

UPDATE

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Sports Field

Managers Association of New Jersey



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Currently we have 221 new & renewed members. Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey has mailed invoices for 2020 membership dues to all current members. If you did not receive an invoice, please register on our website, www.sfmanj.org. Contact us at 856.514.3179 with any questions. Checks can be mailed to SFMANJ, PO Box 205, Pennsville, NJ 08070.

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SFMANJ Update is looking for authors.

Please feel free to send Brad Park, Editor, SFMANJ Update (park@aesop.rutgers.edu) and/or Debbie Savard, SFMANJ Executive Secretary (mail@sfmanj.org) an article regarding your fields, your experiences, your problems and your surprises.

SFMANJ Update can accommodate articles of differing lengths and welcomes pictures. The SFMANJ Membership will benefit from reading your story.

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Committed to enhancing the professionalism of athletic field managers by improving the safety, playability and appearance of athletic fields at all levels through seminars, field days, publications and networking with those in the sports turf industry.

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SFMANJ does not necessarily support the opinions of those reflected in the following articles.

A Message from the President

by Zack Holm

2020 has been a year unlike any other. First and foremost, I hope all of you, your family's and friends are well. This year many of us have had to take on roles we never had before or had to alter how we have managed our fields, but we have shown that we can prevail through difficult times. While 2021 will still be difficult with reduced budgets and staff, we will still be asked to produce the same results.

Please use your board and SFMANJ as a resource for help during these times. Please use the free resources provided by STMA in their "road to Recovery" section.

Your board and I are disappointed we were not able to meet at all this year but look forward to being able to see all of you again next year. As always, if there is anything we can do, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Zach Holm, CSFM is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM), member of the New York Red Bulls sports turf management team, and SFMANJ President

2021 Calendar of Events

R

2021 Rutgers NJAES OCPE Courses
Two-Day Athletic Field Maintenance
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We Miss You!

by Debbie Savard

It seems like its been FOREVER since we have had the opportunity to be together! And the end of this situation does not seem to be in sight!

Last spring SFMANJ had a wonderful Field Day planned at MetLife Stadium, which was actually several years on the drawing board. Who wouldn't want to go behind the scenes at a professional facility that housed not only one, but two National Football Teams? To visit the training rooms and locker rooms. To stand on the 50 yard line and to talk with the people who make the field look so good. What sponsor would not like to see their advertisement up on the multiple television screens around the trade show floor, being repeated over and over throughout the day? What a great experience that would have been.

But then Covid hit. We still hoped that the event would go on, but Covid had other plans. The day was cancelled, but we were sure that this wouldn't last long. We were sure that it would only be a matter of time before things got back to normal, then one by one other events began to be cancelled or postponed to a later date. Who would have thought that the effects of this virus would last this long.

The Rutgers' May Golf outing was postponed to October, only to be cancelled. The Rutgers July Adelpia events, including the SFMANJ Trade Show were postponed to October and shortened to one day, but eventually cancelled as well.

With a glimmer of hope, SFMANJ went ahead and planned a fall field day at Delbarton School in Morristown, NJ, the site of our 2019 Field of the Year winner, for September. Alas, the venue was lost due to the virus.

The New Jersey Green Expo has been cancelled this year along with the STMA Conference on January 10-14, 2021 in Palm Springs CA.

But we are hopeful that there is a little flicker of light at the end of the tunnel. We may not get back to the "normal" we remember - not for a long time, but perhaps a new normal where we can gather and learn. It is with this hope, that SFMANJ is again planning another field day for the spring of 2021. It may happen and it may not, but if it does we want to be ready and are we anxious to see all of you!

In the meantime, please remember that we are here for you with any questions or concerns that you may have. The organization will press on. Please remember to renew your membership dues for 2021. The renewal process is new and is handled through our website, but call the office if you have any trouble. Vendors, your participation is always welcome. There may not be a field day to sponsor, but please consider donating to the SFMANJ Scholarship fund, placing an ad in Update or sponsoring an event like the Field of the Year Contest.

And we would like to hear from you! Please send us a paragraph or just a sentence or two recounting any of your experiences during the past six months. It could be something you found hard to deal with, something heartbreaking, something funny or something uplifting. Just put it in an email - it won't take you long - and send it to mail@sfmanj.org. It would be nice to publish them all together in the next issue of Update.

In the meantime, stay safe, stay healthy and stay optimistic. We **WILL** see you soon!

Debbie Savard is the SFMANJ Executive Secretary

Student members of SFMANJ are welcome to enter this year's scholarship contest.

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Here you can check your membership status, renew your dues, register for events, take out ads in Update, and find out the latest information regarding SFMANJ

The Intelligent Use of Water

By Heath Traver

Winterizing an Irrigation System

This article offers tips, tricks and other information that will come in handy when winterizing an irrigation system. However, I'd like to begin by talking about water at the molecular level. Typically, when a substance gets colder, the molecules pull in tighter to one another, thereby shrinking and increasing in density, which explains why substances turn into a solid when they reach their freezing point. Water, however, is one of the only substances in the known universe that expands when it freezes, becoming less dense. This rare characteristic explains why ice floats. If ice were to sink, bodies of water would freeze solid. Rather, it floats and insulates the water beneath the ice. This behavior makes life on earth possible.

This fascinating trait is also the reason that we must winterize irrigation systems in cold climates. If water were allowed to freeze within the system, it would expand and probably do damage to the components. When located outside, the backflow device is usually the most susceptible component on the system. It is typically installed above ground, and is mostly made of brass, which is an excellent conductor. Therefore, every year right around Thanksgiving, backflows on systems that haven't been winterized will rupture and water will flood the respective areas. Often times, the backflow is the most expensive component on the system. A 2" RPZ, which is very common on a sports field can cost around \$1,000 to replace. Of course, the backflow doesn't explode the second the temperature drops below 32 degrees. It usually takes about 2 days of the temperature being below freezing. Obviously, this timeline will change depending on the actual temperature and the size of the backflow.

effectively and safely winterize the system, an irrigation contractor should be hired to perform the service. If you decide to winterize your system, eye protection should be worn because we are working with compressed air.

When selecting an air compressor, high volume and low pressure is important. The compressor should be able to supply 10-25 cubic feet per minute at 50 PSI. Often times, shop compressors with small holding tanks are utilized by allowing the tank to fill and then rapidly opening the valve to send bursts of air into the system. This creates high pressure within the system which could damage the components. It is also not as effective.



The first thing that must happen when winterizing the irrigation system, is that the main shut off valve for the system must be closed, cutting off the water source. If there is a pump of any kind, the power should be shut off. If a pump tries to run with no water going through it, the pump could sustain catastrophic damage. If there is a pump

relay on the system, it is recommended that the wire should be removed from the Master Valve terminal in the controller. This is an extra precaution in the event that somebody inadvertently turns the power back on to the pump. Next, an air hose must be run from the compressor to the blow-out connection, which is typically located near the main shut off valve.

This next point is very important. Before blowing air into the system, it must be verified that there is somewhere for the air to go. If compressed air into is blown into the main line, and none of the

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There are 3 methods for winterizing an irrigation system: manual bleeding, automatic drain valves and forced air. Since more than 99% of the systems in our region require the forced air method, this is the one we will talk about here. This method involves running a hose from an air compressor to a blow-out point on the system, and blowing air through the lines until the water has been evacuated.

Before we get into the actual process of winterizing the system, it should be mentioned that if you are not 100% sure that you can



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or to make a change.

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FOOTBALL FIELD MAINTENANCE FOR NATURAL TURF FIELDS ABOVE THE TRANSITION ZONE

By Rich Watson

Editor's Note: This article first appeared as a two-part series in the Summer and Fall 2013 issues of SFMANJ Update. The author was Sports Field Manager, Pine Hill Public Schools, Pine Hill, NJ at the time of authorship.

Part I

As I am writing this article, winter is starting to wind down and attention to spring sports is about to begin. Baseball, softball, track and field, tennis and lacrosse will be in full swing shortly just as the weather becomes bearable for outdoor sports. As conference season comes to a close, I can recall many great talks about baseball field maintenance for all different levels of competition. There are many sources of information about the craft of maintaining baseball fields. However, when it comes to the sport of football, I don't recall any talks or articles about maintaining a high school field or any other type of football field.

I recently spent some time talking with Tony Leonard of the Philadelphia Eagles on our way back from the STMA conference in Daytona. Even at the highest level of completion, Tony is often asked "why can't you grow grass on that field"? During our discussion, I found out that there are many reasons why it is difficult. Sharing the stadium with Temple University, dealing with shade issues, hosting many non-football related events and a very narrow set of hash marks are just a few of the hurdles that Tony and his crew face. In addition, the Pro game is played by the largest athletes in all of sport. The fact that they play the bulk of the game in a very small area of the field causes a variety of maintenance problems.

Tony has adjusted by changing his field over to bermudagrass. This allows him to get through most of the season on a very durable surface. As the weather cools the bermudagrass is removed to the depth of 1.5 inches and thick cut Kentucky bluegrass sod is installed to finish out the late season schedule with good turf cover. This process has been very successful for Tony and the Eagles.

While this may be a good answer on the professional level, what about those of us on the high school or park and recreation level. Are there answers to the problems we deal with on our football fields or are we facing a future with plastic football fields as the solution? I don't claim to have all of the answers, but we have had a lot of success with the maintenance of our football fields. Our maintenance program doesn't begin and end with the football season but rather focusses on a yearlong approach. The new season begins as the old one ends.

Enjoy an Early Spring

Spring is a very important time for football fields. The fall season really wears out most fields and springtime is usually the time that significant recovery can take place. This process can be slowed by lacrosse but recovery must be taken into consideration regardless. March 1 in NJ is the first day you can apply fertilizer **legally** and we do. At least 0.5 lbs of nitrogen (N) per 1000 square feet are applied

as ammonium sulfate. This provides food for the new turf planted at the end of last season and promotes growth of established turf also. In addition to an early application of N, there must be a concentrated effort made to begin mowing to remove dormant turf and promote new growth. It is tempting to allow football fields to lie dormant in early spring. There are a lot of other things going on and football is not one of them. Don't fall in to this trap. The quicker your turf is actively growing, the quicker it has the ability to establish and endure the stress of drought and pest pressures that are coming later in the spring and summer. Fertilizer is provided on an as-needed basis during the spring with the intention of not applying more than 0.5 lbs N per 1000 square feet per month.

Aeration

Aeration is something that is very important but commonly overlooked. In our case, we have a core-aerator but have no good way to clean up the messy cores. In addition to the mess, coring during the football season may not always provide the results you are looking for. Problems occur during the season if you open up a worn field by coring. Sometimes because of a busy schedule there is not enough time for the field to heal before the next game is played. This can cause a poorly rooted field to suffer damage even though that was not the intention. At Overbrook we have found a nice window of opportunity right after Memorial Day. Early June is after our spring season and usually before the weather gets too hot. The fields seem to really respond well at this time of year. The turf is actively growing and our activities are limited. We try to make up for the few coring opportunities that are available by using our slicing aerator when we are seeing signs of compaction. This aerator provides us the ability to open things up without disturbing the playing surface. It is a very valuable tool that also aides us in our fall over seeding program by providing a nice seedbed. Another added benefit of slice aerating is the ability to find grub damage quickly during August and early September. It is much better for us to find grub damage and treat it, rather than an injury occurring due to field conditions. Ultimately, it is up to the turf manager to find the right time and aerator for your site.

Summer Stress

Summertime is a time of rest for our football turf. We are lucky that there is very little activity during the summer months until football camp opens around August 15th. Our cutting height is raised to 3.0 inches and mowing frequency is set at 3 to 4 times per week. The thinking is that I don't want to put any extra stress on the turf than is necessary. Last year we went away from applying N during July with some success in suppressing dollar spot. Replacing

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Dealing with Field Wear

Field wear is a normal occurrence in our business and it is probably happening on your field while you are reading this. Whether it is a practice field or a game field, wear patterns develop as feet and turf collide. It is not your fault, and it doesn't usually go away. Don't get mad or get even, instead, just get more effective.

When I know what kind of damage I am experiencing, I can take appropriate remedial steps. Damage from field use in the form of soil compaction, leaf abrasion, or divoting are most common. Soil compaction occurs when soil particles become mashed together tightly by feet or wheels, (often when the soil is wet) resulting in restricted air and water movement through the rootzone. Mechanical aeration in its many forms helps to relieve compaction. Leaf abrasion occurs when the green plant tissues become ruptured causing the tissues to turn brown and die. Maintaining good soil fertility promotes new shoot growth to replace the damaged parts. Divoting occurs when turf plants are ripped out by the roots, often from cleats. Divoting can be minimized by maintaining a dense stand of turf with a dense, deep root system, but despite your best efforts, some damage is likely to occur. When that happens, replace the divots as soon as possible and fill in the chunked out holes with soil mix and seed to help repair the damage.

The common theme points to good cultural practices. A quality turf management program begins with good cultural practices. Our job is to reduce turf stress by creating the best possible conditions for turf health. So, even if all you can do is nothing but grass cutting, at least mow correctly, that is, mow at the right mowing height (for your specific site), removing no more than 1/3 of the growth at one time, and mowing with a sharp mower blade.

As mentioned previously, mechanical aeration, in its many forms is an excellent defense against field wear. The benefits include: reduction in soil bulk density, faster water infiltration into the rootzone, venting the rootzone so that oxygen can reach the roots and soil gases can escape, aiding in thatch control and opening the surface for improved seed to soil contact when overseeding the field. According to **the UConn Turfgrass Best Management**

Practices for Pesticide-Free Cool-Season Athletic Fields Bulletin B-0200 – October 2013 (Henderson, J.; Wallace, V.; Campbell, J.):

“Aggressive overseeding is one of the most important cultural practices required to maintain acceptable turfgrass quality and playing conditions on a high traffic/pesticide-free athletic field.

Aggressive overseeding can be defined as applying seed (at rates exceeding the typical recommended ranges for seedling establishment) onto well-established turfgrass areas, regardless of turfgrass density, in an effort to maintain/increase desirable species on athletic fields subject to intense traffic (Minner et al., 2008).

Selection of turfgrass species and timing of application depends heavily on when the most intense athletic field use occurs. Given budgetary restrictions, overseeding efforts can be focused on concentrated traffic areas. Perennial ryegrass [PR] is the preferred turfgrass species for aggressive overseeding due to its quick germination, speed of establishment and its ability to develop under heavily trafficked conditions (Minner et al., 2008). However, consider a Kentucky bluegrass [KB]/perennial ryegrass (70:30) mixture (by weight) for spring re-establishment to help maintain Kentucky bluegrass populations on fall use athletic fields (Stier et al., 2008). Kentucky bluegrass has a rhizomatous growth habit that helps wear recovery.

Maintaining multiple species on the playing surface (i.e. KB:PR) also helps maintain genetic diversity for disease management.

Seed should be broadcast immediately prior to a cleated practice or game allowing players to work seed into the soil and optimize seed to soil contact. If traffic is not imminent, seed should be applied using a spike seeder that will maximize seed to soil contact while minimizing damage to the existing turfgrass stand

If the athletic field is used May-August, apply 3-5 lbs. of PR seed/1000ft² per month.

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FOOTBALL FIELD MAINTENANCE FOR NATURAL TURF FIELDS ABOVE THE TRANSITION ZONE Continued from page 7

it with an application of 0-0-62 worked well as we had very little dollar spot last summer as compared to past years. This year we may make an additional application in August to see if it reduces our susceptibility to brown patch. Fungicides are not part of our maintenance program so we are constantly making adjustments to see if we can suppress disease without their use. With that in mind, our irrigation routine is based on need not schedule. This sounds like common sense but it gets complicated with tricky summer weather. The fields are checked daily for soil moisture and then irrigated or not based on this information. I have found that it is ok to get a little dry over the summer. Proper water management is crucial for surviving summer heat and humidity. Please don't set your timer box and forget it.

Part 2

With football season in full swing right now, let's look back at how it got started in August. Football season starts around the middle of the month but it actually begins for us around August 1. This is when the fields are laid out. Before the fields are painted we cut in a football pattern consisting of end zones cut in the same direction and every five yards cut in the opposite direction. This is done to burn the pattern in without having to waste paint before field use begins.

Consistent mowing throughout the season is very important. Mowing the same pattern for three months or longer may not be the best thing for the health of your turf. We try to cut a different pattern at least once a week usually before painting with the hope that this will serve as a clean-up cut by keeping the grass blades from laying over and not standing back up. With the pattern burned in, it's time to paint and get ready for practice.

The weather has been pretty unpredictable over the past couple of years. We have had wet weather that causes a lot of damage due to the repetitive nature of football practice. Our coaches do a great job of moving around but sometimes damage is inevitable.

After a wet practice we will sometimes use a light roller to push down damaged turf and broadcast perennial rye seed. This process is used in wet or dry conditions in order to keep up with field damage. Seed is the great equalizer in this equation. It allows us to keep some turf cover. Summer camp is different from our regular practices during the school year. Practices are longer and are held six days a week for around three weeks. In addition to seeding, managing moisture is probably the key to surviving this time of the season. During warm weather irrigation is run just after practice to help the turf recover and allow plenty of time to dry before the next practice. A wet field can be ruined in a single practice. Monitoring

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Run the lines

By Bernard Luongo

When I was a young man many sports seasons ago our household had a subscription to Readers Digest. While there was many a good serious article with excellent content there was also small columns about humor in life. One that always caught my attention was the Humor in Uniform column. Now there is a serious profession with dedicated people, a lot of training, in charge of a lot of territory, and they wear a uniform. Sound familiar? Now, if they can find humor in what they do, what do we have?

Now, don't get the wrong impression, I don't want to turn our newsletter into an Alfred E. Newman Mad Magazine rag, but I know we have better stuff than that. We as professional Turfmeisters have stories to tell. Heck, it happens several times a day. One that I know of we all share and I liken it to the running of the bulls in Spain. It is what I like to call the running of the lines. Whether it's lacrosse in the spring, or field hockey or soccer in the fall, the rallying cry that is heard at the start of every practice throughout the state is RUN THE LINES. Like the bulls in Spain, don't get in their way. They don't stop. Even on the hardwood floor in the winter time. RUN THE LINES. I am beginning to wonder with all the running of the lines that coaches in previous lives must have been fishing captains.

If you are a new Turfmeister and never witnessed this phenomenon of nature you are in for a treat. This event would make any 5th grade geometry teacher proud. A herd, running in unison, following a parallel line and cutting the most perfect 90-degree angle on a beautiful green plane. Now folks, if that is not geometry, I don't know what is. I am most tempted just to humor myself to prove a point (sometimes explaining to coaches in layman terms the consequences of 'running the lines' just doesn't sink in). So maybe a visual is worth a thousand words. Sometime this fall, after the players have been running the lines for two weeks, I am going to extend the perimeter line by 50 feet (geometry again), sit back and watch them run the lines. If the experiment goes to plan, they will run right off the grid. I wonder if they run out of line if the ones out front will stop and all the others will run into them. It would be quite a sight. I will let you know how it turns out in the next issue. Keep on turfing.

Bernard Luongo is a retired sports turf manager; Past-President, SFMANJ; and current member of the SFMANJ Board of Directors.

Continued from page 6

The Intelligent Use of Water

zone valves are open, the air pressure in the main line will build up and will most likely rupture the pipe at its weakest point. Typically, a zone is turned on at the controller which will hold the zone valve open. The air valve on the running compressor should be opened slowly. It is important to observe anytime air is being pumped into the system. This gives us the opportunity to react if anything goes wrong in order to minimize any potential damage. Once the water has finished coming out of all of the heads, we can continue to the next zone. It's important to note that most gear-driven heads are lubricated by water. Therefore, air shouldn't continue to be forced through them after the water has been evacuated from the pipes. This could potentially heat up and damage the heads. Continue blowing out all of the zones. Once complete, the zones should be blown out one more time (about 15 seconds each) to evacuate any water which has settled after the initial blow out.

As the final zone is blowing out, turn off the compressor. Once again, the zone valve should still be open until the compressor is shut down, because air pressure will build up in the system if it has nowhere to go. Unhook the hose, and winterize the backflow. The manufacturer's instructions on how to winterize the unit should be followed. Typically, all of the test ports should be left open, allowing the system to "breathe", and the ball valves should be left at 45 degrees to keep water out of the seals.

The controller should be left in the "off" position. Leaving it plugged in will keep a little heat within the unit, evaporating any moisture away from the electronics.

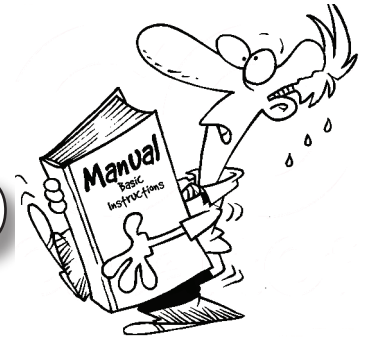
If there is a pump on the system, the manufacturer's instructions for winterizing the unit should be followed. Typically, there are drain plugs at the base of the unit, which will allow gravity to drain the water out of the pump. If you aren't 100% sure about winterizing a pump, a contractor should be hired to perform this service, as pumps tend to be very expensive.

Each system is different, and will require different methods for an effective winterization, but one thing tends to be universal: All of the potential issues that go hand-in-hand with managing an irrigation system disappear once it has been put to bed for the winter.

Heath Traver, CIC, CLIA is a Specification Manager for Rain Bird in the Northeast US and is licensed to practice irrigation in the state of New Jersey. Heath can be reached at htraver@rainbird.com.

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WHAT MANUAL?



By Fred Castenschiold

I have been selling quality turf care equipment for over forty years. I am still amazed how so few customers refer to their owners/operator manuals until it is too late or not at all. These manuals are a great source of information for the supervisor, operator and mechanic.

When taking in a trade on equipment, I try to always recover the original manuals from the account to pass on to the new owner. Often the condition of these manuals condition indicates that they have not been referred-to much! It is a good idea to always record the model and serial number of the equipment on the cover of the manual for quick reference when discussing the need for service or parts. It also a good idea to make sure you read and understand the operators' manual for your machine before operating or servicing it. Become familiar with all safety signs (decals) on the machine. Some manufacturers provide operator training videos which help demonstrate procedures for safe operation and daily maintenance.

Preventative maintenance of your equipment will help you to get the most out of your investment. If you do not have a preventative maintenance program it would be good to start one soon. Sometimes we go long stretches between those rainy day opportunities. Doing scheduled maintenance and adjustments will prolong the life of your equipment, help prevent expensive downtime and give the best possible quality of cut and performance. Experience has shown that a high percentage of problems have developed over a period of time and could have been prevented by adjustment, lubrication, or other required maintenance.

When referring to the manual, take into consideration how harsh your conditions are and remember that manufacturer recommendations for service are the minimum requirements. If we have a long dry spell and your equipment is working daily in a particularly dusty environment you may wish to consider oil and air filter changes more often.

Some of my customers have come-up with great maintenance schedules which they live by. Keeping records for each machine insures that maintenance procedures are being performed at the proper time. These records could also help you predict parts to

have on hand. By keeping blades, belts, filters, etc. on-hand, you will not be caught in a situation where important maintenance was not performed on-schedule because of a lack of parts.

Know what is contained in your manufacturer's warranty. Most warranties are two years in the commercial field. When talking to a service manager regarding a possible warranty issue you will need to refer to those model and serial numbers. Remember? ... The model and serial numbers you wrote down on the front cover of your manual!



Please Don't Be A Victim!

As we get into more sophisticated equipment in the sportsfield industry such as tractor mounted aerators, PTO powered dethatchers, blowers, batwing mowers, etc., etc., as operators we must be extremely careful with moving parts. The first dozen or so pages of owner's manuals usually focus on safety, which shouldn't be taken likely.

Guards and safety shields should always be maintained! The attached picture I recently came across is a good example of what can happen if PTO shielding is not functioning properly. Manuals always say not to work around equipment with loose clothing, to wear work gloves and maintain all protective coverings, especially

on the PTO shafts powering our rear mounted tractor accessories.

In the case of this lucky person who got tangled in a rotating PTO shaft, it immediately stripped him of his clothes and threw him to the otherside of the attachment, also injuring his coworker. Broken bones, sprains and burns were the result. Please read your manuals, especially what is related to safe operation and maintenance.

Fred Castenschiold is Sales Representative, Storr Tractor Company and SFMANJ past Vice President.

Dealing with Field Wear

September 1st, apply up to 20 lbs. seed/1000ft².

Research has shown that applying seed as a single, early application of perennial ryegrass more than doubled the amount of turfgrass cover, compared to dividing the same amount of seed into multiple, smaller amounts applied each week before a game or practice (Minner et al., 2008). The amount of seed applied should be based on the amount of anticipated field use, intensity of traffic, and previous experience with each individual field. Generally, the more seed applied will result in greater turfgrass cover retention in late fall and fewer weeds the subsequent spring.

Set a total target rate of 35-45 lbs. of seed/1000ft² per growing season (turfgrass species selection depends on field use, time of year, and presence of irrigation)."

Whether you use Kentucky bluegrass, turf type tall fescue or improved perennial ryegrass, traffic tolerant, disease resistant turf grass varieties are available and may only cost a few pennies per pound more than what you are paying now. Please refer to www.ntep.org for cultivars that have been evaluated in your region. (The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA), Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ) and Rutgers University all have resources to help you develop a sports field management program that will be effective.)

Nutrient management, based on current soil test results is nothing more a well thought out diet for a healthy stand of turf that will

hold up for athletic events. There is no good reason to over fertilize turf. Adequately nourished turf recovers well from abuse, saves money and is better for the environment.

Soil management also includes irrigation management. As a rule of thumb, 1 inch of water either from rain or a sprinkler per week is necessary to keep turfgrass healthy. Try to adjust irrigation schedule so it doesn't conflict with sports activities because foot traffic on wet turf will cause damage.

Fences, track and permanent goals often dictate the boundaries of a sports field. One way to overcome this is to move the field or change the size. If you can shift a field left, right up or down, or make it smaller temporarily, you can spread some of the wear around a bit.

My favorite tool for dealing with field wear is the installation of sod to remediate a worn area, such as a goal mouth. Many people believe that purchasing sod is expensive, so instead, they will purchase grass seed. The advantage of sod over reseeding is speed of recovery. It takes 12-18 months for seed to reach the maturity of sod. During that time, it must receive numerous inputs of nutrients, water, mowing and perhaps some pesticides. When you purchase sod, all of the work and materials have been included, at a cost much cheaper than you could provide. You get safety and playability right away after a short grow-in period. For small areas, you can even cut out some of your own turf from an out of the way area for a quick patch.

No matter what you do, wear is going continue to happen. Always remember that grass is more forgiving than people. It is unlikely that you will change people's habits or the team culture. Many coaches have the players "run the lines" or practice on wet fields in the rain to "toughen them up". Their focus is coaching a team, not growing a field. So, be tactful and carry an appropriate message. After a while, it begins to sink in. My coaches now stay off of saturated fields. It is an interesting fact that many of the STMA Field of the Year winners in the K-12 categories are coaches and athletic directors. Hard to believe!

Don Savard is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and Certified Grounds Manager (CGM); Director, Athletic Facilities and Grounds, Salesianum School; and SFMANJ Past-President.



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Remember when

Photos by Debbie Savard



We built mounds?



We went to conventions?



We set up early for a field day?



We had trade shows?



We visited professional facilities?



We enjoyed a demo?



We had some fresh SFMANJ Coffee?



We enjoyed Don's chili dogs for lunch?



We learned from a speaker at a field day?

We will again!

FOOTBALL FIELD MAINTENANCE FOR NATURAL TURF FIELDS ABOVE THE TRANSITION ZONE Continued from page 13

your field during this period is very important. Your practice field is going to be used all year long. If no maintenance is done, it will be a very long and bare season.

Game On: Game prep and repair

It always amazes me how much more energy and time we spend on our game fields. The team spends much more time on the practice field but the game field garners all of the attention. We have a very good situation when it comes to our stadium field. One of the reasons the field holds up as well as it does is the fact that it really is just a football field for games. Our coaching staff has even volunteered to move their Friday practices to the practice field in order to preserve conditions on the game field. The marching band has their own practice area at the back of our school that allows them to practice whenever they want. They do however practice on the game field for longer periods of times than I would like during the competition portion of their season. It does force us to aerate more and keep an extra eye on the area of the field that they practice on over and over again. I guess the best advice is to have a good relationship with your coaches and administrators to make your life easier.

Cooperation is great but you need a good plan going in to the week of a football game. Start by looking at the weather forecast to set up a painting and mowing schedule. Typically we will cut Monday, Wednesday and Friday for a Saturday game with painting reserved for Thursday and Friday. Our cutting height is a little higher than most fields (2.5 to 3.0 inches). We counter that by using a light roller on game day to provide a smooth flat surface. In order to keep our sidelines straight, they are cut a quarter inch shorter that morning before rolling. As the season progresses we begin to broadcast perennial ryegrass seed before our games. This allows the athletes to work the seed in with their cleats. This year we have purchased a seeder that we will use to renovate the center of the field throughout the season. The combination of all of these things is what allows us to provide the best surface possible on a tight budget.

Post-game repairs and rest are what really holds the field together from week to week. In the beginning of the season when it is hot, we will irrigate the field as soon as everyone is off after a game. This helps the recuperation process begin. We may also lightly roll the field to push down any loose turf. This allows that turf to re-root if given enough moisture. In addition, we also remove all loose divots that are not still attached. The divots then are filled with a pre-made divot mix consisting of mushroom compost soil and seed. Sometimes this doesn't happen until Monday depending on manpower and time of the game. However, it is better to get as much repair work done as soon as possible to give the field as much time as possible to recover.

Putting Your Field to Bed

As one season ends another begins. After our last home game of the year, we get ready for the following year. Seeding throughout

the season definitely helps this process. Our goal at the end of the year is to fully repair the entire field and have as little bare soil as possible exposed. We start by topdressing all divots and low spots and then seed the entire field with tall fescue seed. Over the past few seasons we have been trying to incorporate more tall fescue into all of our fields because they seem to do a better job resisting disease damage in the summer than perennial ryegrass. The perennial ryegrass serves its purpose during the season by being durable and germinating under difficult circumstances but the addition of the tall fescue gives us more cover going into the season. After the field is topdressed and seeded, we roll one more time and put the final application of ammonium sulfate out. I recommend that you do whatever it takes to keep any type of play off of your field at this time because it is almost at the point of dormancy and any wear will be difficult to repair. A couple of pick-up games can cause a lot of unnecessary damage that will need to be repaired in the spring.

Football in New Jersey is a long season. It starts with heat and humidity and finishes with a mix of cold unpredictable weather. The best way to survive is to have a plan that you can communicate to coaches and administrators in order to provide the best possible playing surface for the athletes to use and enjoy.

Rich Watson is Sales Representative, Laurel Equipment, Blackwood, NJ; and SFMANJ Vice-President



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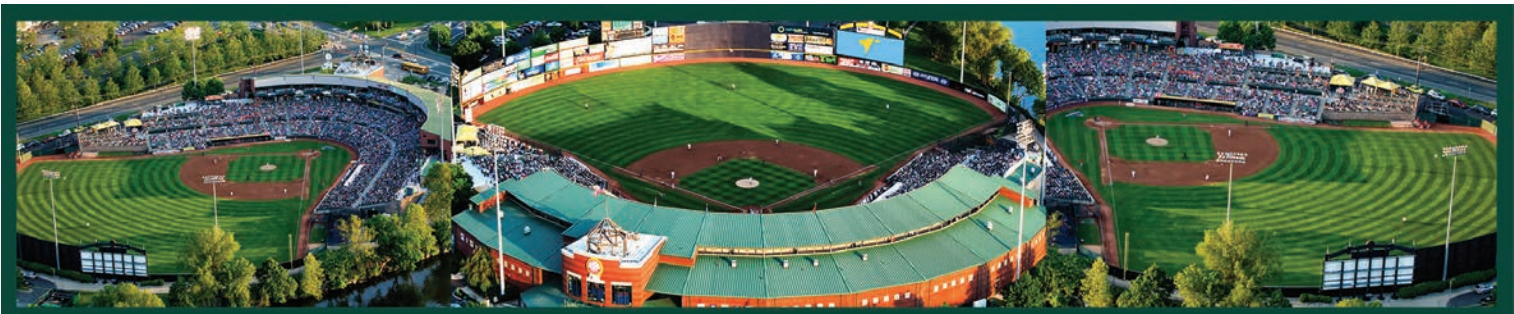
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