What an amazing year we have had here in Texas!

TXSTMA has hosted 6 field days this year and each one has been well attended. If you didn’t get a chance to attend a field day this year, I strongly encourage you to try and work it into your schedule for next year. Each site is unique in their cultural approach and you just never know when one of those ideas my help you at your site.

Even an old dog like me was able to pick up some new pieces of information that I have been able to incorporate into our program here at Moneygram Soccer Park. I would like to say thank you to each board members for helping set up such intriguing sites.

I would also like to thank each person that hosted these field days and all of the time and effort they put in to helping make these events successful. Thank you to all of our vendors who provided on-site product demonstrations as well as sponsorship. Lastly I would like to thank Brian and Carol Cloud for all of the work that you guys do in making each event fun and exciting.

With the onset of winter and colder temperatures, many of us took the time to catch our breath and attend the Texas Turfgrass Winter conference in San Antonio. The TXSTMA held our annual luncheon at the conference and it was awesome to see so many members in attendance. STMA’s national conference is being held in Phoenix, Arizona on January 22-25, 2019.

As we embark on 2019 I would like to challenge each person to learn something new. As A.R. Bernard once said, “The quality of your thinking determines the quality of your life.” Push yourself outside of your comfort zone and break away from the “normal” routine. The easiest and most efficient way to procure knowledge is to attend a TXSTMA field day. Talking with vendors and connecting with other professionals will help broaden your scope of knowledge.
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The lightning flashed, the thunder rumbled and the rain came pouring down onto the Toyota Stadium pitch on Aug. 18. Around the world, that much rain would cause most soccer coaches to get nervous about the way a waterlogged field would change the game. Not FC Dallas coach Oscar Pareja.

After a long lightning delay, the match was played without incident. FCD eased to a 2-0 victory against Minnesota United that required little modification of a game plan that calls for keeping the ball on the ground more often than not.

"We have the best. Seriously," Pareja said of FC Dallas' grounds crew. "The game against Minnesota it rained I don't know how many hours without stopping, and when we came out to the field it was like nothing happened."

Like most top-level facilities, there is a layer of sand underneath the grass at Toyota Stadium. Right now that grass is mostly the Latitude 36 strain of Bermuda grass, though seeds already have been planted to begin the winter transition to rye. Beneath that sand is pea gravel and below that drain lines to help get water off the surface during heavy rain.

While conditions for Saturday's FC Dallas match against Orlando City look more promising, FC Dallas director of stadium grounds Allen Reed and his team will be working hard to get the surface in top condition.

That can be especially hard on a week like this one, when the stadium hosted high school football games Thursday and Friday night. Reed gets it from all sides. The players want the surface to be nice, while fans and broadcasters want those annoying football lines off the field.

This year, the crew is using a removable paint for the football markings and then is going over the whole field with a green colorant. Still, Reed said as the season wears on, the yard-line numbers and sidelines may once again poke through -- especially during day games.

"Honestly, I hate it just as much as anybody else does," he said. "Our main goal, no matter what event it is, our main goal is for anybody -- fan, player -- to walk out there and not know that we either had football the night before or had a concert on the weekend or night before."

Balancing two sports along with the slate of concerts and other events at the stadium isn't the only challenge Reed's team faces.

Continued on Page 7
Tri-Tex Grass was our host in early November for our Region 1 Fall Field Day. Randy Price, Mike Pender and the whole Tri-Tex family welcomed us with open arms to their sod farm in Tioga, Texas. The long drive was well worth it for the 90+ TXSTMA members in attendance. It was a beautiful day with lots of opportunities for networking, education, and to learn from vendors and professional colleagues within our industry.

Sponsorship for the event was terrific with many vendors participating in the tabletop trade show that has become a popular tradition at TXSTMA events. Thank you to all vendors for the great displays of products and services available to members. Each of our sponsors were also able to speak to the group as we went “Around the Room” introducing each company. If you’re an affiliate in our organization and haven’t participated in the field days, you’re missing out on a great opportunity to connect with your current and future customers. Look for great opportunities in 2019.

The education portion of the event was highlighted by Dr. Brian Schwartz from the University of Georgia Extension Service. Dr. Schwartz was instrumental in developing and researching TifTuf Bermudagrass and spoke about the development of this grass and the process involved in developing new species. Dr. Schwartz is a Texan and it was good to have him back in the state and part of our group.

Following the education session, the group was treated to an excellent barbecue lunch sponsored by Xstreme Sports Fields. James and Cade Wally were our excellent Chef’s and knocked it out of the park!

After lunch, the group viewed a new field painting robot that was brought by Pioneer Athletics. To say the demonstration was amazing would be a severe understatement. This new technology is incredible and opens the doors to many other advances in the sports turf managers profession. If you haven’t seen the technology, we encourage you to contact your Pioneer representative for a demo.

The group then traveled being an old-fashioned hayride to the Tri-Tex production fields. Randy Price and Dr. Schwartz gave a great presentation regarding the strict management and cultivation requirements of TifTuf. Tri-Tex staff provided a demo on sod harvesting which was also very incredible.

GLK Turf Solutions were next on deck and gave demonstrations of two very useful pieces of equipment - the Campey UniRake and Shock Wave. Both implements did an outstanding job on the fields. Thanks to Jeff and Rick Kadlec. If you haven’t met these guys, you haven’t been to a TXSTMA event recently. They are great supporters of the association and rarely miss an event.

Thanks again to Tri-Tex, Dr. Schwartz, all of our vendor sponsors, and especially all of the TXSTMA members who made time in their busy schedule to attend the event and support the association. It was a great day and Tioga!
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Region 1 Field Day
The new Hall of Fame complex at the south end has changed the entire look of Toyota Stadium -- and with it the way light hits the grass.

"The shade canopy looks wonderful, but it's going to create many challenges for us on the field," Reed said. Currently, he's utilizing an artificial light rig on that zone and staying focused on the 6-yard box on the south side, trying to minimize use and keep it from getting too compact.

That also requires buy-in from the team. Reed said he has a strong relationship with Pareja and his staff -- particularly with goalkeeper coach Drew Keeshan, whose shot-stopping drills are the most likely to put heavy wear on the surface.

"We basically have an open-door policy with those guys, and I just pop in," Reed said. "I communicate with all of them weekly."

All of it adds up to a surface that center back Matt Hedges called "one of the best in the league." It also could be one of the safest in the league.

Several seasons back, after players complained of lower leg fatigue, Reed started using a device to measure the hardness of the field. Soccer players typically want the surface to be as soft as possible with so many miles run over the course of a 90-minute match. After the field registered as much harder than he expected, Reed took measures to soften the field and currently is working with colleagues around the league to implement standards similar to those used in other major sports leagues. So far, it's working out well.

"Absolutely amazing. Every game, it's like a carpet. It's really nice. The ball flows well," midfielder Victor Ulloa said. "Props to our field guys. They do an amazing job to keep it looking beautiful year round, especially with the weather changes in Dallas, in Texas. It's an amazing job that they do."
Texas A&M softball’s state-of-the-art Davis Diamond was named the Turface Athletics/National Fastpitch Coaches Association Field of the Year, the NFCA Awards Committee announced Friday.

The top stadiums in the nation were recognized with the award for their flawless grounds maintenance and exceptional playing surfaces.

“The Texas A&M field staff is honored to receive the softball field of the year award,” athletic fields manager Craig Potts said. “We take great pride in all of our fields. We could not do this without the support of our softball coaches, players and our administration, who put a lot of emphasis on quality athletic surfaces.”

Davis Diamond, the premier softball stadium in the country, debuted for the last home regular season series last year against No. 12 Auburn in which the Aggies swept the Tigers, 3-1, 1-0 and 7-1.

The stadium was on display during the NCAA Regionals as the Aggies defeated Prairie View A&M, McNeese and Baylor in the College Station Regional.

In the six games played at Davis Diamond, Texas A&M averaged 2,030 fans a game, which would have ranked third nationally.
NEW STMA BULLETIN AVAILABLE ON BEST MOWING PRACTICES

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CLICK HERE
Our second Field Day of the Fall was hosted by Scott LeDoux and his staff at the Cy-Fair Independent School District campus in the Houston area. This school district is the third largest district in the state (only behind Dallas and Houston) and LeDoux leads an incredible operation that maintains all of the landscape areas and sports fields within the district. As Scott described it, “We take care of everything outside of the buildings”.

Our day started off with a quick welcome by Scott and then a short bus ride to the main campus of Cy-Fair High School. Throughout the walking tour, Scott and his staff talked about their management procedures and practices which were very useful for everyone in attendance. We hitched a ride back on the bus to our meeting room where a tasty BBQ lunch awaited attendees.

Our vendors once again stepped up to the plate with their support and their much appreciated sponsorship dollars. At this event, our vendors were especially helpful as several were contacted the day before the event and asked to provide educational presentations in case the local weather forecaster’s washout prediction came true. Every single one of our great sponsors volunteered to help out in some form or fashion. Thank you all very much!

But Mother Nature cooperated 100% and provided a great day for the event. Following lunch, our sponsors were allotted time to tell us about their products and services. These sessions are always interesting and informative. Another round of thanks to Scott LeDoux and all of the Cy-Fair folks for charming Mother Nature and putting on a great Field Day. We had a great turnout and sponsorship and owe a very deserved thank you to all the members and vendors who participated.
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Region 3 Field Day
PREPARE NOW FOR SPRING RAIN

Ohio State’s turfgrass specialist and SportsTurf magazine “Q and A” columnist Pamela Sherratt says start preparing now for the rains you know are coming next spring.

Q: How can we prepare our school fields for spring rains and avoid cancelled games?

A: You can start preparing for that now. Take some time over winter to walk the fields and identify areas with standing water or poor surface levels. Do the same with skinned areas on baseball and softball fields. Take pictures and keep records of where those areas are and set priorities at to which areas get renovated first when the weather breaks.

*This pro-active approach is the first step to making sure your fields are resilient.*

Resiliency is a word I’ve heard a lot recently in regard to climate change and how we must be prepared for adverse weather conditions. Climatologists are predicting that dry areas of the country will get drier and wet areas will get wetter. They are also predicting that USDA Hardiness Zone maps will move northwest as temperatures increase and we’ll be dealing with plants and pests previously only seen in southern states. In central Ohio, we have certainly seen an increase in the intensity and frequency or rain, leading to floods and saturated soils. Given that we typically get excessive rainfall in spring and fall in the northern states already, we can surmise that wet conditions are going to continue, and probably get worse. Rain events that happened every 50 years may just well be something we witness each year and we should start planning now on what that means for our industry and how we can create playing surfaces that can handle rainfall events. The answer to that of course is drainage, which must be our focus moving forward.

The most important factor in providing athletes with a durable field that drains is surface grade. In essence, fields that are not graded, or have low spots, will hold water. So while there are many ways to improve field drainage, like aeration, topdressing or drainpipe installation, I’m going to focus on surface grade because that’s what ultimately dictates where the water goes.

In regard to baseball and softball skins, skinned infields should be laser graded every 2-3 years and this should be a standard line item in the maintenance budget. The goal is to create a 0.25 to 0.5 inch slope from the pitcher’s mound to the outfield. Any less of a slope and the water won’t move, any more of a slope and the water will take soil material with it and dump it into the edges, causing lip problems. Even with great surface grades, a heavy rain before a game can cause issues on skinned areas, so here are some extra tips:

Before each game, fill in low spots—use infield mix that matches the existing soil mix, add 20% soil conditioner to it, and tamp it down to make sure it’s firm and not going to move. Before it rains, if you have tarps, cover the pitcher’s mound and home plate. If puddles do form, remove the water with cups, sponges, soaker pillows or pumps. It is also possible to create a siphon with a hosepipe. Lightly rake the wet area to create ridges in the soil. This increases the surface area and allows it to dry out faster. If you use a drying agent to soak up moisture, keep in mind that drying agents are typically finer graded than soil conditioners and should be removed from the infield after they have done their job. Never brush water off the infield, over-work the soil mix, rake too much, or ever use cat litter or corncobs as drying agents.

In regard to natural grass athletic fields, drainage can be improved by maximizing surface drainage (run-off) via a laser-graded crown. A crowned field means that the grade of the surface slopes from the center down to all four sides of the field, allowing water to run off the playing surface. The average crown on an athletic field ranges from 1% to 2%, depending on which sport is being played, with soccer and field hockey generally requiring a lower crown height. Many professional regulations do not specify or prefer a crown on soccer fields, but those guidelines are typically based on sand-engineered fields, not native soil. The National Federation of State High School Associations recommends a slope of ¼ inch per foot from the center of the field to each sideline for football fields and a minimum of 1 to 1.5% percent slope on native soil soccer fields. On soccer fields with underground drainage, they recommend the slope should be no less than 1% slope. Under no circumstances should a native soil field be flat.

In conjunction with a graded crown, interceptor drains are used to capture surface runoff that occurs due to the slope of the field. Interceptor drains are placed in areas that receive the most runoff, and as far outside of the field of play as possible to limit potential injuries. Interceptor drains give the surface water a place to go, rather than just sitting on the perimeter of the field.

Skinned infields should be laser graded every 2-3 years and native soil fields should have a crown or slope that moves water from the surface to an interceptor drain. Proper grading is the cornerstone of ensuring that fields can shed water.
Our last but certainly not least Field Day of the year was held in Region 2 at Dell Diamond in Round Rock in late November. RS3 Turf were our hosts for the day and were well represented by Garrett Reddehase - Senior Vice President, Jared Olson - Construction Manager and Nick Rozdilski - Head Groundskeeper Round Rock Express. Garret and Jared welcomed participants and Nick gave a very nice presentation on all of the activities and transformations that the park has taken in 2018. We were all surprised to hear that Dell Diamond was the filming site of the latest season of The Walking Dead tv show. Fans of the show were well-aware but the rest of us will have to catch it on reruns!

Once again our vendors showed up in full force and helped us make it a great day. Check out our great lineup of sponsors on the following pages. President Troy Crawford asked a great question - “Are you supporting the vendors who are supporting the activities, education and programs of the TXSTMA?” Great question. Check out the TXSTMA.org website to find out about all of the great sponsors who helped make 2018 a great year.

RS3 and Whittlesey Landscapes made a special presentation launching their new custom line of Nolan Ryan branded Sports Field Materials. The custom "NR34" brand will include an exclusive line of products ranging from calcined clay conditioner, mound clays, infield mixes, drying agents, chalk and warning track material. Thanks again to everyone who attended this event, our great hosts and of course our very supportive sponsors. Dell Diamond is always a great venue for an event and we look forward to going back some day.
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Region 2 Field Day
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