Boyertown's Memorial Field Earns Field of Distinction Honors

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STMA Regional Educational Event a Success

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Dear KAFMO Members,

I want to sincerely thank your organization for their generous contribution to Penn State’s Turfgrass Project. The money donated goes to aid in research of topics such as:

- Cultivar screening for traffic tolerance
- Kentucky bluegrass evaluation to reduce divoting of football fields
- Baseball field surface evaluation including the effectiveness of varying calcined clay concentrations
- The use of organic fertilizers in turf management
- MRSA on synthetic turf
- Heat issues on synthetic turf
- Playability, maintenance, and life expectancy of synthetic turf systems
- Varying percentages of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass for overseeding

The Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization was formed in 1994 by a small group of individuals who were concerned about the quality of the athletic fields in Pennsylvania. In 1997, KAFMO became incorporated as a chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association. Today, KAFMO is over 300 members strong and each individual is committed to enhancing the professionalism of athletic field managers in the Keystone State.

Our goals are to improve the safety, playability and appearance of all athletic fields in Pennsylvania. As an organization we strive to accomplish our goals through seminars, field days, publications and networking with other professionals in the sports turf industry.

Any individual, institution, organization, vendor or supplier who has sincere interest in athletic field maintenance is welcome to become a member. Our members represent a wide range of professionals in the sports turf industry. From high school, collegiate and professional athletic fields in Pennsylvania. As an organization we strive to accomplish our goals through seminars, field days, publications and networking with other professionals in the sports turf industry.

Annual Events include:
- Summer - Field Day(s)
- October - KAFMO Cup Open golf tournament – proceeds benefit the Awards Fund
- January - Eastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference
- January - Northeastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference
- February - Annual KAFMO conference featuring seminars, exhibits and the annual awards program
- February/March - Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference
- March - Northwestern Pennsylvania Turf Conference

Educational Grants and Research

KAFMO has donated over $47,000 for educational grants and sports turf research since 2001. KAFMO provides scholarships for sports turf education and sponsors collegiate teams in the Sports Turf Managers Association’s Collegiate Challenge at their annual national conference. Research beneficiaries include: Sports Turf Managers Association’s Foundation for Safer Athletic Field Environments (SAFE); Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council’s fund for sports turf research at Penn State University and the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Research Fund, Inc.

This year much of the money was used to support travel for the competitive student teams attending the national STMA conference. A link to an article describing the team’s success can be found at: http://turfgrass.psu.edu/newsletter/volume1_issue2.cfm

Thanks for all your efforts and please don’t hesitate to contact me if I can help you with your operations.

Andy

Andrew S. McNitt
Associate Professor of Soil Science - Turfgrass
The Pennsylvania State University
116 ASI Bldg.
University Park, PA 16802
814-863-1368 - voice / 814-863-7043 - fax
www.personal.psu.edu/asm4

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Executive Secretary: Linda Kulp

MEMBERSHIP

Our brochure can be downloaded at: http://www.kafmo.org/membership.htm

The magazine will be free to KAFMO members.

On the Cover...
Boytown’s Memorial Field
Photo by Bruce Dierolf.

KAFMO Athletic Field Managers Organization 1451 Peter’s Mountain Road
Dauphin, PA 17018-9504
www.KAFMO.org
E-mail: KAFMO@aol.com

Contact: Linda Kulp, Executive Secretary
Phone: 717-921-8803 / Fax: 717-921-0135

Contact: Dan Douglas, President
Phone: 610-375-8469 x 212 / Fax: 610-373-5868

In addition, KAFMO was the primary supporter for 2008.

This year much of the money was used to support travel for the competitive student teams attending the national STMA conference. A link to an article describing the team’s success can be found at: http://turfgrass.psu.edu/newsletter/volume1_issue2.cfm

Note: we thanked TORO because of their past and future support; however, KAFMO was the primary supporter for 2008.

Thanks for all your efforts and please don’t hesitate to contact me if I can help you with your operations.

Andy

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STMA Regional Educational Event a Success

STMA held a regional educational event and field day at the Philadelphia Eagles Stadium and the Phillies Citizens Bank Park on June 27. Six STMA-affiliated chapters supported the program: the Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO), the Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ), the Sports Turf Managers of New York (STMONY), the Chesapeake Chapter of STMA, the Virginia Sports Turf Managers Association (VSTMA), and the New England Sports Turf Managers Association (NESTMA).

Emcee Dan Douglas from the KAFMO chapter, kept the more than 160 attendees moving to the various events throughout the day. Dr. John Sorochan, University of Tennessee, started the program with a presentation about how new bermudagrass can successfully be grown in the transition zone. He also presented cool season turf management later in the day. Jeff Fowler, Penn State Extension, challenged attendees to make personal changes to help them be better sports turf managers during his ‘7 Habits of Highly Defective Sports Turf Managers’ presentation. Tony Leonard, Director of Grounds for the Philadelphia Eagles, who hosted the event, his assistant Dan Shemesh, and Dr. Sorochan conducted a tour of the field and discussed the equipment used and the overall field management practices. Mike Boekholder, head groundskeeper for the Philadelphia Phillies, showcased his field, highlighting specific recovery techniques he has been implementing over the past two weeks since the June 14 Jimmy Buffet concert. A ‘Chapter Challenge’ was conducted that tested a team from each chapter on agronomic questions. The winning chapter, VSTMA, won a registration to the STMA Annual Conference, to be held Jan. 13-17, 2009 in San Jose. Philadelphia Eagles and STMA merchandise also was given away during a raffle.
Memorial Field at the Boyertown Area School District in Berks County was honored by KAFMO with its prestigious Field of Distinction Award as part of the organization’s 12th Annual Athletic Field Conference last February.

Head groundskeeper Bruce Dierolf and Terry Eidole overcame a battle with gray leaf spot and drought conditions to keep the field in prime playing condition for more than 75 events last year, not to mention spring practices for boys and girls’ lacrosse and field events for the track squad.

Dierolf reports Memorial Field is even busier in the autumn when it hosts a minimum of 20 soccer games and 15 football games each year (and November football practices after daylight savings time ends). A local midget/mite football league consisting of a regular season plus the annual “Piggy Bowl” with 11 football games over 2 days also calls the field home.

Another big event is the Cavalcade of Bands hosted by the Music League for 11 area high school bands. The band also uses the field for practice.

Dierolf, who is in charge of the grounds at the high school, two junior highs and six elementary schools and manages a three-man crew, said, “The biggest challenge is keeping the turf green and growing during the fall because our field is used non-stop. Keeping the field free of bare spots in high traffic areas and trying to keep the field playable even when it is too wet. [The] budget is always a concern with a school district, so trying to maintain fields and equipment with limited resources is always a challenge. “Spring and fall are very busy because of the sports and the outside activities that are held. A lot of extra hours are needed. There are no set hours; they can change very quickly because of activities being added at the last minute or weather changes,” Dierolf said.

Asked what tool he couldn’t live without, Dierolf replied, “[Our] Kifco water reel; we could not grow grass or keep fields wet between games. The products I could not live without come from Synatek, who supply fertilizers, grass seed, fungicides, etc. Their service is very good.”

What does he wish he had that he doesn’t? “A boom sprayer would make applications for weeds and apply fungicide a lot easier.”

Other Challenges

In his award entry, Dierolf wrote, “Some of the challenges we faced besides the usage were drought and gray leaf spot. We addressed these problems and even with all the events, the grass held up very well. Another difficult task we faced was compacted soil. The field was made up of Philadelphia Sludge (sand). At the time the thought was it

(Continued on page 12)
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Membership Information

What is KAFMO?
The Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization is a group of individuals committed to enhancing the professionalism of athletic field managers in Pennsylvania. The organization’s main goals include:

- Improving the Safety, Playability, and Appearance of all athletic fields in the state.

These goals will be achieved through seminars, field days, publications, and “networking” with those in the sports turf industry.

Who should be a member of KAFMO?
Any individual, institution, organization, and vendor/supplier who has sincere interest in athletic field maintenance.

Members of KAFMO represent high school, college, and professional facilities, parks, and recreation departments, educators, youth leagues, contractors, and commercial vendors.

Subjects Addressed by KAFMO
- Grass species selection
- Fertilization
- Pesticide use
- Soil amendments
- Baseball infill mixes
- Pitcher’s mound/batter’s box repair
- Grass seedings
- Drainage
- Irrigation
- Aeration
- Top dressing
- Equipment demonstration
- Various other management techniques which improve playability, safety, and appearance of athletic fields.

Annual KAFMO events include:
- Athletic Field Conference in February
- Sports Turf School in June
- and the KAFMO Cup Golf Tournament in October

Various other KAFMO sponsored events are conducted throughout the year.

Member Benefits
Each new KAFMO member will receive a 3-ring binder which includes technical materials, a vendor resource guide, and a membership roster. Scholarships and Meeting Grants are available. New members also receive a subscription to SPORTSTURF magazine and KAFMO’s quarterly newsletter.

Annual Membership Dues

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Call for more information (717) 921-8803

What is STMA?
KAFMO is the Pennsylvania Chapter of the national organization known as the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA), www.sportsturfmanger.org.

Annual KAFMO Awards
"Field of Distinction" and "Fowler Founder" awards along with scholarships to turf students and funds for sports turf research are presented each year at the annual conference.

Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization
1451 Peters Mountain Road
Dauphin, PA 17018-9504 (717) 921-8803
kafmo@aol.com
www.KAFMO.org
Most cool-season grasses can be pre-germinated to speed establishment and recovery on athletic fields. Perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and tall fescue have been pregerminated and used in a divot mix to hasten seedling establishment. The following program is used by the Iowa State University turf management team to manage the sand-based fields at Jack Trice Stadium and Johnny Majors practice facility.

**Begin the pregermination process 4 or 5 days** before the time you will actually apply seed to the field.

**Submerge seed for 12 hours.** Put a 50 lb bag of seed into a large water tight container. We keep four 50 gallon plastic trash cans on hand and mark them “for pregermination only.” Woven plastic seed bags that seed typically comes in are perfect for pregermination – the water soaks through the bag and the seed remains contained during the draining cycle. Fill the container with water so that the seed is completely immersed. Add 4 oz. Pana-Sea to each container with the seed and water. A heated shop is preferred so that everything equilibrates to about room temperature or 70°F. Do not use chilled water or freezing conditions. Include a fungicide such as Subdue to the soaking mixture during the early football season if seedling damping off by Pythium is anticipated.

**Drain seed for 12 hours.** It is recommended to have a 12 hour soak cycle followed by a 12 hour drain cycle, followed by another 12 hour soak cycle. For convenience we remove the bags each morning and allow them to drain during the 8 hour work day. Before the end of the work day we set up another soak cycle for the night. Even when we have forgotten about the bags and allowed them to soak for 2 or 3 days there has still been good germination.

**Pregerminated seed is alive.** Even though you may not see root tips the seeds have begun to respire and are alive… there is no turning back now. If the pregerminated seed dries in storage or in the field after planting it will die. You can refrigerate, not freeze, the living seed for about a week to slow down the growth if you want to plant it later.

**Make divot mix by combining pregerminated seed, sand, turface, and green dye.** Remove the seed bag from the pregermination container and allow a few minutes for drainage. A concrete or smooth blacktop surface works fine for mixing. Dump a 5-gallon bucket of sand on the surface and add some seed, turface, and dye over the pile. Use plastic to avoid staining of the hard surface if desired. Continue adding sand, seed, Turface, and dye until you have a layered pile. Shovel the pile to one side and then back again to mix. The recipe is 15 lbs of perennial rye or 10 lbs of Kentucky bluegrass seed, 40 gallons sand, 50 lbs Turface, and 32 oz Green Lawnger dye. **Remove divot debris before seeding.** Load a 5-gallon bucket half full of divot mix and work the field from sideline to sideline five yards at a time. After mechanically sweeping the field there may still be debris in the divot that can be swept out by hand to insure good placement and establishment of the divot mix. Simply work a handful of mix into the divot then firm and level with your foot. Divots that are completely dislodged seldom root sufficiently so they are removed and replaced by a 4 or 6-inch plug taken from a nursery or surrounding area of the field. Any remaining divot mix is spread in worn areas of the field.

(Continued on page 14)
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would prevent injuries to the athletes but the grass never took a solid root and would come out in divots after each activity.

“A company came in and spread soil, 6 inches over the entire field but the soil turned out to be hard clay soil with loads of rocks. So we decided to Blecavate the field to mix both soils together and to laser grade the field but heavy rains prevented the grading. [Later] a grading company came in and donated their time and equipment but they compacted the soil and brought all the rocks to the top. Also the bulldozer and a blacktop machine made deep ruts and compacted the soil even more. It was devastating to see the condition of the field.

“My assistant, Terry, and I used a York rake to rip up some the compacted areas. We used hand rakes to get all the stones and rocks so they could be removed. Sod could not be installed until the huge amount of stones and rocks were removed. Loads of screened topsoil were brought in to fill all the ruts. Time was an issue because the sod was coming in. The field was deep tined three times in the first two years because the sod was not rooting into the compacted soil. We decided to drill and fill with MVP soil conditioner. The MVP helped a great deal but it was a challenge to get the field back to the condition it is now.”

Dierolf adds, “The PM program in place has overcome obstacles and helps to stop small problems turning into devastating damage to the field. With a staff of only two, our field is the best in the area. We take great pride in having a safe and beautiful field for our students to play on.”

Field of Distinction...

(From page 6)
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SINCE 1981
Pre-Germinated Divot Mix...
(From page 10)

Not all the seed survives but those that do represent mature plants for next years field. Seeds that are visible after placing the divot mix and seeds that are placed too deep will seldom establish, however those just below the surface will develop if watered. With divot mix it is important to remember that seed is mixed throughout a volume of sand and then the mixture is placed at various depths depending on the depth of the divot. Seed visible on the surface 1/16-inch dries out and seldom establishes. Likewise, seed planted too deep below a 1/2-inch will not germinate. The seeds that actually make plants germinates from a 1/8-inch zone that lies at the depth of 1/16-inch to 3/16-inch below the surface for Kentucky bluegrass and in a 1/4-inch zone that lies at a depth of 1/16-inch to 3/8-inches below the surface for perennial ryegrass and tall fescue. For each home game we mix about eight 5-gallon buckets of sand with 15 pounds of perennial ryegrass or 10 lbs of Kentucky bluegrass seed. After filling divots we feel that we are getting about 100 seedlings/square inch. At this rate the divots fill quickly without a negative effect from seedling over crowding. Some seedlings get trampled and die but those that survive create biomass and a mature turf for the beginning of next year opposed to bare spots with exposed and compacted soil.

We start the season in September using Kentucky bluegrass since it establishes well during September but may not fill divots when seeded in October. After the beginning of October we switch to perennial ryegrass because it establishes until the end of October and even into early November. Pregerminated Kentucky bluegrass divot mix seeded in early September will have nearly 90% of the divot covered with “green fuzz” in 7 days. Perennial ryegrass fills the divots about twice as fast as the Kentucky bluegrass. Pregeneration fills the divots twice as fast as seedling without pregermination. One advantage of the pregerminated divot mix over non-germinated seed is that the pregerminated seed does not require excessive water to get the seeds started. They are already growing and it only takes a little more frequent watering to make the seedlings develop.
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