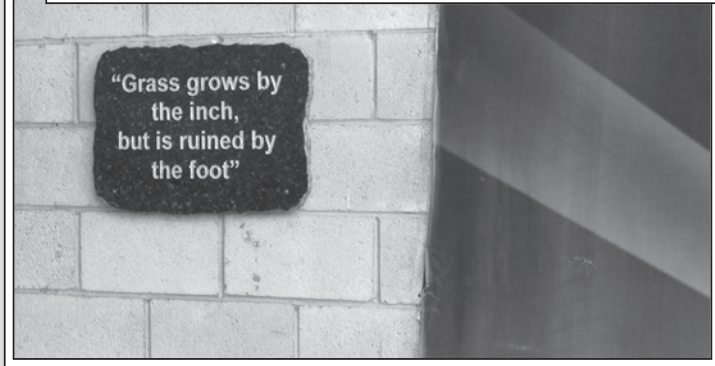


Photo Recap of Sports Turf Managers Association Annual Conference Turf Tour

by Brad Park, Rutgers University

Hollywood Park Racetrack,
The Home Depot Center,
and Blair Field



January 10, 2012



We have more tools than you might think

Submitted by Tech Terra Environmental

Times are changing and due to public demand and new regulations we have to become knowledgeable in other techniques to care for plants. Public pressure, government regulations and good business practices are all telling us to Go Green.

We all have issues with the NJ School IPM Program, the new fertilizer law and the continuing battle over the Safe Playing Field Act. These regulations remove many of the tools we have depended upon for years. On the other hand there are good reasons to rethink some of the methods of the past.

I talk with many people in the industry and many who are environmentally concerned. I hear a lot of misinformation on both sides, from "We can't successfully maintain turf cost effectively without access to pesticides as we currently use

them" to "All these pesticides are killing us". The vast majority of people believe that the truth is in the middle.

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.

Albert Einstein



Now is the time to get serious about promoting our profession as being environmental stewards. We should be able to wisely use some pesticides and still embrace the use of more environmentally sensitive methods. There is a growing body of science which describes the benefits of adding organic matter to the soil and the effectiveness of many of the Low Impact Pesticides. They are

being used on many playing fields throughout the country successfully.

There will be a hard fought battle in Trenton this year over the Safe Playing Fields Act. By taking a strategy of compromise, the Green Industry would present itself as having a concerned and reasonable approach towards the future of turf care. 🌱

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2012 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NJ School Buildings & Grounds Conference/Expo
April 3-4, 2012
Trump Taj Mahal
Atlantic City, NJ
800.851.9382
www.njsbga.org

SFMANJ Spring Field Day
April 19, 2012
Morris Township, NJ
856.514.3179
www.sfmanj.org

Rutgers Turfgrass Research Golf Classic
May 7, 2012
Fiddler's Elbow Country Club
Bedminster, NJ
973.812.6467
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Rutgers Turfgrass Golf & Fine Turf Field Day
July 31, 2012
Rutgers Hort. Farm 2
North Brunswick, NJ
Rutgers Lawn, Landscape, & Sports Turf Field Day
SFMANJ-sponsored equipment demonstrations
August 1, 2012
Rutgers Adelphia Research Farm
Freehold, NJ
973.812.6467
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New Jersey Green Expo
December 4-6, 2012
Trump Taj Mahal
Atlantic City, NJ
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HAVE YOU CHECKED-OUT OUR WEB SITE LATELY?

- ☑ Check our Events page for upcoming events and pictures of past SFMANJ functions.
- ☑ Check our Resources page for past issues of our Newsletter Update, Minutes from past Board Meetings, links to useful information and job postings.
- ☑ Check our Contact Us page for direct links to all of the Board of Directors. Call us with any questions or comments.
- ☑ Check our Vendor page for interactive links to our advertising vendors' web sites and a complete list of all our vendors. Call them first! They are happy to answer any questions.



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2011 Field of the Year

Continued from page 4

Hammonton High School's Frank Capoferri Field

Bernard were able to improve their fields. SFMANJ congratulates Don and Bernard for being a runner-up for 2011 Field of the Year.

For the second time, Frank LaSasso, Sports Turf and Grounds Manager at Hammonton High School, Hammonton, NJ submitted an application for Field of the Year. The first time Frank sent his application for the Frank Capoferri football field, the SFMANJ Board of Directors was forced to make a tough decision. That year, Frank was chosen as runner-up and the Field of the Year award went to Lacey Twp. When I visited Frank's field the first time in late November it looked as if no one played on it. That same year I visited 4 other applicants' football fields, all in November. They asked me why we inspect them in November after they have been played on. Frank was happy to show his field off in November. It looked like it had never been played on. That year Frank estimated the field had already hosted over 20 games.

Fast forwarding 3 years, Frank's budget and manpower has been cut. Sound familiar. Despite the budget woes, the worst heat spell in recent memory, 12 inches of snow at Halloween and no letup in usage, the Frank Capoferri football field still looked perfect in November. In fact, I show pictures of the field to other school districts and they think it is synthetic.

Frank LaSasso has figured out how to manage turf, regardless of the obstacles. Aside from his mowing schedule, fertility program and cultural practices, Frank is a great communicator. He has won the respect of the administration and coaching staff. As a result, Frank is able to manage field usage and is rarely denied funding because the administration sees results.

The SFMANJ Board of Directors would like to congratulate Frank LaSasso and The Hammonton School District for being awarded the 2011 Field of the Year for the Frank Capoferri Football Field.

The SFMANJ Field of the Year program recognizes the efforts of member sports turf managers throughout New Jersey. Applications are due by the end of October 2012 and are awarded at the NJ Green Expo in Atlantic City, NJ in early December. In addition to a plaque, the winner will receive a complimentary registration to all education sessions, the two day trade show, dinner and one night's lodging at Trump Taj Mahal.

If you have any further questions regarding the program please feel free to contact the SFMANJ office at 856-514-3179.

Scott Bills is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM); Sports Field Consultant, Sports Field Solutions LLC; and Secretary and Public Relations Committee Chairman, SFMANJ Board of Directors

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Stop the Insanity

In the past, local sports field managers were fearful of installing the same type of infield mix used in professional stadiums.

Through continued research and understanding the resources available to each groundskeeper, now specific infield mix blends and amendments can be installed on college, high school and municipal ball fields. More importantly, the fields can be improved without having to completely replace the existing infield mix or spend \$500 to \$600 per ton on conditioners.

But the title of this article is "Stop the Insanity". So far, it doesn't sound so insane. I'll get there.

Although I am mostly familiar with field issues in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast region of the country, believe me, there are infield problems in all 50 states.

In our area of the country, most of the indigenous infield mixes that are produced have too much sand, too much fine sand, too much silt in relation to the amount of clay and not the right type of clay. Most of the producers of local infield mixes find a source of sand that has some percentage of silt and clay. These materials are harvested, not engineered. Since most of these companies are large sand producers for other industries like masonry, concrete, asphalt and glass, these sands with too much silt and clay become waste. Well someone much smarter than me figured out that if you screened it a little bit, have it analyzed, keep it somewhat consistent and give it a fancy name related to the game of baseball, they could add \$10 to \$20 per ton or more and sell it as infield mix.

So over the years engineers and architects have specified these materials because that's what was available. Now with a little more knowledge, we have figured out these high sand and high silt mixes cause a lot of problems on our fields.

OK – Here it is.

Because these materials have characteristics that don't allow them to manage moisture efficiently, can be easily migrated during grooming or from wind and water erosion, plus are relatively cheap, we have ruined our fields.

Here are a couple examples of the insanity.

Case Study #1 – I was asked to look at a field for a local little league in an upscale town in Bergen County. The field had such a significant lip that an infielder actually broke a small bone in his neck when he fell chasing a pop up into the outfield. I was asked to contact the township engineer and discuss my recommendations. Before calling him I checked the depth of the infield mix and found the area behind second base was 19 inches deep. I didn't need to survey the field to determine there were grade problems. While on the phone with the engineer, he advised me they were planning to build a new softball field in town. I joke and told him there was enough infield mix on this field to build 3 new fields.

Here's the insanity. While on the phone with the engineer I hear a back-up beeper. Following the sound, I realize it is a tri-axle backing into the park maintenance yard. Reluctantly, the engineer admitted it was a load of infield mix. After doing some quick math, this 11,000 square foot infield had 15 inches of infield mix it didn't need. At a conservative cost of \$40 per ton, that was about \$30,000 of wasted money, not including the labor to install over the years and now a potential lawsuit.

Case Study #2 – I was asked to survey the ball fields for a county park system. I am sure when the fields were originally designed and constructed, the grades allowed for water to drain off the fields. Well after about 10 years the county now had over 40 ball fields that were bowls or saucers. Not one field allowed for surface run off. Here's the insanity. The grass lips were so severe; one county worker admitted they need to use a trencher to cut through the lips to help get some of the water off the fields. In addition, they spend thousands of dollars on drying agents.

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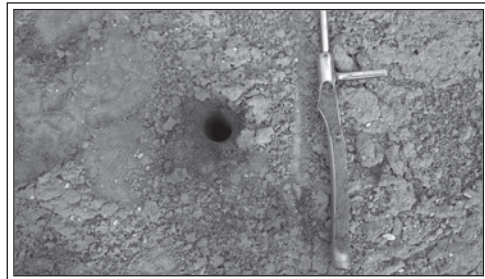
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stop the insanity

Continued from page 17

Case Study #3 – I recently visited a little league complex in Central New Jersey. My first observation was the fields had major grading issues. As in Case Study #1, I checked the depth of the infield mix. My probe is 12 inches deep, I didn't hit bottom. See included picture. After surveying the first field, I noticed all of the bottom rails of the backstop and player bench fences were buried by about 6 to 8 inches and a considerable amount of infield mix had washed into the dugouts. Here's the insanity. While walking from field to field, I noticed tire track damage from double gates in the outfield fence towards the infields. Not only were they adding infield mix they didn't need, they were damaging the turf to do it. Assuming there was at least 12 inches of infield mix on each field (actually there was more), these four infields had about 1,200 tons of excess infield mix. Again, using a conservative cost of \$40 per ton, this equates to \$48,000 of wasted money. Now let's throw in tens of thousands of dollars to fix them.



Case Study #3

I could go on and on. Here's the scary part. There are 566 municipalities and 416 high schools in New Jersey. With a fair estimate of at least four fields per town and school, that means there are about 4,000 ball fields in the state, not including counties, colleges, middle schools or private little leagues. Again using conservative estimates, let's say each field has twice the amount of infield mix it should have or an additional four inches. Using an average infield size of 8,000 square feet, that would equate to 600,000 tons of infield mix that has been added to ball fields unnecessarily. At \$40 per ton that's \$24 million dollars. No wonder the schools and towns have budget problems.

The take home message here is that we need to change our way of thinking. Albert Einstein said it best: "We can't solve problems by using the same thinking we used to create them."

More importantly, there is a practical solution to this problem. It has been tested at the highest level of play and is available to improve all little



league, recreational, high school and college fields. Plus, there are groundskeepers who have changed their thinking and are practicing better techniques to reduce unnecessary expense.

Let's stop the insanity!

Scott Bills is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM); Sports Field Consultant, Sports Field Solutions, LLC; and Secretary, SFMAN

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