

TALK TURF

Official publication of the Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association

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MONEY TALKS: BUDGETING TIPS FOR A HEALTHY SEASON

Budget time can be a very frustrating and challenging time for many of us. It involves lots of planning and number crunching, sometimes we put in many hours of work in proposals just to get turned down.

We have asked three turf leaders in our state to share with us how they best plan and utilize their budget including some of the biggest challenges that come with budgeting and ways to overcome them.

Here at West Salem Schools, I have an overall budget that

SCOTT JOHNSON

Director of Buildings & Grounds,
West Salem School District



I use for buildings and grounds in general.

We service soccer, softball, football, tennis and baseball. Our baseball field and soccer complex have in ground irrigation. Our football field is irrigated with a water reel. All athletic fields are fertilized, weed control and grub prevention. We just recently added two football/ green space practice fields to our campus. Our community

Park and Rec Dept. and the Boys and Girls Club use our fields as well as school district activities.

At the beginning of the budget cycle, I try to plan what course I would like to take with the athletic fields. I first plan the knowns such as field marking paint, winterizing irrigation, water, fertilizer and weed control applications, overseeding of high traffic fields, etc. I then map out within a 5 year plan, what extras we need to take care of involving athletic fields, which also includes our tennis courts.

We rotate years for topdressing and softball field infield revitalizing.

The challenges that can arise would be things such as large ticket repairs or purchases. We have set up a 5 to 10 year plan for maintenance equipment. This helps me to plan ahead for a purchase of machinery that would not come out of our operating budget. I have to be careful that I don't deplete my budget on costly repairs that would take away from other areas of the buildings and grounds. I also have to keep an eye on how much we are doing for each sport so that we spread the amount of work over all sports. For the most part, our preventive maintenance schedule and grounds care helps keep us ahead of any issues that could come up.

RON NOVINSKA

Groundskeeper
Oregon School District

I always keep track of expenses for each field, so I know how much I need to budget for fertilizer, seed, etc.

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Wisconsin
SportsTurf
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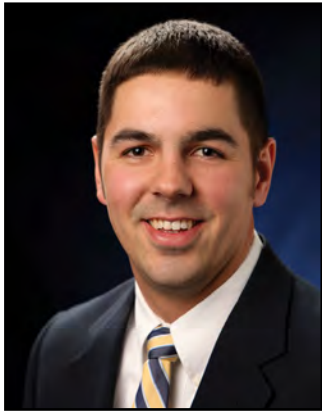
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hope this finds most of you wrapping up another successful season due to hard work and extensive hours, keeping your fields in top shape and readied for play every day.

I want to first take the opportunity to THANK all our Sponsors, Packers Turf Department and all the Sports Turf Managers that supported and attended our Fall Meeting on October 22 at Lambeau Field! We had an amazing turnout, along with great education from gentlemen who are highly respected, knowledgeable

professionals at every level. This meeting's success provides great excitement for our growing chapter and makes me incredibly proud to be a part of this industry!

As we enter another fall/winter season, it usually allows for some time to evaluate your successes and challenges you had as a department this past season. I urge all of you to identify the obstacles that challenge the quality of fields you are able to produce at your facility whether it be limited knowledgeable staff, budget issues, equipment quality, or simply existing conditions of the fields. Once you have identified these challenges, prioritize them in terms of their impact on your ability to produce the desired surfaces, develop solutions that are feasible and fight for their implementation. To insure our continued success as Sports Turf Managers, we need to continue our solution-oriented thinking and never hesitate to effectively communicate the effects of your current resources and the possibilities given your proposed advancements. If you're looking for further direction on how to go about this, I urge you to make your way to San Diego this January for the STMA National Conference. Fellow Turf Managers along with an impressive line-up of speakers can show you ways to accomplish more at your facility.

As we put a wrap on another growing season as WI Sports Turf Managers, find some time to reflect and enjoy your successes as a department as little time is taken during the season to recognize all the accomplishments and triumphs of your staff! Happy Fall!

Michael Boettcher

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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

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WTA | Wisconsin Turfgrass Association | 608.845.6536



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CHAPTER MANAGER'S REPORT

2015 What a year!

As the growing season comes to a close and most of our WI sports fields are quickly being prepared to endure the winter months I wanted to take a moment to recap what a great 2015 was for your association.

I will remember 2015 as a GREAT growing year for turf. Here in central WI we had a great winter with adequate snow cover and moderate to cold temperatures thru March. Spring came on time and was a steady progression of warmer weather with our turf coming out of dormancy in a steady fashion as well.

May, June, and July were warm with pretty rainfall (even in sand country) which allowed the turf to grow sufficiently and the cooler night time temps allowed for minimal disease pressure. August was warm and dry but September brought continued warm weather and timely rains which kept the turf growing and recovering well into October. I had several sports turf managers and golf course superintendents tell me that they wish they could have this weather every year. Of course regional weather varied and some parts of the state experienced too much or too little rainfall but all in all it was a great Wisconsin growing season. I hope the weather was less of a stress to you and your operation than the past few years.

I will also remember 2015 as a GREAT year for our association! The WSTMA has benefited from the dedication of our hard working board of directors. This group of volunteers represents both vendor companies and sports turf managers with the core mission of providing quality events, communications, and services for everyone in our chapter. The past and present efforts have seen improvements to many services the association offers. Our events are well attended. The Winter Conference in Appleton was a big success. We offered our first solo summer meeting in many years and everyone that attended the meeting was happy they came. This past week we held our fall meeting which I am confident was our largest event ever. This newsletter is the 3rd of three that we offered and I hope you find them educational and entertaining. The website continues to grow with content and is an important tool used for day to day communications, registrations, and education. Lastly, I am happy to report that our membership is continuing to grow thanks to our efforts to "spread the word" about all the WSTMA can do for those in our industry.

I am excited about 2016 which we are already planning and preparing for. Please continue to do all you can with promoting our chapter to potential members. Do you have an idea or

suggestion to make the chapter better? Would you consider taking a turn at hosting an event, joining the board, or sitting on a committee? We are always looking for ideas, suggestions, and volunteers!

Thanks for being a WSTMA member, we are all better when we can work collectively to learn and grow from each other.

Enjoy the hopefully slower season,

Brett Grams, Ch. Mgr

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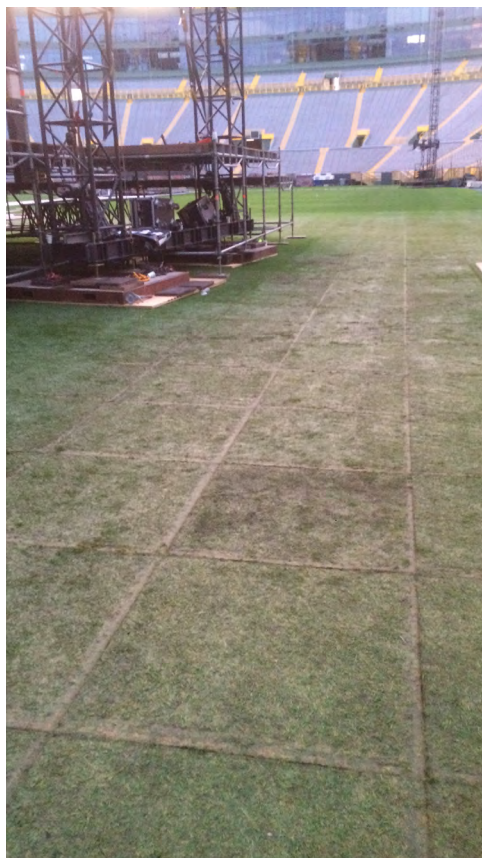
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SHOW THEM YOUR VALUE

Written by: Allen Johnson, CSFM
STMA President & Green Bay Packers Fields Manager



Many of us take pride of ownership in the playing surfaces that we are charged with maintaining. That's a good thing. It's part of what motivates us to bring forth our best efforts. Inevitably, some type of event will be planned that may cause some type of damage that you may view as a hindrance to your efforts. It is at these times that we are humbly reminded that we are not the owners of our fields, we are the caretakers.

But I say do not be dismayed. View these opportunities as challenges to overcome and prove your worth as a sports field manager. As a professional, you are charged with educating your superiors on the consequences of certain types of activities on your playing surface; be honest with your assessments, so that your opinions will be valued in the future. Also, don't make promises that you can't keep. There are some things in this business that we can't control. We can, however, control our attitude and our approach to the task at hand. That approach should be to give your very best effort in providing your employer with the best possible playing surface for their next event.

The Sports Turf Managers Association and their local chapters, like ours in Wisconsin, are great resources to help you learn from others on how to put your best foot forward and help achieve that great playing surface once again.

We recently held a concert at Lambeau Field, and though I'm not an expert on holding such events and rebounding from them, I'll share a few small tips that we hope to employ to bring Lambeau back to its standard form.

The damage that has occurred from the two concerts that have been held here in the recent years are not from where the stage sits or where the people stand. It is from the roadway that lies on the surface for approximately a week to provide access for forklifts and cranes used to assemble and disassemble the stage itself. The terra-trak panels used to build the roadway help prevent ruts into the surface but mash the grass flat and don't allow it to breathe.

Going into the concert we do our best to slow the growth of the grass down, limiting nitrogen. We try to get the plants to be as hardy as possible before being covered. We make sure that compaction is relieved with aeration prior to and immediately after the event. We also do not waste a second before getting seed in the ground in those areas you know will be damaged the worst.

Judging how the turf survived being covered might not be possible immediately. But within a week or two you will see what has survived, because you will see life. Hopefully you will see blades of grass sprouting forth from the ground that will look mature and you will know that it is sprouting from the crowns of the plants that were there prior to being covered.

Soon, your seedlings will be sprouting and your normal maintenance practices will resume. You can compensate somewhat for lack of time with heavier seeding rates. Though not as ideal, we don't always deal with ideal situations.

One thing that you may not think about is the hardware that can end up on your playing surface such as screws, wire, bolts, nuts, and maybe nails. Most facilities that host such events purchase a strong magnet that is slowly hovered across the field to collect such items. We took our magnet across the field three times until we were satisfied that such items were removed from the surface.

As a professional sports turf manager, our jobs of growing grass never end. Special events along with athletic participation on the surfaces we maintain, just give us more opportunity to showcase what we do.





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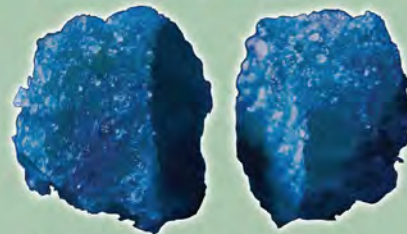
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Dr. Andy McNitt, Penn State University



WELCOME TO TITLETOWN!

Written by Bart Bartelme

The WSTMA and Green Bay Packers hosted our largest meeting and field day in history October 22 with 13 vendor companies and 120 attendees. The Green Bay Distillery was a perfect venue for our guests and presentations! We had eight companies display equipment in the parking lot, along with tablet displays inside the venue.

The day started off with an update from our National STMA President and Green Bay Packers Fields Manager Allen Johnson CSFM. Allen gave us an update on the STMA's mission statement and future of the STMA.

We were then treated with a great educational and entertaining presentation by Dr. Andy McNitt from Penn State University. Andy is a well-known professor in sports turf and speaks all over the country. Andy spoke about synthetic field maintenance/costs/replacement and had great information for our members at all levels. We were informed about field testing at the professional level along with safety measures that are being taken to help prevent injuries. Andy then spoke about natural grass maintenance practices and the importance of many aspects we all come across on a daily basis.

Our next presentation came from the Director of Sports

Medicine for the Green Bay Packers, Pepper Burruss. Pepper gave a presentation on the history of Lambeau Field and the Green Bay Packers practice facility. Pepper had nearly 500 slides of construction projects of the fields, stadium, locker room, training facility and the ever changing landscape around Lambeau field.

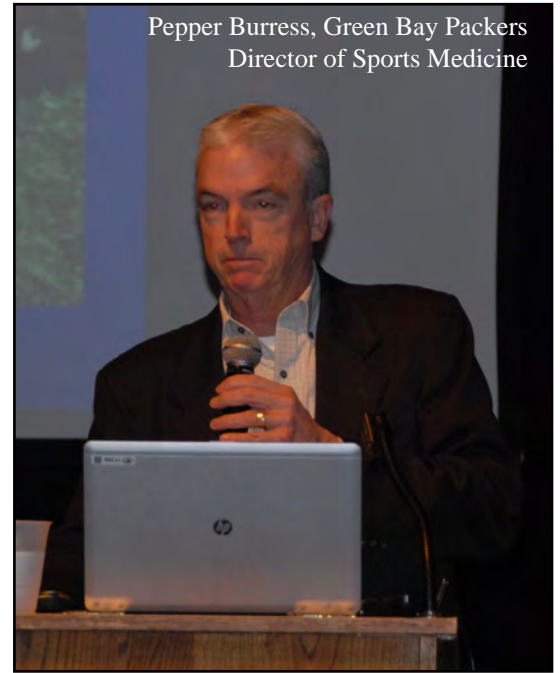
Pepper also spoke about certain injury related issues including pictures of injuries. Pepper had a great display of construction materials used for the field heat system under Lambeau field. Pepper brought along a variety of football cleats for display and to show how important cleat selection is to remain safe and perform well. We were also fortunate that Pepper brought along his Championship Rings for all to see!

After our presentations, we had a great buffet lunch, followed by tours of Lambeau Field and the Green Bay Packers Practice facility. The group was split up into 3 tours, Allen Johnson, Derek Paris and myself led the attendees around the facility, equipment and spoke on field maintenance for the Green Bay Packers.

Following the tours, everyone was invited back to the Green Bay Distillery for a refreshment and for a couple

raffle items donated by the Green Bay Packers. The items were a winter jacket, hats, gloves, and travel mug. Everyone that attended was given a raffle ticket to potentially win one of the items. We also had an autographed Mason Crosby helmet for a silent auction which was won by Dennis Robinson.

It was a perfect day for our event. The presentations, education, and networking were great. A huge thank you to our vendors for contributing to this event and the WSTMA. We could not have done it without the support of all of you!



Money Talks continued from front page

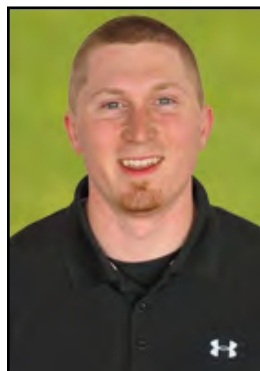
I then can look for ways to save money and shop around for supplies to get a better price. I plan for large maintenance expenses a year or 2 ahead. I will meet with my supervisors to discuss the work and to see if there is any additional money to help pay for the large expense. I usually get approval and have sometimes work with the company doing the work on a payment plan. An example is when we did a Drill n' Fill years back. We were able to work with the company and pay for half the work out of the current budget and the final payment out of next year's budget. Without this agreement with the company, the work would not been done.

I look for cost saving ways to purchase supplies or equipment. I try to buy certain supplies in bulk and look for suppliers that offer quantity discounts. One example is chalk for baseball and softball fields. I will buy 2-3 years supply knowing the product doesn't have a shelf life. Then the following year, I use the money that would be spent on chalk on other supplies. I also try to purchase supplies, tools, etc. at trade shows, as sometimes companies and/or suppliers will give trade show discounts. When I budget for fertilizer, I look at cost per lb of N as well as the quality. The cheapest bag of fertilizer is not always the best value. As far as chemicals, sometimes the generic chemical is as good as a brand name.

For equipment, I have a list of equipment along with the condition of each piece. When I have my annual grounds meeting, I discuss the equipment and let my supervisors know that within the next three years we need to replace this piece of equipment. I make sure this is discussed at every meeting so they don't forget about the equipment.

One of my biggest challenges, especially at a high school level, is that education comes first. So when budgets get tightened, usually grounds budgets are the first to get cut, or equipment for the custodial staff gets purchased before any grounds equipment. But overall, I feel my budget is good and I've been able to maintain our athletics field fairly well and safe with the budget I currently have. I've been able to prove and show that it takes money to maintain good, safe quality fields. Another challenge is purchasing equipment and the right equipment. I'm currently working on purchasing a 3pt. PTO aerator. I've been meeting with my supervisors to discuss the benefits this piece of equipment will have on the fields and the time it will save me. Though they are hesitant of the cost, they are very interested in the three year payment plan the company is offering.

Budgets will always be an issue and something everyone has to deal with. There are ways to save money or even payment plans that may work for you to get a piece of



equipment or to do maintenance on a field. Good luck with your fields and keep them looking great!

JAKE HANNES

Head Groundskeeper
Wisconsin Timber Rattlers

The goal for all of us is to have a high quality sports field/complex without breaking the bank. I maintain a staff budget

and a maintenance budget like most managers. For my staff budget, the benefit for me is the majority of my staff are salaried interns. Thankfully I only have 1-2 hourly employees to manage hours for. This makes scheduling and planning out the staff needed for events and projects fairly easy which is very important.

When planning out maintenance budget there are expected expenses, unexpected expenses, and possible projects and/or new equipment. Expected expenses such as buying infield conditioner, tools, fertilizer, and fuel are fairly simple to organize and easiest to maintain. It is important to focus on the expected expenses to set your budget, but also important to try to cut out what you will not need to save money without sacrificing the health of the field.

Unexpected expenses are tough to predict and maintain. I always make sure I have money set aside for equipment and irrigation repairs. The weather is also a factor you can never plan for that can add to expenses. I have learned it doesn't hurt to have more money set aside than you think you would need to be prepared for any issues you run into along the way.

The toughest part of planning a budget is prioritizing possible projects. Getting estimates and checking your schedule is essential for planning. It is also important to schedule properly to have the right amount of time to do these projects. Also having the correct people for the project is crucial as well.

This biggest challenges in budget management for me is weather, extra events and asking for more money for next year's budget. Getting a budget increase is something I strive for every year. That additional money can only be a benefit to make improvements. Using every cent you have in the budget is important. You never know when management may want to make cuts.

WINTER DO'S AND DON'TS

COURTESY OF



It is that time of year again in Wisconsin to put your turf maintenance equipment to bed for winter. It is very important to take just a few simple steps in fall to make sure you are not cursing at your mower or utility vehicle when it is not ready for you in spring.

CLEAN YOUR EQUIPMENT prior to putting away in storage. Blow it off with compressed air, power wash clean and remove all grass etc. from under mower decks, radiators and prescreens. Clean it thoroughly, grass and fertilizer that sits all winter long can be very corrosive and can be an attractant to mice in storage.

SHARPEN AND BALANCE ALL BLADES whether they are rotary mowers or reel mowers. Have all blades sharpened prior to spring.

CHECK FOR WORN PARTS AND REPLACE as needed. Check over all hoses, ball joints, tires, bearings etc. Ask yourself; will this last through the entire season next year? If not, replace. It is better to replace now than during the middle of a busy season next summer. Grease and lube the entire machine

INSPECT AND /OR REPLACE ALL OIL FILTERS, air filters, and fluids. New oils and filters are much cheaper than a new engine or hydraulic pump. Check and test engine coolant, replace if necessary to minimize overheating problems next summer.

FULLY CHARGE ALL BATTERIES prior to winter storage. A fully charged battery will not freeze over winter but a low or partially charged battery will. Batteries are very expensive with most now being over \$100 to replace. It is a good idea to disconnect your negative cable battery and clean the top of the battery to prevent a slow discharge and potential freeze threat.

FUEL. Poor fuel can be the cause of many of our small engine problems. Today's fuel which contains 10% ethanol is very corrosive and starts to degrade as quickly as 30 days. It's a good idea to start out the following spring with fresh fuel. Consider treating your fuel when storing over the winter with one of the many fuel stabilizers on the market today.

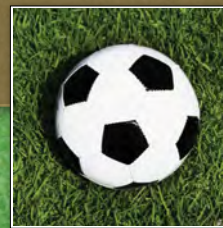
This, by no means is an all-inclusive list but it is a good starting point. The more maintenance you can do when putting your equipment to bed for the winter the fewer headaches you will have in the spring.



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