

TALK TURF

Official publication of the Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association

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Image Credit: Madison.com



WSTMA to Support Research

The WSTMA is starting a new initiative in support of Sports Turf Research at the University of Wisconsin. This initiative will give support to the Professors, Dr. Doug Soldat and Dr. Paul Koch and their research teams and to the O.J. Noer Center, the turf research facility for the University of Wisconsin. This initiative will be funded through WSTMA monies and donations.

With the increased research the WSTMA has funded in the last 3 years, which have produced great results for Sports Turf Managers to use, we hope to expand our efforts in the realm of sports turf focused research.

The Professors and the O.J.Noer Center have been very supportive of our past and continuing efforts, and we look forward to providing the sports turf managers we serve new research based tools to help them provide healthy, safe turf for their athletes to perform on.

We are extremely fortunate to have the high level of turf research we have here in Wisconsin. Some of the most important turf research done through the years has been produced at the University of Wisconsin. With turf programs dwindling throughout the country, along with the research they produce (I could name quite a few), our support of this asset we have in our backyard is imperative to the future of the turf industry here in Wisconsin.

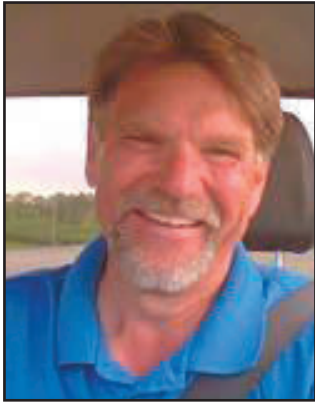
The Wisconsin Turfgrass Association has done, and continues to do, a great job of supporting the turf program and our hope is our WSTMA initiative helps keep turf research alive and healthy here in Wisconsin for our turf managers. Read more about the history of the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility page 4 and an introductory article on the new turf research initiative on page x.

Also inside...

Wisconsin
SportsTurf
MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|
| WSTMA President's Message | Page 2 |
| OJ Noer Turfgrass & Educational Facility..... | Page 4 |
| Tie a Ribbon on 2020..... | Page 6 |
| New Feature: Show us your field..... | Page 8-9 |

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings All,

First, I hope you and yours are safe and healthy.

I have seen some amazing work done on Sports turf this past season regarding the challenges the pandemic has set forth. Whether you were playing or not playing Fall sports, whether you were short staffed or had added responsibilities or in many cases BOTH, great job!

The sports turf world in Wisconsin is not necessarily a revenue generator like golf, lawn care or landscaping, it may be considered a service in most cases. BUT, it is still as important as the aforementioned turf genres. With that said, the same care has had to be taken in managing these sports fields whether they were being used this season or not. The incentive may be different to maintain the turf at a high level, but still as crucial.

Let us look down the road at the potential of Fall sports being played this Spring. Let's be clear, I am 110% for student athletes having a chance to play their given sport. As School Board President in my local town, this is not just an opinion, I am well aware of the research supporting it. As an avid sports participant in my past, I know the joy that comes with it. What I am concerned about is the stress it will put on fields this Spring. Not only for turf health and aesthetics, but also for the safety of the athletes. We all know what March is like in Wisconsin. Snow? Maybe. Frost? Probably. Daily freezing and thawing? Definitely. And oh, by the way, usually lots of moisture from the sky. Throw that all together with football, and in many cases, football and soccer on the same playing surface. I'm not confident the powers that be took this all into consideration.

My point is not to say, "lets' do not play", my point is, managing sport turf this Spring is going to potentially be a major challenge to keep fields safe and healthy. Many turf managers I work with have been able to do the extra work to prepare these fields the best they can for the upcoming Spring. Others, with perhaps reduced resources have been challenged to do so. No disrespect intended, just fact. Sports turf managers are going to need the support and understanding of a wide array of people. Administration, Athletic Directors, Coaches, Fans, Athletes and the community as a whole. If your one of this group, please be supportive in any way you can.

From the standpoint of the sports turf managers peers and the WSTMA, my hope is that we all remember networking is a great form of support and education. We all won't have the above scenario this Spring but day to day the challenges arise even in a normal year. Do not be afraid to reach out to the turf manager down the road, the researcher at the University, the WSTMA or one of the great Commercial Partners we have that support us here in Wisconsin.

May your roots be healthy....

Michael Krupke

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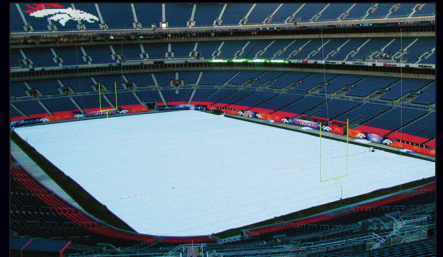
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What gets studied at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility touches the lives - or rather the feet - of virtually everyone in the state. Wisconsin has an estimated 300,000 acres of turfgrass, and in acreage, turfgrass is the state's fourth biggest crop. Wisconsin's turfgrass is the base of a nearly one-billion-dollar-a-year industry that employs more than 30,000 people.

Researchers use the Noer facility to compare different turfgrass varieties, mowing practices, equipment and strategies for fertilizer, irrigation and pest management. The station is also used to evaluate prairie and ornamental grasses. Environmental protection is another important research goal. Researchers use the Noer facility to evaluate cultural practices and turfgrass varieties that require less use of pesticides and fertilizer while still maintaining quality landscapes.

The Noer facility also plays an important educational role. Classes in horticulture, soils, entomology and plant pathology often meet at the facility, and professionals from turf related industries hold seminars at Noer. Many homeowners call to get unbiased, expert answers to turf related questions. The O.J. Noer Facility is also the home of the Turfgrass Diagnostic Lab, the University's only single commodity based laboratory.

The people of the turfgrass industry made the O.J. Noer Facility possible. Members from the sod industry, golf courses, landscape and lawn-care firms who help make up the Wisconsin Turfgrass Industry worked with the UW Foundation to raise the funds needed to build the facility which opened in 1992. The facility is named after O.J. Noer, a UW-Madison alumnus and internationally respected turfgrass agronomist.

O.J. NOER (1890-1966) - "Mr. Turf"

Born in 1890 in Stoughton, Wisconsin, O. J. (Oyvind Juul) Noer began his career as a graduating soil scientist from



the Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is credited with helping to establish the first soil testing laboratory in the nation. From 1922 to 1924 he was in charge of all investigational and experimental work in conjunction with determining the agricultural value of Milorganite under a fellowship grant at the College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin. Later as Head of the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission Turf Service Bureau from 1926-1960, O.J. Noer visited /inspected perhaps 80% of the golf courses in North America advising on turf maintenance problems. He became an internationally respected turfgrass agronomist, his name synonymous with outstanding assessment and articulation of turf management needs.

Before and after his death, O.J. Noer has been considered a true pioneer in the turfgrass industry. In addition to the Wisconsin Golf Hall of Fame induction, Noer was honored by the United States Golf Association, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and many other golf and turfgrass associations.

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread; places to play and places to pray in, where nature may heal and cheer, and give strength to body and soul alike.”

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP FOR ATHLETIC FIELDS AND FACILITIES

As the public becomes more aware of the environmental issues facing the world today, sports facilities are under increased pressure to turn to more environmentally friendly practices. Natural grass and other green spaces provide a variety of environmental benefits:

- » In urban areas, green spaces help regulate air quality and climate, reduce energy consumption by countering the warming effects of paved surfaces, reduce noise and glare, recharge groundwater supplies, and protect lakes and streams from polluted runoff.
- » Green spaces provide stormwater management. Landscaped areas reduce pollutants from leaching through the soil into the water supply or from entering surface water runoff. Natural grasses filter stormwater runoff and reduce sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants from entering water bodies.
- » Natural turfgrass areas reduce heat buildup. Lawns can be 30 degrees cooler than asphalt and 14 degrees cooler than bare soil in the heat of summer. The cooling effect of an average size lawn is equal to about 9 tons of air

conditioning.

- » Reduced soil erosion. The fibrous root system of natural grass stabilizes soil on flat and sloped areas thereby reducing sediment transfer and providing dust control.
- » Improved air quality. Natural turfgrass removes smoke, dust, and other pollutants from the air. Turfgrasses also provide carbon storage by capturing and using atmospheric carbon dioxide. A healthy natural grass soccer field can offset the carbon produced by a car driving 3000 miles.

With a “Best Management Practices” guide being developed by the Wisconsin GCSAA, we will be working in that realm and using that as a template to develop a similar guide focused on Sports Turf and it’s management. Watch for more info coming from the WSTMA regarding this initiative.

“Environmental Stewardship” bullet points are from the STMA.



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RING THE BELLS AND TIE A RIBBON ON 2020

Bruce Schweiger, Manager, O.J. Noer Turfgrass Facility

It is finally here. Many of us thought it was never going to happen, the 2020 GROWING SEASON is COMPLETE! One of the most annoying phrases from 2020 is “the new normal”. Is it?

The 2020 growing season was much the same as any other year:

- » Staffing was difficult to hire and even harder to retain
- » Staffing levels were lower than in previous years
- » Budget restrictions
- » Rainy periods
- » Drought
- » Excessive play on fields this past fall
- » Coaches complained about conditions
- » Diseases appeared
- » Weeds came
- » Irrigation broke
- » Early order season came and went
- » Doing more with less
- » Spring start-up short on staff (ok maybe shorter than usual)
- » Constant repair of worn areas

I could go on and on but what did change when playing sports returned:

- » Increase field usage
- » Social distancing
- » Face coverings
- » COVID testing
- » New cleaning protocols
- » COVID quarantines
- » Imaginative staff scheduling routines
- » NO SUMMER FIELD DAY
- » NO WSTMA LIVE EVENTS
- » More virtual type meetings
- » No high fives or handshakes (my hands normally have dirt on them anyway)
- » For me; barred from driving outside of Dane County for work purposes

This list could go on forever, but I will stop here. My point is that the second list are not issues that we in the green industry cannot and did not overcome. Overcoming change is what Sports Turf Managers do everyday! Although it is not written in the job description that is part of the job.

Last Spring when this whole Coronavirus pandemic started,

we were all worried. I had an age-old veteran (not me this time) predict there will be issues, but history has proven that the green industry will overcome, and WE DID! No one said it would not be difficult, equally, no one said that every year your job would be easy. Often, we make our jobs as hard as possible, we can be and often be our own worst enemy. In our desire to improve our fields we try new things and many times they make our lives more difficult. Examples:

- » Striping game fields
- » Topdressing fields
- » Deep tining
- » Spiking
- » Disease programs
- » Moisture monitoring

The list is much longer than this but each item on the list added work, expense and scheduling challenges to your job, but you believed each would create better field conditions and you made it happen. Our work ethic provided us with the background and skill set to overcome the changes to our world this past growing season.

If you have been lucky enough not to have contracted COVID, all these issues were an inconvenience but not a real crisis for your fields. The green industry has a way to overcome most everything. I believe you have overcome 2020 through the dedication and hard work of you and all your staff. Congratulations on the successes you experienced this past growing season. You did your job and did it well.

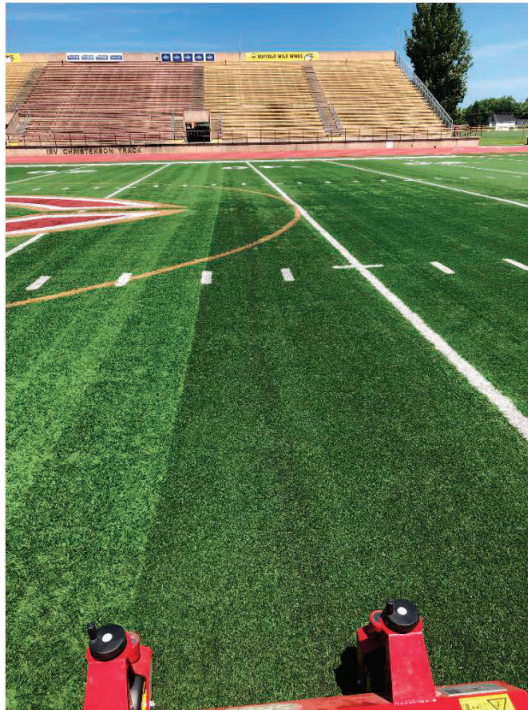
Congratulations on a year well done and a break WELL DESERVED!

*The 2020 season has come to an end
This year we all had to bend
All snow mold control is on the ground
The lesson of the season will forever abound
Winter is here so, take a break
Hopefully the new year will not be a re-take
The new season will be here soon enough
Here is to hoping next year is a powder puff*

Okay it must have been a hard year since I somehow thought I was a poet!

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SHOW US

This is the first installment of "Let's see the fruits of your labor." We would like to see pictures of your fields that you put so much heart and soul into (and for better or worse, what you are judged on).

These photos will be primarily for the newsletter but will also be highlighted on Facebook, as we hope we have too many to show in the newsletter! Please submit a photo(s) and a tutorial on your maintenance practice to mkrupke.wstma@gmail.com.

Our first feature is of Darlington School's football field, managed by Lee Black. Darlington played their fall season this year and the field held up amazingly. Lee carefully follows a well-balanced maintenance

program of timely fertilizer applications and aeration processes. He waters at sparingly to help insure root growth and mows during the competition season at 1.5 inches.

Well done Lee!



YOUR FIELD!





with the Turf Docs

By Josh LePine, Superintendent Maple Bluff Country Club, WTA Board Member

Thursday, January 21st, 2021, Virtually 2-4 pm

Save The Date! Take the afternoon off, curl up with a beverage of choice and join the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association as we virtually host Happy Hour with the Turf Docs!

Although COVID will not allow us to meet in person for Research Day 2021, we can still come together virtually and talk turf with some of the leading turf scientists in the world. Dr. Frank Rossi of Cornell University will lead a discussion with UW's Dr. Doug Soldat and, Dr. Paul Koch, along with Dr. Bill Kreuser from the University of Nebraska and Glen Obear. This no cost, informal discussion will highlight industry trends, challenges, current research, and hot turf topics. More importantly, it is an opportunity for our WTA members to ask questions and spark discussions on issues we face as turf managers.

We will be meeting via Zoom with an email invitation sent the day of the event for those that pre-registered. To receive the invite for this no cost event, you must sign up on the WTA website www.wisconsinturfgrassassociation.org. We ask that you log on, sign up, include a preferred email address for the Zoom invite and submit a question or two. While on the website, please renew your WTA membership for 2021. Bring a friend or colleague, showcase what our great association has to offer and encourage them to join and support the WTA, its mission, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison turf program.

The WTA's mission is to support turfgrass research and education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This includes funding of programs in turfgrass management and allied disciplines that enhance the understanding and general knowledge of the art and science of maintaining turfgrass. We need your support, now more than ever, to continue this mission.

Please sign up for the Happy Hour and renew your WTA membership today. If you have questions about this event or becoming a WTA member, please contact Audra Anderson at audra.anderson@wisc.edu or 608 845-6536.

Event: Happy Hour with the Turf Docs

Date: Thursday, January 21st, 2021

Time: 2-4pm Cost: FREE (GCSAA CEU's applied for)

Platform: Zoom (invite sent via email on January 21st)

Sign up: Wisconsin Turfgrass Association website www.wisconsinturfgrassassociation.org
Enter name, preferred email address for zoom invite and turf related questions.

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ABOUT THE TURF DOCS



Department at Cornell University. Dr. Rossi administers a broad-based research and education program focused on ecological aspects of turfgrass science. The goal of his research and education efforts for undergraduates, graduate students and industry professionals is to improve the environmental compatibility and economic feasibility of turfgrass management systems.



Doug Soldat, Ph.D., is a professor in the Soil Science department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He earned both his bachelors and master's degrees in soil science at the University of Wisconsin and Ph.D. in horticulture at Cornell University. He focuses on turfgrass, urban soils, nutrient management, water resources, soil testing and landscape irrigation.



Paul Koch, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He earned his bachelors, masters, and Ph.D. in Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research is focused on three areas: precision disease management using predictive models, pesticide fate and impact on turfgrass landscapes, and the turfgrass microbiome. Research in each area includes both fundamental and applied objectives to gain a broad biological understanding of the system with the intent of developing pest management recommendations for the turfgrass industry that are both effective and reduce non-target impacts.



Bill Kreuser, Ph.D., is an extension specialist and assistant professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his Ph.D. at Cornell University. Dr. Kreuser's research focuses on turfgrass soil, water, and nutrient management. Current interests include the relationship between turf crown moisture and temperature stress tolerance, sustainable lawn management, use of nitrogen sensing technology to increase fertilizer application precision, and the cause and management of impermeable iron-oxide layers in sand-based putting greens.



Glen Obear is the Director of Innovation with Tria Global Solutions. Glen's work focuses on developing innovative technologies aimed at improving soil health, plant health, and water quality. Glen has spent over a decade as a researcher in the plant and soil sciences fields and is an expert in turfgrass soil and water chemistry. Glen earned M.S. degrees in Entomology and Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is currently completing his Ph.D. in Agronomy and Horticulture from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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2020: A TIME FOR RENOVATIONS

By Josh Viet

In a year that's been difficult in many ways, we can at least say that the weather was a great improvement from the last couple of years. The total rainfalls were down greatly and in some areas of the state, you could call it a very dry year. A much-welcomed change from near record rainfall in recent years past.

That having been said, it was an excellent year to take advantage of outdoor projects. Several turf managers were able to focus on improvements that may not have been possible in the past. With sports schedules being cancelled, moved around, started/postponed, etc, it was a great year for renovations. A year of excellent weather and with sports activities at a minimum, this renovation started late at the end of the year- when normally this type of work is halted for the season in the upper Midwest.

An infield renovation in northeast Iowa was not necessarily



planned for this time of year, but due to funding delays and the weather holding out, we chose to begin in hopes of getting this field sodded before a predicted snow storm at the end of the following week. Janesville High School hired us to complete an infield renovation on the baseball field and the softball field. The crew mobilized on December 3rd and began the demolition process that afternoon. The weather was in the low to mid 40's in the afternoons, with lows into the mid-teens at night.

This wasn't as easy as we thought it was going to be. Frost was setting in deeper than we hoped. The interior infield

was left tilled at night to help insulate and keep the frost from going too deep. The infield skins and baselines had deeper frost that never came out during the day. The old infield mix had to be removed by digging below the frost and breaking it up in chunks.

Too much infield mix was removed due to the frost problem so unfrozen fill had to be installed before the infield mix. The top of the sod rolls came frozen, frost in the ground, and frozen water source for the sod were all just a few items, of many, to overcome when doing this kind of work this time of year.

There were some unforeseen conditions that had to be overcome quickly as rain and snow was coming in just a couple days. The weather on December 9th and 10th unexpectedly improved even more and climbed into the upper 50's during the day and allowed us to get the infield sodded, and the new infield mix installed on both the baseball and softball field. Friday, December 11th came along and the rain and snow came with it, ending the project for the season at over 90% completion during a time of year that shop work is the only thing possible.

In conclusion, in a time when we are going about our lives in a very irregular and uncomfortable way and overcoming challenges can seem more difficult than before, we must keep pushing forward. This will pass and we will go back to a more normal life. The new year will bring new opportunities.



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