

TALK TURF

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A New Option for Turfgrass Science Education at UW-Madison

Doug Soldat, Dept. of Soil Science, UW-Madison

2019 will mark the 60th anniversary of the conversation between O.J. Noer and Dr. L.E. Engelbert, which resulted in the founding for the Turf and Grounds Maintenance Specialization in Soil Science. That program, which produced its first two graduates in 1964, has been the academic training grounds for a small but steady stream of turfgrass managers who've gone on to do great work in Wisconsin and beyond. The small numbers of students in the program relative to others was designed to match (not exceed) the demand of turf related job openings in Wisconsin, and the program has typically graduated four or five students a year. However, because of recent changes in the job market, the cost of education, and the economy in general, the enrollment in the program has declined to the point where it has been consistently unable to meet demand. Job searches are going unfilled, and internship offers pile up with fewer and fewer students to accept them.

Because of the very close relationship between the Wisconsin turfgrass industry and the University of Wisconsin, the University felt obligated to try something new. In the fall of 2019, students interested in learning

about turfgrass management will have the opportunity to do that through the UW-Madison's Farm and Industry Short Course. The Farm and Industry Short Course is a historic program that has been going strong in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences for over 130 years. In 1885, the Board of Regents accepted the recommendation that "a shorter course for the winter months confined to the term of two years, would be more popular and appropriate" for the education of farmers. The program was taught by UW faculty like F.H. King, Stephen Babcock, CALS Dean's Henry and Russell, who all have buildings or malls named after them on campus today. When thinking about how to expand our turfgrass program, we wanted to find a way to educate students in a compressed period, but without compromising the quality of the instructors or the content. We felt the Farm and Industry Short Course would be the ideal place to try this new idea.

The Farm and Industry Short Course is in session over two 8-week periods (early-October through mid-December) and (mid-January through mid-March). This timing works well for prospective students who already work in the turf industry and want to their work experience with their Short

Continued on page 3



Also inside...

West Salem Resurface & Drainage.....	Page 4
WSTMA Meet the Board Member.....	Page 6
POA Annua.....	Page 8
Carrying Capacity of Athletic Field.....	Page 10

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings,

I want to wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season! I hope everyone has had a great season and your athletic surfaces have made it through another year of play. As most of us are slowing down for the season, I encourage you all to take time with your family and friends to “recharge”.

The WSTMA has come a long way, and is continuing to grow and do bigger and better things, this could not be possible without the support of our vendor sponsors, and the effort of all of your board members. The WSTMA now has a Facebook page, and Twitter account, so check them out and share, share, share. This fall was the premier of The WSTMA recruitment video, which was produced by Mike Miller and students at UW Whitewater. This video is an excellent source and message as to what the WSTMA stands for.

As this year comes to an end, I want to remind everyone that this is a great time to start planning a trip to attend the nation STMA conference in Phoenix, AZ, January 22nd-25th. This conference is a great way to network, learn, and see new innovative equipment in the turf grass industry. The WSTMA will be hosting our annual winter conference on Wednesday February 7th and Neuroscience Group Field, home of the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers. This conference is becoming one of the most attend meetings for the WTSMA, its one you do not want to miss.

Lastly, as I reflect on the past year, and the time I have spent with the WTSMA, I want to personally thank the board of directors, and the executive committee for their tireless efforts to make our organization better for our members. I thank our vendor sponsors and members for allowing me to help lead YOUR WSTMA for the past 2 years. I want to assure you, the WSTMA is in good standing and will continue to grow and be a useful resource for sports turf managers.

Bart Bartelme

“Excellence is never an accident; It is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, skillful execution and the vision to see obstacles as opportunities.” - Anonymous



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Ron Novinska
Oregon School District
rjn@oregonsd.net

Todd Putz
Watertown School District
putzt@watertown.k12.wi.us

Mark Robel
Reinders, Inc
mrobelt@reinders.com

Josh Viet
Midwest Athletic Fields
josh@midwestaf.com

Rex Zemke
Wausau School District
rzemke24@gmail.com

CHAPTER MANAGER

Peter Bemis
2206 Park Drive
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608) 792-9264
Email: pbemis@wstma.org

TURFGRASS SCIENCE continued from front

Course education. We are hoping to draw students from three main areas: 1) high school graduates interested in a career in turfgrass management, but without the means or desire to complete a four-year degree, 2) working turfgrass professionals interested in a certificate for career advancement, and 3) students that have earned a degree in a different field, but wish to switch careers.

Upon completion, the credential will not be a bachelor's or an associate's degree, but rather two certificates. The first certificate (earned in year 1) will be called the Foundations of Turfgrass Management, the second certificate (earned in year 2) will be the Professional Turfgrass Management Certificate. The two certificates are designed to be taken sequentially. Students must complete the Foundations certificate in order to enroll in the Professional Turfgrass Management Certificate.

The Farm and Industry Short Course offers over 40 courses taught by 25 faculty and staff at UW-Madison, all highly regarded in their fields. The faculty teaching the turfgrass courses will be myself and Dr. Paul Koch.

As the program grows, we will be able to add more courses to suit the needs of our students. That said, we feel this is a solid start. While I am not able to quote exact costs for this article, the cost of the program will be significantly lower than the cost of attending UW-Madison's normal turfgrass management program. In-state tuition for each certificate will be less than \$5,000. Students can choose to stay in the dorms for the 16-week period for about \$3,000 a year. Thanks to the overwhelming support of the turfgrass and agricultural industries, over \$140,000 in scholarships are available (some earmarked for turfgrass students only), which will lower the total cost of the education significantly for award recipients.

We are very excited about this new direction but without strong enrollment, it may not be around long. Please help get the word out. Any student interested in enrolling in Fall of 2019 can start by visiting the Farm and Industry Short Course Web Site at www.fisc.cals.wisc.edu and/or contacting me at djsoldat@wisc.edu. The enrollment deadline for the fall semester is August 1, 2019.

While actual schedules will vary from student to student, here is a sample of the course work for the two certificates:

YEAR ONE

Foundations of Turfgrass Management

- Introduction to Soils (2 cr.)
- Agribusiness Communications (2 cr.)
- Plant Science (2 cr.)
- Agricultural Safety (1 cr.)
- Weather and Climate (1 cr.)
- Business Principles (1 cr.)
- Agricultural Human Resources Management (1 cr.)
- Turfgrass Management (2 cr.)
- + Electives

Total: 12 or more credits

YEAR TWO

Professional Turfgrass Management

- Turfgrass Nutrient Management (2 cr.)
- Precision Agriculture (2 cr.)
- Turfgrass Irrigation and Drainage (1 cr.)
- Farm Power (2 cr.)
- Safe and Effective Use of Pesticides (1 cr.)
- Turfgrass Integrated Pest Management (2 cr.)
- + Electives

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FIVE WAYS TO AN UNSAFE DIAMOND

Rex Zemke, District Groundskeeper for the Wausau School District

A number of years ago when I was the Groundskeeper for the Village of Rothschild, I was asked to speak to the local Little League about basic ball diamond care. I jumped at the opportunity because I had been struggling with improving and caring for the Village's ball diamonds with limited staff, time and budget. In addition, the Village had just invested in two parks that included new Little League diamonds. I viewed this as an opportunity to enlist the Little League's help as well as educating them on techniques that they may not be familiar with. As a result I created a list of five things that could damage a diamond and should be avoided. The idea was that they could share the ideas with the coaches, parents and volunteers and hopefully we could work together on keeping the diamonds safe and increase playability.

When I moved to my current position as Groundskeeper for the Wausau School District I was able to use many of the same concepts and ideas. Even though my user group had changed as I was now interacting with more experienced coaches, parents and volunteers. The expectations had also changed. Now there was even more of a demand to play the game even if the weather didn't cooperate. In addition, many of the bad habits and techniques that this user group had learned at the lower levels, they now were using to "help" me get the games in. With this "help", I realized that I needed to do some of the very same educating that I did with Little League. This was not always popular with this user group.

Even though my list is geared towards Little League, I believe that many of the concepts can be applied to other levels and types of athletic fields.

#5 INTENTIONALLY HIT BALLS INTO THE FENCE

Drills that involve hitting any type of ball (plastic, tennis, hard balls, etc.) into the fence causes the metal to bend, stretch and breakdown rapidly. When

the fence bends it can cause the wire to pull away from the poles or cause it to curl. This exposes athletes to sharp edges and allows balls to slip past the fence.

#4 WARM UP IN THE SAME SPOT AND DIG HOLES

Warming up on the infield and in foul territory (playing catch and swinging bats) increases compaction. When compaction increases, grass growth declines and weeds increase. Compaction also increases field hardness which can lead to more injuries, such as concussions. Compaction is often a reason for bad hops and poor drainage. Warming up in the outfield limits compaction in areas of the diamond that has high traffic during the game and between innings. In addition, it improves safety by moving athletes from a crowded area to a less crowded area before the game.

When warming up in the outfield, avoid warming up on the foul line. Vary your location. The grass in the foul line is already stressed by having the blade covered with paint (if painted). Compacting the soil increases the stress.

Do not allow the athletes to dig holes or wear out the grass in one spot. Have athletes move to different locations to reduce stress on the grass and perform drills in various locations.

#3 PLAY OR PRACTICE ON A WET DIAMOND

Playing on a wet diamond transports the "dirt" away from the areas that it designed to be located. The loss of infield material (dirt) will increase low areas and increase "lips" on the field.

Take the proper steps to make a wet diamond safe before you play on it. Use a drying agent to dry the infield or continually rake the wet areas to allow air to dry the infield material.

DO NOT USE KITTY LITTER.

Observe the “two bag rule”. This rule guides the amount of drying agent that can be used to have a diamond playable. If the diamond can not be playable with two bags of drying agent, then the game should be postponed or moved to another location. I have not always followed this rule, but having some limit is a good guide. This will also tell you if your diamond needs additional work if the number of bags continues to increase for regular weather events.

#2 PUSH WATER FROM THE INFIELD DIRT INTO THE GRASS

Pushing water to the grass areas also pushes infield material into the grass. This increases the depth of the hole that the water was just pushed from, increasing the amount of water that can be held during the next weather event. It also increases the size of the “lip” on the field. The lip is the area of the diamond where the grass meets the infield material. A larger lip will prohibit proper drainage, holding more water on the infield. It also increases chances of a bad hop that is unsafe and can affect the game. Once a lip begins to form the only way to truly eliminate it is to completely remove and replace the grass.

Pushing water from one grass area to another should be avoided when possible, as it can have a similar effect as on the infield.

The best way to remove standing water is to use a sponge and bucket. Use the sponge to soak up the water and ring it in the bucket. Then use the bucket to dispose of the water in an area that will not impact the diamond.

#1 FAILURE TO RAKE PROPERLY AND FILL IN INFIELD HOLES

Failure to rake and fill in the infield holes after every game or practice, allows infield, batters boxes, pitching mound and sliding holes to increase in size. Holes do not allow for proper drainage. (Previously discussed)

When raking, rake any loose infield material from the grass back into the infield dirt. Using a stiff broom to broom all the lips takes time, but works well for reducing lip build up.

Always rake the infield parallel to the grass, especially where the grass meets the infield material. DO NOT rake perpendicular to the grass, as you will push material into the grass adding to the lip.

Taking the time to properly rake and fill in the holes will increase playability when rain occurs.

One note, the Little League diamonds that I cared for in Rothschild as well as the baseball diamonds that I care for in the Wausau School District have grass infields. In addition, I have covered the first and third base lines with grass. Some baseball traditionalists do not care for the grass base paths. I do not like the look, but I do like the reduced maintenance. I no longer have coaches and volunteers pushing water and dirt into the grass on the base paths. I do not need to edge the base paths every year to reduce lips. Game day prep no longer requires that I maintain the base lines or chalk a line. I have painted a line in advance and only need to chalk the batters box as well as the line past each base. The only maintenance that I may have is repairing a little sod at the end of the season and additional aerating.

Remember that a properly maintained field will have fewer cancellations due to weather and will be safer for the athletes. Best of Luck.

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Water and Highway Construction Equals a Big Mess

Bruce Schweiger; O.J. Noer Turfgrass Facility

I decided I should submit an article for publication after hearing reports that I retired or had just disappeared. I was just wondering what I should write about. Who cares what I have to say, then it hit me like a 15-foot wall of water. Oh yeah, it was a fifteen-foot wall of water that made its way through the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Facility on the overnight hours of August 21st. This is what I hope is the topper to a very interesting year.

For those that think I am retired, I am NOT! Six years ago, I left my comfortable world in sales to become the turfgrass diagnostician at the UW-Madison for the Department of Plant Pathology, working for who is now Dr. Paul Koch. Two years ago, I was persuaded to apply for the superintendent position at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility in Verona. What does that mean, well I started my turfgrass career as a golf course superintendent, assuming I can keep this job, I will end it as a superintendent. My position is to manage the O.J. Noer Facility. Which is basically a golf course superintendent of a nine-hole golf facility, with a few minor differences. This is a very rewarding position and allows me to use several of the skills and ideas I learned from and with many of you. Discussions with turfgrass professionals this year have been consistent; this has been a challenging and bizarre summer. I could relive the weather but we have all lived through the past few months. One thing that has made this summer a long one at the O.J. Noer



Photo: Water Line on Bridge.

Facility has been the rains and some very heavy ones. Add these rains to the massive road construction project along County Highway M in front of the facility it makes for a noteworthy combination. When I assumed this position from Tom Schwab after his 22-year career at the helm, he stated I should expect the facility to flood on average once per year. Tom might have been selling ice to an Eskimo. Beginning January 1st, 2017, the Noer Facility has flooded once in winter making it a complete ice-skating rink. The growing season would not be outdone. The Noer Facility flooded three times in 2017 and another three times this year, so far. At times I think Tom knew more than he was telling me. After the last flood, I texted him a few pictures asking if he wanted his old job back, no response!

You may not have heard or seen but the morning of August 21st, the Noer Facility flooded the worst it has ever. With rain falling hard for hours and hours I planned to leave for work around 5:30am to survey

Continued on page 8

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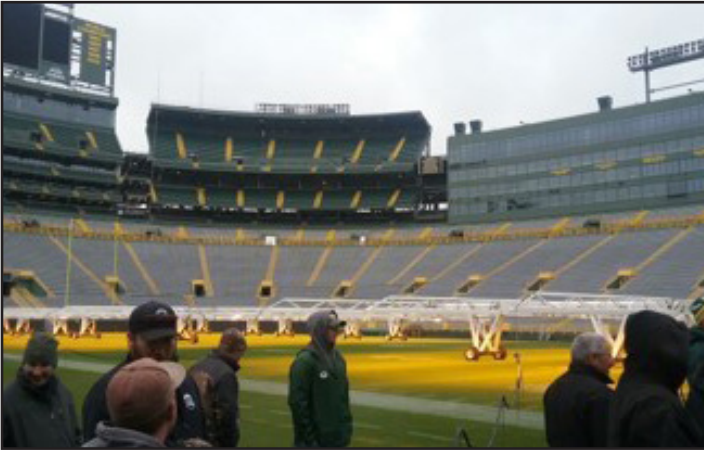
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WSTMA Fall Meeting Recap

Pete Bemis, Chapter Manager



The 2018 Fall meeting was held at the Distillery Restaurant in Green Bay, Wisconsin on Friday, October 19th. This event attracted a total of 90 people from across the State of Wisconsin to Green Bay. The day started with registration and coffee while people rolled into the event with weather that was “nice enough” for the day. Our first speaker was Tim Van Loo, whose position is Manager of Athletics Turf/Grounds at Iowa State University. As usual, his presentation was well organized and well presented on the stage at the Distillery. Mr. Van Loo’s first presentation as titled “ISU Athletics Summary and Maintenance”, which provided details on the management and planning of sports turf fields at the Iowa State University. Many of his ideas and details could be easily adopted by our members for their facilities.

The second presentation of the day was by Bart Bartelme, WSTMA President and Fields Assistant with the Green Bay Packers. Mike Krupke acted as host while Mr. Bartelme answered a series of questions on the turf management and recent field reconstruction of Lambeau Field. Bart presentation was well received as he also answered various questions from our members.

The third presentation saw Mr. Van Loo again take the stage for a presentation titled. “Communication Through Different Generations”. A number of interesting points were shared about engaging the millennium generation to enhance our communication and teaching for these first arising professionals.

After an excellent lunch we then gathered for a tour of the facilities of the Green Bay Packers. Our host for the tours was Fields Manager and WSTMA member Allen Johnson. Allen did an excellent job of leading our tours of the indoor and outdoor practice facilities and allowed us to walk across Lambeau Field and inspect their portable turfgrass growth stimulating lighting system. His knowledge and sharing of his experience of managing these professional facilities was informative and enjoyable. We certainly appreciated the work that Allen, Bart, and the remainder of their crew, including: Derek Paris, Joe Ranthum, and Ryan Blise provided for our day.

The day wrapped up with a return to the Distillery for awarding of numerous door prizes that were sponsored by the Green Bay Packers and the Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association. The Green Bay Packers association did donate a game helmet signed by Ha Ha Clinton Dix which was auctioned off for \$400.00 to Carl Dowse with the funds going to the WSTMA Scholarship program.

In review, the weather was ‘just good enough,’ and the hospitality of the Distillery and the Field Maintenance Crew of the Green Bay Packers was exceptional!





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Photo: Flooding at 7 AM,.

the damage. To my surprise, in Cross Plains we received more than 15 inches of rain and there were no open roads out of town. Around 6:45am, I was outside surveying my house and yard when the local police chief drove by. I flagged him down and he said one road was being opened at that time. I was off to see what the Noer Facility looked like. Arriving at the Noer the water level was as high as I had ever seen. I walked around the grounds taking pictures. When my employee Larry arrived, we could not believe our eyes. As we looked out on the property, it was quite apparent this was going to be bad as all four of my Toro irrigation controllers were under water as was my pump station.

As we entered the building the carpets and floors were all soaked, the building had flooded. Larry and I started moving things to higher ground and cleaning up water. I had never seen anyone use a green squeegee to move water out of the carpet. We started running a carpet cleaner to remove more water and dumped 125 gallons of water. Calls began to ServPro, my boss, and the UW to begin the insurance claim process.

By the end of the day ServPro was here working their magic and due to the hard work of Larry (79 years old), we were able to have all standing water removed. Boy did we pump water! The squeegees seemed to conform to our hands. That was a long day proven by the fact that my Iphone battery normally has a charge for days but on my way home that night

the battery died. Thank you to all those that reached out and offered to assist and words of wisdom that this too shall pass.

Then came Wednesday and the real cleanup began. The entire property was covered in silt and there was debris everywhere. Thanks to Phil Davison from University Ridge (I seem to be thanking him a lot) for the use of his green sweep and Toro Turf Vac. The irrigation system will be down for up to a month. This will not allow us to wash the silt off greens, so the next best option was drag, brush and blow. By end of the day Wednesday, Kurt Hockemeyer and one of his staff were blowing all bentgrass areas after I dragged and swept them. The general grounds were also covered in silt. I wish I had a picture of the silt flying when I dragged, Kurt and his staff were blowing and Larry was mowing general turf areas, dust bowl is the picture. At days end things looked better but we were a long way from done.

Thursday everyone waited until the turf dried and we attempted to mow. The mowing went well and the property started to look respectable. Around noon I was told the water pressure inside the building was low. I had a few hoses running off the building and thought I was just demanding too much water. Alas, I was mistaken and the building well pump had died. I had not thought about that pump but when the well repairman arrived, it was agreed the wellhead had gone underwater and things were damaged. A few hours later and the well was repaired.

By now it was Friday and ServPro had been there running many fans and dehumidifiers for four days. The sound in the building was deafening and the heat from the equipment was unbelievable. The air conditioning could not keep up and was turned off late Tuesday. The next week when ServPro was done I turned the air conditioning back on and it did cool things off but something was wrong. One more call the HVAC contractor. After inspection, the air conditioning units have been damaged and their demise is in the foreseeable future.

Let see what has died and needed to be replaced:

- 4 Toro Irrigation Controllers
- Pump Station Control System
- Irrigation Pump
- 38 Ametex rectangular control box cover (they floated away)
- 6 eight inch round valve covers
- Building well pump and controls
- 2 air conditioning units
- Base molding in the entire facility

As I submit this the Noer went through 11 days without irrigation. Hot, dry and sunny so my sand based surfaces are anything but happy. It was out with two one-thousand gallons' water tanks and water the best we can. Yes, the surfaces showed sign of stress then came the million dollars rains followed the next day by some of the "best" dollar spot this old guy has ever seen, picture attached.

Let's hope that 2019 is dry or at least floodless! Happy New Year but any year that is not 2018 will be a Happy Year, I HOPE!

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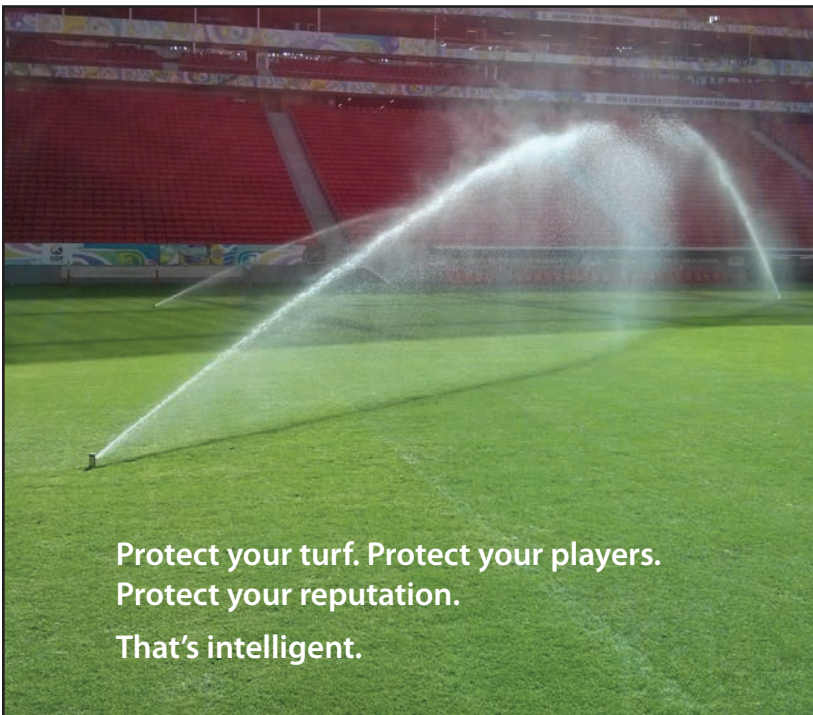
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NEW BEGINNING FOR WSTMA BOARD MEMEBER JAKE HANNES

After taking on a new position in Minnesota with the Waconia school district, I would like to look back at my time with the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers and the WSTMA. The last 5 years I grew immensely as a manager and a person thanks to the help of the WSTMA and the Timber Rattlers.

The Timber Rattlers gave me a great opportunity to be the Head Groundskeeper. This was my first true full-time job and my first time being a manager. Managing a field on the professional level was a huge goal of mine. This position allowed me to grow and refine my skills. Having a supportive front office and a great staff allowed me to become who I am today. Over the years the field was kept in great shape because the fantastic crew members that did all the heavy lifting.

I want to thank all the crew members and assistants I have had over the years for giving it their all every day and sticking by my side through everything.

Between the 2ft. snowstorm last April, the first ever concert at the ballpark, the field renovation in 2015 and all the extreme weather events to name a few!

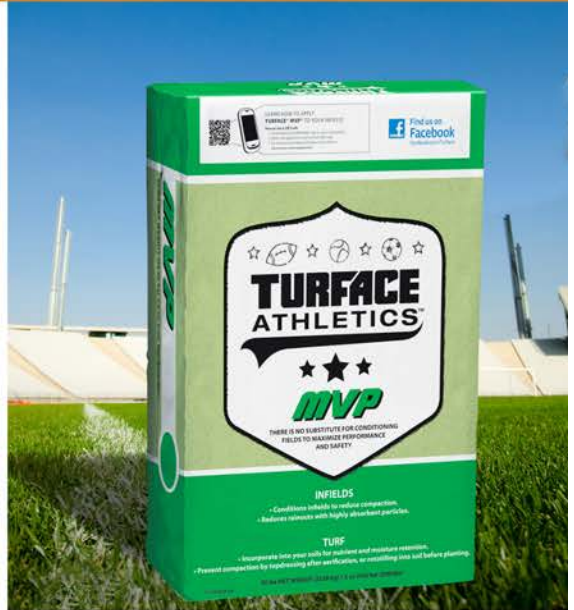
The WSTMA provided a lot of opportunity to learn, network, and develop some friendships over the years. I enjoyed hosting the Winter Conference each year and was happy to hear the positive feedback from everyone attending over the years. Being involved whether it was hosting an event, being a board member, or being the Vice President/Treasurer was rewarding in so many ways not only professionally but personally. I will dearly miss being a part of such a great Chapter and organization and only wish the best to everyone involved! If anyone decides to make their way over to Minnesota to visit do not be afraid to reach out!

Thank you!

Jake Hannes



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