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*The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council Magazine*

## Managing High-Use SPORTS FIELDS

*Plus, Tips to Finding  
and Securing a Job*





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# Pennsylvania TURFGRASS

Vol. 6 / No. 4 • Fall 2017

Pennsylvania  
Turfgrass  
Council

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# United WE STAND

**N**ow that fall is here, I hope you have some time to get away and relax. This year has been interesting. It started out looking like a drought but ended up being a wet summer. Fortunately, the temperatures were rarely high enough to cause many problems. It sounds like turf professionals fared well this year. I've had more conversations about water and fertilizer regulations than turf issues this past season. Half of the state continues to struggle with SRBC compliance, while the entire state could be affected by Senate Bill 792.

The legislative committee hearing on SRBC overreach went very well, and I appreciate all of the support. The committee believes the commission is guilty of operating beyond the guidelines of the compact it was founded upon. The commission has become a wealthy organization with no government oversight. Turf managers have been blindsided by increased fees, more inspections and violations.

As difficult as it has been for us, municipal water suppliers are the biggest victims. Since their services trickle down to taxpayers, the abuse of them is what

will drive reform within the commission. The fees and requirements for re-permitting our dockets are excessive. Don't wait until the last minute to apply for a renewal. I would allow at least two years before it expires to start the process.

Senate Bill 792 was originally introduced as SB 563, which created labeling requirements for lawn fertilizer. Meetings within the Department of Agriculture have arrived at a bill that strikes a balance between industry needs and the protection of our natural resources. Their concern is that there are now more acres of turf than acres of corn in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. While that may be true, turf is a much better filter of water headed for the bay than corn will ever be. Just like the SRBC, this legislation does not apply to agriculture production. There is a big difference between fertilizer in the hands of a homeowner versus those of a turf professional. We are guilty by association, though, and in danger of being regulated accordingly.

As an industry, we need to make sure that we are involved in these discussions and are stakeholders at the table. We currently have no lobbyist or representation watching over the turf industry. It is up to us collectively to build relationships with our legislators and make our concerns heard when these decisions are made.

Look for updates on these issues coming through the local chapters and state organizations. Mark your calendars for the upcoming seminars (see page 8). The new 2018 Eastern Pennsylvania Turfgrass Conference at Shady Maple is one you do not want to miss! Have a great fall season.

*Pete Ramsey*

2017-2018 PTC President



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## 2018 Eastern PA Turf Conference & Trade Show Revitalized, January 10

**The** 2018 edition of the Eastern PA Turf Conference will introduce some major changes to the annual educational opportunity. The conference location has moved to the Shady Maple Conference Center in East Earl, PA, and the conference has been compacted into one jam-packed day: **Wednesday, January 10, 2018.**

The conference will feature three concurrent educational tracks: Golf; Landscape and Sports Turf; and Back to the Basics (topics appealing to all who work in the green industry). The Trade Show will return, and sponsorship opportunities are available. Lunch at the famous Shady Maple Smorgasbord is included with registration.

The educational program has been developed with input from representatives of LCAP, CPGCSA, USGA, KAFMO

and Penn State. More than 20 update credits in categories 7, 18, 23 and PC will be offered, along with 4 core credits, 3 in category 6 and 1 in category 16.

Dr. Mike Goatley of Virginia Tech and Dr. Matt Elmore of Rutgers will be joining Penn State educators in providing university research results and advice to address current turfgrass management issues. Experts in the field — like Elliott Dowling (USGA) and Steve McDonald (Turfgrass Disease Solutions) — will also be presenting. At least 10 seminar topics will be of special interest to lawn and landscape professionals, and, for the sports turf managers attending, Tony Leonard (Eagles) and Chris Ecton (Steelers) will share their experiences working in the NFL. The 2018 Eastern PA Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show will have something for all turfgrass managers.

Plan to attend. Save the date, **Wednesday, January 10, 2018**, on your calendar. Additional details and registration will be available in November. ☉

### NOVEMBER 14–16

#### **Penn State Golf Turf Conference**

*Nittany Lion Inn  
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### JANUARY 25, 2018

#### **Northeastern PA Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show**

*Woodlands Inn  
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### FEBRUARY 27–28, 2018

#### **Western Pennsylvania Turf, Ornamental and Landscape Conference and Trade Show**

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### Research Summary

## ○ Golf Course Fairway Topography and Sampling Strategy Influence Soil Fertility Assessments ○

**R**outine soil fertility testing is a commonly used method of estimating fertilizer and/or lime requirements of turfgrass systems. Soil sampling is the critical first step, and the accuracy of nutrient availability prediction increases with the number of soil cores collected from each area of interest. But pulling cores isn't the most rewarding engagement, so exactly how few sub-samples comprise a robust composite sample?

The goal of this research is to develop a site-specific method for efficient sampling of golf course fairway soils.

Quarter-acre sections of three identically managed Kentucky bluegrass/perennial ryegrass fairways, each situated on a shoulder, footslope or toeslope landscape position, were intensively grid-sampled in 2017. Thatch was removed, and the upper 3" of soil ground was passed through a 60-mesh sieve for routine fertility analysis by Penn State University's Ag. Analytical Services Laboratory. Further specialized analyses include total soil nitrogen, carbon and sulfur levels, as well as labile organic carbon fractions.

Preliminary results show that despite

having received identical cultural management for 50 years, soil-nutrient assessment of golf course fairways is highly influenced by both random and structured spatial variabilities. The authors gratefully acknowledge financial support provided through the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council and the Dr. George W. Hamilton Fellowship. ☉

*Update submitted by Benjamin E. Brace (MS Candidate Agronomy) and Maxim J. Schlossberg, Ph.D., Assoc. Prof. Turf Nutrition, Center for Turfgrass Science, Penn State University*





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# Managing High-Use SPORTS FIELDS

By Tom Serensits, Manager, Center for Sports Surface Research, Penn State University

One of the biggest challenges a sports field manager can face is maintaining a safe, playable surface on a heavily used field. Whether it's a football field shared by multiple

teams or a soccer field used from sunup to sundown, the task of providing consistent, dense turf can be daunting. A few simple maintenance practices can help minimize field wear and tear.

## Seed early and often

Overseeding is likely the most important in-season maintenance practice on athletic fields and is a “must” on heavily used fields. Special attention should be given to the high-use areas within the field. These areas include between the hashes on football fields and goalmouths on soccer and lacrosse fields.

## Overseeding species

For fields in Pennsylvania that contain Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass or tall fescue (or any combination of these), you will have the most success for in-season seeding using 100% perennial ryegrass. Perennial ryegrass offers several advantages over both Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue for in-season seeding.

First is speed. Perennial ryegrass typically germinates in five to seven days and grows quickly after germination. Tall fescue tends to germinate fairly quickly but is slow to mature. Germination and maturation time for Kentucky bluegrass is much slower, and there is

A typical heavily used sports field.







Top to bottom: Kentucky bluegrass (9 lbs./1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>), tall fescue (25 lbs./1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) and perennial ryegrass (25 lbs./1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) overseeding at 3 times the standard seeding rate under an equal amount of simulated field use.



little chance for the plants to mature before being torn out during field use.

Perennial ryegrass is also less expensive. You will often see blends of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass, but for the best bang for your buck, stick with 100% perennial ryegrass for in-season seeding.

As for selecting the cultivar of perennial ryegrass, visit [www.ntep.org](http://www.ntep.org), and select the latest perennial ryegrass test date. The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program consists of turfgrass cultivar evaluations conducted at universities throughout the United States, including Penn State.

When looking at the perennial ryegrass data, it is important to note that many of the top-performing cultivars have similar performance characteristics. In many cases, selecting cultivars in the top half of the list is sufficient and allows you to shop for good deals. Quality is important, but so is quantity, and if you can pick a good cultivar that is inexpensive, this will allow you to buy more seed.

During the off-season, Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue can be seeded



Top to bottom: Perennial ryegrass overseeded at 5, 15 and 30 lbs./1,000 ft<sup>2</sup> under an equal amount of simulated field use.



if desired, given there is enough time for establishment before field use.

### Overseeding rate

The more seed you put down on your field, the richer your “seed bank” will be, which ultimately means more turf coverage. Of course, there is also an economic side to this practice. In general, if you can apply between 20 and 30 pounds of perennial ryegrass per 1,000 square feet during the course of the season, you will see excellent results without too much strain on your budget.

That’s a lot of seed. For example, the commonly recommended seeding rate for planting a perennial ryegrass lawn is 4 to 5 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. The good news is that you do not need to spread seed at that high rate across the entire field. Perhaps you need this high seeding rate only on the high-wear areas between the hash marks and between the 20-yard lines of a football field.

On a high school football field, this area is roughly 10,000 square feet. If you are going with 30 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet, you would need 300 pounds of seed for the area between the hash marks and between the 20 yard lines. At an approximate price of \$2 per pound of seed, the cost for 300 pounds is \$600.

You do not need to wait until the turf begins to thin to begin overseeding. A general rule of thumb is to overseed half of the total amount of seed when field use begins and spread the remaining seed weekly or bi-weekly during field use.

### Fertilizing

Fertilizing is key to helping heavily used fields recover. The majority of fertilizer should be applied in the fall, and fertilizer should not be applied in hot, dry weather or any time when the turf is stressed. Over the course of the growing season, a total of 3 to 5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet should be applied on heavily used fields. It’s important that the fertilizer be watered-in with irrigation or rainfall.



## Watering

Watering heavily used fields has several benefits. First, it will help the grass seed germinate. It will also help prevent the field from becoming hard and potentially unsafe. Watering should be done on a deep and infrequent basis in most instances. More frequent, lighter amounts may be needed during heavy use, but watering immediately before field use should be avoided.

## Synthetic turf

Heavily used synthetic turf fields also require routine maintenance. While seeding and fertilizing are obviously not needed, practices such as brushing, grooming and adding infill where needed help maintain safety and playability.

Infill depth should be monitored in areas of high use, and additional infill should be added if infill levels drop below manufacturer-specified levels. Infill depth gauges can be purchased for less than \$20 and are a valuable, easy-to-use tool (search online for "fire-proofing depth gauge").

## Rotate drills

Whether your team is playing on natural or synthetic turf, one of the easiest ways to minimize damage from heavy field use is to constantly rotate the location of drills. However, this is often more easily said than done. It's a battle many field managers continuously fight, even at the professional level.

Coaches tend to find their "spot," and whether it's a comfort level or superstition, it's often difficult to get them to move. Often, shifting a drill even just a few feet can make a dramatic difference on field conditions. Constantly running the same drill on the same spot can eventually wear out the turf completely, creating a problem area on the field that may last all season.

Managing a heavily used field is not easy. However, with proper maintenance practices and some communication with coaches, you can overcome many of the challenges brought about by high field use. ☉



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# Between the Lines

## » TIPS TO FINDING AND SECURING A JOB «

**The** transition from college to your first real job, or even changing jobs, can be intimidating. How do you make your resume stand out? What should your cover letter say? How do you make a great impression on a potential employer? Penn State graduates share their experiences and advice for landing a position.

### The job search

Many job searches are conducted via the internet — industry websites ([www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org)), school or facility websites, and job search engines. Internships and networking in the industry are also extremely important. Positions are not always advertised, so staying connected can lead turfgrass professionals to jobs that come by word of mouth. When asked how KAFMO has played a role in their job searches, all the PSU graduates said the networking that KAFMO provides keeps them connected to other professionals and demonstrates commitment and involvement in the industry.

### The application process

#### Cover letter

Be brief. People sifting through applications don't have the time or patience

to read your life story. The cover letter should explain why you are interested in the job, and it should mention specific experiences or qualifications that make you a proper fit for the vacancy. Highlight achievements and use specific examples. Try to avoid repeating information that is already outlined in your resume.

#### Resume

A visually appealing, professional resume will get you one step closer to securing an interview. The content of the resume should be current and focus on education and practical experience relevant to the job. Evan Mascitti, Field Operations Supervisor for the Pittsburgh Pirates, suggests adjusting your resume writing strategy depending on who is doing the hiring. For example: If you're applying for an assistant position, typically you will be addressing another turfgrass manager and can emphasize technical skills specific to the job. If applying for a head groundskeeper job, you may be addressing a general manager and can focus on managing employees and how you would be a good fit for the business or organization.

Have peers, mentors or a career professional read and review your resume. A second set of eyes can pick up mistakes and provide ideas for improvement.

### The interview

#### Interview format

Phone or video interviews may be conducted prior to the in-person interview. These typically last 30 to 45 minutes. The in-person interview and facility tour can last anywhere from two hours to a full day. Ask for an agenda before arriving so you can be prepared for appointments such as meetings with your direct supervisor and/or committee, meals with administration and staff or a facility tour.

#### Professional presentation

Presentation of yourself is a crucial part of the interview. Dress professionally. All the individuals featured in this article wore a coat and tie or dress pants with a collared shirt to the interview.

There's a difference between confident and cocky. Be confident, convey positive body language, be enthusiastic about the position and always keep a positive attitude. Alex Steinman, Assistant Director of Grounds, Department of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Maryland, College Park, encourages modesty. Instead of acting like a know-it-all, ask questions and listen. Show respect to potential coworkers. Although staff members may not have a degree, they have many years of work experience and practical knowledge. The



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## Interview questions

Your potential employer wants to learn more about you and how you will contribute to the operation. Evan Mascitti stated that one of the biggest things an employer looks for is your willingness to be a team player and accomplish shared goals. Thomas Goyne, Athletic Field Specialist, Baseball at Florida State University, shared some of the questions he was asked during interviews:

- How would you handle a problem with another employee?
- What do you like most/least about the industry?
- Do you have familiarity with a specific product/or equipment?
- Describe the daily maintenance for a field.
- Describe your personality.
- What do you like to do outside of work?
- Can you work effectively in teams/groups?

Be prepared for both turfgrass management and personnel questions. Prior to the interview, practice questions and answers so you can be prepared to communicate your skills and strengths clearly and confidently.

## You should interview them

The interview is also a place for you to find out if the job fits you and if you will be happy. Do your research. When Devon Carroll, PSU Master of Science Candidate in Agronomy, was preparing for her graduate school interviews, she visited university websites to familiarize herself with the research and backgrounds of faculty members. This helped her prepare questions for the faculty and learn about project expectations.

Develop a list of questions to learn more about turf-management



challenges, crew and administrative structure, compensation and benefits, daily schedules, etc. Think about the day-to-day of what you will be doing and if you will enjoy going to work every day. Will you have enough resources to meet the expectations of the organization? Will you be able to get along with your new boss and coworkers? Transitioning to any job is a big step and has a lot of variables. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

## Post interview

Some of us are lucky enough to get hired at the end of the interview, while others may need to wait one to three weeks for a decision. Regardless, continue to make a good impression by writing thank you notes to each person you met with during the day of the interview. Thank them for their time, and include

anything of importance that may have been forgotten during the interview.

## Closing advice

You may feel pressured to take the first job you're offered. Be patient, and take a job you will enjoy. Negative feelings affect work performance, professional relationships and your reputation. Kyle Patterson, Parks and Recreation Manager for Greene Township Board of Supervisors, states that if you don't enjoy the interview, there's a good chance you will not enjoy working there.

Once you've secured a job, remember that every day is another job interview for your next position. Carry your professionalism through all aspects of your career. The reputation you create through your day-to-day actions is more important than anything you can say in a formal interview. ☺

*Thank you to the following PSU graduates for their contributions to the article:  
Devon Carroll, Thomas Goyne, Shawn Mahonski, Evan Mascitti, Kyle Patterson and Alex Steinman.*



## Brad Jakubowski Hired as New Instructor of Plant Science

Penn State announced that Brad Jakubowski has been named the new Instructor of Plant Science within the College of Agricultural Sciences and the Turfgrass Science Major. Jakubowski, currently a Penn State Ph.D.

graduate assistant studying performance testing of athletic fields, started his new appointment on August 1.

Jakubowski will primarily teach a variety of courses in turfgrass irrigation and drainage, as well as fundamental

turfgrass management. His responsibilities will also include serving as a liaison between Penn State and stakeholder groups, such as the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council and the Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization.

Jakubowski has been involved with the green industry for nearly 30 years, working within the residential/commercial irrigation, golf course and sport field areas. Previously, he directed the two-year Sports Turf Management Program for the University of Nebraska and helped to develop the university's new Turfgrass and Landscape Management Degree Program. He is a 15-year member of the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA), co-founder of the STMA Intercollegiate Student Challenge and recently served on the STMA board of directors.

As Instructor of Plant Science, Jakubowski will teach four-year resident Golf Course Irrigation and Drainage, Landscape Soil and Water Management and two-year resident Golf Course Irrigation and Drainage, and he will instruct online courses in Golf Course Irrigation and Drainage and Introduction to Turfgrass Management. He will also oversee the Penn State Turfgrass Program's digital footprint of social media, blogs and other media outlets, as well as provide support for Penn State turfgrass conferences and field day activities. ☺



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## Calendar of Events

### **November 14–16**

#### **Penn State Golf Turf Conference**

Nittany Lion Inn  
State College, PA

### **January 10, 2018**

#### **Eastern PA Turf, Ornamental, Landscape and Athletic Field Conference and Trade Show**

Shady Maple Conf. Center  
East Earl, PA

### **January 16–19, 2018**

#### **STMA Conference and Exhibition**

Fort Worth, TX

### **January 25, 2018**

#### **Northeastern PA Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show**

Woodlands Inn  
Wilkes Barre, PA

### **February 3–8, 2018**

#### **Golf Industry Show**

Henry B. Gonzalez  
Convention Center  
San Antonio, TX

### **February 27–28, 2018**

#### **Western Pennsylvania Turf, Ornamental and Landscape Conference and Trade Show**

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel,  
Pittsburgh Cranberry  
Mars, PA

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