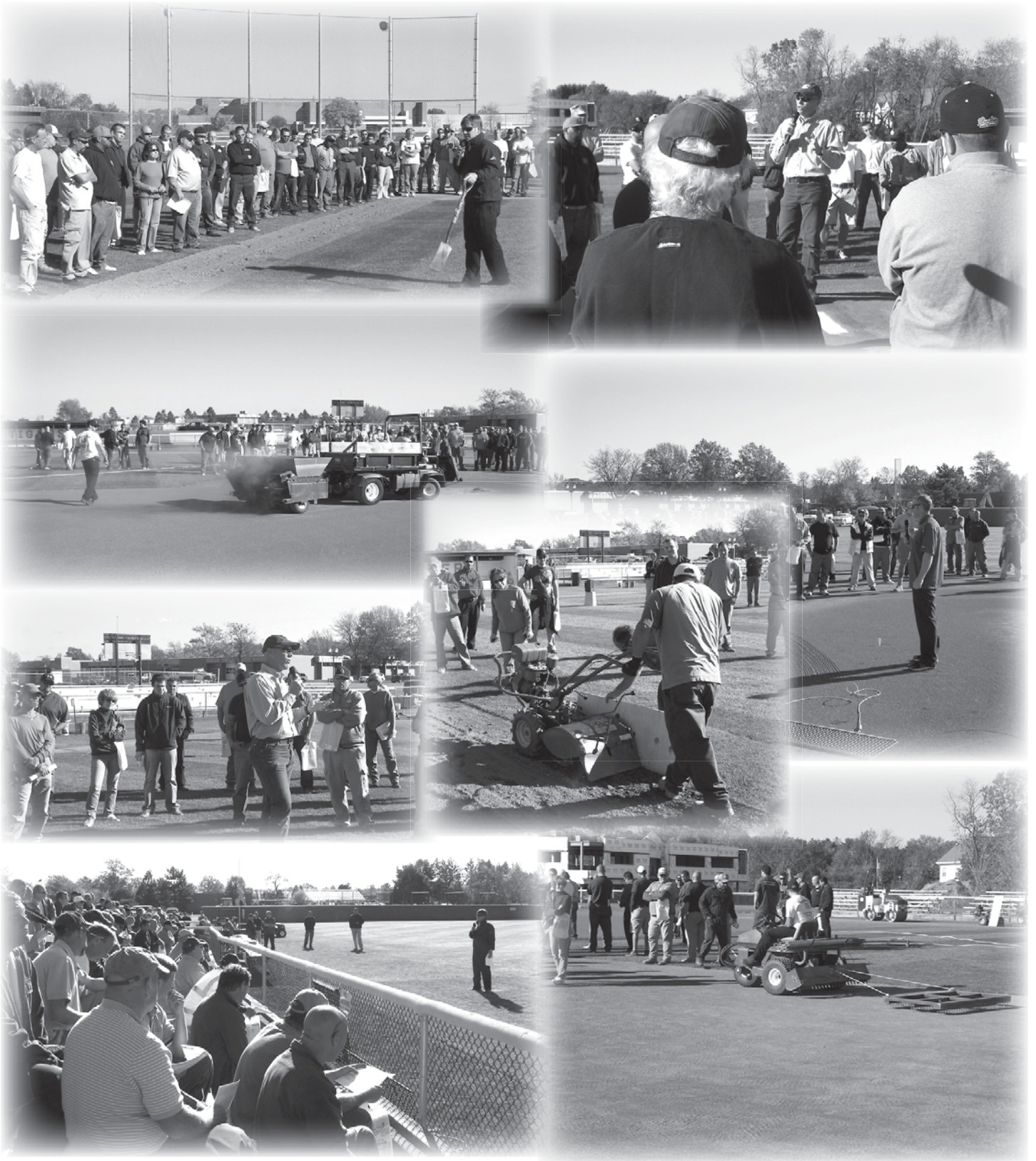


Infield Maintenance Clinic



November 9, 2011

Tips for Athletic Field Care

Dr. Dave Minner*



Use higher than normal seeding rates. In most cases, facilities are needed for play before seeded grass has completed a full year's growth. Higher seeding rates allow for faster ground coverage and provide better competition with weeds, especially crabgrass. Higher than normal seeding rates that provide faster coverage are Kentucky bluegrass 3 to 4 lbs/1000 sq. ft., tall fescue 8 to 12 lbs/1000 sq. ft., and perennial ryegrass 10 to 15 lbs/1000 sq. ft.

Deeper seeded grass that is able to germinate survives traffic better. Drill seeding and seeding after hollow coring is preferred. Plants that develop crowns deeper in the soil are more protected than those that are on top of the soil and are easily damaged.

When renovating, keep existing turf if there is at least 30 to 50% grass cover. Mature grass plants, even a thin stand of grass, have better traffic-tolerance than a thick stand of seedling turf. Unless there is good reason, avoid nonselective killing of grass in high-traffic areas. Keep the grass you have and overseed with coring and slicing to fill-in bare spots.

Use a combination of nitrogen sources. Quick release in the fall, slow release in early summer, and organic nitrogen in the spring or summer.

Use equal N and K for traffic and drought tolerance.

Always **have at least one showcase field.** Reallocate resources so that you have at least one field that lets you boss and the public know that you are capable of producing quality turf when given the proper resources and control of the field. Even if resources are limited, don't spread them out so that all your fields are average-to-poor or your reputation as a grounds manager may be perceived as average-to-poor. Document what it takes to have at least one good field, and use the information to justify an increase in resources to improve the rest of the fields that are in poor condition.

Build **a repertoire of instant solutions** that you can count on in time of need. For example, thick-cut sod, pre-germinated

Continued on page 18

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STMA Editorial Staff*

Your staff has a significant impact on your success. The work that they do is a direct reflection on you, your ability to train, to motivate and to lead. Reaching the goals of your facility is only possible through good management of your people and their continued development. To make sure you are fully embracing the talents of your staff, use these simple techniques.

Top 10 Strategies to Engage Your Staff

1. Seek input and listen.

Your staff is a great resource for ideas and improvements. Asking for their opinions and solutions to problems, truly listening to them, and implementing as appropriate, strengthens their commitment to you and to their job. Involving your staff in decision making builds loyalty and improves retention.

2. Set expectations.

Clearly and consistently set expectations for each employee through jointly written performance objectives. Good performance can't happen if they do not understand what you expect. Reinforce your expectations verbally.

3. Provide continuous feedback.

Praise accomplishments, large and small, and for those projects that weren't as successful, use them as learning experiences to find out what could have been done differently. Don't wait until the end of the year at performance time to express

4. Show appreciation.

Just say "thank you!" When you reward and acknowledge good behaviors, you get more of the same. Publicly acknowledge

your staff for doing a good job, and look for other ways to reward their efforts. According to a Harris Poll, the top three satisfaction drivers for employees are control over their work; the opportunity to use their talents and skills; and recognition and appreciation.

5. Be accessible.

By being visible and available, you send the message that you are part of the team and are ready to support their efforts to get the job done.

6. Train, Train, Train.

Training in the correct procedures and equipment use is critical to getting the job done right, but also for health and safety reasons. The continuous upgrading of skills also provides employees with the means for promotion. Consider training opportunities in areas outside of their core responsibilities, such as in writing skills, public speaking, customer service, business management, etc. You and your facility will reap many benefits from improving their "softer" skills.

7. Empower your staff.

Give them as much information as possible about what and why, and allow them to make decisions appropriate to their work.

8. Provide a safe and comfortable working environment.

Don't expect employees to use outdated or faulty equipment. With anxieties at an all time high regarding increased terrorist activity, make sure you have emergency procedures in place to protect the workforce in the event of an attack, and ensure that every employee is aware of these procedures.

9. Treat with respect.

Respect and accept each person as an important member of the team.

10. Inspire your staff.

Be a coach and a cheerleader. Be sure your boss knows about the good work they do. When you help them succeed, you succeed.

**This article is compliments of Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA), Lawrence, KS.*



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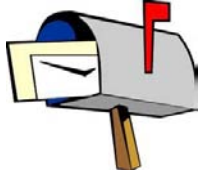


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Continued from page 5

Perspective on 2011 & Looking Ahead to 2012

Anyone who has followed the sports turf industry in New Jersey is aware that the Garden State has been fertile ground for synthetic field installations during the past 10 years – many of these surfaces now reaching the point of replacement. The costs associated with tear-out, disposal, and re-surfacing that were, in many cases, overlooked prior to installation are now crystallizing.

On a personal note, congratulations to Don Savard, CSFM, CGM for three years of outstanding service as SFMANJ President. During his tenure, SFMANJ has hosted numerous successful Field Days, continued to award student scholarships, remained financially solvent, as well as improved its national visibility and reputation as the New Jersey Chapter of Sports Turf Managers Association. Thanks, Don!

Best of luck to all for 2012!

Brad

Brad Park is Sports Turf Research & Education Coordinator, Rutgers Univ.; SFMANJ Board member; and Editor, SFMANJ Update.

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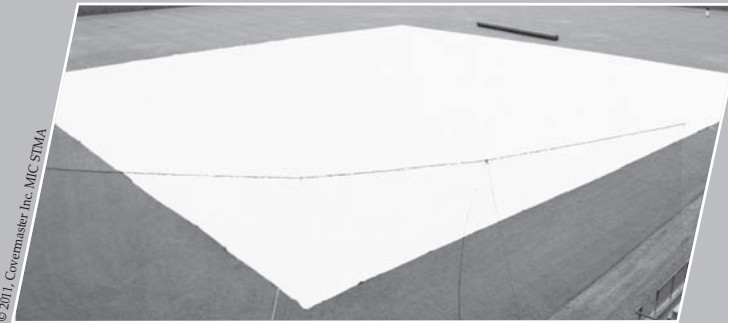
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one application of Flight Control after the field has been cut to provide additional control until we get into our season.

Overall it seems that while none of these methods used individually works very well for a long period of time, when multiple methods are used simultaneously we have gotten excellent results. In past years we used our Goosen Vac on the field each spring to clean up and would get 2-3 loads of waste. With our current control measures in place last winter we only had to clean up an amount equal to one five-gallon bucket. As a result our spring fertilizer inputs have been reduced by 60% while our overall turf quality, density, and color have increased. This leads to a better field and a better bottom line.

Dan Purner is Head Groundskeeper, Somerset Patriots, Bridgewater, NJ and SFMANJ Member. He is a graduate of both the Country College of Morris LHT program and the Rutgers Turf program.

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and Dr. John C. Maxwell's free monthly e-newsletter:
'Leadership Wired' www.INJOY.com

If making e-mail work for you instead of against you is a goal of yours, you won't want to miss Stever Robbins' article, "Tips for Mastering E-mail Overload," in a recent issue of Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge e-zine.

Robbins, a leadership consultant and author of "It Takes a Lot More than Attitude to Lead a Stellar Organization," says that "taming e-mail means training the senders to put the burden of quality back on themselves."

He recommends a two-pronged approach:

- Lead by example by sending better e-mail yourself (by making your e-mails one page or less, editing forwarded messages, making action requests clear, providing full context at the beginning of each message, etc.)
- Explicitly training others to make their online communications more productive.

When it comes to teaching others, Robbins offers the following suggestions:

- Only check your e-mail at certain times each day. Let your people know that if they need to reach you immediately, "e-mail isn't the way," he writes.
- "Charge people for sending you messages." One CEO Robbins has worked with charges employees five dollars from their budget for each e-mail she gets. "Amazingly, her overload has gone way down, the relevance of e-mails has gone up, and the senders are happy, too, because the added thought often results in them solving more problems on their own," he writes.
- Keep your responses short. Responding to three-page e-mails with three-word answers lets people know not to expect long responses from you, "and then you can proceed to answer at your leisure in whatever format works best for you," Robbins says.

For other e-mail taming tips, see:

http://hbswk.hbs.edu/tools/print_item.jhtml?id=4438&t=leadership

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Me?

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Experience as a sports field manager is crucial. It is possible to become certified with only a high school education if you have enough experience in sports field management.

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After successfully passing each of the four sections of the exam with a minimum 80% passing grade, the program also requires that the CSFM continues to stay current with trends, regulations, products and new developments that pertain to sports field management through continuing education as well as service to the industry.

For many, there is a personal satisfaction one can get after qualifying for and attaining the CSFM designation. While almost anybody can get a job working within the sports field industry, to be recognized as a true professional within this craft validates the hard work, knowledge and experience necessary to build one's career.

For more information, visit the Sports Turf Managers Association website www.stma.org and click on Professionalism - CSFM Program.

Now, isn't it time you accepted the challenge and put the credibility and recognition of this certification to work for you?

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

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Tips for Athletic Field Care

Dr. Dave Minner*



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seed, water removal products, smoothing and rolling. Like any good ball team, you should practice these procedures before you try in game situations.

SOME COMMON MISTAKES

Non-irrigated areas

Using 100% ryegrass for fall repair of summer "burn out". Each year you will be doing the same thing over and over. Continue to use the ryegrass but add 30% Kentucky bluegrass, especially those from the low-maintenance and drought-tolerant categories.

It is a mistake to anticipate that tall fescue can be used as a substitute for an adequate irrigation system, especially on soccer fields where a smooth ball rolling surface is desired. Even with its excellent drought and traffic tolerance tall fescue's bunch habit can cause a clumpy and uneven playing surface when water is lacking and traffic is intense. Should clumping become a problem, interseeding with more and temporary watering with a portable rain gun will be needed to regain adequate turf density. If Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass have failed because of limited water then give tall fescue a try. The key point here is not to discourage you from using tall fescue, but instead to encourage you to provide at least temporary irrigation. Watering as little as five times during the summer may be sufficient to maintain an adequate stand of tall fescue.

Close mowing and heavy nitrogen applications of any non-irrigated turf, especially Kentucky bluegrass. This combination of mowing, watering, and fertility is the best way to predispose Kentucky bluegrass to summer patch and loss of turf during summer drought dormancy.

Irrigated areas

Over watering – too much, too often, too shallow. As a general rule, turf should be allowed to slightly wilt before irrigation.

At this stage of the wilting, soils are well-aerated because air has replaced the water that was removed from the soil pore space by the roots. Roots need water to grow, but they need air-filled pore space. Excessively wet soils become anaerobic and have a distinct sulfur odor of rotten eggs. Root growth is poor in anaerobic conditions. Allow the turf to slightly wilt and then apply about an inch of water. Wait until the turf just begins to wilt before watering again. About 1.0 to 1.5 inches of water per week is sufficient for sand-based fields. Sand-based fields may require more frequent watering.

Mid-day watering of grass. This increases humidity and free moisture near the plant that results in increased disease.

No plan for watering the skin on baseball/softball fields. Don't forget to install separate heads and valves for watering just the infield dirt. Don't place the heads so that they water both the dirt and the grass. Watering the skin portion of an infield is just as important as watering the grass. A separate station is needed for watering the skin infield because it is managed differently than grass.

Dr. Dave Minner is Professor, Department of Horticulture, Iowa State University; and recipient of Sports Turf Managers Association's Dr. William H. Daniel Award in 1994.

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2011

