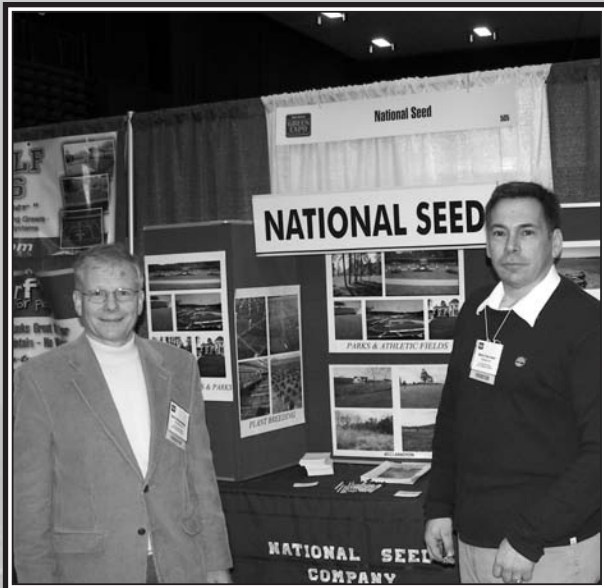


EXPO 2007 TRADE SHOW PHOTO RECAP

Brad Park, Rutgers University and Editor, SFMANJ Update



National Seed, New Brunswick, NJ.
Ken Griepentrog (l) and Barry VanSant (r)



Storr Tractor Co., Somerville, NJ
Fred Castenschiold (l) and Ken Indyk (r).



Wilfred MacDonald, Inc.
South Hackensack, NJ
Bernie White.



Aer-Core, Inc., Pottstown, PA
Dennis DeSanctis, Sr. (l) and
Bill Mast (r)

GETTING BACK TO BASICS

By Jim Hermann, CSFM

By this time of year New Jersey sports field managers are patiently awaiting conditions which allow them to start infield preparation for the spring baseball and softball season. They are checking their arsenal of specialty products to be sure inventories are at their peak.

The sports field manager needs to know what product dries up the puddles, what product firms up the base paths and maybe what products can get him or her through the fifth inning of an otherwise rained out game. These products are all effective tools at the disposal of the sports field manager and a thorough understanding of these materials is essential. In addition to these tools, the most useful and effective tool available to the sports field manager is the site specific experience and basic understanding he has for his fields.

Experience dictates which fields to watch for the perpetual problems of the game and the problems brought about by rain and other environmental conditions. One field may hold water at 3rd base due to a lip buildup. Another field may require attention because water inevitably funnels down the base paths and washes them out every time it rains.

Only the experienced sports field manager can predict with certainty the day to day challenges of each infield. Only the experienced manager can react to these predictable problems and maintain the infields in a safe and playable condition with some degree of effectiveness.

A primary challenge to every sports field manager is to use the experience and understanding gained over time to manage his infields in a "proactive" rather than "reactive" manner.

Many fields have perpetual problems. These problems can be caused by poor design, poor construction or years of improper maintenance. By identifying these problems and correcting them the sports field manager can minimize the day to day maintenance requirements of an otherwise difficult infield.

In some situations it may not be a case of poor design; it might just be that another design would be more efficient. An example of this would be a baseball infield with the baselines running down the middle of a 6.0-ft base paths. When designed in this fashion, only 3.0-ft of skinned area lies between the baseline and the turf perimeter. Aggressive play inevitably causes a buildup of material on the outside of 1st and 3rd base in the turf. With this buildup of material in the turf comes a depression in front of the base. This situation has the potential to cause water to pond in these areas. The "reactive" manager can get out on the field early and utilize the most effective products and procedures to transform an otherwise unplayable infield into an acceptable condition.

The "proactive" sports field manager on the other hand has dealt with the problem before the season began by making some basic adjustments. He may have realigned the baselines to favor the inside of the base path by positioning them closer to the inside turf perimeter or he may have constructed a radius around the 1st and 3rd bases which allows a groomer to pass to the outside of the base paths. In any event, the objective is to allow more distance between the bases and the turf perimeter. At a minimum he removed the lip to allow positive surface drainage to help manage potential water problems.

Many of those involved in the planning stages of a new field desire their own little Yankee Stadium. They want no more than a 0.5% slope extending from behind the pitchers mound in all directions. They may desire a mix that is 60% sand and 40% silt and clay because someone said it works for them. They may even go to the expense of a complete gravel blanket under the infield to help evacuate surface water that ponds within the infield when positive surface drainage is not maintained.

For some, this might be the perfect infield. For others it can evolve into a maintenance nightmare. It is the opinion of many, myself included that a 0.5% slope is not sufficient to evacuate water from a moderately maintained infield skin. It requires more intense maintenance than a 0.75 or 1% slope. A 0.5% slope is not sufficient to effectively evacuate surface water from a turf infield constructed on a heavy textured soil. Turf Infields constructed with less than 1% slope rely heavily on internal drainage characteristics consistent with a lighter textured soil, a bypass drainage system of an effective design or both to efficiently evacuate surface water.

Unless the infield skin is watered on a regular basis, the 60-40 mix will more than likely turn to hardness similar to that of concrete. If the mix happens to contain more than 10 or 15% silt this infield mix could have the potential to become mucky when overly wet and extremely dusty when dry.

Although typically not a negative influence, the gravel blanket under the infield skin will be extremely inefficient in the evacuation of surface water, even though it is an effective means of managing a high water table beneath the infield. The proactive sports field manager will educate himself, start with an effective design and take the action necessary to manage and maintain the playing field in a safe and playable condition.

It has been my experience that a very difficult challenge to the sports field manager is to adapt design or reconstruction criteria to site specific conditions. An infield with a slope that radiates outward from a center point in the vicinity of the pitcher's area could be more expensive and more problematic than an alternative design, depending on site specific conditions.

*Jim Hermann, is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM);
President, Total Control Inc. and member of the
SFMANJ Board of Directors.*

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PLANNING NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET- *Do You Know Your Costs?*

By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

It's that time of year again and sports field and grounds managers are planning the Operating Budget for the next fiscal year. Unlike a Capital Budget which is for the purchase of major pieces of equipment, or a Program Budget which is for special projects such as a major field renovation or construction, an Operating Budget is a financial plan for managing the day-to-day operations of a sports field or grounds maintenance operation. We are talking about things like grass seed, mowing and marking paint. Whether you have been given a dollar amount to work with or are starting from zero and must justify every expense, your must mission is to learn what your costs are and estimate what you expect to spend. If you don't know where to begin, here are some tips to help you get started.

Track your historical data. Collect receipts, and all records pertaining to your facilities grounds or sports field operations for the last fiscal year. A ledger book or a computer spread sheet program will be very helpful for organizing this data.

Find out what is expected. You must know exactly what the site will be used for. For example, is it an open space used for a variety of activities, or will it be used for a single purpose such as exhibition baseball games? What are the expectations of the owner? Will certain rules or conditions apply such as the amount and severity of use, use during inclement weather? Different sites will have different budgets based on their maintenance levels. Find out the expectation of the owner first. Without the support of the owner, it will likely waste your time to budgeting for a higher level than what your owner envisions. Consider the following differences in maintenance levels.

Maintenance Levels:

Level 1 Showpiece facility (professional sports facility)

Level 2 Comprehensive stewardship (College facility or high end sports facility)

Level 3 Managed care (well maintained high school or park)

Level 4 Reactive management (minimal care, mowing, no irrigation, occasional fertilizer)

Level 5 Crisis response (neglected, occasional mowing)

Inventory the Site. Take measurements of the area, identify weed and pest pressures and grass types and have a complete chemical and physical soil test performed. This information is necessary for designing a turf maintenance program. Perform an irrigation audit to quantify the effectiveness of the irrigation system and the drainage of the soil. Evaluate the effectiveness of the current maintenance system. Determine the thresholds for acceptable wear damage, weeds or pest pressures that you will tolerate before corrective measures will be taken? Think about what can go wrong and how you would respond.

Conduct an inventory of your resources. Who will do the work? What equipment, materials, and time will be needed to get the work done? You will also need to find out how much money was spent in the past and whether it was adequate to meet expectations.

Make a list of all the activities in your program. For each activity list:

1. The frequency of each activity
2. Number of people and the man-hours required and the cost
3. Time constraints
4. The equipment needed and cost
5. Materials needed and the cost

(continued on page 17)

~Impacting an Industry through Professionalism~

Sports Turf Managers Association Editorial Staff

Demands on the profession continue to rise. Environmental regulations, personnel management, changing technology, resource utilization, athlete and fan safety ...the list of areas for which a sports turf manager has responsibility continues to expand in complexity. Obviously, doing a great job at your sports facility is paramount to your career success, but it takes more than doing a great job to garner respect and recognition.

Your abilities as a sports turf manager will form other's opinions of the profession, but your personal professionalism speaks volumes to your staff, your employer, your colleagues, the athletes who use your fields and the fans. Sports turf managers should view the non-technical aspects of their work as a critical aspect of their jobs.

Here are 10 ideas to help you gain recognition and bring respect to you personally, professionally and ultimately to the entire profession.

1. Do a great job. No amount of publicity, communication or civic goodwill will overcome poor job performance.
2. Be visible and talk daily with other managers. Make a point of talking with other departments' staff. Your interest and sincerity will make them want to be a supporter and promoter of you.
3. Control your reactions and watch your non-verbal communication. The champions in business are able to shrug off distressing situations and regroup emotionally – that's one reason they are successful. They also keep in check their non-verbal body language and facial expressions.
4. Promote your education and training. Put your diploma, STMA membership certificate and plaques in visible areas. Talk about concepts and ideas you learned at the STMA conference and at other educational events when you are in meetings with peers and with your employer.
5. Take responsibility for your own mistakes and for those of your subordinates. Blaming others, even if justifiable, makes you look small-minded and weak. Earn a reputation as a "fixer" of errors, someone who can snap back from setbacks and learn from mistakes.
6. Always answer criticism in a professional and courteous manner. Explain why there is a problem and what you plan to do about it. Never let it be assumed that you do not care. Take immediate action on complaints.
7. Adopt a "no surprises" philosophy. If there is a problem with the field, communicate the issue immediately and honestly to those who need to know, along with how you are addressing the problem. Proactive communication, even when it is bad news, contributes to your stature as a professional.
8. Hire a top flight team and support continuing education for them. Your image is affected by the image of your staff. Make them aware of their important role in promoting professionalism in the field of sports turf management. This includes their attitudes, care of equipment and courtesy to all with whom they come in contact with while on the job.
9. Be responsive and on-time. Return telephone calls and answer requests promptly, no matter how trivial they seem. Be on time for meetings. A reputation for always being late can influence people's opinion of your performance.
10. Pay attention to the details. It's the little things that can make or break you. For example, what does your work space say about you? A cluttered and dirty desk may make others think you don't care or that you lack organization in all areas of your work.

*Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA),
Lawrence, KS*

PLANNING NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET- *Do You Know Your Costs?*

By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

(continued from page 15)

Create a calendar showing when the activities will occur. This is helpful for scheduling resources and time around scheduled events. This will help you create a realistic picture of what tasks your organization can do in-house, outsource or eliminate. Be sure to include any overhead expenses that your operation is charged, such as rent, utilities, or other line items.

Check your figures carefully and submit your budget. Present your proposal neatly, in an easy to read and understandable format such as a spread sheet. It is likely that your budget will be challenged by a budget committee. Above all, remain flexible.

The people we work for often are unaware of the true costs of maintaining a safe and playable sports field, so remember to be tactful, diplomatic and professional.

Don Savard is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and Certified Grounds Manager (CGM); Director, Athletic Facilities and Grounds, Salesianum School; and a member of the SFMANJ Board of Directors.

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DID YOU KNOW?

A stolon is an elongated stem (or shoot) that grows along the surface of the ground and from which leaves and adventitious roots develop at the nodes.

South Jersey Sports Field Snapshots

Brad Park, Rutgers University and Editor, SFMANJ Update



The grounds staff at Cumberland Regional High School uses paints to highlight the end zones of their varsity football field (Cumberland County, NJ).



Pine trees create a visually appealing backdrop at the Salem High School varsity baseball field, not to mention a natural "batter's eye" (Salem County, NJ).

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