for the program. It just keeps getting better every year – congratulations to Lee Huether and the committee.

Mark your calendar now for our one day seminar Introduction to Synthetic Turf and Air-Supported Structures on November 13. This is being held in partnership with the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association and will be hosted in Guelph. If you are considering a synthetic field in the future, then this is the day for you and your management personnel. We will be touching on everything from the evolution of synthetic turf, the turf system, field safety, construction and maintenance together with air-supported structures explained, construction and operational considerations. This is an information packed agenda and always generates a lot of questions for our experienced presenters.

This year's Ontario Turfgrass Symposium is right around the corner. It seems early to be talking about a February event, but now is the time to make your plans. Aside from the great line-up of speakers, this year is even more important because of the changes coming to pesticide licensing regulations.

It's hard to believe that we are coming to the end of another year – it seems like yesterday that we were complaining about the cold spring weather! We trust that your fields were up to the stress and that you have the time and resources to put them to bed in a way that will ensure safe and playable conditions in the spring.

We look forward to seeing you at one or both of the upcoming programs. •

## NEW & RETURNING MEMBERS

### British Columbia

Bryan Wood  
West Shore Parks  
& Recreation  
Victoria, BC

### Ontario

Andrew D'Alfonso  
Nick DiGravio  
Joel Julien  
Seneca College  
Toronto, ON

Mary Battaglia  
City of Burlington, ON

Cindy Chambers  
City of Brampton, ON

Lynn Blanchard  
City of Cornwall, ON

Adam Brown  
Town of Orangeville, ON

Jamie Anderson  
City of Ottawa, ON

Brian Geerts  
City of Cambridge, ON

## Sports Turf Manager of the Year.

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE for all the details.  
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# Event Calendar

ASSOCIATION EVENTS ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN GREEN

## November 13

**Sports Turf Association/  
Ontario Recreation Facilities Association**  
**Introduction to Synthetic Turf and Air-Supported Structures**  
Guelph, ON  
[www.sportsturfassociation.com](http://www.sportsturfassociation.com)  
[www.orfa.com](http://www.orfa.com)

## November 29

**University of Guelph Diploma of Turfgrass Management  
Students  
Turfgrass Symposium**  
Guelph, ON  
[guelphturfsymposium@gmail.com](mailto:guelphturfsymposium@gmail.com)

## December 1

**Sports Turf Association**  
**Sports Turf Manager of the Year Award  
Nomination Deadline**  
[www.sportsturfassociation.com/Awards&Scholarship](http://www.sportsturfassociation.com/Awards&Scholarship)

2014

## January 7 to 9

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

## January 21 to 24

**Sports Turf Managers Association  
Conference & Exhibition**  
San Antonio, Texas  
[www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org)  
**STA members can register at STMA rates!**

## January 22 to 24

**Ontario Golf Superintendents' Association  
Ontario Golf Course Management Conference & Trade Show**  
Toronto, Ontario  
[www.ogsa.ca](http://www.ogsa.ca)

## January 27 to February 21

**University of Guelph  
Turf Managers' Short Course**  
Guelph, ON  
[www.turfmanagers.ca](http://www.turfmanagers.ca)

## February 17 to 21

**Western Canada Turfgrass Association/  
Canadian Golf Superintendents Association**  
**Canadian International Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show**  
Vancouver, BC  
[www.golfsupers.com/vancouver2014](http://www.golfsupers.com/vancouver2014)

## February 19 and 20

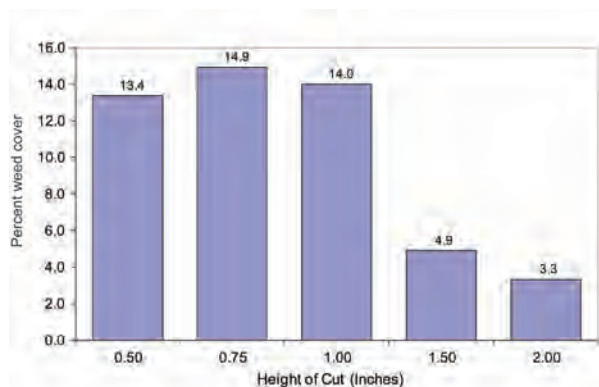
**Ontario Turfgrass Symposium**  
**The Changing Face of Turf**  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, ON  
[www.turfsymposium.ca](http://www.turfsymposium.ca)

## August 17 to 24

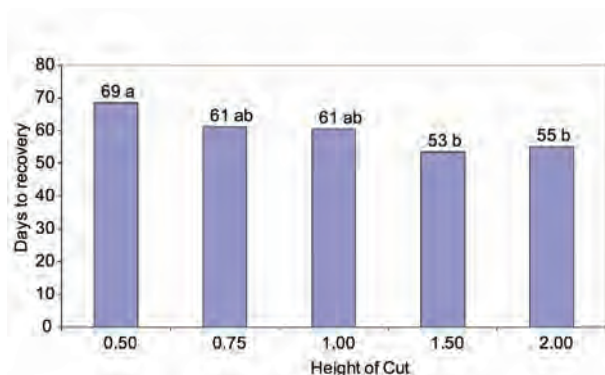
**International Symposium on Turfgrass Management and  
Science for Sports Fields**  
Part of the International Horticultural Congress  
Brisbane, Australia  
[http://www.ihc2014.org/symposium\\_29.html](http://www.ihc2014.org/symposium_29.html)

# Sports Turf Managers Must Address the Challenges of a Diverse Sport Loving Population

*Continued from page 1*



**Figure 1.** Percent weed cover of plots of Kentucky bluegrass cultivars mowed at different mowing heights. Each bar represents an average of four replicates.



**Figure 2.** Days to complete divot recovery of Kentucky bluegrass cultivars mowed at different mowing heights. Each bar represents a recovery of four divots per cultivar.

patterns and user groups. What follows is a summary of factors that sports turf managers should incorporate into their programs in order to serve their diverse client base, based on a few of the sports they may encounter.

## Soccer

The popularity of soccer in Canada particularly amongst youth, the most active segment of the population in sport, requires that management of multi-use fields must take into account the demands of soccer user groups as it is likely the game will be played on most fields at some point in time. Soccer has some advantages with regards to management, in that the field dimensions for the fields are somewhat variable, meaning it can fit on fields designed for other sports (Figure 3). In addition, different age groups play on different size fields. One common practice on soccer fields is to run two youth fields across each half of a full-length adult field. In order to help with preservation of the sidelines of the field, whatever the sport may be for the full sized field, make sure that the goalmouth of the youth field is beyond the sideline of the full sized field's sideline. This necessitates that lines be painted differently for the two different fields, but the increased quality of the sideline of a multi-use field may be worth it.

Soccer is a popular sport with a highly organized administrative structure. This leads to soccer being the most likely source of special requests and also complaints. Soccer teams often request low mowing heights for their sport. This is very difficult to achieve even with the new dwarf varieties of Kentucky bluegrass available. Research conducted at the Guelph Turfgrass Institute showed that low mowing heights on both dwarf and regular varieties of Kentucky bluegrass led to more weeds and slower divot recovery (Figure 1, 2). The lack of access to traditional herbicides limits our ability to achieve the desired quality under current budgetary constraints. This is while other sports are also requesting use of the fields, increasing the wear and tear. Soccer, with its administrative structure, makes it one of the easier user groups with which to

open lines of communication to explain the realities of sports turf management.

## Football

Football is the second most popular field (non-diamond) sport in Canada with respect to participation. Most of this is youth participation. Football has very rigid field dimension requirements and has permanent goal posts on each goal line. Football also has a predictable and defined wear pattern. If soccer and football share a field, considerable efficiencies can be achieved by concentrating overseeding and aeration events to the centre of the field, where the majority of the wear takes place. Often portable soccer goals are placed in front of the football goal posts. This preserves the goal line but also creates a wear spot on the 5-yard line where the ball is placed for the point after touchdown conversion (Figure 4). Often football is very seasonal and this provides opportunities to heavily overseed and repair divoting before the soccer groups begin to use the fields. It is important to focus overseeding on the centre of the goal line and out to the 5-yard line if a field is used by both soccer and football.

## Rugby

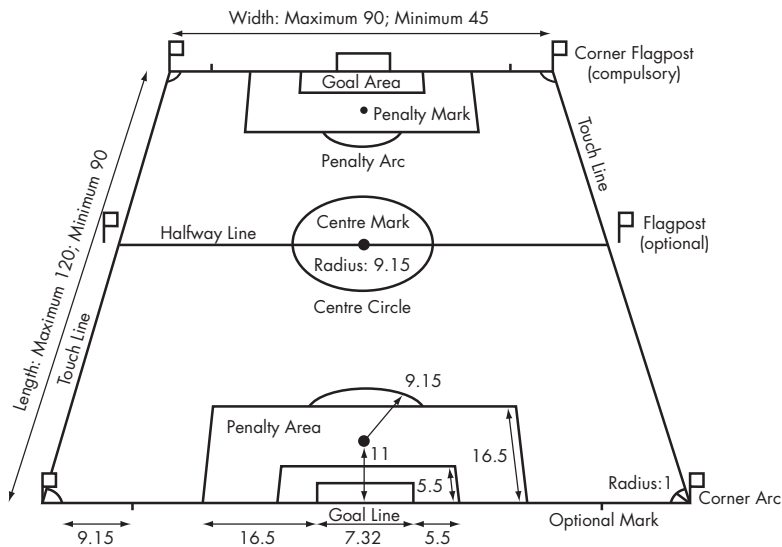
Rugby is in the top 25 of participation sports in Canada and although it has goal posts it does have flexible field dimensions that allow it to be played on a number of different sites. This is how the Canadian national team is able to play at BMO Field in Toronto. One of the aspects of rugby is a less defined wear pattern than football and soccer. This lessens the intensive wear down the centre of the field but also makes it harder to concentrate management practices when it is being played on a shared field. One of the crucial spots on a rugby field is between 5 and 10 meters from the sidelines as that is where many of the scrums take place on the field. This is important when considering the placement of youth soccer fields discussed earlier. Generally rugby has a culture of field preservation and can be a user group that is amenable to

## 10.0 FIELD DIMENSIONS

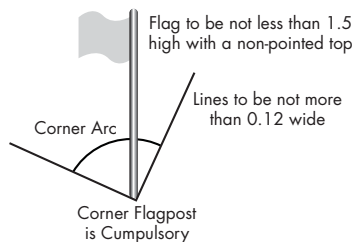
### 10.11 Soccer

All dimensions are in metres. Diagrams not to scale.

**Figure 3.** A diagram of acceptable soccer field dimensions reprinted from the Sports Turf Association's Athletic Field Construction Manual.



#### Corner Flagpost



Canadian Soccer Association • [www.canadasoccer.com](http://www.canadasoccer.com) • (613) 237-7678  
Federation Internationale de Football Association • [www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)



**Figure 4.** Wear from a soccer goal being placed in front of football goal post and the resulting wear spot on the 5-yard line of the football field.



**Figure 5.** Excessive wear caused by repetitive drills on a field shared by rugby, lacrosse and soccer.

opening lines of communication with regards to field preservation. Despite this, rugby is a physical sport and has drills that can cause severe damage to a field if they are repeated on one area of the field (Figure 5).

### Lacrosse

Although lacrosse is the national sport of Canada it is not as popular as many other sports across all age groups, but the participation by youth is similar to that of football and rugby. Lacrosse can lead to a number of interesting wear patterns, particularly from drills and practices. Lacrosse also has a very small goalmouth creating extensive wear in the vicinity of the net. In addition to the foot traffic there is the added damage from the sticks. Lacrosse is also played indoors and coaches and players may be less aware of the need for field preservation during practice because they are used to practicing on synthetic surfaces (Figure 6). One thing to remember about lacrosse is that the goalmouth is 13 meters from the end line. This places the goalmouth just beyond the penalty spot in soccer. If soccer and lacrosse must share a field it is important to stress the need for the lacrosse team to move the goalmouth off the field whenever possible during practice and drills.

### Cricket

Cricket is not in the top 25 sports in Canada but with recent immigration from



**Figure 6.** Circular wear pattern in the middle of a field caused by a lacrosse drill that used the soccer centre circle as a reference for the drill.

commonwealth countries it is one of the fastest growing sports in Canada according to the Cricket Canada website. For sports turf managers, one of the most important things to note is that the cricket pitch refers to the area where the ball is bowled to the batsman and where the wickets are located. Traditionally cricket pitches are mowed extremely low and the soil is compacted to provide an optimum bounce of the ball when bowled. This is unachievable with most municipal budgets and is only sustainable for the occasional competition. For this reason cricket pitches are often made from other materials such as synthetic turf and in other cases they can be constructed from clay materials similar to those used on clay tennis courts. Their small size with respect to the entire playing grounds makes this more economically attractive. Placement of cricket pitches is crucial as they must be surrounded by large fields but cannot be on the fields of play of other sports. They can be placed between two soccer fields or in the centre of two baseball or softball fields that have an area between their fences. Generally cricket players favour a smooth field so they prefer to be paired with sports with limited divoting of the field such as baseball, softball and even soccer. Pairing them with football, rugby and lacrosse is less desirable.

#### Ultimate Flying Disk

One sport that is popular amongst young adults is ultimate flying disk. Ultimate began as a counter culture sport in the late 1960's and 70's and is popular for its inclusive nature and its intent to not be overly competitive. One issue with ultimate is that it is played by young adults who as a group are the most abusive to fields with regards to wear due to both their size and athletic ability. In addition the most damaging part of the sport to fields is the rule that requires the players to pivot to avoid the defense. This pivoting causes severe turfgrass damage because most of the athletes are wearing cleats. Ultimate was originally supposed to require no special equipment. The wearing of cleats while playing ultimate causes much more severe wear than even physical sports such as rugby and football. In addition the demographic of groups that play ultimate, allow them to book lighted fields later for night play allowing for more wear on the fields.

Ultimate leagues are often run as for-profit social leagues so dealing with issues regarding wear can be addressed in a number of ways. One is to make sure that the organizer of the league is aware of the additional costs of excessive wear the sport may cause. In addition, a premium fee can be charged for sports dominated by adult social leagues run as a for-profit endeavor, thus assuring that sport is available to youth at an affordable rate. Finally sports such as ultimate that can cause severe wear can be segregated from the other sports so the actual wear and costs of recovery can be calculated so that appropriate fees can be determined and charged.


#### Summary

Canada has a diverse sporting history and unlike our neighbours to the south, most of our fields undergo constant use through the entire growing season and are used by multiple sports. The key to managing multi-use fields is to understand the sports being played and their respective wear patterns. This allows the

turfgrass manager to work with the booking manager of the fields to make sure that sports that can optimize efficiencies with respect to wear can be placed together.

One of the goals of the sports turf manager in Canada should be to provide sport for the diverse multicultural sporting community that resides here. In order to do this the sports turf manager must understand the sports being played. Managers must also open lines of communication with the user groups. The specialized user groups need to be listened to and in return they must be educated as to how their sport affects the fields and what they can do to preserve the integrity of the fields for their own sport and for other user groups. •

Sport Participation 2010 Research Paper, Canadian Heritage, February 2013  
[http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/pc-ch/CH24-1-2012-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/pc-ch/CH24-1-2012-eng.pdf)



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# Eight Steps to an Easy Field Facelift

Jeffrey T. Fowler, *Penn State Cooperative Extension*

Over the last 10 years I have been called to countless athletic fields to lend some advice to the athletic field manager, school custodian or the school board member who wanted a "better" field for the young athletes in their district. After a few stops with similar answers, I realized that many people were forgetting the basic steps that we need to keep in the forefront when maintaining athletic fields. Each of these eight steps has been or could be written in its own book form, but this article serves as a friendly reminder of the basics.

## 1. Soil Testing

Soil testing is the first step in any field facelift. Without a soil test we have no idea what the soil needs and thus what the turf plant needs to thrive. I like to compare soil testing to a human blood pressure. Medical professionals can tell a lot about our health by taking our blood pressure. Turf professionals can tell a lot about our soil's health by conducting a simple soil test. This test will give you the soil pH and nutrient levels present in the sample.

A soil test is conducted by taking 20 - 32 core samples on the field, mixing them together and allowing them to dry. Taking a representative sample and sending it to a certified laboratory. Check with your provincial agricultural ministry for a list of laboratories that can perform this test. In Ontario they are listed at [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/resource/soillabs.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/resource/soillabs.htm). The cost of this inexpensive test will pay for itself many times over in the amount you save on lime and fertilizer expenses.

## 2. Lime and Fertilizer

Dollar for dollar fertilization does more to improve poor quality turfgrass than any other single management practice. Proper fertilization practices will produce a dense,

medium to dark green turf that resists pests and environmental stresses. However, careless application techniques and/or applying excessive amounts of fertilizer at the wrong time of the year can result in serious turf damage and contamination of water resources. Successful turf maintenance fertilization requires an assessment of the nutritional requirements of your turf, an understanding of fertilizers, how much and when fertilizers should be applied, as well as proper application techniques.<sup>1</sup>

## 3. Mowing

Whether we are mowing with a reel type or rotary type mower we need to make sure that we are always using a sharp blade. Mowing frequency depends upon the rate of growth. We should never remove more than one-third of the green growth in one mowing. If we want to maintain a height of 5 cm, we should mow when the plant reaches 7.5 cm. Clippings do not need to be removed as long as we maintain a regular mowing schedule.

## 4. Aeration

Aeration is the process of disturbing the soil to relieve compaction. Compacted soil does not allow proper air, water, and nutrient penetration and makes it difficult for proper plant root growth. Core removal should be performed at least two times a year when the plants are actively growing. There are many different aeration methods that can be used during the playing season that will not disrupt play.

## 5. Topdressing

Topdressing is the addition of sand or soil to the surface of the turf. Topdressing gives the sports turf manager a chance to improve the soil quality, improve the seedbed for new plants and rooting of both new and existing

