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Virginia SportsTurf Managers Association



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1st Quarter - 2008

From the President: VSTMA Looking Ahead



Dean Whitehead, CSFM
VSTMA President

The growing season was winding down last time I wrote my letter for this newsletter. No sooner than I caught my breath, I find the new season winding up! My life has taken another turn, and I am now the Director of Grounds for Christopher Newport University in Newport News. Steve Boles has graciously taken my place at Hampden-Sydney, and I wish him the best.

You may wonder, now that I do not manage sports fields, if I have abandoned that facet of my life. The answer is an emphatic - NO! I will continue to work for this industry as president of VSTMA and hope to see the organization grow to its fullest potential.

The membership drive is bringing in folks who never joined before as well as record number of returning members who have joined early in the

year. This proves that people believe in VSTMA.

Our new Sports Turf Management book is hot off the press, and we hope you will order your copies soon. We only printed 1000, and we can't guarantee this low a price for the next go around.

We have several fun and informative events scheduled this year, Field Days June 17 & 18th, another Fall Symposium, and locally supported Sports Jam Nights. And don't forget the various short courses listed on the website.

If you would like to help us grow and have time to volunteer, we would like to hear from you. My wish is that we will serve Sports Turf Managers well, but that depends on all of you.

Best regards,
Dean
Christopher Newport University
757 594-8416 dean.whitehead@cnu.edu

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by Michael Goatley, Shawn Askew, Erik Ervin, David McCall, Bob Studholme, Pete Schultz, and Brandon Horvath.

Featured Content

- Principles in Design and Construction
- Turfgrass Selections & Establishment
- Winter Overseeding, Interseeding & Dormant Seeding
- Management Programs for Established Athletic Fields
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Description

Authored by turfgrass researchers and managers from Virginia, this high quality hardcover, full color book is a user-friendly guide to sports turf management for transition zone fields. Sports directors in the mid-Atlantic transition zone, with its highly variable climate, face unique challenges. This book assists in the care of multipurpose sports fields – whether for soccer, football, baseball, or any other sport – by addressing those challenges with great organization and clarity.

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Does Topdressing Color Matter When Establishing Athletic Fields?

By Tyler Mittlesteadt

No matter how fast a sports field renovation occurs, it is never fast enough. Such was the case with the 2006 renovation of Virginia Tech's Worsham Field from 'Tifsport' to 'Patriot' bermudagrass. On May 26, 2006 the field was planted with 2000 bushels of 'Patriot' bermudagrass.



Figure 1. Initial 'Patriot' bermudagrass planting on May 26, 2006.

Virginia Tech athletic department officials expressed concerns about the establishment rate. Tech's turfgrass faculty acknowledged the unusually slow growth rate compared to previous trials with 'Patriot' bermudagrass (in this case, establishment was delayed due to an abnormally cool and cloudy weather period that followed sprigging), but felt that the field would be ready for the upcoming season. However, to ensure that there was a dense bermudagrass canopy in place for the first game in early September, the decision was made to sod the playing surface on June 21,



Figure 2. Laying sod over existing sprigs on June 21, 2006.

just 3.5 weeks after the initial sprigging. This created plenty of challenges for the athletic turf staff throughout the season as they had to give special attention to managing the organic layer that was created by covering the sprigs.

Worsham Field has a sand-based growing medium consisting of a blend of particulates from local quarries. This sand happens to be white. Researchers at Virginia Tech have perceived differential growth rates of creeping bentgrass on putting greens with white sand versus darker colored sand. It stands to reason, the white sand on Worsham Field could have contributed, along with cool weather and other potential factors, to the slow growth rate of bermudagrass during the 2006 renovation and/or provided the perception that growth was inadequate. If white sand results in a slower turfgrass establishment, simply topdressing the field with 1/8 inch of a colored mix could alleviate the problem. Thus, studies were designed and conducted to evaluate several colors and textures of topdressing for effects on establishment of 'Patriot' bermudagrass.

A field trial was established July 19, 2007 on sprigged 'Patriot' bermudagrass at Virginia Tech's turfgrass



Figure 3. Images taken on August 20, 2007 comparing visual cover in plots that were topdressed with white sand (left) and green Turface™ (right)

research center with each plot ranging from 20 to 30% bermudagrass cover. The trial area was constructed to simulate Worsham Field with respect to drainage, irrigation, and sand-based growing media with the exception that a modular substructure was not installed. The study was established as a randomized complete block design with six treatments and three replications. Two particle sizes of topdressing included sand between 0.05 and 2 mm diameter and Turface™ between 6 and 9 mm diameter. The six treatments were: brown Turface™, green Turface™, red Turface™, brown sand, white sand, and black sand each uniformly applied to a depth of 3.2 mm in 1.2 by 1.8 m plots.

Featured Article by Tyler Mittlesteadt

Starting July 19, 2007 weekly ratings were taken for percentage bermudagrass cover using a 100-grid count and by visual estimation. Prior to bermudagrass dormancy on October 10, 10-cm diameter core samples were removed from each plot, dried, and weighed to determine biomass of stolons and leaves.

The percent change of cover based on the 100-grid count revealed that plots treated with white sand actually displayed equivalent or faster establishment rates compared to other topdressing materials. However, visual percentage bermudagrass cover ratings revealed that plots treated with green Turface™ displayed the fastest establishment rates.

Discrepancies between grid counts and visual estimations probably occurred due to high contrast between turfgrass tissue and white sand compared to the low contrast between turfgrass tissue and green Turface™. Late-season biomass of 'Patriot' bermudagrass was equivalent regardless of topdressing color during establishment and extrapolates to a range between 1.5 and 2.1 kg/m². Thus, white sand does not appear to actually deter bermudagrass growth but does leave the viewer with the impression that the bermudagrass is thin. Furthermore, other colors of topdressing do not increase establishment rates, but green topdressing leaves the viewer with the impression that more bermudagrass cover exist than is actually present. This psychological effect should be considered as it could be the difference between praise and retribution for field managers.

Test strips were left on Worsham field to see if the 'Patriot' sprigs would have become 100% established, and indeed they did. The psychological effect that green colored topdressing has on the viewer can be used as a tool by turfgrass managers. In many situations, people in administrative positions have the power to override decisions made by turfgrass managers, as seen in the events at Virginia Tech. Turfgrass scientist at Virginia Tech understood at the time of evaluating the field that the turf still had July and August (the two prime growing months for bermudagrass) to complete establishment. Furthermore, prior to sodding the field, the sprigs had not been subject to mowing, which would have further stimulated establishment. If the sprigs had been topdressed with a green colored topdressing, athletic administration likely would have perceived bermudagrass growth was sufficient. The perception that more cover was there might have calmed the fears of the administration and prevented the cost and management headaches that were created by the sod installation.

Tyler Mittlesteadt (tmittles@vt.edu) is a PhD student at Virginia Tech in the Plant Pathology & Weed Science Department, and works with Dr. Shawn Askew.

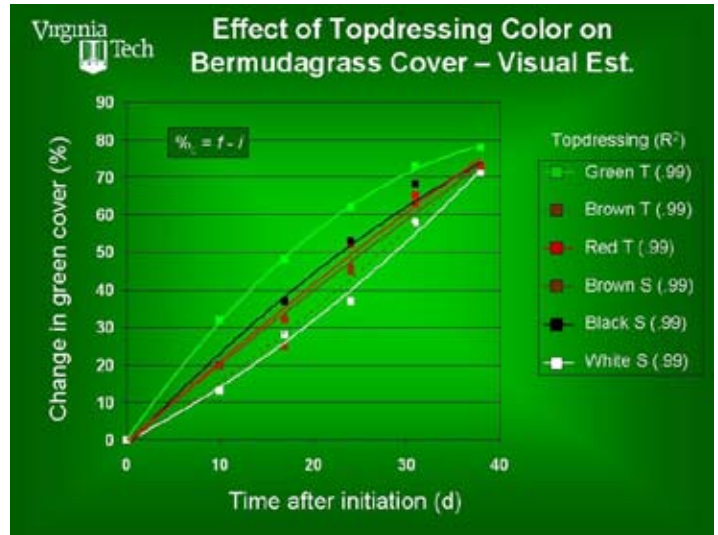


Figure 4. Effect of topdressing color on bermudagrass cover when visually estimated

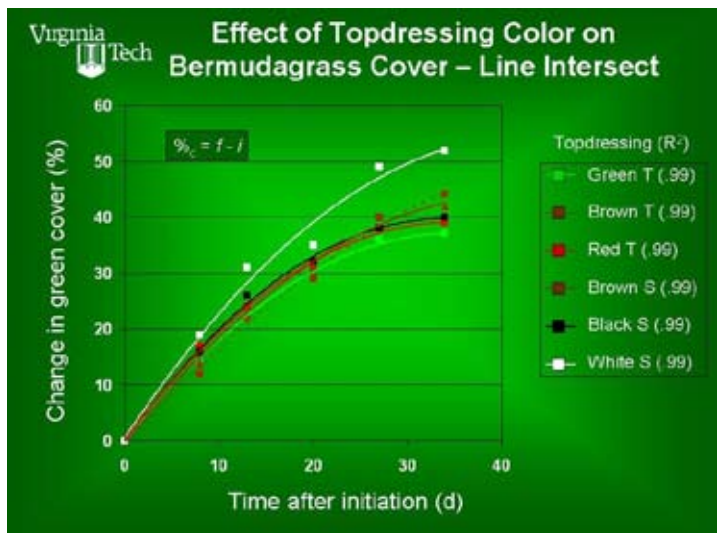


Figure 5. Effect of topdressing color on bermudagrass cover when estimated using line intersect.



Hokie Turf Students at STMA Conference Placed 7th!



VT Turf Club students, Nick McKenna (graduate student and non-competing team captain), Daniel Clayton, Jeremy Harvey, and Chris Webb, represented the departments of Crop and Soil Environmental Science and Agricultural Technology in the "Turf Bowl" event at the SportsTurf Managers Association conference in January.

The team, sponsored by the Virginia chapter of STMA, placed 7th out of 30. For the second year in a row they were tops in the ACC! The competition involves a 3-hr written exam (taken as a team) covering turf, weed, insect, and disease identification, infield skin maintenance, soils, cultural management practices, and a case study. Penn State finished 1st, while Iowa State finished 2nd.

Nick McKenna, Daniel Clayton, Jeremy Harvey, and Chris Webb. Not pictured, faculty advisor: Sam Doak.

Many thanks to Same Doak, faculty advisor and Erik Ervin, VT Turf Club advisor for all of their work.

To Our Members . . . Thank you for joining VSTMA!

We appreciate your prompt payments, and believe this illustrates your enthusiasm for the association. We hope you find the Sidelines content informative and thoughtful. If you have suggestions for future articles or would like to contribute content that is of interest to others in the field, please contact us, vstma@vstma.org. Also, spread the word to convince others to join, and please consider hosting a VSTMA event, be it only an evening Sports Jam. This is your chance to make a difference!

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STMA Conference in Phoenix - January 2008

The STMA Annual Conference was held January 15 – 19, 2008 in sunny Phoenix, Arizona. The VSTMA had a terrific presence, with eight members of its Board of Directors and 27 other members among the attendees. Among the sites visited during the popular "Seminar On Wheels" tours were Arizona State University, Chase Field with its state-of-the-art retractable roof (home of the Arizona Diamondbacks), and University of Phoenix Stadium with its one-of-a-kind retractable field (home of the Arizona Cardinals and site of the 2008 Super Bowl).

VSTMA Members garnered four awards and one certification at the Awards Banquet:

- **Josh McPherson**, George Mason University
2007 Softball Field of the Year, Collegiate
- **Nick McKenna**, Virginia Tech
Watson/Toro Scholarship Award.
- **Christopher Webb**, Virginia Tech
SAFE Foundation Scholarship Award
- **Dr. Mike Goatley**, Virginia Tech
Dr. William H. Daniel Award.
- **Jason Bowers**, Virginia Tech
Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM)



Left to right are Christopher Webb, David Quinn (GMU), Clint Steele (GMU), Josh McPherson (GMU), Mike Goatley, Nick McKenna.



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Dr. Mike Goatley, Jr. (left) Turfgrass Specialist at Virginia Tech, received the Dr. William H. Daniel Award, presented by Dr. Jim McAfee (right). This award acknowledges significant contributions to the sports turf industry through research, teaching and extension outreach. **Mike** has been working in sports field research for many years. He's an educator, a prominent author, and the go-to resource for warm season turfgrass questions. He is the Board Advisor to VSTMA and is a member of the Board of Directors of STMA, serving as "Academic Rep". He was elected to this post last fall, as were VSTMA Board Member Larry Divito and VSTMA Member Chad Price.



If you've never attended a STMA Conference, you owe it to yourself to attend at least once! The educational sessions are superb, the Trade Show excellent and the networking unparalleled. The 2009 Conference is set for San Jose, CA and in 2010 the Conference comes back east to Orlando, Florida (www.stma.org)

VSTMA

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VSTMA Professional Position Posting

Positions are posted on www.vstma.org/classifieds.php. If you have jobs available or you are looking for a job, please send your information to vstma@vstma.org. We will also post goods for sale or trade by non-vendors.

New Posting:

Seeking Sodexo Education Services Grounds Supervisor at Carlbrook, John Andrew Fik (john.fik@sodexousa.com)

Save the Date!

VSTMA
Field Days
June 17-18th

RF&P Park
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Located within the Meadow Farm Park Museum Glen Allen



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SportsTurf Events Calendar

- ✓ June 17-18 VSTMA Field Day 2008; RF&P Park, Henrico County Parks Div
- ✓ Aug. 19-20, VT Turfgrass Research Field Days, Blacksburg
- ✓ Dec. 8-10, Virginia Turfgrass Short Course, Blacksburg
- ✓ January 13-17, 2009, STMA Annual Conference & Exhibition, San Jose, CA

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