

How to handle the 60-HOUR WEEK

Three busy field managers rely on detailed budgets and creative scheduling when the work week gets long and hectic.

by STEVE AND SUZ TRUSTY
Athletic field managers who oversee multiple-use fields have found it's to everyone's benefit to be detailed in their scheduling and budgeting to keep a cool head in the summer heat.

Dale Getz, Athletic Facilities Manager, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind., oversees 78 acres of athletic fields. These range from the game fields frequently featured on television to practice, intramural and "pick-up" game fields.

Five-year plan

The Notre Dame Athletic Department's annual budget is based on recommendations from the executive vice president's office in accordance with the master five-year plan. It's Getz's responsibility to develop an overall five-year plan for his areas of responsibility and an annual budget with appropriate fund allocation within those boundaries. Budgets for special projects, such as the two new soccer and lacrosse practice fields just built, must be submitted for approval along with the general budget. Once approved, they become a separate line item with those funds restricted for use on that project.

Tom Curran, grounds supervisor, City of Pompano Beach, Fla., oversees park turf maintenance, playground safety, trees, shrubbery, flower beds, irrigation (for the entire city, including the sports fields), amphitheater maintenance, small engine mechanics and "special events."

Curran submits an annual budget in March/April and receives feedback on adjustments in May. Major purchase re-

quests, such as equipment, are submitted at the same time, but separately. They must include details, such as what unit will be taken out of service when the new one is purchased.

Weekly reviews with crew

The Notre Dame program is derived from the annual upgrade of a five-year budgetary and facility auditing plan. Every sport and facility manager develops a general plan for each year and then breaks that

will use to dole out assignments. On Monday the entire staff meets to review the weekly plan. This feedback session allows us to clarify details and gives the supervisors the information they need to better allocate personnel."

Spring at Notre Dame is a busy time for fields, the toughest of the season. The schedule accommodates 30 home baseball games; 28 softball games; six to eight men's lacrosse games; six women's lacrosse



A look at some of the U.Cal at Berkely Memorial Stadium crew, from left: Mark Lucas; Howard Comre; Tony Santarelli; Miguel Vasquez; Paul Kokorowski; Tim McCystle. A great crew is the best defense against busy schedules.

into quarterly plans. Getz says his quarterly plans cover seasonal cycles.

"My assistants and I meet each Friday to develop a detailed plan for the following week based on events, weather forecasts, special projects, etc. which the supervisors

games; and one or two outdoor track meets between April 1st and May 10th.

In addition, there are the practices for all these sports; spring football practice and one football game; intramural games; and special events.

Crew 'work centers'

Bob Milano, Jr., Sports Turf Manager, University of California, Berkeley, oversees six significant event facilities: Memorial Stadium; Witter Rugby Field; Strawberry Softball Field; Evans Baseball Diamond; Hellman Tennis Complex; and the Edwards Track Stadium. He also is in charge of several practice fields, recreational fields, tennis facilities, and a synthetic turf field.

Milano has two "work centers" for crews, at Memorial Stadium and at Evans Baseball Diamond.

"I work from a master plan, then break the workload into manageable blocks," says Milano. "We hold staff meetings every two



The Milwaukee Brewers crew handles the tarp.

PHOTO COURTESY DAVID MELLOR

weeks. Staff members provide input to a prepared list, including projects that coaches have requested or that the staff sees, and we negotiate priorities."

Quarterly plan

"I develop a detailed quarterly plan following the annual budget guidelines," explains Curran. "Then I'll meet with the supervisors on Thursday or Friday of each week to plan and prioritize the following week based on activities scheduled, projects in process and anticipated weather conditions. The supervisors set the daily priorities and make specific assignments from the weekly plan."

Getz manages a full-time staff of 14 with five seasonal full-time personnel added in both the spring and fall seasons.

"I generally assign our year-round people to a specific sport and facility, with enough time spent on the other venues to give them flexibility when necessary. This focus allows them to develop 'ownership' of the field and a good working relationship with the coaches and assistant coaches. They can respond more quickly to coaches' requests and often come up with their own suggestions to improve the field.

Plugging in 'repeaters'

"We usually have two or three 'repeaters' in our seasonal full-time personnel which helps to trim training during the rush of the season," adds Getz. "These people can be plugged into the schedule whenever need is the greatest."

Milano has a full-time staff of eight, with three part-time staff members.

"For the most effective client service, we assign our full-time staff members to specific sports and facilities. The employees take responsibility for 'their' fields and develop a sensitivity to the coaches' needs.

"Two of our part-timers are students; the other is a retired employee. Schedules are negotiable for the part-time staffers, but they

know upfront that work hours will be heaviest on evenings and weekends. It's a good match with the students' class schedules."

Curran oversees a full-time staff of 23 within the 56-person Public Works Department. From the end of May through July, this staff is boosted with college student part-timers. Flexibility is important, says Curran, when crews handle from 25 to 30 special events each year.

"Our foremen need autonomy to work this into the regular schedule; with that, comes an equal degree of accountability."

Work from the averages

Notre Dame staff members work an average of 55 to 65 hours per week during the "crunch" periods. Getz juggles the

Tips to cutting long weeks

"There will never be enough resources to accomplish everything," admits Bob Milano, Jr. of the University of California, Berkeley.

"Give your 'clients' (staffers) the opportunity to set the priorities when there is no pressing safety or field integrity issue," Milano says. "Explain that while they have x, y and z on their needs list, you only have the current resources to do two of them. Ask if they want x and y, x and z, or y and z.

"It makes tight budget and labor allocations more palatable and helps them realize that you are sensitive to their needs.

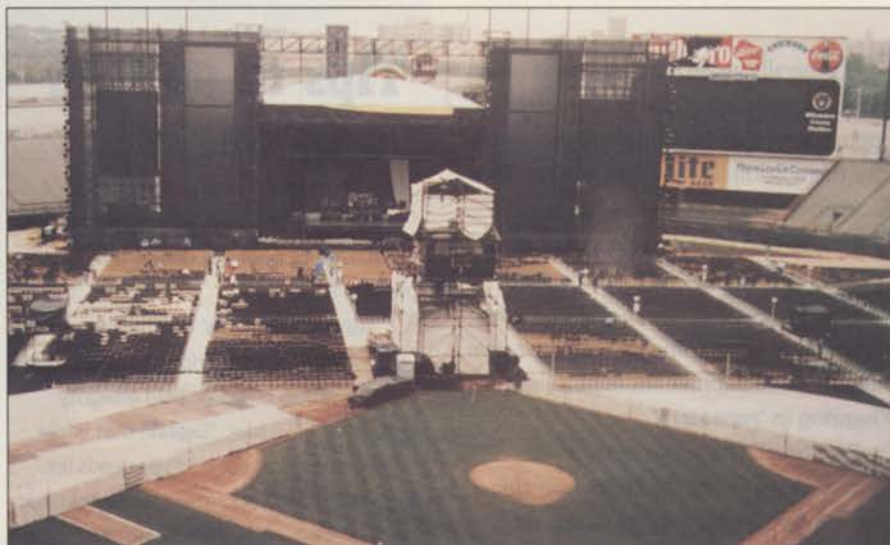
"I try to get out and see my prime clients on their turf at least once a month, usually spending a few minutes with them at the facility before or after a practice. This is a simple chat, with no paperwork, so it's not a burden to them. I check up on how things are going and ask if there are any specific problems or upcoming needs that they want to have addressed. This eliminates most problems while they are still easy to manage and helps keep the lines of communication open."

Dale Getz says Notre Dame's program of hiring seasonal, full-time personnel has become an "excellent" recruiting tool.

"It gives us the opportunity to evaluate potential full-time staff members under our actual working conditions and it gives them a chance to determine whether they like the job and working here," he says.

"Avoid the micro-management syndrome," suggests Tom Curran, grounds supervisor, City of Pompano Beach, Fla., who gives these final tips:

- ▶ hire good people;
- ▶ train them well;
- ▶ give them the tools and guidance needed to do the job;
- ▶ let them do it. □



Special events, such as concerts, add to the schedule and demand cool heads.

budget to provide for overtime pay. "I try to estimate what the overtime budget will be during the annual planning session," he says. "But with heavy play schedules, erratic weather and special needs within the various sports, it's difficult to arrive at accurate predictions."

Milano's staff averages 48 to 50 hours per week. Full-time staff members are salaried and paid once a month.

"Department policy doesn't allow for overtime pay," says Milano. "Full-time employees earn extra time off at the rate of 1½ hours for every hour over 40 worked during a week. Our part-time personnel are paid hourly, but we keep their workloads well below 40 hours per week."

Curran must authorize, justify and of course, document overtime pay.

"I build some overtime into the budget and projected schedule for projects I know will require it, such as the Easter Special Events," says Curran. "But I keep unscheduled overtime to a minimum and clear any large blocks of overtime hours with the Director of Public Works in advance."

Plan ahead, be prepared

"Planning is essential," adds Getz. "Obviously, weather plays a huge role and plans will change, so we must be flexible; but we can only accomplish our goals by knowing what needs doing and when, and staying a little ahead of the curve."

"You need to be prepared and do your homework," says Milano. "By accurately documenting how existing resources—including labor—are allocated and showing the specifics of what could be achieved with more, you at least have a chance of getting them." □

The authors are partners in Trusty & Associates, a consulting firm located in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Steve is Executive Director of the Sports Turf Managers Association

Plan, communicate and have fun!

Working a long home stand can be exhausting on the Milwaukee Brewer's ground crew. Report time can be as early as 6:30 a.m. to remove the tarp before the sun heats up the turf underneath. If the game goes to extra innings, or there is a rain delay, the crew won't clock out till about 1 a.m.

Due to inclement weather and/or set up, take down, and repair from events such as concerts, it is not unusual for my boss, Gary Vandenberg, members of the crew and myself to work between 80 to 90-plus hours in seven days.

Here's some tips to survive the schedule:

1) Not only do you need to be able to handle the long hours, you need to make sure the crew can, too. I have a supportive boss, Gary Vandenberg, and a wonderful wife and family who keep me going.

2) Try to lead by example. Be organized, and look at the hours as a challenge. Take pride in your work. Realize that you are only as good as the people around you.

3) Respect others. Be creative in getting employees motivated. We work hard to prevent burn-out, or what the crew might call "Stadium Brain."

4) Proper scheduling helps manage the budget, and allows crew members to balance and plan their lives outside of work.

5) Make daily work schedules thorough and well-planned. Each job can effect another, whether on that day, the next day, or weeks away. Prioritize each job and keep track of how much time it takes to accomplish well. Attention to detail helps prevent jobs from falling through the cracks.

6) Communicate! Encourage crew members to ask questions and/or suggest ideas. Teamwork makes all our jobs easier.

7) Equipment: match it to the task at hand. Good equipment and regular, preventive maintenance reduce downtime, which can add needless hours to a full day.

8) Watch the weather. We use the D.T.N. Weather System. It's another 'tool' that helps with scheduling, tarp work and chemical applications.

9) Consider hiring interns. Our crew is made up of veterans, newer hires and college interns. Interns want to learn, and their desire to learn influences other employees.

10) Have fun, and enjoy what you do. You will if you build a solid overall management program; it's to everyone's advantage. □

David Mellor, Milwaukee Brewers