

Challenges and Opportunities of Sports Field Programs in Secondary Schools

Dr. Mike Goatley PhD, Russel Bayer, Drew Miller
& Brentsville Turf Students




1

Current State of the Industry

- Lack of Skilled Labor
- Positions not being filled
- Challenges with competitive salaries
- Post Pandemic unknowns
- Where do we turn?





2

Turfgrass Science in High School

- Career and Technical Education
- Hands on Learning
- Needs of the Industry
- Connection with Community
- Bringing Awareness to our Industry






3

Survey of Current Programs in the US

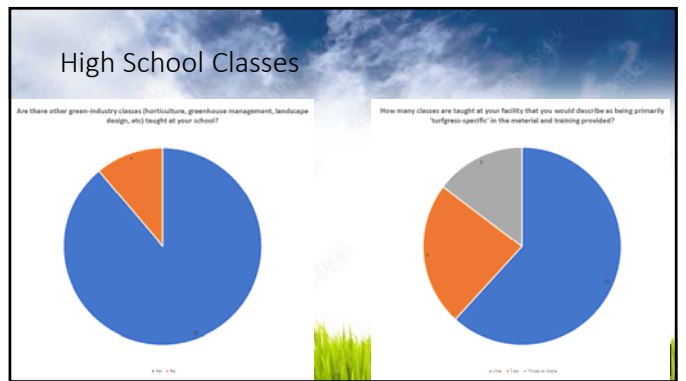




4



5



6



7



8

Collegiate Programs Perspective

- Collegiate turfgrass program enrollment numbers have generally followed the ups and downs of the golf industry
 - Student numbers in most turf programs declined rapidly after 2008
 - One 'positive' is that more students explored careers outside of golf
- Admission requirements at universities continue to strengthen
 - Very difficult for freshman to gain acceptance to many programs
 - Transfer agreements with community colleges are beneficial
 - Students lose 'momentum' in turf program commitment
 - Are CC advisors facilitating internships/job experiences/appropriate classes

9

Collegiate Programs Perspective

- Recruiting remains a challenge
 - How many 2 or 4 year turf students today had even heard of 'Turfgrass Science' as a degree track when they went to college? (There's a real STRENGTH of high school programs in general).
 - Guidance counselor roles have changed in the last two decades... not really the avenue that I have found beneficial in gaining student interest.
 - At what point does one approach students about careers?
 - The SFM career remains primarily a white male dominated industry... how do we attract non-traditional students?
 - Does possible training or careers in turfgrass have enough 'sizzle AND meat' to attract young people?

10

South Forsyth Turf Management

- SOUTH FORSYTH High School (Cumming, GA)
- Career Pathway Option in CTE
- Developed to focus on careers in Turf
- Hands on Learning

11

Where it all Began

- Former Professional Baseball Player (Pittsburgh Pirates)
- Players Maintained fields in Cape Cod League
- Began Career in Education
- High School Baseball Coach
- Learning through Experience

12

Program's Start

- Accepted the Head Baseball coach 2009 at South Forsyth
- Maintained Field and furthered my Knowledge
- 2017 Counselor mention new Pathway in Turf
- Development Process
 - Curriculums
 - School Board Approval
 - Funding
 - Safety & Liability





13

Needs for launching the Program

- Classroom Development
- Equipment from the Baseball Program
 - Field Tools
 - Bunker rake
 - Blowers

Bare minimum to start program





14

Gaining Traction

- Community Connections
- Success leads to School Support
- Enrollment leads to Funding
 - Program in 3 years enrollment: 80??





15

Outside Support

- Making Connections are Vital
- Tommy Hewitt ClubCorp
 - Pipeline to knowledge
 - Connection to resources
 - Advocate for Students
- Local Companies
- School Staff
- Parents & Community Member
- Athletic Department





16

Key Factors for Growth

- Class Scheduling
- TIME of Day is Key
- Weather Plays a Role
- Athletic Schedule
- Opportunity for Student Reception
- Keep them Excited
- Sense of Accomplishment





17

What Class Looks Like

- Class Size: 12-20 Students
- Physical Activity
- Diverse Skill Set
- Less Class, More Workplace
- Focus on Students interests





18

South Forsyth Turf

- Introduce New Materials
- Catch the Student's Attention
- Advocate program in School
- Growth is crucial to Program's Success





19

Brentsville Turf Program

- Brentsville District High School: Nokesville, VA
- Career and Technical Education
- Prince William County Specialty Program
- Workplace Environment
- Hands on Learning
- Understand the Science Behind the Practices





20

Where it all Began

- Former Groundskeeper
- Why did I become a teacher?
- Further your education in all areas
 - Masters in Ag Education
 - Doctoral Educational Leadership Candidate
- Development from a single idea







21

Programs Start

- Director of Career Technical Education meeting
- Jobs Readily available in Northern VA
- Would not take the job without certain needs met
- Understanding between Administration
- Smallest High School in PWCS
- Developing a Turf Program
 - Curriculum and Focus
 - School Support
 - Funding






22

Brentsville Turf's Start

- Athletic Department Support
- Needs Demanded when Starting Program
 - Paint Machine
 - John Deere 2653B Reel Mower
 - Backpack Blowers
 - String Trimmer
- Enrollment 60 students from prior program
- Plans for Growth






23

Brentsville Turf Journey

- Focus on Classroom development
- Hands on Learning
- Workplace Readiness
- Skill-based Examination
- Commercial-Grade Equipment







24



25



26



27



28



29



30

Ethan Rice- President

- Gained a passion for SportsTurf through class
- Industry Skills learned translated to Internships
- Extended learning in the industry
- Learned critical leadership skills
- Aspirations to work in the NFL





31

Sam Ruwe- Vice President

- Gained Passion through Experience
- Working on 40 different Fields
- Gained Leadership skills
- Learned proper Communication
- Different Approach to Future in Turf
- Certified SportsTurf Specialist





32

Franco Allegro- Master Mechanic

- Passion for Turf with time in the Program
- Aspirations of becoming a Product Engineer
- Works well with Equipment
- Learning through Internships
- Looking to Double Major in Turf & Mechanical Engineering





33

Julie Kessler- Alumni

- Found love in the work
- Want to further education- VT Turfgrass
- Internship with Pittsburgh Steelers
- Gain a passion for the Industry
- Aspirations to become the first female NFL Head Groundskeeper





34

Barrett Butler- Director of Communications

- Student Body President
- Impact of program on School
- Life skills beyond the Industry
- How have we grown?
- Industry skills in the classroom
- Impact the Culture in our school
- D1 Golfer





35

Students are the Key

- Student Driven
- Success is on the Students
- Leaders make or Break the Program
- Recognize their success
- Show them the possibility of their Future
- High Expectations= Quality Work
- Keep Inspiring






BRENSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
TURF MANAGEMENT FACILITY




36

School System Support

37

Challenges

- School Board Approval
- Current State of Education due to COVID-19
- Need for Turf Educator
- Resources necessary
- Student Enrollment

Opportunity

- Every High School has Athletic Fields
- Program Services the Schools needs
- Most High Schools have bare necessity for equipment
- Bring SportsTurf Awareness to communities





38

Resources Available

- STMA Classroom Curriculum
 - Unit 1: Introduction to Turfgrass Science
 - Unit 2: Turfgrass Growth and Development, Anatomy, and Identification
 - Unit 3: Turfgrass Soils
 - Unit 4: Turfgrass Cultural Practices
 - Unit 5: Turfgrass Establishment
 - Final Project
 - Two options are provided as a final culminating project:
 - Students create their own annual calendar for care of a turfgrass area
 - Students take part in a community service project to renovate a local park or community sports field





39

Resources Available

- Many Current Programs out there to help
- Local Organizations Eager to build
- Professionals always ready to help
 - Industry
 - STMA Chapters
- Perkins Funding (CTE Grant)






40

Impact on the Future of our Industry

- The sports turf industry will continue to embrace technology
 - Who is better trained than Gen Z in many aspects of technology?
 - Who will likely develop better ways to utilize and expand technology than this generation?
- And at the same time, the sports turf industry will still require managers that have an appreciation of plant and soil sciences AND the art of sports field management
- And, any student in a HS turfgrass curriculum, regardless if they go on to a college degree or job in the turfgrass industry, has an appreciation for science-based turfgrass management programming that is a positive factor for society in general.




41

Questions?

- Thank you for coming








42