

TALK TURF

Official publication of the Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association

Volume 16 Issue 1 | Spring 2015

LEADER OF THE “PACK”

Written by Lynn Grooms



2015 STMA President,
Allen Johnson

Allen Johnson, CSFM, will bring the same strong work ethic, intelligence and professionalism he has shown at Green Bay’s Lambeau Field to STMA as its new president.

Within a few hours of seeing Allen Johnson literally run between jobs, Steve Hutchison knew the guy was special. Eighteen years later, he feels the same way as Johnson, now fields manager for the Green Bay Packers at Lambeau Field, takes the office of 2015 STMA president. “Allen is quick to grasp the big picture and cuts to the chase. He’s hardworking, intelligent and not afraid to get on with the task at hand,” Hutchison says.

The two men met in 1997 when Hutchison’s company, Tee to Green, had been charged with renovating Lambeau Field. Needing temporary construction workers, Tee to Green had posted a job notice with a local employment agency. Working for a health insurance company in Green Bay at the time and miserable sitting at a cubicle day after day, Johnson regularly visited a local employment agency over his lunch hour. After reading the posting, “See Steve in the construction trailer in the Lambeau Field parking lot,” his life was about to change.

Johnson and Hutchison immediately hit it off, having both served in the military. During the height of the Cold War, Hutchison had been a member of a select team of U.S. Marines charged with protecting U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in Europe.

Johnson fought in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm with a U.S. Army artillery unit. “Military service instills discipline to complete a job. Sometimes completing that job is literally a life or death decision,” Hutchison says. *Continued on page 10*

Wisconsin
SportsTurf
MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

Also inside...

Spring Field Preparation.....PAGE 4

WSTMA Winter Conference Recap.....PAGE 8

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings from Milwaukee! I am honored to be serving as your new President in 2015! I look forward to this year, which has already gotten off to great start! Our Winter Conference that was held last week at Fox Cities Stadium, provided good education and inspiration, opportunities to talk with our supportive vendors, and above all, a chance for fellow turf managers to catch up and talk about the season to come.

With February about to be torn off the calendar, spring is just around the corner (or at least we hope), which means a start of another season where us turf managers are expected to wave our wand on the fields we keep to make them playable in some of the harshest conditions Mother Nature can present. As the pressure builds to get games in no matter the weather, qualities that a turf manager possess come to the forefront! These qualities were highlighted by Karl Mecklenburg, a former Denver Bronco Defensive Linemen, during his keynote speech about success at the National Conference last month in Denver. He spoke of teamwork, courage, dedication, desire, honesty and forgiveness, and goal setting. I feel truly lucky that I get to work in the Sports Turf industry where you as managers exemplify these qualities every single day, while expecting nothing less from your "Grounds Team". Many of you will agree, we as managers only succeed with the staff we surround ourselves with every day.

Once you have gotten through the spring rush, I hope you can find the time to join your fellow WSTMA members for our Summer Field Day in Oregon on June 30th. This day brings opportunities for members to join in and see the final build stages of baseball/softball fields as the school district looks to complete a multi-year renovation of its' fields.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve this great organization and hope to work with all in the coming year! Good luck to you and your Grounds Team this upcoming season!

Michael Boettcher

WSTMA Contact Telephone Numbers

Mid-AM | Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show | www.midam.org

PLANET | Professional Landcare Network | 800.395.2522

STMA | Sports Turf Managers Association | 800.323.3875

TPI | Turf Producers International Field Day | 800.405.8873

WGCSA | Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association | 920.643.4888

WSTMA | Wisconsin Sports Turf Manager Association | 920-643-4494

WTA | Wisconsin Turfgrass Association | 608.845.6536



WSTMA 2015 BOARD CONTACTS

OFFICERS

Michael Boettcher, President
Milwaukee Brewers
michael.boettcher@brewers.com

Bart Bartelme, President-Elect/Treasurer
Green Bay Packers
bartelmeb@packers.com

Nick Strain, Commercial Vice President
Quali-Pro
nstrain@controlsolutionsinc.com

Allen Behnke, Secretary
Howard-Suamico School District
allebehn@hssd.k12.wi.us

MEMBERS

Jake Hannes
Wisconsin Timber Rattlers
jhannes@timberrattlers.com

Dan Carmichael
Pro Turf Solutions Owner/Sales
dan@pro-turfsolutions.com

Ron Novinska
Oregon School District
RJN@oregon.k12.wi.us

Craig Schlender
Ball Diamond Fine Sports Turf
cschlender@greatwolf.com

Eddie Warczak
Milwaukee Brewers
edward.warczak@brewers.com

Pete Bemis
Western Technical College
bemisp@westerntc.edu

CHAPTER MANAGER

Brett Grams
Chapter Manager
920.643.4494 | bgrams@wstma.org
N1922 Virginia Drive
Waupaca, WI 58481

CHAPTER MANAGER'S REPORT

Brett Grams

Winter Greetings to everyone! I know that many of us have busy seasons in our professional lives. On top of our jobs we also have obligations and interests in our personal lives that can also consume our time. It is my hope that many of you are able to take advantage of the winter months preparing for your busy growing season that lies ahead.

I am happy to report the WSTMA is growing! Memberships are up significantly compared to the same time last year. I am confident we will continue to see growth due in large part to the commitment of your WSTMA leaders and board in continuing to improve on our communications and meeting offerings to our membership. I also am very thankful to the commitment to the WSTMA board of directors. President Boettcher is truly passionate about our chapter and is utilizing the skills of our diverse board of directors to make

sure we are growing and successful in 2015. I am honored to assist this great group of people willing to volunteer their time to be servant leaders to the membership.

Financially, we are also seeing the benefits of increased membership levels, improved advertising and meeting sponsorship that is due to the dedication of providing timely and informative communications via our newsletters and website. We hope you like the content and information that is provided to all members. Your membership renewals are vital to our financial success. If you have not already done so please renew your membership for 2015 today. If you need assistance please feel free to contact me for help.

So what do we need all members to do to help us with this increased momentum? Help us find new members! We have the potential to

grow our members four fold! Just think locally in your community. Who should be a member of the WSTMA but is not? We should represent every school district, every park district, every sports complex, and every company that supplies our great turf industry! The fact is many of your peers are not members. Please mention the WSTMA when you see them next. In order to aid our membership drive the WSTMA board is putting the final touches on a WSTMA brochure which will be a great tool to help explain and promote our chapter and hopefully allow new members the opportunity to join our professional association. Just think how great it would be if every member just found one additional member to join us. I would enjoy learning of any leads, ideas, or suggestions on how you think we can grow our membership numbers.

SAVE THE DATE
JUNE 30

OREGON SCHOOL'S
DEMONSTRATION & EDUCATION DAY

Join us for a day of hands-on equipment demonstrations and educational sessions.

Lunch provided.

More information to follow!

Have questions?

Contact Ron Novinska 608-835-4048.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!



Irrigation Consultants
Sports Fields • Pump Stations •
Golf Courses • Controls • Bidding • Site Observation

FRS
Design Group LLC

Dan Feick, PLA
dan@frsdesign.com

2901 International Lane
Suite 200
Madison, WI 53704

www.frsdesign.com 608.442.5130

4 Grades of Infield Mix
Find the right Sure-Hop for you



Sure-Hop
INFIELD MIX

Waupaca Sand & Solutions
715-258-8566 • www.WaupacaSand.com
YOUR Trusted Material Source

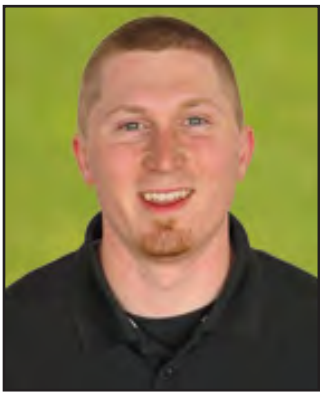


WAUPACA

NOW'S THE TIME TO SPRING AHEAD

Green grass and warm temps aren't often found on Opening Day. We've asked WSTMA members how they shake off winter and get their fields game ready.

Jake Hannes, Wisconsin Timber Rattlers



Spring start up can be a daunting task especially in Wisconsin. Between the weather, time, and limited resources it seems next to impossible. We use these simple steps to make our field ready for play.

The first step is removing the snow off the infield to the track, then gathering and picking up the piles using our

skid-steer. Once the snow is removed, we are able to roll out the tarp gray side up. This attracts heat from the sun to melt any remaining snow and ice from beneath. We use this simple trick to melt snow in the outfield as well.

Our focus then shifts to drying the dirt surfaces out. We scratch the infield skin with landscape rakes to jump start the drying out process. Once it is safe to drive on, we nail the infield skin to further dry it out. These steps are applied to the warning track as well. When dry, we roll and add infield conditioner, also water if possible. If temperatures are below freezing overnight we use the tarp as an insulator on the infield.

Fertilizer is the final step. Starting with Milorganite, this helps heat up the ground temperature and melts any remaining snow and ice. Following Milorganite, 25-0-5 is applied. This is done to balance the pH and act as a green up. The following week we apply 12-0-0 for a quick green up. When all of this is completed it's time to play ball!

Ron Novinska, Oregon School District

“Think Spring!” Yes, winter is almost over, but then comes the spring clean up and the excited (and sometimes impatient) spring sports teams wanting to get outside! Here

are some of the things I do to get the fields ready for spring activities.

For baseball and softball, I do most of my prep work in the fall. Things like re-sodding of areas, leveling all the skin areas, and mound repairs. In the spring, I will walk the field picking up garbage, sticks, clean dugouts, and even pick up after someone else's dog, if you know what I mean!!?? When the ground is still frozen, I will remove any snowdrifts, leaving about 2” of snow to drive on. I get snowdrifts by the backstops and sometimes along the side fences and the rest of the field is mostly drift free. A few years ago I made a small “x” nail drag to be pulled by hand. I will hand drag, and/or hand rake the skin areas to open up the skin and help it dry faster. The windscreen on HR fence is unrolled and tied down and banners put up, this is usually done by the baseball team. Here is a good tip on windscreens. As soon as the summer baseball season is over, for me is first week of August, we roll up the windscreen. We start from the bottom and roll it up to the top of the fence and zip-tie it to the fence. We didn't do this when the first windscreen was installed and it began to tear, it was replaced about 4 years later. The new windscreen has been rolled up every year for the last 6 years, and doesn't have a single rip or tear. On really windy days when the windscreen is bowed out, I will cut the zip ties and flip the windscreen over the fence so the wind is now pushing it against the fence.

As for Soccer, Lacrosse or any other sport you may have, it can be hard to do much until the wet, soft field dries out. When the field conditions are right, I will slice the fields to open them up. With the early games, I will spread Turface in the goal mouth areas to protect the crown of the plant and the turf.

I have a good relation with the coaches, and I always keep them informed of field conditions. I will ask them to stay off the fields as much as possible.

Keep up the great work, people do notice! Good luck with the upcoming sport seasons!!

Tim Diermeir, Seymour Community Schools



You know the old saying in Real Estate, location, location, location. Well in spring sports turf management, it's weather, weather, weather. In northeast Wisconsin the spring sport seasons can be quite a challenge. The outdoor season may start as early as the second week of March, or we may be shoveling snow off

the diamonds, soccer fields, and track as late as the second week of April. With that in mind we place a lot of emphasis on having all of our fields ready to play in the fall before the first snow. That way as soon as weather conditions permit our teams are on the fields. All of our equipment has been serviced over the course of the winter and is fueled up and ready to go. In a normal year mowing for us starts around the 15th of April. We cut our turf at 2 1/2", it is really important to stay on track with the mowing and remember the 1/3 rule (never cut more than 1/3 the blade length in one cutting). We proceed following our turf management plan. The first fertilizer application is usually the last week of April or the first week of May. As soon as the sport seasons are over we aerate, fertilize, and over seed all athletic fields. From there we follow our plan of scheduled fertilizer applications and our annual herbicide treatment the last week of August.

Craig Schlender, Ball Diamond Fine Sports Turf



Spring time in Wisconsin is an exciting time of year for most people because the doldrums of winter are fading away, snow is melting, and the sun is shining. There is one group of people it can be a nightmare for... groundskeepers! It is always a challenge in the spring to get fields ready for the first games. Late snow fall, frost thawing, and cold rain can lead to groundskeeper's pulling their

hair out (if they have any left) or at least turning it gray to get fields ready for the "very important game". The whole thing can be very stressful to say the least for all involved. Here are a few things that can help alleviate the stress of spring that can be done in autumn, fall, winter and early spring.

As the field use schedules slow down in August and September turf areas should be aerated, fertilized, and overseeded. These efforts should be done on the entire turf area and special concentration and double aeration should be done on high wear areas like in front of the pitcher's mound, fielder position wear in outfield, coach's boxes, and on deck circles-approach areas. Fall is also an excellent time of year to edge the field, tune- up mound, tune-up batters boxes, add infield mix in low spots, and do finish grading on infield mix. I recommend putting the mound and batter box covers on to keep excess moisture out of the profile. This will help these areas respond faster in the spring and be more usable during wet conditions. Moisture can always be added if needed. I do not recommend putting down topdress on infield areas in the fall, and you are much better off waiting until spring to apply that. Too much can be lost in the winter from wind

- Construction
- Renovations
- Maintenance
- Field Marking
- Field Setups:
- Daily/Tournaments

Specializing In Athletic Fields!

Mick's Landscaping Inc.
592 W20540 Henneberry Rd.
Muskego, WI 53150
MicksLandscaping.net

Family Owned & Operated For Over 20 Years!

ph.262.679.8009
fx.262.682.4424
mickslawn@gmail.com

<p>Mike Krupke Turf Specialist Madison Area</p> <p>Phone 920-723-0936</p>	<p>Tim Gagnon Certified Turf Specialist Waukesha Area</p> <p>Phone 414-333-8082</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL IRRIGATION | Built on Innovation®
Learn more. Visit hunterindustries.com

Eric Simmons
TEL: 630-200-7581
Eric.Simmons@hunterindustries.com

Hunter®

Burris EQUIPMENT

Proud Supporter of the WSTMA

Gary Huenerberg (608)751-0074
Jake Vollbeer (847)417-0548 Joe Baert (847)417-4238

Spring Ahead continued from page 5

and runoff. It also is more effective as a drying agent in the spring when it is really needed.

As we get closer to winter and in the late fall months, a trick that helps the Brewers in the spring, is to place 2 inch rigid Styrofoam down on the skinned areas of the infield. This helps to keep the frost from going in the ground as deep as it would if it were uncovered. This practice is probably not in most budgets, but a feasible option would be to cover the pitcher's mound and the batter's circle before freeze-up. I suggest removing your game tarps, cleaning them, and storing them for the winter to ensure they will last longer. Install the 2 inch Styrofoam and then cover with cheap "disposable" thin tarps. Make certain you don't cover the grass areas with the Styrofoam or tarps. The turf areas should be mowed one last time at the normal height and should be mowed regularly throughout the fall to prevent thatch and matting that can inhibit grass from laying flat after the first snow. The turf areas should be fertilized with a winterizer product just before freeze-up. If you are fortunate enough to have winter turf growth covers these should be installed at this time as well. If you are considering growth covers focus on infield and hip areas first. These are the most crucial areas for wear and where %75 of the "play" takes place.

In the winter months leading up to spring if you need to remove snow drifts from the playing surface or piled snow from snow plowing efforts careful consideration must be taken. The best course of action is to use a tracked skid loader and to extremely limit turning on the sod. I also recommend cutting a 4 inch PVC pipe length ways and

slipping over the cutting edge of the bucket so it can not cut into turf.

In the spring when temperatures get above freezing the mound and batter's circle areas can be uncovered to let the sun rays warm the area, but be sure to cover them up at night to minimized heat loss overnight. As the weather and schedules allow remove the turf growth covers. Install your topdress/drying agent product as needed. I usually recommend a calcined clay product for this application. I always recommend saving some as a drying agent for days it might be raining before or during a game. The turf areas should be thatched to stimulate green up and your spring fertilizer should be applied as conditions allow. Scarify (nail) dragging may be needed on your infield mix to aid in initially drying of field right away in the spring. This should not be done to aggressive however, as you do not want to undo what you did in the fall.

Spring has been and will continue to be a tough time of year in Wisconsin. If you take these steps in autumn, fall, winter, and spring it will help alleviate some of the stresses. Also make sure to do things when conditions are correct even if pressures from coaches and athletic directors are mounting. You don't want to cause more damage than that what it is worth to have a game a few days before things are ready. I recommend good communication between everyone involved and things will run much smoother in the spring.

Think spring, and "Play Ball!"



**Sports Turf
Systems Since 1974**

*Michael Todd, CID - JJ Busalacchi, CID
John Michels*

Milwaukee Lawn Sprinkler Corp.

www.milwaukeeelawnsprinkler.com
Phone 262.252.3880 • Fax 262.252.5379



**BALL DIAMOND FINE
SPORTS TURF
LLC**

*"Let me help
you have a
better
field..."*

Craig Schlender - Manager

Sports Turf Consulting
Sports Turf Construction

- Batters Boxes / Mounds
- Infield Mixes - Fertilization
- Prairie Grass Restoration

1106 Tillberry Drive
Baraboo, WI 53913
Phone 608-434-2504
craig Schlender@gmail.com

Call today for free planning & design



Providing Equipment for
Site, Sport, Park & Play, Since 1968.
1-800-953-8700
www.millersaukprairie.com



BARENBRUG SEED



YELLOW JACKET®

Coated Grass Seed

*Zeba Moisture Absorbant Coating
Dormancy Breaker
Fungicide*

A Barenbrug exclusive - Yellow Jacket coated grass seed utilizes Zeba superabsorbant technology to produce a coating that can hold up to 600 times its own weight in water. The addition of metalaxyl fungicide prevents seedling diseases.

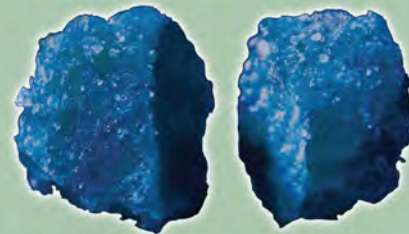
A third component of Yellow Jacket - DORMANCY BREAKER - reduces days to germination on Kentucky Bluegrass and Fine Fescues by half.

www.barusa.com

LEBANON FERTILIZER

MESA®

Patented Controlled Release Nitrogen



*Half a piece of MESA...
is still MESA.*

With methylene urea & sulfate of ammonia combined in each tiny granule, MESA fertilizer products work immediately to provide a consistent, brilliant green color that will help your turf perform at its best. MESA retains its slow release attributes even when cracked, chipped or crushed. MESA also helps your bottom line and makes your customers happy.

www.lebanonturf.com



DHD Turf & Tree Products
866-343-8733
Juneau, WI

WINTER CONFERENCE RECAP 2015

Written by: Peter Bemis

The Wisconsin chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association held their 6th Annual Winter Conference at Fox Cities Stadium in Appleton, WI, home of the Timber Rattlers professional baseball team on February 11, 2015.

Association President, Michael Boettcher of the Milwaukee Brewers, welcomed all members, guests, and vendors to the event. Peter Bemis, a member of the Board of Directors then introduced the first guest speaker, Mark Robel of the Reinders Company. Mr. Robel provide information on numerous mowers and equipment that service the sports turf market. Many examples of mowing equipment from large to small and their identified uses were provided. The presentation on mowers included products in the areas of: rotary mowers, reel mowers, hybrid mowers, ultra-light gang reel mowers, traditional 5 gang reel mowers, and heavy duty triplex mowers. Mr. Robel also reviewed the EPA mandated Tier 4 regulations that require engines in the 25-74 hp range to have cleaner emissions.

The second section of Mr. Robel's presentation included equipment reviews for sprayers, infield groomers, aeration, and equipment for the future. Mr. Robel forecasted that we will see more GPS systems working with sprayers, increase communication between irrigation systems-computers-and smart phones, soil moisture sensors will become mandatory, automated programmable mowers, and additional computer applications for weather forecasting and computer calibrations.



Our second speaker of the day was Jerad Minnick, an international grass field professional, advisor, and educator and founder of Growing Innovations (www.growinginnovations.net). Mr. Minnick experiences include the management of the award winning SoccerPlex outside of Washington DC, Kauffman Stadium with the Kansas City Royals, and major league soccer Sporting Park in Kansas City. Mr. Minnick brought stories and photographs of his experiences managing sports fields that demand very high levels of play. He explained that with proper construction techniques and innovative management, a field can handle more play than we currently believe possible. His enthusiasm and willingness to innovate have lead him to the management of a number of successful high use sites both national and internationally. He is dedicated to helping sports turf managers get the most out of their high traffic natural grass fields.

Our third speaker was Chris Quinlan, one of the Territory Managers for Barenbrug Seed. Mr. Quinlan was also instrumental in helping to arrange for Mr. Minnick to speak. Mr. Quinlan provided a brief but informational overview of some of the newer developments at Barenbrug Seed. A few of those developments include Kentucky Bluegrass that is germinating in 10 days, use of bio-stimulants in turf management, and the use of Fraze mowers to control poa annua.

The guest speaker of the day was former Milwaukee Brewer pitcher Don August. Mr. August spent four years at AA ball and AAA ball before being called up to pitch for





Shown above: 2015 WSTMA Board of Directors & Chapter Manager. Top Row, Left to Right: Nick Strain, Brett Grams, Allen Behnke, Pete Bemis, Jake Hannes, Bart Bartelme, and Ron Novinska. Bottom Row, Left to Right: Eddie Warczak, Michael Boettcher, Chris Brindley, and Craig Schlender. Not pictured: Dan Carmichael

the Milwaukee Brewers. August was also a member of the 1984 summer Olympics in Los Angeles. We received a high degree of appreciation for our work as professionals and advisors to local sports fields. Mr. August stated how he learned firsthand about field maintenance from his high school coach, and as an active high school baseball coach at Menominee Falls he appreciates all the work the professionals put into their fields. He had many entertaining stories about fields, players, and managers from his years in professional baseball. A number of the stories revolved around his time in Milwaukee, Taiwan, and Italy.

The last presentation of the day was a panel of speakers relating their experiences in sports field construction and maintenance.

The panel included: Mike Parent of H & K Sportsfields, Josh Viet of Midwest Athletic Fields, Ron Novinska of the Oregon School District, and Jared Minnick of Growing Innovations responded to questions from the members. Their advice was in direct response to questions. A few of the questions included;

What advice do you give to people who ask you about starting a new project? What are the priorities in evaluating a sports field for renovation? What are the most common mistakes you see in field management? What percentage of sports fields do not have a water sources for irrigation? How do you determine what products are needed for sportsfield maintenance? One of the pieces of advice from the panel was that sportsfield professionals need to insert themselves into the planning process as early as possible. Professionals need to be pro-active in this message, bringing your professional expertise and positive outlook.

The WSTMA would like to thank Michael Boettcher of the Milwaukee Brewers for sponsoring 5 sets of two tickets to Milwaukee Brewers games this season. All the free tickets were awarded to those present at the event. The WSTMA would also like to thank our event sponsors, Frontier-Servco FS, Hunter Industries, Ball Diamond Fine Sports Turf, Midwest Athletic Fields and Miller & Associates.

Athletic Field Specialists
Midwest Athletic Fields

CONSTRUCTION
RENOVATION
MAINTENANCE



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Construction Infield Renovation / Maintenance Turf Renovation Laser Grading / Recrowning / Design Infield Skin Topdressing Warning Track Construction / Renovation Sod Installation / Grass Seeding Aeration/Topdressing / Overseeding Edging/Lip Removal (Infield, Baseline, Warning Track) Mound and Batter's Box Reconstruction Drain Tile Installation Irrigation Fence and Backstops 	<p style="font-weight: bold; color: #004a99;">Midwest Athletic Fields</p> <p>323 William Street PO Box 76 Watertown, WI 53094</p> <p style="color: #004a99; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.1em;">Contact Us Today!</p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; color: #004a99;">920-378-0650</p> <p style="color: #004a99; font-weight: bold;">info@MidwestAF.com</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Proud Member of the WSTMA serving all of Wisconsin!

ACCUSTOMED TO HARD WORK

Working hard at an early age on his family's dairy farm also helped to build Johnson's character. The Johnsons managed about two dozen milk cows and 50 young stock. They did not have automatic barn cleaning equipment when Allen was a boy. Johnson recalls loading manure on a wheelbarrow, transporting it to a wagon rack and then pulling the rack with a tractor to the fields to shovel it off for the second time. He also remembers working many a windy, snowy subzero day on the farm located two hours north of Green Bay in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. That experience made him mentally strong. Today when he works long days under adverse conditions at Lambeau's "Frozen Tundra," Johnson says "nothing will be as hard as those early days as a boy."

Johnson joined the Army immediately after graduating from high school. He returned home four years later and attended Northern Michigan University (NMU) where he received a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration. Before graduating, he served as an intern at the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae) in Washington, D.C. After graduating from NMU, however, Johnson had difficulty finding a job in his field. That is when he began working at the insurance company.

Being able to work outside rather than inside a cubicle was one of the reasons that Johnson left his insurance job. The ability to put his knowledge of equipment and his initiative to work were likely other reasons, Hutchison

says. "He could quickly grasp what we were doing and start moving on it. There are lots of challenges working with sports turf. It requires someone to fully understand and implement what's needed."

While working at Lambeau Field, Johnson also began working for UPS. "I would wake up at 4:00 a.m., go to work at UPS and then work at Lambeau," he says. When Tee to Green's renovation of Lambeau was finished, Hutchison asked Johnson if he wanted to stay on and travel with the company to other locations. But, Johnson did not want to leave the area at the time. Fortunately, a position as assistant fields manager for the Packers soon opened up, and Johnson took the job. He worked in this position two years before being promoted to fields manager after

"Allen is very particular in everything he does at work or in his personal life. He is hands-on and puts 100 percent effort into everything he does."

Todd Edlebeck, his former boss, moved within the Packers organization to become facilities manager. Soon after his promotion, Johnson enrolled in Pennsylvania State University's online turfgrass program and earned an advanced certificate in turfgrass management. "It was one of the first online courses of its kind," Johnson says, adding that his soils classes were especially valuable. "In football, there are issues with drainage. These classes helped me get a good grasp of soil characteristics." He used what he had learned in this program to convince Packers management about the value of upgrading Lambeau and its practice fields.

When Johnson first starting working

for the Packers, the practice fields had been composed of native soil with a lot of poor-draining clay. The first renovation involved reconstructing the root zone with a sand base. Then sod was installed. To keep the turf in good playing condition during Green Bay's short growing season, he also recommended the Desso GrassMaster system which involved injecting artificial fibers into the natural turf. The knitting together of the artificial fibers and the natural grass helps stabilize the root zone, Johnson says.

Johnson eventually got management's go-ahead to remodel Lambeau and an outdoor synthetic practice field. The players said their legs were more stressed and fatigued playing on the other practice field's artificial turf and that they did not like changing from one playing surface to another.

Asked about his greatest accomplishments, Johnson says, "Being a dad. I have a great son." Ethan, 11, does not play football, but his dad points out that he is an excellent swimmer and excels in academics.

DEMONSTRATING VALUE

Johnson also is proud of the renovation at Lambeau under his direction because it involved communicating his knowledge of field management and its impact on players so that management could make an educated choice. "It matters to me how our employers view us and our value to their organizations," says Johnson, adding that one of STMA's goals has been to raise the level of professionalism of the sports turf industry. "Our association can't go into your place of employment and make management respect you. You need to demonstrate your value. But, STMA can give members the tools they need," he says. These tools

include continuing education programs on how to be better managers, how to communicate scientific principles to executives and so on.

Johnson believes that STMA also took a big step forward when it hired a marketing communications firm to help increase general awareness about the value of the sports turf industry to target audiences, such as school boards, athletic directors, facility management groups, parent-teacher organizations.

“As the sports field manager for the Green Bay Packers--a marketing and promotional machine--Allen brings his expertise from that franchise to STMA’s public relations efforts,” says Kim Heck, CEO of STMA. “I look to Allen to bring his great board skills to the presidency. He is always well-prepared for every board meeting and his style is insightful. He listens very well, but is not afraid to voice his opinions and respectfully disagree. This is what makes the STMA Board so energizing to work with – the vibrant discussions and the board coming to consensus on what is best for the association.”

David Pinsonneault served as STMA president in 2014 and will continue to serve on the board as immediate past president. He agrees that Johnson is straightforward. “You don’t have to guess what he’s thinking.” Pinsonneault’s advice to the new president is to engage the STMA membership. “We’re fortunate to have very active members and we need to keep them involved with different committees and task groups. Fortunately, Allen has great resources and a hardworking staff available to him.”

That staff includes Heck and her team at STMA headquarters as well as Johnson’s three full-time assistants

(Derek Paris, Bart Bartelme and Joel Hunt) in Green Bay. Paris has worked with his boss for almost all of Johnson’s tenure with the Packers. Asked about Johnson’s leadership style, Paris says, “Allen is very particular in everything he does at work or in his personal life. He is hands-on and puts 100 percent effort into everything he does. As far as motivating, it’s hard for me to say. I feel that we, as his assistants, are self-motivated. Working for a prestigious organization like the Packers is all the motivation one needs to do a top notch job at all times. Allen leads with this same belief.”

Johnson can poke fun at himself. Asked what factors go into some of his field management decisions, he says, “It’s probably more my ‘very particular personality’ than my job experience. I’m a bit OCD when it comes to the field.”

You can also get a sense of his humor watching the Coca-Cola commercial in which Johnson appeared during last year’s Superbowl

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eyj1qKksPs>. Most people would brag about being featured in a national commercial like this, but Johnson was modest, never mentioning it to his peers, Pinsonneault says. During the interview for this article, Johnson also did not mention that the STMA named Lambeau Field its Field of the Year in 2009.

SERVICE TO STMA

Johnson’s work on various STMA committees has helped him to get more acquainted with fellow members, and to learn more about the association and what it is trying to accomplish. He has chaired the Awards Committee as well as served on the Scholarship

and Membership Committees. He also has served as both secretary-treasurer and chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. The latter, says STMA’s Heck, has provided Johnson “a comprehensive understanding of the association’s budget, its revenue streams and potentials. This helps in evaluating new programs and services that need funding.”

As president, Johnson would like to see STMA become more visible with the end user groups he mentioned earlier in this article--school boards, athletic directors, facility management groups and parent-teacher organizations. As outlined in his vision for STMA at www.stma.org, he also hopes the association will “make further strides in helping its members enhance their professional image. Our success depends upon being avid learners, building relationships within our organizations, and being able to communicate and influence these decision-makers. STMA can help us by providing the continuing education and resources to gain respect and succeed in our careers.”

Originally printed in February 2015 Sports Turf Publication. Lynn Grooms, Grooms Communications, is a Wisconsin-based freelance writer and a Green Bay Packers fan.

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

**WSTMA FALL
MEETING AT
LAMBEAU FIELD**

**MORE DETAILS
TO FOLLOW!**

Reinders

1866 **150** 2016

Celebrating Our Past with
Our Eyes on the Future

22nd Green Industry Conference

March 11-12, 2015
Waukesha Expo Center
Suburban Milwaukee, WI



1973

2013

Guest Speakers Include:

Dr. Jim Kerns, North Carolina State University

Dr. Leah Brilman, Seed Research of Oregon

Dr. Joe Vargas, Michigan State University

Dale Getz, The Toro Company

Michael Boettcher, Milwaukee Brewers

Matt Giese, Syngenta

Bob Vavrek, USGA

Mark Nelson, Briggs & Stratton

Show Grand Prize Drawing
One Lucky Person Will Win a
Drone & Camera Package!



- More than 35 Educational Seminars
- Earn Certification Credits
- Visit with More than 80 Leading Industry Suppliers
- See the Latest Equipment and Products
- Enjoy Hot Homemade Donuts Each Morning
- Buffet Lunch, Refreshments and Door Prizes Each Day



Show Booth - 1975



Show Floor - 1987



Show Floor - 2001



Seminar - 1973

Single Day: \$59 in advance
\$69 at the door
2-Day Pass: \$99 in advance

Visit www.reinders.com for show registration and updates