



Lacey Township – Hebrew Park Soccer Field No. 1 wins the SFMANJ 2009 Field of the Year

By Scott Bills, CSFM

Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ) received eight entries for the 2009 Field of the Year contest from six members. The entries included: Central Regional High School, Varsity Baseball Field, Sam Pepe; Hammonton High School, Robert Capoferri Football Field, Frank LaSasso; Lacey Township, Hebrew Park Soccer Field No. 1, J. Casey Parker; Middlesex County Parks Dept., Waterfront



Managed by J. Casey Parker, Hebrew Park Soccer Field No. 1, Lacey Township, NJ was selected as the 2009 SFMANJ Field of the Year.

Park Baseball Field and Football Field, Larry Mayerowitz; Moorestown High School, Stadium Football Field, Greg McCarty; and City of Wildwood, Maxwell Field Baseball Field and Football Field, Rich Hans.

During the fall, I had the opportunity to visit all of the fields and interview the sports field managers. A common denominator among all of the members was how much they cared about the fields. Despite the same budget woes, weather issues and over-use, these members found a way to maintain above average fields.

The evaluation process to determine the Field of the Year included examining the three main factors a sports field manager should always consider: Safety, Playability and Appearance. In addition, interviewing each member to learn about their background and philosophy helped in the evaluation process.

The following questions were asked of each member regarding their management practices.

1. Do you have direct responsibility for the field or do you supervise others who actually do the work?
2. Do you directly develop the turf management program and budget for the field?
3. Do you have the authority to determine whether the field is playable during inclement weather?
4. Do you regularly attend classes, clinics or field days? Do you encourage other on your staff to attend?
5. Do you now or have you had a mentor that you relied on to help learn about sport field management?
6. What makes you a competent sports field manager?

Continued on page 7

"FIELD OF THE YEAR 2009"

Continued from page 1

The following questions were asked regarding the field history and management.

1. How many games are played on the field each year and what different sports use the field?
2. When was the field built and was any major renovation done in the past 5 years?
3. Did you have any responsibility for the renovation?
4. How is the field irrigated?
5. Do you perform soil testing?
6. What is your philosophy regarding turf care, infield grooming and pitcher's mound/home plate care?

In addition, we discussed cultural practices such as mowing, aeration, topdressing and field rotation. Finally, as is the case with most fields I visit, we discussed field use. The most revealing information I received from each of the turf managers was they were in control of field use. Although each member may not have direct authority to cancel games or limit use, they had the confidence of athletic directors, coaches or administration to control use so the fields would not be abused. Each member understood and more importantly knew how to communicate to others why field use needed to be managed.

After the evaluation process, I had to choose a winner. What made one field stand out from the others? To be honest, this year's winner, J. Casey Parker and Lacey Township, made it easy. All of the other fields were managed and maintained as a 'Field of the Year' should. The difference with Hebrew Park Soccer Field No. 1 was the effort Casey put into renovating a field that was unsafe and barely playable. Casey used his background in site work to design and implement a plan to renovate the field. The scope of the project would have been unaffordable to the town if they went the traditional route of hiring an engineer, soliciting bids and hiring a private contractor at prevailing wages. To save money, Casey utilized the resources available to him. The original field was lower than the surrounding grades and would flood regularly. The playing surface was uneven and there was barely 50% turf cover. The design included raising the field nearly two feet, requiring 2,500 cubic yards of fill and topsoil. The material was spread with bulldozers and finished with a laser-guided road grader. The topsoil was amended with Ocean-Gro to add organic matter. The

field was seeded three times with 90% Tall Fescue mix. All of the work was performed with township employees, saving Lacey Township thousands of dollars. Casey wisely convinced the parks department and soccer club to let the field grow in during the spring and summer. The field was opened for play on September 15th, nearly one year after start of construction. Without a doubt, allowing one full season for grow-in, was the most important decision Casey made.

The overall scope of the project, plus Casey's ability to unite the town, turned a liability into an asset for Lacey Township. Our Association would like to congratulate Casey for his SFMANJ 2009 Field of the Year.

All SFMANJ members responsible for managing natural turfgrass fields are encouraged to submit entries for the 2010 Field of the Year. Please see contest rules on page 14 of this issue of SFMANJ Update.

Scott Bills is a Certified Sports Field Managers (CSFM); Sales Consultant, Northern Nurseries; and SFMANJ Secretary

NATIONAL SEED PROFESSIONAL TURF PRODUCTS

**Specializing in Quality
Grass Seed to Meet All Your
Turf Performance Standards**

Call For a Catalog

800-828-5856

Carry a full line of quality mixtures
especially formulated for:
SPORTS & ATHLETIC FIELDS

LOW MAINTENANCE AREAS

GENERAL GROUNDS

GOLF, LAWN & RECLAMATION

**Technical Agronomic Support and
Custom Blending Available**