

The *Sideline* Report

Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association

February 2012



Iowa Turfgrass Institute Board Cuts the Ribbon for the Grand Opening of the 2012 Trade Show

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For more information regarding articles and advertising rates contact the editor.

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A Letter from the President

Jason Koester, CGCS, Grinnell College



I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to be the President of the ISTMA. It is a pure pleasure to be elected to such a great honor in our organization.

I feel excited, humbled and energized by this tremendous opportunity! Feel free to contact me or any of the board members with anything. We are here to serve the members and organization. We have a lot of exciting ideas and energy to keep the chapter progressing in the future. The board is very proud of the ISTMA. We always strive to make the ISTMA better and continuing to be one of the premiere local chapters of the STMA.

What a great Iowa Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show in January. Thank you to everyone that attended. The show had a new look, but as usual it turned out to be very successful. The educational, networking, and vendor showings were all top notch. The education committee did a great job providing great topics and speakers for the Sports Turf Managers. It was nice to meet and hear Amy Fouty, CSFM of Michigan State talk about many different topics. Unfortunately Allen Johnson, CSFM of the Green Bay Packers was unable to attend due to the grueling playoff schedule that he and his staff had been under. We plan on bringing Allen in the near future. Keynote speaker Chad Carden had an abundant amount of energy that was contagious and provided many people and life skills tips that are great tools for everyone to utilize in your personal and professional endeavors. Thanks to everyone who spoke and if you have an educational topic you would like to see at the conference or our workshops let us know.

The silent auction was a hit again this year. We had many great items and a lot of bidding action that resulted in \$1,675 that will be used for scholarships. Thank you to all that donated items for the auction. The ISTMA conference social on Tuesday night was another success with great food, outstanding networking providing a opportunity to share stories from the past year and catch up with old friends and meet some new contacts. We have some new gear for sale that was unveiled during the show. {Shirts for \$25 and hats for \$20} We will be selling these at the all of events

throughout the year. If we don't have your size, let us know, we can have custom orders placed.

Congratulations to all of the 2011 award winners:

Presented at the annual meeting January 18, 2012.

Golden Cleat Award :

Bryan Wood, Owner of Commercial Turf and Tractor

Sports Turf Manager of the Year :

Tim VanLoo, CSFM, Iowa State University

Baseball Field of the Year :

Council Bluffs Sports Complex - Rick House

Gary Peterson Scholarships:

Tyler Dean of Kirkwood Community College and

Kevin Hansen of Iowa State University.

Membership Drive winner for 2011 was Joe Wagner of Iowa City.

Kirkwood Community College placed first and sixth in the 2-Year Division of the student challenge at the National STMA Conference & Exposition in Long Beach California. Iowa State University finished eighth, tenth and twenty-second in the 4-year division. Congratulations to both institutions on proudly representing our state!

We are forming our committees for the year and would like to invite you to be part of them. There is the education, newsletter, membership and awards committees. These committees are the back bone to getting things rolling in each category of the ISTMA. They provide detailed ideas and feedback to the Board to help make decisions for the organization. Be active and involved with the ISTMA. Please contact the Iowa Turfgrass Office or one of the board members to sign up for a committee.

Good luck on the upcoming sports season and hope for a early spring, mild summer and late fall!!

Keep moving forward, didn't let obstacles get in your way of your dreams and desires.

Iowa Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show

Jeff Wendel, CGCS, Iowa Turfgrass Institute

78th Iowa Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show

Thanks to all the ISTMA members who participated in the 2012 Iowa Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show. We have started working on the 2013 'show', please let your ISTMA Board & Education Committee know the topics and speakers you would like to have at next years event. It really takes most of the year to get the program in place, so if you know a great speaker or topic, now is the time to get that information to us. You can also send your suggestions to me at: 515-232-8222 or jeff@iowaturfgrass.org.

Congratulations!

Mike Andresen, CSFM was presented with the Harry C. Gill Memorial Award on Jan. 13 during the 2012 STMA Conference & Exhibition, recognizing Andresen for his hard work in the sports turf industry.

"STMA's highest honor, the Harry C. Gill Award was presented to 'Mr. STMA,' Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) Mike Andresen," the STMA website reads.

Andresen was honored for his passion for the industry and the association, his willingness to provide guidance and mentorship, his leadership of the association as its 14th President and for long-time service on the board and in his Iowa Chapter of STMA.

All of us in Iowa join STMA in recognizing Mike's commitment to the Sports Turf Professional and other Sports Turf Managers.

Thanks & more congratulations

Thanks to Jason Koester, CGCS, Steve Bush, CSFM & Troy McQuillen for moderating the Sports Turf Sessions at the 2012 Conference. We want to thank all the Sports Turf Speakers and Volunteers; our annual Conference is great because of the commitment of ISTMA Members and their connection to so many fantastic people.

Congratulations to Bryan Wood on his Golden Cleat Award. Congratulations also to Tim VanLoo, CSFM 2011 Sports Turf Manager of the Year and Council Bluffs Sports Complex & Rick House, 2011 Baseball Field of the Year.

Moving Forward

There is much ahead for ISTMA in 2012. Please plan to attend an educational workshop. Also make certain that you are 'logged in' with ISTMA and the ITI online membership directory.

This February issue is one of three printed issues of the *Sideline Report* for 2012. Make sure you are getting the ISTMA Monthly 'quicknotes' email, that should insure that you receive the *Sideline Report* in electronic form as well.

If you are not receiving email from ISTMA, please contact Sarah Hodgson at 515-232-8222 or email to: sarah@iowaturfgrass.org. Sarah will be happy to get you set up with the online account.

2012 Keynote

Thanks to Chad Carden for his high energy message! Sarah Hodgson returned from a meeting in Lawrence, Kansas excited about the speaker she had seen there.

When I finally got around to checking that speakers website, I found Chad Carden, whom I had known since he was a junior golfer at Clarinda Country Club where I was the GM. Thanks Chad!

Special Promotion from The Chad Carden Group

If you enjoyed Chad's Keynote at the Iowa Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show you will love Chad's book P.E.P.P. This book regularly sells on www.chadcarden.com for \$10.95 plus shipping. CCG is announcing a special promotion just for Iowa GCSA. If you are interested in Chad's book email info@chadcarden.com and mention Iowa Turfgrass Institute and you can receive this exciting book for only \$7.95 plus shipping. This could be the best \$7.95 you ever spent!

Career Inspirations

Mike Andresen, CSFM, Iowa State University

It's a true privilege to be asked to write an article for this newsletter. After discussions with a few members on, "what do you want to hear", I was nudged in the direction of reflecting on job or career changes. There seems to be restlessness within our profession and I find it hard to put a finger on the root cause. Being a member of the turf management profession is challenging these days but it's been challenging for many years!

To set this up, know that I started managing turf and landscaping full time in 1982. I worked 10 years in the turf industry before realizing there was a sports turf management side to our industry. Looking back, there wasn't much of a sports turf management industry at the time in central Iowa. There were other admirable sports turf managers but Ted Thorn from the University of Iowa was one professional I aspired to have a career similar to! On a national level I believe the era when fields were being converted from artificial turf to sand based rootzones with grass is when the sports turf management industry exploded in stature. Leaders at that time utilized technology and industry support to propel us from being thought of as a "groundskeeper" to being a professional manager of playing surfaces. It became imperative to understand soils, chemistry, agronomics and of course, soft skills in order to find professional success. I do not mean to undervalue field managers before the mid -1970's, it's just that I believe the advent of the Prescription Athletic Turf (PAT) surfaces demanded a higher level of expertise than rootzones before. As more varieties of sand based rootzones came to be more common, the demands on our profession were elevated.

In 1991 my dream was granted (though it came with a pay cut) as I was asked to be Head Groundskeeper for the Iowa Cubs baseball team. Just so there is no illusion, I got the job because I played college baseball with the General Manager of the club. But I was trained in turf management and very much focused on succeeding at that level. Being around professional athletes reinforced there is one skill that separates the good players from average players, and that every exceptional athlete has - "focus"! When everyone has similar talent, the

one of us that can block out life's clutter and focus on our tasks is going to rise to the top. It's very difficult to maintain professional focus especially for extended periods of time. I think professional baseball field management has an exceptionally high rate of burn out due to the compressed schedule and the field demands. Your longevity in that segment of our profession is completely dependent on how successfully you can focus on your job almost night and day. You primarily have today to worry about but you'll make decisions in the context of your homestand and season schedule. This is not to diminish the importance of high school, park and recreation, college or any other segment of our membership! If you work a sport that involves an infield, every day is different and challenging! The real "art" of sports turf management may be most on display when working infield skins.

One philosophy that I was taught was, "keep your options alive", so when the Iowa State University Athletics Turf Manager position opened up I felt compelled to seek it. The opportunity to work football, softball, baseball and all the other sports at a very high level was
...Continued on page 6



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alluring. I knew how to manage a baseball field but I didn't know a lick about managing pitches or fields for foot sports. The conversion in Jack Trice Stadium from Astro-Turf to grass was an opportunity to work on a field with the latest version of the sand based root zone. To keep future career options alive I needed to know how to manage sand based rootzones. The job was also an opportunity to daily pick the brain of one of our industry's leading researchers, Dr. Dave Miner. Fortunately for me, Iowa State University asked me to work for them and I've been blessed to still call the Ames campus home.

One aspect of working at I-State that has been reinforced to me is to "know my role and the role of others". At the I-Cubs I knew the role – when it comes to the field the buck stopped with me. Iowa State offered the opportunity to really be part of a team of facility and grounds people. Simply, the culture was completely different than where I'd worked before. Getting along with multiple entities of the university was critical to succeeding. Learning to maneuver through university bureaucracy and hierarchy took a lot of focus. The culture at a university and in an athletics department is not one you'll change. I learned to broaden the focus on my job, identify colleagues that could help our cause and develop relationships and trust with those who could help our program succeed. Giving away some ownership of our operations and having others feel part of any success we had in managing fields resulted in "getting more than we gave" from colleagues.

I see and meet many turf managers that have a burning desire to work for certain teams, in certain venues or for certain sports. My advice is to keep your dream but do it quietly. Each of us starts at an entry level position. The only way a better opportunity is ever offered to us is very simple: When we prove we're worthy of being offered more responsibility is when we'll be offered more responsibility. The point is – completely focus on your job (nest) today and work it as if your intent is to make today's nest your long term home. Don't think about what you'd like to be doing, be thinking about what you are or could be doing! Steve Wightman, from Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego, during a presentation at the Iowa Turfgrass Conference years ago said, "if all you can grow on your field is knotweed, grow the best knotweed field you can". Focus on your present

job as if you'll be there forever. If we work as if one foot is out the door to the next job, that next job will never show itself - or you'll be asked to step your other foot out the door and turn your keys in. Employers expect to trade a salary for our committed focus. They don't expect us to be perfect. They expect us to work hard and care about where we work. We help our employers sell the image of our organization and they like to see us motivated to do so. We're visible at our facilities and our work is on display for every patron and staff member to see. You're marketing your organization and yourself every time you unlock the gate or fill up the mower. Those of us that understand today's event truly is the most important one are the turf managers who will be offered more important events to manage in the future!

One of the seven deadly sins is "pride". Don't be too proud to think there are jobs or events that are beneath you or the level of your focus. Real focus doesn't come easily and we need to take advantage of our opportunities to develop the skill. Pulling tarp during a storm in May – when no one is in your park and the game doesn't mean much – is part of the exercise that allows you and your crew to pull the same tarp flawlessly during the pivotal game in a pennant race in August! Doing the job right in May just might play a role in your team's fortunes when the lights are the brightest late in the year.

Before this gets too long and preachy I want to issue each of us a challenge. Most of us were athletes and this may partially be the reason we found our way into this profession. We all like to do things that either come naturally or that we are good at doing. My challenge is for each of us to focus and work on the things we're NOT good at doing! Teams – and don't forget for a second that you're part of one – reward members that have multiple talents. We may have been a star in little league simply because we threw harder than anyone else but that alone was not enough to carry us as we climbed through higher levels of competition! For the most part, you can list on paper the things you like to do. Those are also probably the things you are good at doing. List on paper those things or tasks you prefer to avoid! Chances are that is the list of jobs or skills

you avoid because they don't come easy – or frankly – you may not be very good at doing. I don't like any aspect of the budgeting process. From start to finish the bureaucracy involved in budgeting at the University is layered with safeguards and redundancy. It's there for our protection but it's a challenge to feel like it's anything but oppressive and archaic. To excel in my position, I have to know not only how budgeting works but I need to know how to maximize our advantage through every segment of the process. Secondly, in order to keep my options alive at Iowa State University or possibly for a future employer I know it's important to focus and get comfortable in the budgeting and business office world. Nope, I didn't want to do it - and it's taken more focus than I care to admit – but if I'm to excel to the level my employer trusts me to in this present role I need to more than meet that challenge. My professional growth depends on turning personal weaknesses into strengths and so does yours.

It's important to self audit your strengths, weaknesses, motivations and goals on a fairly regular basis. The audit is only the first step. The second step is to develop some sort of action plan to ensure you're doing everything possible to keep goals alive and your career moving forward. Our lives and careers truly are in motion! As a wise person once said – if you're not moving forward, you're moving backward.

Take time to recharge during this snow season and please never hesitate to contact me with a question or comment. Thank you for your membership and support of the Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association.

Mike Andresen, CSFM
Iowa State University Athletics Department

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Adding a WOW Factor

Jeff Bosworth, Drake University

There is nothing like passing by a stadium, park, college or high school and seeing a nice, green, manicured lawn. However, to add an extra “WOW” factor, you may want to consider an annual garden with a combination of your school or team colors. I realize you are all sports turf managers and are busy getting your 2012 event calendars put together with cultural, pesticide, fungicide and fertilizer applications penciled in, but now is the time to put pencil to paper and start planning for annual color as well. Consider adding annual color to high profile areas such as entrances to the stadium, common areas or in front of the administrative (bosses) offices.

We all have varying degrees of responsibilities with our main focus on making the fields we manage as safe and in the best possible playing condition; however, there is somewhere on your facility where added color would make an impact by means of an annual flower bed or annual flower pots. I am no expert in garden design and care; I have trouble keeping my own flowers at home alive! I am just fortunate enough to have staff that are experts in this area and are able to keep them alive during our hot, dry summers. What I can offer you are tips I have learned to make the process easier.

My first suggestion would be to find a grower in your area. I have used the same grower for a number of years and it makes life much simpler when it comes time to plant in the spring. My grower is able to help me make smart decisions concerning the plant material best suited to my situation. Growers will most likely start the plants from plugs and have the plants ready by your designated time, usually in May. This way, you will be able to get the plant material you want when you need it and without



having to pick through less desirable plants. I have nothing against buying annual flowers from garden centers or big box stores, but building a relationship with a grower makes the process of buying plants much easier and often times cheaper.

When using a grower, it is important to start planning annual beds and pots now. The sooner you have the numbers put together the sooner your grower can find and start the plants. When planning, be sure to choose plants which have the same water and light requirements. In this way, you will avoid losing plant material due to over or under watering; losing blooms due to lack of sun; and avoid burning the foliage. Also consider the ultimate height and width of each plant. In both annual beds and in annual pots, you will want to choose varying heights to make the planting more interesting. Pots usually have a tall plant, filler and a trailing plant. When you are finished designing your annual beds and pots, create a spreadsheet so from year to year so you know how many plants you ordered and the number actually used. I have become more diligent in doing this because it never fails; I run short and end up scrambling to find plants.

I have learned there is much more to annual flower design and implementation than what I first realized and what I have mentioned here, however by finding a grower in your area and starting the planning process now is a good beginning to making life much simpler in the spring. The playing field is our number one priority, but adding some color to the entrance of your facility I'm sure will not go unnoticed.

Kirkwood Students Win National Turf Competition

Kirkwood Community College

Kirkwood students claimed a new piece of turf at a competition in Long Beach, California: Student Challenge National Champions. Students from the college's Golf Course & Athletic Turfgrass Management program finished in first place at the 2012 Student Challenge at the Sports Turf Managers Association annual Conference & Exposition in January.

During the conference, students participated in the industry trades show, education sessions and panel discussions. One of the biggest draws is the Student Challenge competition. It is comprised both two- and four-year colleges with turfgrass programs from around the country.

Seven Kirkwood students made up two teams that competed in the 12-team event. One team comprised of Luke Perkins (Iowa City, IA), Tim Sims (Galva, IL), Tyler Dean (West Branch, IA) and Tyler Timmerman (Genceo, IL) took first place in the two-year team competition. The other team, of just three students, included James Eaton (Muscatine, IA), Nick Dralle (Mason City, IA) and Levi Driesen (Hawarden, IA) placed sixth.

"I am very proud of the effort and dedication that the students put into the Student Challenge competition this year," said Troy McQuillen, Golf Course & Athletic Turfgrass Management faculty member. "These students are a great reflection for what the Golf Course and Athletic Turfgrass Program is all about."

The first place Kirkwood team not only had the highest score in the two-year category, but also tied the four-year winning team, Purdue. Kirkwood's winning team received a trophy and a \$4000 check to the Turf Club to be used for tools and special projects for the classroom.

"We know that our students are well-prepared when they leave our program. Seeing them win the competition, and tie the best four-year school in the country ... that's something these students can be really proud of." The teams started studying for the competition in early October. They raised more than \$6000 to fund the trip, with fundraiser like home lawn aerations, sod installations and renovation projects on high school baseball fields. The teams will travel to Daytona Beach, Florida next year to defend their title.



**Congratulations
to Kirkwood
Community
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2012 Iowa Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show Picture Review





Keynote Chad Carden



Congratulations to Chuck Eckermann!



ITI Meritorious Service Award Winner

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2012 ISTMA Award Results



**Bryan Wood, Commercial Turf and Tractor
receives the ISTMA Golden Cleat Award**

**Tim VanLoo, CSFM, Iowa State University
receives ISTMA Sports Turf Manager of the Year**



**Rick House, Council Bluffs Sports Complex
receives ISTMA Baseball Field of the Year
for Field #8**



Congratulations to all Award Winners!

2012 ISTMA Gary Peterson Scholarships



Congratulations to Kevin Hansen!

Kevin is a Junior at Iowa State University pursuing a degree in Horticulture with a Turfgrass Management Option. In 2011, he graduated from Kirkwood Community College with a Associate of Science Degree.

Kevin has enjoyed working in the Turfgrass Field at Boone Golf & Country Club, The City of Coralville, the I-Cubs Sports Turf Management and currently at Jack Trice Stadium.

He plans to continue working through internships with professional sports fields and someday become a manager of a sports turf field or complex.

Congratulations to Tyler Dean!

Tyler will be graduating from Kirkwood Community College in May with a Golf Course and Athletic Turfgrass Management Degree.

His work experience includes 4 summers with the City of Iowa City working with baseball, softball and soccer fields. He enjoyed the real world experience and gain valuable information to be successful.

Tyler plans to find a full time job working as a Sports Turf Manager for an Athletic Field upon graduation in May.



ISTMA is pleased to offer these scholarships and wishes each recipient much success as they pursue their careers.

ISTMA would like to express our gratitude to the individuals and businesses who donated items towards the ISTMA silent auction at the Iowa Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show. All proceeds from the silent auction go towards providing scholarship opportunities to Iowa university, college and technical school students pursuing careers in the Sports Turf Industry.

If you are a student interested in applying for the 2012 ISTMA Scholarships, you can find the application at <http://www.iowaturfgrass.org/istmascholarship.htm>

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2012 Legislative Issue: Commercial Property Taxes in Iowa

Mona Bond, IaAEC

Background:

Currently commercial & industrial properties are assessed at 100% of their assessed value. Residential property is assessed at 50.75% and agricultural at 57.45% of their assessed value due to the state mandated rollback. (Note: More than 20 years ago, residential property values were rising quickly. To help cushion the impact of high inflation, the Legislature passed an assessment limitation law called rollback. Increases in assessed values for residential and agricultural property are subject to this assessment limitation formula. If the statewide increase in values of homes and farms exceeds 4% due to revaluation, their values are "rolled back" so that the total increase statewide is 4%. Rollback is also available for industrial and commercial property when necessary.

After failing to get an overhaul of Iowa's commercial property tax system through the Legislature last session, Gov. Terry Branstad has begun meeting with local

government leaders and is seeking input from Iowan's to gain approval of big property tax changes. All parties have agreed that this will be a priority issue for them in the 2012 session. Brandstad's proposal includes a \$50 million/year reimbursement to local governments for the revenue they would lose. The Governor's office has stated they would like to see if they could protect the local government budgets. Additionally, they have indicated they would consider additional methods of revenue for local governments.

In 2011, Iowa's Senate Democrats proposed a plan that would have set aside \$50 million in state funds annually for a new business property tax credit program. An additional \$50 million per year to a total of \$200 million could be added to the fund if the state's Revenue Estimating Conference certifies that the total amount of general fund revenues has grown by at least four percent as compared to the previous fiscal year. Of all the property tax proposals put on the table last session, the bill holds local governments harmless and still meets the goal of commercial property tax reduction. (Note: See SF 522-2011 session)

Proposal:

Many Iowan's have voiced their concerns about how their property taxes impact their businesses by inhibiting their ability to hire additional staff, expand their operations and how it is creating an un-level playing field with surrounding states. It was noted that property taxes vary greatly from one community to another within the state also.

Recommendations:

IaAEC recommends that a hard look be taken at the services provided by government, focusing more on essential services. They recommend Iowa take the lead in America by reducing all taxes thus drawing business to the state – not away. Potentially the cost of goods in stores could be decreased by 5-10% immediately if fees and taxes were reduced. Steps must be taken that all taxing entities restrain themselves from finding new fees and regulations to charge for. The economy could take a swing upward if we could cut the overhead of non-essential items provided by local governments.

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Additionally members recommend that high taxes, whether property or other taxes, are starving small businesses that operate on narrow margins and are perpetually cash poor. There continues to be concern about the sale of existing businesses and their value as taxes and fees continue to rise.

The current structure in Iowa is very much a disincentive to reinvest in sites, either existing or new ones and is something given strong consideration to when making capital decisions. While obviously expecting to recoup the actual capital costs in any project through additional revenues or out of necessity to maintain the viability of a site, the associated increase in property tax is a dead weight that never goes away. For example: this year a new business site was opened at a cost of over \$1.5 million. The projected property tax is approximately \$27,000/yr. That means before any other fixed/variable costs are covered the business must

generate \$2250/month just to pay the property tax. This is equivalent to hiring another employee. The tax burden is magnified in small towns. There is an business in a town of about 500 people. It's an older, low volume property and the tax bill is \$6000/year. Taxes are a definite drain on the site.

Contact:

Please contact Mona Bond with any comments you may have on the issue at monabond51@gmail.com or call her at 515-202-9222 (Cell).

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Count on it.

STMA Conference 2012 - Long Beach, CA

Tim VanLoo, CSFM, Iowa State University

The 2012 STMA Conference was another great success. I never heard the final number, but I was told the number of attendees was as many as last year. That is a great success considering most of us have decreased budgets in this economically challenging time. The conference was held in Long Beach, CA where the weather was a perfect 75 degrees every day and the sun seemed to never stop shining.

My conference started with a tour on wheels that included stops at Hollywood Park Race Track, The Home Depot Center, MLB Urban Youth Academy, and Blair Field. The tour departed from the conference center at 7 AM and returned around 4 PM. I have had the privilege of attending at least one tour for the past five years, and they seem to be just getting better. The highlight on this tour for me was not the Home Depot Center which houses 2 professional soccer teams along with many other events like X-Games. My highlight was the MLB Urban Youth Academy. It is housed in the heart of Compton on the grounds of Compton Community College. MLB paid to build the 10 acre complex to give inner city kids from Compton a place to play baseball. The program has been a great success. Many kids have used the opportunity to get college scholarships and get off of the streets of Compton. The complex reminded me what opportunities our fields provide for people. Don't forget that as this year gets started.

Tuesday night I had the privilege to represent our chapter at COTS. COTS is designed to help STMA local chapters get better at what they do by sharing ideas and challenges that each chapter has. It is important to understand that the ISTMA is one of the country's strongest chapters. You all should be very proud to be a part of it, I know I am.

The SAFE foundation annually has a golf outing on Wednesday to help raise scholarship funds for students dedicated to the sports turf industry. This year's outing was held at a great course called Industry Hills Golf Club. We were able to raise about \$27,000 towards the scholarship fund which is a great success. The other highlight of that outing was Mike McDonald from University of Minnesota hitting a hole in one on the par 3

number 9. Many of you know Mike through the chapter challenge. Needless to say, it is not a financially good idea to have a hole in one during an outing. Thursday is the start of the education with a keynote speaker to kick it off. The keynote speaker was a gentleman by the name of Eric Boles. Eric did a great job sharing stories of his NFL experience and what he learned about life through his athletic career. What he ended with probably had the biggest impact on me. I will paraphrase as best I can.

"Turf managers create memories. Some of my life's highest points and best memories were created on an athletic field. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will also say thank you on behalf of all the athletes that don't have the same opportunity that I have right now. What you do may be under appreciated by many, but understand that you are a crucial piece to athletes making great life long memories".

Please don't forget that as this year begins to challenge you. I would actually take it one step further by saying you are also creating memories for parents and spectators. Keep what you do in the right perspective and you will have a much better outlook on your day to day activities.

There are up to 7 different talks going on consecutively Thursday through Friday. There was always a talk that one could apply to his situation and take something back to help them have a successful 2012 season. The education at the STMA conference continues to get better and better every year.

Friday morning is when the student challenge is held. This year the test was as tough as ever. All 36 teams were challenged to answer multiple choice and short answer question along with a very challenging ID section that includes irrigation parts, pests, weeds, and turf grasses. Congratulations go to Kirkwood Community College for winning the 2 year college competition.

The annual awards banquet is Friday night and is the final event. The STMA founder's awards are given after dinner. The best part of this year's awards for me was being there to see Mike Andresen, CSFM receive the Harry C. Gill Memorial Award.

As many of you know Mike, winning an award is the last thing he wants to have happen to him, but that is exactly why he was a great choice for this year's recipient. Mike has done so many things for our chapter, the national chapter, countless ISU students, and me. It was great to see his dedication to our industry noticed among his peers.

Next year's conference will be in Daytona Beach, FL. If you have never attended an STMA national event I would encourage you to do so this year. The networking and education opportunities are plentiful and I promise you will not be disappointed.

P.S. I wanted to say thank you to the ISTMA for awarding me the Sports Turf Manager of the Year. Winning an award has never been a goal of mine. Having a recognition come from my peers is a very humbling experience. Thank you for accepting me so quickly. The place I grew up may be 550 miles away, but all of you have made it easy for me to call Iowa, "home".

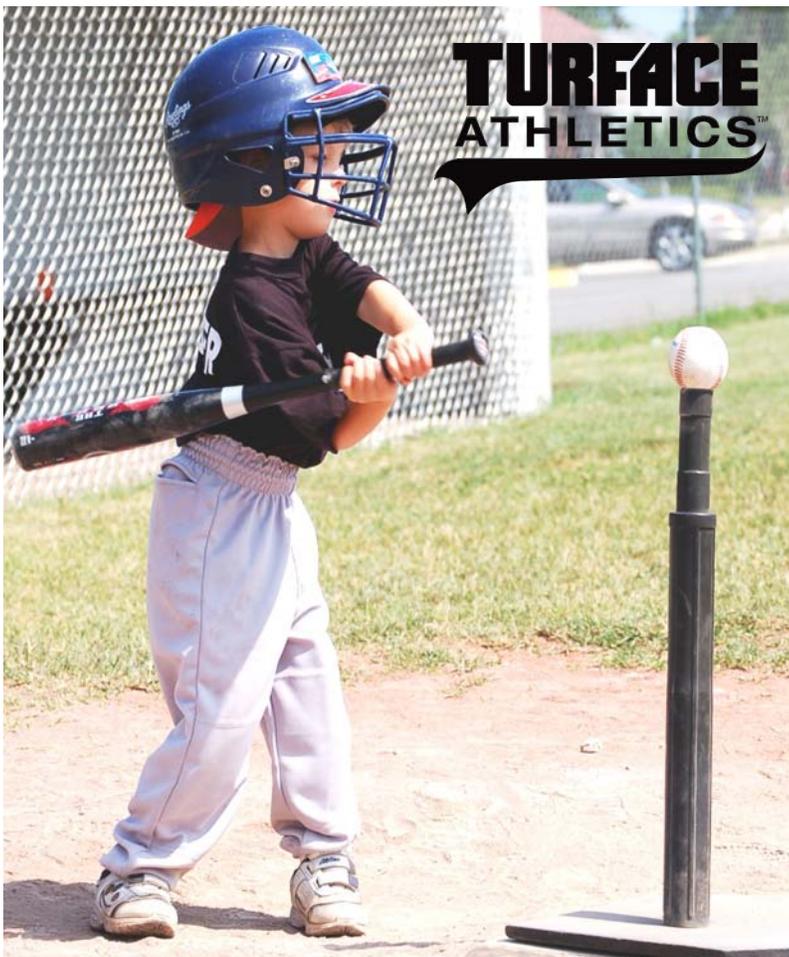


**Congratulations
to
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**Mike received the Harry C. Gill Memorial
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What is Most Important?

TJ Brewer, CSFM, Burlington Bees

In order of importance, what are your three most important aspects of sports turf management? I was recently asked this question and it really made me think. I feel like I have been spending too much time trying to figure out the answer to this question. I want you all to stop reading for just a minute and think of what your initial response is. I can't even remember what my first reaction was, but I am sure it revolved somewhere around safety, playability, and aesthetics. I imagine this is where most of you would start out as well. Then the old mind started spinning and opening up the possibilities of what all of the answers really could be.

Let's start with safety. I am sure we all agree this is probably #1 on our lists. Now let's think about playability. If our field is not playable it is unsafe. Do you all agree here? Is it possible to have a field that is safe to play on and not be playable? So I have taken the liberty of putting safety and playability in the same slot, as far as I am concerned they are the same thing. Now aesthetics is number three and I understand how important this is to the television audience and people in the stands, but is it really one of my most important aspects of sports turf management? I don't know. This is where I have a huge brain jam. I honestly believe I would do anything to make my field safe (and playable) and don't know if I would, or have in many cases, taken the aesthetics of my actions into consideration. If this is true, is it fair for aesthetics to be in the top three. I mean if safety (and playability) are number one, then how is it possible for aesthetics to be so highly ranked

given I would overlook it to make my field safe (and playable). So all of a sudden my initial top three have been worked down to only one, although it is a very strong #1.

What are my options now? The first one that came to my mind was consistency. I have always felt this to be very important part of what I do. My goal is to have my field play the same during game one of our season as it does in game 70. The players are expecting the ball to bounce the same, move through the grass the same speed, and get their traction on every play of every game. I also think that consistency plays very close always reacting the same to player and ball movements it is a very safe field. For one because no one is going to be surprised by a bad or unexpected field response. So, I feel, I can make this a solid #2 and I believe I have a pretty good list started with #1.) safety (and playability) and #2.) consistency. This is where I run into trouble.

So far I have eliminated safety, playability, aesthetics, and consistency. This is a pretty powerful list and only fills up two positions on my end list. What else is left out there? Here are some options I am playing around with for #3 on the list: teamwork, communication and leadership. Now I feel like I need to justify each of these options. First teamwork, if you are an athletic field manager you need teamwork even if you are a one man show. You need your user or user groups to work with you to give you the best chance to provide a safe, playable, and consistent playing surface. If you have a crew this is critical to getting the job done on schedule, to the expectations of the user group, and to maintain sanity on the crew during those long days of spring, summer and fall. In order for teamwork to happen you need leadership. I am not talking about the kind of leadership where the boss sits in the office and tells people what to do, but the kind where there is a feeling of ownership given to the crew and user groups. Someone that makes each individual feel like they are an important part of the process and not just a means to an end. Most importantly you need someone who can instill the team aspect into the use and maintenance of your facility. I feel these two go hand in hand, you



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need a good leader to build teamwork, and you need teamwork to develop good leaders. Now let's add in communication to this mix. If you have teamwork you already have good communication, right? I mean how does a team operate without communication? I don't think it can, and I know you can't truly have teamwork without good communication. Now let's look at leadership and communication as one in the same. A good leader can't exist without communication. There is no such thing as a good leader that is unable to communicate... I challenge you to name one. So if you need good leadership and communication to have teamwork exist than should we put these three together? I think so and I think they fit best under the name teamwork. Teamwork because this is the one that truly encompasses all three and the only one that can't stand alone without the other two already in place. Now for my list: #1.) safety (and playability) #2.) consistency #3.) teamwork (communication, and leadership), pretty good if you ask me!

And the big question is: are these the three most important aspects of sports turf management? I don't know. I think this makes a pretty impressive list, but I don't know if it is a good one. There are a lot of different aspects of sports turf management that are critical to the success of my field. For example, if I didn't have the knowledge I have gained through my education and experience I would not be able to create a safe playing field. Without my experience and education I would not have developed the teamwork, communication, and leadership skills that I feel have become pretty strong. With this being said does this make education and experience part of my three most important aspects of sports turf management? I think there is an argument for them and I would combine them under knowledge. So with the addition of this where does it fit in?

I think consistency is a tough one. I can have a consistently bad field, so consistency alone may not be one of the top three. This being said consistency might end up fitting in with safety and playability. Why? Because an inconsistent field should be considered unsafe if athletes can't expect the same response from the field every time they are on it. So end of story consistency is out as one of the three and combined with safety. Here is our list so far: #1.) safety (playability and consistency) #2.) teamwork (communication and leadership) #3.)

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knowledge (education and experience). Wow, I feel this list is really getting good! But wait, what about scheduling? Could this really be a top three? I think so. One of the biggest parts of my job is scheduling. It might be scheduling workers, chemical application, cultural practices, games, practices and so on, but in general scheduling. I think we need another paragraph to figure this one out.

Think about how much scheduling you do in a year and how critical it is to success of your facility. First of all I am handed our team schedule. There are 70 games set in stone. From this I lay out all of my chemical applications, cultural practices, and general routine maintenance. Once I have this all set up and I am feeling good about it the high school, babe ruth, college, and whatever other games are added to the schedule. This means I need to reschedule, so I do, we all do. How critical is our chemical application schedule. This alone is a major factor in the success of our fields.

....Continued on page 22

What is Most Important Continued...

The timing of the applications can't be too far apart or we stress the plants with deficiencies, if they are too close we stress our budgets with extra mowings and extra applications. Pesticide application timing is very particular. Too early with an insecticide and it is worthless, too late and it again is worthless. If a fungicide will prevent attacks for 12 days you better not put down your next application 15 days later or you just wasted your money. What about the restricted entry interval of some of these pesticides? You better make sure you are following the label in these situations! Alright, without going too much further have I made a good point that scheduling is one of the top three? I think I provide a pretty good argument, but where do I fit it in? Now if you remember talking about knowledge, you will remember I said without my experience and education I would not have developed my teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. So how about we put teamwork in with knowledge because of this. Anyone else confused yet? I know I am! So where are we on our

top three? 1. safety (playability and consistency) 2. knowledge (teamwork, leadership, communication, education and experience) 3. scheduling.

Can it be that easy? Can scheduling stand alone? Once again, I still don't know. But when I really think about it scheduling is so important, but it is never really spoken about as such. I mean everything we do is based on a schedule and that schedule is always changing. By the year, month, week, day, even hour. Our schedules are constantly in motion whether it is a game added to our calendar, a thunderstorm, or an early fall frost. Every aspect of the success of our facility is based on our ability to make a schedule and then be able to compromise and modify our routine to fit into the window available and still produce a satisfactory product. Is it possible scheduling is so important? It is obvious that the safety, playability, and consistency of our fields are all directly related to our ability to make out, follow, and modify a schedule.



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It is also important that we don't have different user groups trying to use the same field at the same time. Does this make scheduling #1? This is going to require us to go back and look at the question that was originally asked of us.

In order of importance, what are your three most important aspects of sports turf management? Looks like such a simple question, but it is definitely loaded! My initial response of safety, playability, and aesthetics are all very important, but I think they are more geared to our end product, the fields we produce. These are very important outcomes, but what are the most important aspects of turf management. Even though safety is an outcome I think it should always be in the top three no matter what part of the process we are talking about. Without safety we don't even get to the end product, so keep it up, and it stays number one. All of the components of knowledge we have discussed are critical to success, and I don't

believe a satisfactory end product is possible without them. These are all critical components to knowing how to do what we do and get it done successfully. I feel I have made an argument that scheduling should be on this list, and I feel it is in a good place. I am not done thinking about this question. I am sure if the next week goes anywhere like the last week has I will make more changes to it.

I would like to hear your answers to this question. Send me an email with your suggestions. Post a comment on the ISTMA Facebook page with your response. This is one of those articles, I hope, has made you think. Look at this with question and think about it for a bit. Finally I don't know if this article has made any sense, but hopefully it has raised some question to what is important. I think I might be more confused now than when I was asked this question, but I think I might be figuring something out.

ISTMA would like to welcome our newest Board Members



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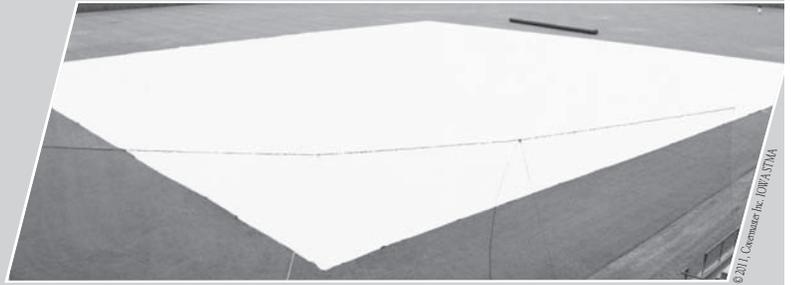
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