

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, and 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.

Often, when a purchaser is considering a synthetic infill sports field system, the synthetic field salesman will promote the concept of "maintenance free" or "easy to maintain." We saw how acorns, leaves, trash, broken glass, weeds and sun flower seeds present ongoing maintenance problems. Normal field use contributes to rubber crumb migration and uneven distribution causing high and low spots. From this sports field manager's perspective, it seems that keeping up a synthetic sports field surface requires a different but equally time consuming maintenance protocol to maintain similar quality standards as on a natural grass

sports field. A very good question and answer period followed.

Brad Park, Rutgers University Sports Turf Research & Education Coordinator led a discussion of synthetic sports field safety and hardness testing. All sports field surfaces, whether natural grass or synthetic develop surface hardness over a period of time. Impact testing (commonly referred to as G-max testing) is used to measure the shock-absorbing properties of sports surfaces. The higher the G-max value, the lower the shock-absorbing properties of the surface. G-max testing involves measuring the shock absorbing properties of a playing surface *in situ*, and comparing the results against a standard. The most commonly used standard is the one established by ASTM International. If the standard isn't met, the field is considered unsafe and remediation is required. Brad demonstrated a Clegg Impact Tester and measured surface hardness before and after field grooming.

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.

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