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# Welcome! New and Renewed SFMANJ Members

Currently we have 291 new & renewed members. Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey mailed invoices for 2012 membership dues to all current members. If you did not receive an invoice, please contact us at 856.514.3179 or download the membership form available at [www.sfmanj.org](http://www.sfmanj.org). Mail membership dues direct to SFMANJ, PO Box 205, Pennsville, NJ 08070.

Jamie Achison	Northern Highlands Regional HS
Dan Alvarez	Rutherford Schools
Kyle Amburgey	Upper Freehold Regional School Dist.
Anthony Amiano	Berkely Heights BOE
Joe Barker	Robinsville BOE
Louann Benson	No Brunswick Twp. Parks
Bob Beutel	Borough of Tenafly
Tim Blasja	Berkely Heights BOE
Robert Bongiovi	No Brunswick Twp. Parks
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Ron Lee	Highland High School
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John Lewless	Hopewell Valley Regional School Dist.
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Gerry Macfarlan	Princeton Recreation Dept
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David Maines	Florham Park DPW
Bob Manning	Piscataway BOE
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Raymond Mcdowell	Princeton Recreation Dept
Michael Mcininch	Woodbridge High School
Tim Montague	Lawrence BOE
Evan Moorhead	Princeton Recreation Dept
Lou Paterno	Rutherford Schools
Jeffery Peck	Piscataway BOE
Phillip Pensinger	St Andrews School

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## 2012 SFMANJ BOARD OF DIRECTIONS

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### MISSION STATEMENT

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.

### Contact us at:

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Email: [mail@sfmanj.org](mailto:mail@sfmanj.org) • Phone/Fax: 856-514-3179

### National Organization

Sports Turf Managers Association

[www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org)

Email: [stmainfo@stma.org](mailto:stmainfo@stma.org) • Phone: 800-323-3875

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For information regarding this newsletter, contact:  
 SFMANJ at (856) 514-3179 or Brad Park at (848) 932-6327  
 Editor: Brad Park, Rutgers University, Email: [park@aesop.rutgers.edu](mailto:park@aesop.rutgers.edu)  
 Layout and Design: Debra Savard, Email: [debbiesavard@aol.com](mailto:debbiesavard@aol.com)

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

# Atlantic City *Surf Stadium* in 2012

By Sean Connell



This year the City of Atlantic City had the old Surf Stadium resurfaced and made ready for play. This stadium was originally a minor league stadium for the Independent league team. Since the team bankrupted in 2008 the stadium had not been maintained. The box seats had to have new sheet rock. The roof had to be repaired with new shingles. The field had to be re-surfaced. I was the low-bid contractor on the field portion of this stadium.

The original bid had a basic premise of how to re-do the field by providing specifications for grading, sod, infield mix and warning track mix. This stadium was built like a large golf green: subsurface drains with a gravel layer serving as a water table and straight sand as a growing medium. The grading plan had one elevation of "11" at home plate and no other reference points. Of course, the bid instructions were to laser grade the field and nothing else. All other assumptions were up to the winning contractor to survey and make their own grading plan.

Well, that's what I did, just like most jobs I do. I shot the existing grades and gridded-out the elevations. From those grades, I calculated the slopes by making the least amount of cuts and fills, and made a grading plan. It is easy. I have been using laser technology since 1992 when I first saw it applied on a golf tee. You find the lowest elevation and work out from there. Of course with a field that is layered with a gravel blanket and sand capped, you have to check depths of material and make field adjustments. I quickly discerned that this field most likely had never been laser graded. It was flat but had some depth issues in some places from way too much material to way too shallow.

The amazing part of laser grading is the machine control aspect of it. I am still amazed after owning three laser tractors for all these years when the machine is telling me to cut and fill, but rest assured I trust the equipment. And it never lets me down. In this project, we had a deadline of 30 days to strip and remove the sod, rototill under the organic layer (which was still huge because the field had not been aerified in years), laser grade, then sod. Also: amend the infield and add material, re-grade the warning track and, as an added bonus, the irrigation which was supposed to 95% functional was really about 20% functional.


This part is where having tons of experience kicks-in in all facets of construction. We completed the striping, rototilling, grading and re-sodding in 6 days. - and had a quite a jump on the infield mix and warning track. Once the sod was down, the pressure was off somewhat. We could work from the warning track. The irrigation was of course repaired at same time I was doing these tasks by a company named Quality Cut, Inc. out of Farmingdale, NJ Doug and Jerry McGee brothers. I have used these guys before but not on such a big job. They exceeded my expectations and identified broken wires, leaks and heads improperly functioning. They had the system at 100% efficient in 2 days. They did a great job and I could not have met my time line without them.

The field was constructed with a rootzone consisting of straight sand with no organic material - which was great the day it rained after we tilled it. It rained inches overnight and all day. The next morning we graded and by the end of the day it was dusty, so I was pretty sure the drains worked. The following day we sodded the field using a track sod installer called a WMI Warner Manufacturing track machine. The sand dried out so quick and had no organic matter to it. A simple turn with any

*Continued on page 18*

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## Problems facing sports field managers:



# Refining cultural practices to better manage high traffic sports fields

Brad Park, Rutgers University

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article first appeared in Sports Turf Manager: Vol. 25, No. 3. Sports Turf Manager (ISSN 1201-3765) is the official publication of the Sports Turf Association, Inc., Guelph, Ontario, Canada*

One of the most significant problems facing turf managers responsible for sports fields and grounds at schools and municipalities is maintaining adequate turf cover on high traffic sports fields. Maintaining dense cool-season turfgrass cover on sport fields has numerous benefits beyond aesthetic appeal including improving player safety, stabilizing soil, and reducing summer annual weed encroachment, particularly summer annual weeds like crabgrass, goosegrass and prostrate knotweed that ultimately revert to bare soil in fall.

There are numerous reasons why even highly competent sports field managers may have difficulty maintaining turf cover on highly used – or “abused” – fields. These reasons may extend beyond the sports field manager’s control including installation of field lights (i.e. day AND nighttime field use), not having the option to hold events on a synthetic field where natural turf field space is minimal, limited budget and labor resources, and user groups and management unwilling to take fields out-of-play when turf cover and/or weed encroachment justify renovation and time is required to allow new turf to fully establish.

Conversely, many schools and towns struggle with implementing primary turfgrass management cultural practices; the result is a more rapid decline in turf cover during periods of intense traffic. Primary cultural practices are mowing, fertilization, and irrigation (Turgeon, 1999). Cultivation (i.e. aerification) has traditionally been defined as supplementary cultural practice but can play a primary role in the management of high traffic sport fields. Regular overseeding of field centers and goal creases can often “make or break” the presence of turf cover in these locations; thus, the practice of overseeding is arguably an additional primary cultural practice for high traffic sports fields.

### **Mowing**

Unfortunately, there are institutions mowing large, multi-acre sports fields and adjacent grounds locations with rotary mowers equipped with single 5-ft-wide mowing decks. During spring and early summer months when turf growth is most rapid, it can be extremely challenging to mow frequently enough with small mowers at a desired cutting height without scalping. Removing too much turfgrass leaf tissue in one mowing weakens the turf and results in excess clippings left on the surface, which if not physically removed (a labor-intensive process), can lead to severe turf thinning and weed encroachment. Turfgrass that lacks density and is infested with summer annual weeds tends to be less traffic tolerant.

Wide-area, multi-deck rotary mowers with cutting swaths ranging from 11 to 16-ft are available and can greatly improve the efficiency of mowing large expanses of turf. It is unfortunate to observe some institutions ready to invest in new equipment pass on acquiring larger mowing equipment for the reason that “the maintenance department already has a mower”, albeit a 5-ft-wide machine. Investment in wide-area mowers can reduce the labor time spent on mowing and allow these resources to be allocated to increasing the frequency of overseeding, fertilization, or other cultural practices.

### **Fertilization**

School and municipal sports fields are commonly under-fertilized and subsequently exhibit limited growth and poor recuperative capacity, attributes that do not favor good turf cover under high traffic.

*Continued on page 13*

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# The Politics of Sports Field Management

By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM



I am a sports field manager at a high school in Wilmington, Delaware. I have been managing high school sports fields for the past 21 years. I have come to the following conclusion, that is, managing a sports field is easy, but people make it complicated. How great would it be if we could go to work every day and grow the very best sports fields without anyone bothering us? Like it or not, we need people so that we can do what we do. We serve with a variety of people from our co-workers to the people who use the fields, to the people who own the fields and pay the bills. If we consider these people as our customers, are we not customer service specialists first and field managers second?

Many of us and our crews are support staff. We work for organizations whose primary business is something other than grass and dirt. Something like education, or government. From a financial point of view our operation is viewed as overhead.

We compete with other departments within our organization for money, resources, positions, recognition, programs, and approvals. Nothing comes easy. To survive and for peace of mind, we need to get along with our customers. Our stakeholders or customers have diverse interests and agendas. Some of these agendas serve the common good; some serve someone's individual self interest. To fully understand the politics of the organization, you must become well acquainted with all of the stakeholders and their agendas. And within each organization, some stakeholder's agendas have more legitimacy than others, including yours and mine.

Let's look at our stakeholders or customers both within and external to our organization:

- First and foremost are the athletes who use and play on our fields. That is why we are here. We try to maintain safe and playable fields for them. The players want fields that play well and do not impede their performance. Players, particularly at the youth level take the athletic facilities for granted. Usually if they do not seem to notice the field, we are doing an adequate job. At many levels, the players seem to be the easiest customers to satisfy.
- Coaches exist to develop their players and guide the teams to victories. At times the coaches seem to be at odds with the sports field managers, considering the ways their practices and drills use or abuse their fields. Coaches will also let you know when they think there is something wrong with your field.
- Athletic Directors are responsible for the management and quality of their athletic programs. That includes everything from hiring coaches, arranging team schedules, renting buses and letting someone know that a shower head in

the locker room is leaking. Athletic Directors have a very large sphere of influence.

They also hear everything from everybody. An Athletic Director on your side is an important ally.

- Then there are the owners. They are the people who give you money. Or withhold it. The owner of the facility can be a Board of Education, a School Administration or a Board of Trustees, a government department or some other entity. Frequently this entity has a hierarchy of management in which you have a boss and your boss has a boss and so on. In organizations, the chain of command is important and must be respected. Breaking the chain of command in organizations probably won't get you a court martial, but it may cause you some pain in a variety of ways depending on the organization and the personalities involved. Respect the food chain.
- There are usually support people within this hierarchy. These include administrative assistants, accounting specialists, and others who are the wheels of the organization. Be careful you don't get caught under the wheels.
- Parents of players- Alaska Governor Sarah Palin expressed it perfectly in her Republican vice Presidential nominee acceptance speech- "What is the difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull? ... Lipstick!" 'Nuff said. Parents can be tough critics but they can also be staunch supporters. How they are treated usually makes the difference.
- The committees who run youth league sports- very dangerous territory. If you fall in that quick sand you might not be saved. Watch where you tread!
- The public and the press have a perception of you or your field that can be accurate or inaccurate. Like it or not, these external customers can influence your internal customers.
- Vendors, suppliers and contractors can help make you look good or let you wither on the vine. So can your coworkers and other sports field managers. Treat your network right.
- Family, and close friends because we need their love and support; without them life is a lonely place.
- And Nature, we are its stewards. We can never be successful if we work against it.

As customer service representatives, we're the "go to" guys and gals when it comes to our sports field facilities. Stakeholders at all levels come to us when they need something from us or want

*Continued on page 12*

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# The Sports Turf Manager as a Crisis Communicator

Sports Turf Managers Association Editorial Staff

Perhaps you will never be faced with responding to a crisis. But, if you ever have an athlete get injured during play, an employee who gets hurt on the job, a disgruntled employee, a weather related disaster, or an environmental incident, you just might find yourself in the spotlight and under scrutiny.

As a manager of people, you may have to deal with an employee's death or illness, a sudden change in top management, or employee issues of sexual harassment. Each one of these can constitute a crisis. You must be prepared for that decisive moment when your response can lead the crisis to better or to worse. An initial negative perception is nearly impossible to reverse.

## Crisis Communication Response Tips

- Respond within 24 hours.
- Don't point fingers.
- Always be available to the media.
- Be visible and on-site.
- Tell the absolute truth.
- Never say "no comment."

You are judged within the first 30 seconds of speaking if you and the information you are providing is trusted. Appearing empathetic and caring are the most importance characteristics you can exhibit to show "trustworthiness". Your audience will also assess your competence, your honesty and your commitment. Your goal as a communicator is to demonstrate these attributes.

It is important to recognize that the media is usually more interested in covering opposing viewpoints and that bad news and conflict are more newsworthy. Most reporters are working under a tight deadline, have limited scientific and technical knowledge and can be a bit cynical. When preparing to talk with the media, address the principal underlying concern of the audience/questioner/listener keeping your responses short and concise.

In many crisis situations it is important to bring in a third party and to tell the media who you have contacted.

Continued on page 15



## 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**STMA Annual Conference**  
January 15-19, 2013  
Daytona Beach, FL  
800.323.3875  
www.stma.org

**2013 Rutgers NJAES OCPE Courses**  
**Organic Turfgrass Management**  
January 29, 2013

**Reducing Pesticide Inputs & Exploring Organic Options for Sports Turf**  
February 12, 2013

**Baseball & Softball Skin Surface Selection & Management**  
February 20, 2013

**Two-Day Athletic Field Maintenance**  
February 21-22, 2013  
Rutgers Cook Campus  
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732.932.9271  
www.cpe.rutgers.edu

## Welcome! New and Renewed SFMANJ Members

Continued from page 3

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Frank Russo  
Rich Russo  
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Berkely Heights BOE



# Georgia Golf Construction, Inc.

1441 Route 50, Woodbine, NJ 08270

Submitted by Sean Connell

I started Georgia Golf Construction in March 1999 in Marietta, GA where I grew-up. After receiving an Associate Degree in Turf Agronomy from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, GA in 1990, I worked as an assistant superintendent for several years and became a construction superintendent in 1995. I traveled and worked in 12 states building golf courses. I actually started building athletic fields in high school when I worked for a landscaper.

My company (Georgia Golf Construction) started building athletic fields in 2000 and every since then the percentage of athletic field work has increased every year; we barely do any golf course work. My company specializes in finish work consisting of design build, consulting, machine control laser grading, synthetic base grading, sod installation, infield grading, drainage, pitcher's mound construction, deep tine and core aerification, topdressing and de-thatching of turf. We use state-of-the-art equipment that we have purchased and have it built for a specific job like machine control laser grading.

In 2012, we became a dealer for Mar-CO Clay products, because we have used and have believed in their products for years. The brand is a high-end line of baseball soils such as Pitcher's Mound clay and green (unfired) bricks, vitrified clay conditioners and infield mixes. The infield clays are matched by soil particle analysis to local infield blends to achieve major league playability and maintained at a high school level. New Jersey end users want safer and better playing conditions on athletic fields - which is our main mission in business.

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## SPORTS FIELD MANAGERS ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

**SFMANJ IS ENDING A GREAT YEAR AND LOOKING FORWARD TO AN EVEN BETTER 2013.**

Our membership renewal forms will come out in the next few weeks and we are asking you to please check them over and make any changes and/or additions that are applicable. If you would like to use your home address instead of your business address, please make a note of that.

To cut down on postage costs, we occasionally send out email blasts regarding important current activities or notices. Please be sure we have an email address for you. If you don't have one at work, please let us know how to contact you at home. We don't want anyone left out!



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