

TALK TURF

Official publication of the Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association

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This fall, the Wisconsin chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association held their Fall Tour Conference in the Madison area on October 5th. The conference focused its stops at facilities that showed turf managers and researchers who are committed to the advancement and improvement of our turf surfaces we can provide our athletes. Here's a little recap of the day.

Starting our tour off at Beacon Athletics in Middleton where Paul Zwaska, former MLB Groundskeeper, talked with the attendees about the work that he and many other volunteers have put in 15+ years of work to improve the facilities of West Madison Little League. He walked

us through the poor field conditions and facilities that existed for the league years ago and the challenges they experienced to get the fields where they are today. Paul showed the importance of establishing a budget for the facility and the fundraising efforts that have allowed them to make equipment improvements, proper material selection and more importantly, hiring of quality staff to maintain the fields and facilities. Paul's talk provided great insight to the hard work and commitment it takes to establish a facility of quality and in turn, growing a stronger and successful league for today's youth!

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hope all you turf managers are enjoying a little time with your families before the snow flies and your fields get some much needed rest! With another season of sports completed on our surfaces, it gives us a chance to reflect and examine our performance this past season. We all faced challenges this year, but probably none greater than those that our always unpredictable Mother Nature gave us. Hot temperatures, periods of drought, excessive rain events and another cold spring briefly sums up the 2016 growing season for most of us—fortunately she

made it up to us with this nice fall!

No matter what we're dealt, it is amazing to watch turf managers persevere every season and present quality surfaces! The "don't quit" and "succeed at all costs" attitude that seems to exist in almost every turf manager that I have had the pleasure to know over my years in this industry, makes leading the WSTMA over these past two years so exhilarating! Our organization has made some great strides over that past few years and it is all because of your commitment to our industry!

I want to say THANKS to the WSTMA Members and the Vendors for giving me the opportunity to serve as President these past two years. It has been a true honor and privilege to continue the growth of an organization that puts their heart and soul into their careers every single day! I not only look forward to the next chapter of the WSTMA with the leadership we have coming on board, but the advancements our fields will make with the committed turf managers and industry professionals we have in this state!

Until we talk again,

Michael Boettcher

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CHAPTER MANAGER'S REPORT

Summer of 1998, I recall the first meeting of the WSTMA. I was just starting my position at the newly named Waupaca Sand and Solutions. I was new to the Sportsturf side of the industry but that meeting taught me two important things.

1. The people that came to the meeting were so willing to share information and learn from each other. 2. The newly formed WSTMA was a great way for me to meet and network with the experts in our state.

Mid 2000's I was able to serve on the board and take my two year term as WSTMA President. What a great experience! The membership had grown and we had learned that the Vendor Companies were willing to assist in education and sponsorship. I served with some great people during my time on the board. Again, I learned far more from others than they did from me.

Spring of 2013, Chris Brindley invited me to lunch he wanted to talk about the WSTMA. He shared that he thought the WSTMA could use my assistance in improving the day to day operations and to assist the current leaders be more effective. Membership levels were quite low, and monetarily the chapter needed improvements. In August of 2013 I began my tenure as Ch. Mgr.

I am happy to report that your WSTMA leaders have turned things around in the past few years. It has been a great pleasure to serve these fine people and to assist the membership with an emphasis on improved service and communications to the membership. We now have one of the best websites of all STMA chapters; we have streamlined our operations, improved communications with members and most importantly have created a better relationship with our vendor companies who continue to support us financially.

As my former employer used to say, "It's important to leave the woodpile higher than we found it". I am proud to say your current leaders have done this and will continue to do so!

Earlier this year after MUCH thought I decided that my current commitments to my rental properties business and my service to the WI Golf Course Superintendents had grown and I needed to make a change. I reluctantly informed President Boettcher of my decision. In was not easy to step down from my role but the job duties had grown along with the chapter and I simply had no more time to grow with it.

So now the latest evolution of my time with the WSTMA has started. Last week, I met with the new Ch. Mgr. Mr. Peter Bemis. I have known him for many years, and consider him a great friend and resource. I was so excited to learn that the board had chosen him to continue what we have been doing. Rest assured that Peter will be able to take the WSTMA to another level. He is a great servant leader and will help the board reach new goals and milestones. The WSTMA is poised to take on more growth and I promise all members I will help Peter in any way that I can going forward.



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I hope to see you soon at the 2017 meetings. It will be fun to continue to learn and network with so many of you. Until then, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I wish all of the hard working WSTMA members continued success in the future.

Sincerely,

Brett Grams
Former Ch. Mgr

Here from
our new
Chapter Manager,
Peter Bemis
on Pg 10!



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FALL TOUR RECAP *continued from front*

From Beacon Athletics, we loaded up and made the short trip over to the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research & Education Facility in West Madison to talk with Dr. Doug Soldat, Dr. Paul Koch, Tom Schwab and Ben Henke about the facility and the research being conducted currently that impacts all Turf Managers as we look to make more educated decisions about our playing surfaces. Dr. Soldat, Dr. Koch and Tom provided great insight about the Noer, discussing the entities that use it on a daily basis like the

Wisconsin Turfgrass Association, Turfgrass Diagnostics Lab, and of course the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

After the rain subsided, we were able to get out on the plots and look at multiple studies that look at the effects of fertility inputs, with resulting weed succession, mowing frequencies and its effects on different turfgrass species, drought tolerance of certain turfgrass species, along with varying usage rates of plant growth regulators and the their effects, to name a select few.

Attendees were impressed by the information coming from these trials and although we could have spent A LOT more time at the O.J. Noer, it was time to continue our tour.

With sun and a beautiful fall day now upon us, our next stop was West Madison Little League where lunch awaited us thanks to Mike Krupke and Insight FS. The attendees were able to sit and enjoy a delicious grill out, overlooking the fields and talking with fellow turf managers and vendors about the fall and the preparations of our fields.

After lunch, Paul Zwaska followed his talk about the West Madison Little League with a tour of the facilities and introduction to the Grounds staff. Paul walked us through some of the reasoning behind their current management practices of each field and the maintenance plans they implement based on field usage and budgets. With the fields and surrounding facilities already great shape, Paul



discussed the potential of upcoming renovations and the associated fundraising taking place to pay for them.

Once back on the buses, we headed onto the UW campus to tour the one and only, Camp Randall Stadium. Chris Crawford and Daron Jones led us out onto the turf where they discussed the different events that take place on the field and their corresponding maintenance practices of the synthetic turf for each event. After a good amount of questions about the turf, we then proceeded to their indoor and outdoor practice facilities, understanding the high usage and events these two surfaces see! Since we had a little more time, Chris and Daron showed us some behind the scenes areas that all the athletes use at UW-Madison.

Our final stop of the day was back at Beacon Athletics for a nice social and raffle. Several members won tickets to upcoming Badger games, turf & clay maintenance equipment, along with a multitude of other prizes!

The WSTMA would like to thank Paul Zwaska and everyone at Beacon Athletics and West Madison Little League, Dr. Doug Soldat, Dr. Paul Koch and Tom Schwab of UW-Madison and Daron Jones and Chris Crawford of Camp Randall Facilities for opening your doors, letting us learn about and tour your facilities. The WSTMA would also like to thank our sponsors for this event, our Presenting Sponsor, Reinders, Gold Level sponsors, Insight FS, Miller & Associates, Turfix and Burris Equipment. Silver Level sponsors Barrenburg USA, Hunter Industries, Landmark Turf & Native Seed, SiteOne Landscape Supply, Midwest Athletic Fields, Turface, Horst Distributing, Beacon Athletics, DHD Turf & Tree, along with our Bronze Level sponsors FRS Design Group, Ball Diamond Fine Sports Turf, and Jasperson Sod. The success of this event wouldn't have been possible without your support!





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SAY HELLO...

We're highlighting WSTMA Board Member Mike Krupke, Certified Turf Specialist at Insight FS.

What first got your interest in turf management?

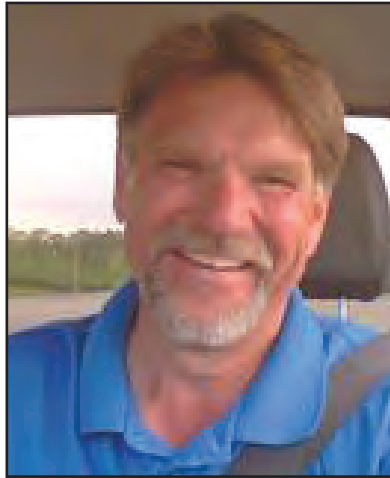
I grew up on a farm. I didn't want to continue to Farm, as it were, but I knew I wanted to continue growing things and working outdoors. It was a very natural fit. After all, it's still farming.

What do you like best about your job?

I get a lot of fulfillment in using my 25 years of turf management experience to help people be successful in resolving their turf related issues. I have received a lot of help over the years from some great turf experts and enjoy being able to give some of that back.

What has been the most memorable moment of your career?

As the Golf Course Superintendent at Wolf Hollow Golf Club, one of my projects was designing and implementing a 3 year Tree program that placed 500 trees on 18 holes. It completely changed the course and every time I go back to visit over the last 15 years, I see those trees mature and it sends



chills up my spine. I think that is the magic of our industry, appreciating our results.

What do you wish other people knew about the turf industry?

That it's a lot of hard work and dedication. It's not just mowing the grass and killing the weeds. Successful turf management is a science. A lot of turf managers are under appreciated and deserve more credit for what they do AND what they know.

Who has been your biggest influences/mentors?

Bruce Schweiger and Lucas Hendrickson. Both in different ways, but for the same reason....they inspire me to be the best man I can be.

When you are not working, what do you like to do?

I hang out with my family and I'm a music nut. All kinds...preferably on vinyl.

If you were not in the turf industry what would you want to do?

I'd be a psychologist.



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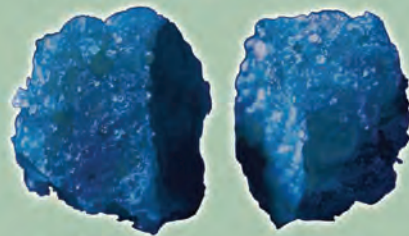
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Changing Ideas on Fall Fertilization

Doug Soldat, Dept. of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Over the past several years views have been rapidly changing on how to best fertilize turf in fall. The conventional wisdom said that we should apply a soluble N fertilizer around the time when the mowers are being put away – typically Halloween. The thinking was that the nitrogen would turn the turf green, inducing more photosynthesis and lead to enhanced root growth because temperature was limiting shoot growth. Many managers had good success with following this recommendation over the years, but some of our research has identified a chink in the armor. We applied soluble nitrogen fertilizer to Kentucky bluegrass in a growth chamber set to simulate conditions of either mid-September, mid-October, or mid-November, we found that while about 70% of the September applied N was absorbed by the plant, only 50% was absorbed in October, and 20% in November. These results were similar when we tried the experiment in field settings in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The grass that was fertilized in October had very good visual quality and performance, however. But because we found that only 20% of the applied N entered the plant, it reasons that one could get the same response with low doses of soluble N in October. Other researchers at Penn State and Purdue have recently confirmed our findings. My new recommendation for fall fertilization is to keep the soluble N to 0.5 lbs N per 1000 sq. ft. or less. You can apply more total N than that, but I recommend you use a slow release source like a polymer or sulfur coated urea.

In addition to these ideas about N, we have learned even more about potassium. It turns out that high potassium levels lead to increase snow mold (pink and gray) damage in bentgrass, annual bluegrass, and ryegrass. Nobody has studied the effect on Kentucky bluegrass, but I'd be surprised if it was any different. This is troubling because we normally think of potassium as a "winterizer". Indeed, strong potassium fertility has been associated with improved cold tolerance in warm season grasses, and it appears it also is important for the cold



Figure 1. This photo was taken in March of 2016. The plot on the left has not been fertilized with potassium for six years, while the plot on the right receives a small amount of potassium every other week.

tolerance of annual bluegrass. However, we have been studying potassium applications on bentgrass (with a similar winter hardiness to Kentucky bluegrass) and have not seen differences in winter kill. In contrast, we see that the treatments that have potassium applied get much more snow mold damage than the ones that do not (Figure 1). For this reason, I now suggest that potassium be applied in the spring and summer and to avoid fall applications. There are many studies that have shown the benefits of potassium for drought tolerance, so making applications in spring and summer still seems reasonable



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if soil tests indicate a need for potassium applications.

The best way to determine the need for potassium is to follow the newest soil testing guidelines for the Mehlich-3 test. Rock River Labs in Watertown and the UW Soil and Forage Analysis Lab in Marshfield both offer the Mehlich-3 test. The independent consulting group PACE Turf has analyzed tens of thousands of soil samples to determine the minimum soil nutrient levels for sustainable turf (MLSN). For the Mehlich-3, they recommend having at least 37 ppm in your soil. This is substantially lower than the more frequently used levels of 50 or even 100 ppm soil potassium. However, the data suggest that 37 ppm is more than adequate for maintaining healthy turf. If your soil is above this threshold, there is no reason to apply potassium at all. The MLSN also reports threshold levels for soil pH (should be 5.5 or greater), phosphorus (21 ppm), calcium (331 ppm), magnesium (47 ppm), and sulfate (7 ppm). You should consider soil testing about every three years (or break your property into thirds and sample a different third every year). Historically, Wisconsin has used a soil test called "Bray", however almost all the latest turfgrass research has been using the Mehlich-3 soil test, so I strongly recommend getting Mehlich-3 tests from this point forward.

Turfgrass research is exciting and always changing. I think there is great value in staying abreast with the current research (field days, newsletters, association

meetings) and using that information to re-visit your approach to turfgrass management. The research improves with your participation as well. I know that some of my more successful projects started from conversations with turf managers about particular challenges or unusual observations they have made. So, I hope this article inspires you to re-evaluate your approach to fall fertilization and hope to see you at future turfgrass educational or research events. In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact me to for more information or resources about the research discussed in this article. My email is djsoldat@wisc.edu and my office line is 608-263-3631.




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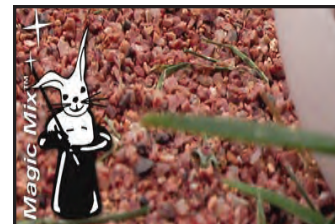


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WSTMA WELCOMES NEW CHAPTER MANAGER PETER BEMIS

Starting this month, I will be the new Chapter Manager for the Wisconsin Sports Turf Manager's Association. I am very excited for this opportunity to continue to work with our Board of

Directors and membership to provide outstanding service, excellent educational opportunities, and to promote our industry. Although many of you know me from my years of membership and former Board of Directors service, I would like to provide a short background.

Like many of you I started my career raking baselines and

laying chalk while a youth baseball player, continuing this work through my college summers. My first professional position was as a Recreation Director where I needed to teach my summer crew the correct method of field preparation. Advance a few years and I worked in the position of Landscape Architect and Grounds Manager for the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse with the responsibility of maintaining all of the campus landscape including all the sportsfields. The university served host to numerous high school and college events plus summer camp home of the New Orleans Saints for 10 years. As a Landscape Architect I have also been involved in the design and construction of a number of sportsfields. My current position is as Program Head and Instructor for Western Technical College where I teach many courses, including Turf Management, as part of the Landscape Horticulture program.



Membership Application Building in 2017!

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