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2009 TPI Midwinter Conference
(Point Clear, AL, February 9-13)

Monday—Working Group & Committee
Meetings

Tuesday—Prayer Breakfast

Mobile City Tour

The Lawn Institute Golf Tournament

Early Bird Reception

Wednesday—Women's Forum

Seminar: (Credit & Collections)

Exhibit Reception

Thursday—Education Session #1

Exhibit Lunch

The Lawn Institute Banquet (Casino

Night & Karaoke)

Friday—Education Session #2

Roundtable Forum

Farm Tour

Saturday—Field Day with Alabama

Turfgrass Association

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

TPI Represents Turfgrass Industry in Washington D.C.

In October, 2008, the National Turfgrass Federation (NTF) board of directors met in Washington, DC with federal officials and Congressional staff to discuss items of interest to the turfgrass industry. Representing the turfgrass industry were TPI Executive Director Kirk Hunter, Dr. Mike Kenna of the U.S. Golf Association (USGA), Dr. Clark Throssell of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), Dr. Brian Horgan of the University of Minnesota, Tom Delaney of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), Kris Kiser of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), John Farner of the Irrigation Association (IA), Bill Behan and Dr. Mark Schmidt of John Deere, and Kevin Morris of the NTF/NTEP.

On Oct. 29, the group met with Dr. Tom Bewick, USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES), National Program Leader for Horticulture. The discussions centered around the Specialty Crops Research Initiative included in the 2007 Farm Bill. The Specialty Crops Initiative allows crops other than major program crops (corn, wheat, soybeans, etc.) an opportunity for research dollars. This is the first significant opportunity for turfgrass researchers to compete for federal research funding. One turfgrass project (Biosolid Use in Sod Production, University of Wisconsin & Virginia Tech) was selected and rated the highest of any project. Bewick indicated that \$50 to \$100 million will be available for funding next year.

National Turfgrass Survey Proposed

Next, the group met with Jorge Garcia-Pratts, Douglas Marousek and Lance Honig from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) which collects and reports data for many agricultural and horticultural crops. The group's interest is in a national survey of the entire turfgrass industry (size, scope and economic value), similar to what several states have conducted in the past. NASS has statisticians in each state and a great interest in conducting such a survey.

The next steps are to determine—for this first survey—the scope, breadth and approximate funding needed by NASS.

Funds for Turfgrass Research

The National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI) was the next meeting's focus, with Dr. Ed Knipling, Administrator, USDA—Agricultural Research Service (ARS). NTRI is a plan to conduct high priority, long-term turfgrass research within ARS. NTRI was also mentioned in the Farm Bill as a high priority research initiative.

Furthering the discussions on funding for NTRI, the group met with West Higginbotham, Legislative Assistant for Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Fitz Elder, Agriculture Appropriations staff director for Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT). Also discussed was the need for a national turfgrass survey and the need for funding.

WaterSense for New Home Construction

The agenda included two meetings focused on the new EPA's WaterSense draft specifications for new home construction. Although WaterSense is a federal government program designed with the intent to reduce water use and protect the environment, the draft specifications contain several provisions that either limit the amount of turfgrass in the landscape or restrict implementation of sound water conservation measures. Participants met with Congressional Water Caucus leaders and expressed their concern with the draft specs and how the turf industry and Congress might work with EPA to revise the specs, considering sound science.

On Oct. 30, the NTF board met to determine follow-up actions. 2009 plans include retaining a lobbyist and meeting with



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Taking Care of Business

By Michael Guld
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www.talkingbiz.net

Transform Your Business with 2009 New Year's reVolutions

While the origin of New Year's resolutions goes back as far as 153 BC, in modern day times, they usually evoke feelings of guilt. Most verbs associated with resolutions are restrictive in nature, including to quit, stop, loose, reduce or eliminate. The implication is that you need to improve, fix or repair something that's broken or not complete.

By its very nature, people see New Year's resolutions as a difficult exercise at best, requiring discipline, determination and will power, which are not exactly energizing words. As a result, most people "make" the resolutions January 1 and usually begin to "break" them by February 1 as their commitment fades and enthusiasm for attainment wanes. Case in point: The extreme increase in traffic at a health club the beginning of the year, which quickly subsides as the weeks and months progress.

Well here's an idea: This year, consider creating New Year's *reVolutions*, transformational actions that will lead to breakthrough results. New Year's *reVolutions* can energize and invigorate by the thought of "what's possible."

By definition, which of the following will inspire you to get out of bed January 1?

Resolution—a solution, accommodation or settling of a problem.

ReVolution—a drastic and far reaching change in ways of thinking and behaving.

New Year's *reVolutions* are personal and broader in scope than the traditional resolutions. The framing of your *reVolutions* requires stepping back and deciding what do you *want* to be, as opposed to what do you *need* to do. If someone were to introduce you to a large crowd recognizing you for your accomplishments, what would you want your bio to say? Are you on track to be that person? If not, what actionable steps can you take today that will help you get there tomorrow?

To help increase the chances of continuing to be inspired (vs. disciplined) with your New Year's *reVolutions*, follow these 10 tips:

1. Goals are dreams with a deadline—Dreams are all about "wants and desires" with no commitment, where goals are "concrete and defined" with commitment.

Where do you ultimately want to be and what do you want to do?

Imagine limitless opportunities and be willing to take a chance to put yourself on the line to achieve them. Write down three actionable goals that you can visualize and that you **WILL** achieve by the end of 2009. Keep them in front of you at all times so your daily actions will lead you to the attainment of these goals.

2. Positive attitude plus positive actions equal positive results—While having a positive mental attitude is a good start, it is the positive actions that follow that will lead to success (vs. wanting, hoping and waiting for them to happen). Make a plan on how you will achieve each goal with mini-plans, mini-goals and corresponding dates for each.

3. Follow your passion—Commit to doing more of what you enjoy doing that invigorates, provides pleasure and satisfaction, and less of what you do not enjoy that leads to procrastination and stress (delegate, hire out, etc.). Your chores are other people's challenges.

4. Soar with Your Strengths—Spend more time on those projects, tasks or activities that accentuate your talents and natural gifts and less time on the improvement of your weaknesses or shortcomings (delegate to others). By focusing on your strengths—what you are naturally good at—you will have a higher self-esteem, be more professionally fulfilled and you will ultimately be far more successful.

5. Be the organized executive—Being overwhelmed with clutter can make you feel busier than you actually are. Start the year fresh by doing a total catharsis or cleansing. Go through every piece of paper in every file with a goal to trash it, box it (future needs) or re-file it (near term needs).

Your files will be reduced by 66 to 75 percent. You will start the year with a refreshed attitude. Begin or end each day with 20 minutes of organizing, even if it means hiding piles until you can get to them.

6. Re-analyze your To-Do list—Does your To-Do list look more like an annual plan? Are you working 10, 12 and 14-hour days and you still don't feel like you get it all done? Go back through your To-Do list and

prioritize it to "do it," "delegate it" or "scratch it." Prioritize your list so you can do more of what brings you personal, professional and monetary rewards and less of what steals your time. Make sure you add in your "want-to-do list" items, as opposed to only those tasks that others ask you to do.

7. Compartmentalize your priorities—Once you have decided on your priorities of the day, week, month and year, focus on the tasks at hand; setting up firewalls to keep any distractions from diluting your focus.

While we have two arms, two eyes and two ears, we only have one brain, so it is extremely difficult to concentrate on two or more projects and do them well at the very same time.

8. Change the way you see everything—By reprogramming your brain to see opportunities vs. obstacles, challenges vs. chores and celebrate what you've accomplished vs. feeling bad about what you have not accomplished, you will increase your energy, improve your attitude and raise your level of professional satisfaction.

9. Surround yourself with positive people—Good attitudes are contagious, elevating organizations to heights previously thought unreachable. Bad attitudes are more contagious, energy draining, accelerate discontent and destroy morale. Choose to spend your precious time with people who will support you, encourage you and celebrate in your success.

10. Reinvent Yourself—Even performers like Madonna realize change is cathartic, energizing and can be very good for a career. It is easy to become stale and accept status quo if we don't shake it up once in a while.

While we now have new technologies like cell phones, e-mail, PDAs, wireless cards—designed to save us time, make us more efficient and more effective—they also can be distractions. Do not become a slave to technology; instead, use technology as a tool to help you achieve your goals.

Wherever we spend our precious resources of time, energy and money is where we'll get the greatest results. Decide what you want to accomplish in 2009; spend your time and energy to achieve your New Year's *reVolutions*.



Safety Management

12 Key Elements of a Good Safety Program

How often do you review your company's safety program to make sure all of the key elements are in place? Hopefully, you conduct a review at least annually and add to your program as needed. While a good safety program may include many different elements, the following are among those that will help ensure you are on track.

Note: If you have a small turfgrass sod operation and are not able to incorporate all of these elements, pick and choose one or two you will work on over the next year. Then compile a list of people who can help you, such as your supervisors, your trade association and/or your insurer. Follow up by setting up a timetable by which you will have those elements in place.

- ✓ **Develop a brief, written safety policy statement.** This should state that safety is a top priority at your turfgrass sod operation and that safety is EVERYONE'S responsibility. Have your owner or company president sign and date this statement.
- ✓ **TOP management commitment to safety.** This commitment must include allowing time for safety meetings and training to take place, providing quality personal protective equipment and safety signage, and insisting on the enforcement of company safety rules.
- ✓ **Create written safety goals.** Be sure to get input from your employees on setting companywide safety goals. Also, make sure your goals are measurable. For example, instead of stating "increase attendance at safety meetings" a better, measurable goal would be "increase safety meeting attendance by 15 percent in 2009."
- ✓ **Provide a written document of and implemented company safety policies and rules.** Make sure you put these into writing and that they are orally reviewed with employees in a language or languages they understand.
- ✓ **A drug-free workplace policy.** This may or may not include drug and alcohol testing. At the very least, let all job candidates and employees know that you strictly prohibit both the possession and use of drugs and alcohol on the job. This is especially important for persons who operate trucks, forklifts and other potentially hazardous equipment.
- ✓ **Weekly "tailgate" safety training sessions.** What works best are five- to 15-minute oral sessions on a single safety topic. It's important that all training be conducted in a language and manner your employees understand.
- ✓ **A safety committee or safety team.** This can consist of two or more persons. It's best to include both management and non-supervisory employees, with—if possible—a greater percentage of non-supervisory employees on the "team." The reason for this is because your non-supervisory employees are the ones performing the day-to-day tasks that can result in injury.
- ✓ **Regular review by managers of all injuries, incidents, "near miss" incidents (close calls) and related insurance claims.** Involve your supervisors in these reviews and follow up with prompt action to reduce the risk of recurrence.
- ✓ **Monthly safety meetings.** If possible, involve everyone in your company. These meetings can focus on recommendations from your safety committee on reducing injuries and making your com-

pany safer. It's also a good idea to share with employees what types of injuries are most often occurring. **Note:** While your meetings with managers may focus on insurance costs, it's important when meeting with your nonsupervisory employees to stress that the main reason for your safety program is so they can go home uninjured to their families every night.

- ✓ **A return-to-work/light duty program.** Your insurer and the clinic to which you send injured employees are two good resources to assist you in setting up a program. Also, see "Light Duty Program Will Save You Money" in the June/July 2007 issue of *Safety Management*.
- ✓ **Daily work site hazard inspections.** Train your employees to look for hazards and potential hazards as soon as they get to the work site. Also, regularly check equipment and the shop, offices and other buildings on your property.
- ✓ **Logs or sign-off sheets to document attendance at all safety-related meetings.** This will give you a written record that each employee has received the applicable training and other important safety information.

Hurrying Often Results in Injury

Picture yourself in this situation: Your employees are transporting and laying sod at the height of the busiest season. One day, you receive a call saying that a worker crashed his truck and was severely injured. The next day, you learn that a different employee barely escaped injury when he got too close to a rotating power takeoff (PTO) shaft. Later that week, one of your forklift operators is injured on your own property.

What is going wrong? It may be something as "simple" as being in too much of a hurry to get the job done. Rushing leads to taking shortcuts, and shortcuts often result in accidents. The following are some important questions to ask yourself:

- Am I consciously or unconsciously giving my employees the message that the work must be done on time at ALL costs?
- Do I succumb to unrealistic deadline pressures from customers?
- Do I lead by example? For instance, do my employees see me driving too fast for conditions, disabling or bypassing a safety device, or taking other shortcuts?
- Do I always take the time to put on the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)—or am I sometimes in too much of a hurry?
- How often do I talk with our company's employees about safety?
 - Do I only make the time after an injury or other incident has occurred?
- How high of a priority is safety at our company? Is it as—or even more—important than high quality work and meeting customers' deadlines?
- Do I pull an employee aside and talk to him or her when I notice that the person is visibly stressed, distracted or not taking any breaks?
- Do I constantly show our employees how to protect themselves against hazards? Do I then follow up by reminding them that their safety and the safety of their co-workers is our company's highest priority?
- Do I turn my head the other way when I see or hear about an

- employee acting in a reckless or careless manner?
- ♦ Do I have "balance" in my own life, and do I encourage our employees to do the same?
 - ♦ Do I take the time to adequately train employees before sending them out to a work site? Or do I assume that they'll read the operator's manual and any safety decals/warnings and not get hurt?

Tailgate Training Lesson on the Dangers of Hurrying

Editor's note: Use this checklist to train your employees, then post it in a location where they can later refer to it. Remember to orally train your workers in a language and manner they understand.

- ✓ An accident can happen in a split second and can dramatically change your life.
- ✓ Hurrying to get the job done increases the chances that you will act carelessly and get injured.
- ✓ Hurrying also results in shortcuts—shortcuts that can cost you or a co-worker a life.
- ✓ Being in too much of a rush can actually result in more lost time. If you or someone else is injured, you will lose time from the job answering questions from supervisors, insurance company representatives and others.
- ✓ If you need to go to the doctor, you may be off work much longer than it would have taken you to approach your task at a steady, even pace.
- ✓ Hurrying can also be very costly. Think about the medical bills you could face if you are seriously injured.
- ✓ NEVER disable or bypass a safety device. Promptly report any missing or damaged safety devices to your supervisor.
- ✓ Always use the required personal protective equipment, even if it takes you a few extra minutes to put it on.
- ✓ Keep your mind on the task at hand. If personal issues are distracting you from safely doing your job, let your supervisor or another manager know.
- ✓ Don't engage in horseplay or other risky behaviors on the job.
- ✓ Take adequate breaks. If you are too tired or ill to perform the job that day, talk to your supervisor. Don't just rush through it.
- ✓ Work to have "balance" in your life. All work with no time off for "play" increases your chances of an accident.
- ✓ Ask for help when you need it. And always keep safety in the forefront of your mind.

Important Injury and Incident Prevention Tips

Do you have systems and processes in place to reduce the risk of an injury or other incident? In past issues of *Safety Management*, we have discussed the importance of thorough accident investigation and have given you tips on how to effectively interview witnesses. A recent discussion with Jimmy Eavenson, Sr., P.E., chief engineer at Commercial Turf Products, Ltd. in Streetsboro, Ohio, pointed out the importance of taking a step back to review what preventive processes and systems your turfgrass sod farm has in place.

Eavenson noted that many accident investigations simply identify the "causal factors" of an incident and make recommendations to correct them. While this may prevent recurrence of a similar event in the

future, it's important to also identify the system weaknesses that allowed the causal factor to occur, he says.

The following are examples of some typical systems or processes you may have in place and questions for you to review now—not just after an accident occurs:

Equipment Application and Usage:

- ✓ Are we using the RIGHT equipment for the job?
- ✓ Is the equipment being used correctly?

Supervision:

- ✓ Are our equipment operators receiving proper direction and guidance?
- ✓ Is there adequate knowledge of the workplace, equipment and worker skills?

Standards and Policies:

- ✓ Are our company rules and policies posted and reviewed?

Operator Training:

- ✓ Is a training program in place and active?

Communication Practices:

- ✓ Is information presented at the level of comprehension?
- ✓ Are there language barriers?

Maintenance Practices:

- ✓ Is a preventive maintenance program in place and active?

Operating Procedures:

- ✓ Are procedures in place to prevent an incident from occurring again?
- ✓ Are procedures in place to prevent similar incident occurrences?
- ✓ Are procedures in place to improve the operation of our turfgrass sod farm?

Reminder: Most injuries/incidents and their related costs CAN be prevented. It's important that safety has top management support and that you involve everyone in your company in your safety efforts.

Turfgrass Sod Producers' Safety Q&A No. 3

Editor's note: The following are the correct answers to our third Safety Q&A in the Oct/Nov 2008 issue of "Safety Management."

I should report a minor accident to our company's insurer:

C— In most cases because our insurer may be able to help investigate the incident.

One of the best ways to get to the root cause of an incident is:

B— Keep asking "why" and don't accept surface causes as the root cause.

When conducting "tailgate" safety training:

D— Train orally and use "visual" aids to assist in the training.



Think Safety!

Marketing Tip

By John R. Graham
Graham Communications
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You Might Unknowingly be Gambling with Your Sales Strategy

Good economic times make it easy to sell. The money is flowing freely and the buyers' upbeat, positive attitude of "We're invincible" gets the orders because they are ready to buy! That was then. What about now? Customers are hunkering down. They're anything but interested in seeing salespeople. It's easy to fall victim to the prevailing mood and begin a quest for the "silver bullet," the quick fix to generate more business. Yet, far too many naïve salespeople continue to look for quick fixes and "silver bullets" to help them be successful in today's economy. Without even knowing it, they are playing Russian roulette.

There's simply too much at stake to follow a path that leads to disaster. So that we're all on the same page, here's a three-point reality check for anyone in sales:

- Stop hoping that "things will change for the better." They will, of course, but no one knows when.
- Forget about relying on relationships with "influencers" to bail you out. They're so preoccupied with their own concerns, they don't have time to listen to your story, no matter how much money you claim you can save them.
- Stay away from anyone who tells you what you want to hear. They will only get your hopes up, cost you money and waste your time.

Although this might seem unnecessarily discouraging and negative, it's realistic. It's also filled with opportunities. Here are five realistic recommendations for ramping up your sales:

1—Be sure you're branded. This means paying very careful attention to understanding what our customers think about when they think about us. This is important since we often see ourselves quite differently from the way others view us. We see ourselves in the most favorable light. For example, a producer had just finished a presentation to a prospective client. An associate asked, "How did it go?" The salesperson replied, "Great! Just great!"

A few weeks later, he found out that he lost the sale. The prospective client reported, "Your presentation left a lot to be desired." We tend to tune out anything that might challenge how we like to think of ourselves.

On the other hand, when sincerity, the desire to be helpful, patience and competence come through, there's a positive connection with the client. That's the type of branding that's worth working on.

2—Share everything you know. If there was ever a time to practice a consultative approach, it's now. Persuasion is out; it only drives customers away. Even with limited knowledge, customers want to be collaborative, and the wise salesperson takes the role of coach instead of closer.

All this makes an important point: customers are far more serious than they were even a couple of years ago, more demanding and less forgiving. At the same time, they're more willing to listen to those who take time, share their knowledge and don't lapse into a "sales mode." This creates an unusual opportunity for salespeople to educate, inform and demonstrate their competence.

3—Sell security. Growth is good but today the focus is on avoiding loss. With a depressed housing market, a gyrating stock market, the threat of being laid off and the escalating cost of living, security has taken on new significance to most everyone's buying decisions. Buyers want safety and they look for guarantees above all else.

4—Don't attempt to shorten the sales cycle. In a shaky economy, customers want to be sure they're making the right buying decisions. They will buy when they get ready. This is when it's important to stay close to encourage questions and be ready to provide helpful information. Don't write them off too soon. Most sales are lost because the salesperson quit too soon. If customers feel they're being "pushed," the sale will be lost.

5—Market aggressively. While many customers are hunkering down, don't make the mistake of doing it yourself. Because your competitors are lying low, use this as the right time to raise your visibility by being more assertive in your marketing.

Taken together, these five guidelines form a powerful script for marketing a salesperson's services in difficult economic times. They require some work, but they are far more successful than looking for a quick fix or playing Russian roulette with a "silver bullet."

Shrewder Computing

Spam Scams—Quick Facts

Some email users have lost money to bogus offers that arrived as spam in their inbox. Con artists are very cunning; they know how to make their claims seem legitimate. Some spam messages ask for your business, others invite you to a website with a detailed pitch. Either way, the following tips can help you avoid spam scams:

- Protect your personal information. Share credit card or other personal information only when you're buying from a company you know and trust.
- Know who you're dealing with. Don't do business with any company that won't provide its name, street address and telephone number.
- Take your time. Resist any urge to "act now" despite the offer and the terms. Once you turn over your money, you may never get it back.
- Read the small print. Get all promises in writing and review them carefully before you make a payment or sign a contract.
- Never pay for a free gift. Disregard any offer that asks you to pay for a gift or prize. If it's free or a gift, you shouldn't have to pay for it. Free means free.

Filter Tips: 10 Scams to Screen from Your Email

1. The "Nigerian" Email Scam
2. Phishing
3. Work-at-Home Scams
4. Weight Loss Claims
5. Foreign Lotteries
6. Cure-All Products
7. Check Overpayment Scams
8. Pay-in-Advance Credit Offers
9. Debt Relief
10. Investment Schemes

Some consumers find unsolicited spam informative. Others find it annoying and time consuming. But the computer users who have lost money to spam that contained bogus offers and fraudulent promotions find it expensive.



TPI Action

Are You Receiving the TPI e-Newsletter?

If you haven't received the first five editions of the *Turfgrass Producers International E-Newsletter*, TPI might not have your correct e-mail address. The *TPI E-Newsletter* goal is to provide TPI members with a wide assortment of interesting information about upcoming TPI events, new programs and services, interesting member stories, amusing tidbits and a variety of assorted topics of interest to everyone. Members are encouraged to submit stories for consideration. Check the TPI website listing to make sure your e-mail address is correct; if not, contact the TPI office.

TPI Dr. Henry W. Indyk Scholarship Applications Being Accepted

The Lawn Institute is now accepting applications for the Henry W. Indyk Scholarship which honors one of the TPI founding fathers. Provided by TPI for members, the scholarship-administered by The Lawn Institute-benefits TPI members by assisting them with paying for the higher education of their immediate family or designated staff. Scholarship applications are available at www.TheLawnInstitute.org/programs/. Completed applications are due at The Lawn Institute office by January 15, 2009. Winners will be announced at the 2009 TPI Summer Convention in East Lansing, MI.

TPI Offers Members Strength in Numbers

Even in good times, it makes sense to take advantage of the information and other collective resources available through TPI membership. In today's tough global economy, it's more important than ever. The key to TPI's continuing success is providing valuable information to help members more cost-effectively run their operations. Much of this information comes from members through TPI Membership Profile Surveys, Member Needs' Surveys, Industry Outlooks and Business forecasts, Roundtable Forums, TPI Working Groups and even one-on-one conversations with TPI Board and staff. Take time to participate in TPI programs and take advantage of TPI Member benefits.

To receive additional information on any of these items, contact the TPI Office at Tel: 800/405-8873 or 847/649-5555
Fax: 847/649-5678, or e-mail: info@TurfGrassSod.org
Website: <http://www.TurfGrassSod.org>

Spotlight on Member Benefits

TPI Offers Information to Help Members Battle Artificial Turf

There has been some success in stopping the infringement of artificial turf coming into markets where communities, particularly the decision-makers, have been educated about the true benefits and cost of natural grass. That information is available to members and the general public on the TPI website www.TurfGrassSod.org when you select the tab "RESOURCES," then "Artificial Turf vs. Natural Grass." You'll have immediate access to the following:

Natural Grass and Artificial Turf:

Separating Myths and Facts—TPI's 32-page booklet comparing natural grass to artificial turf.

What the Synthetic Turf Industry

Doesn't Want You to Know—a powerful *Turf News* reprint.

The Role of Turfgrasses in

Environmental Protection and Their Benefits to Humans—a peer-reviewed study by Dr. James L. Beard.

Serious Questions About New-

Generation Artificial Turf That Require Answers—a document decision-makers need to be aware of.

Recorded Temperature Comparisons of

Synthetic vs. Natural Surfaces—by Dr. F. Williams, Brigham Young Univ.

2006 NFL Players Playing Surfaces

Opinion Survey

Synthetic Turf Costs Far Exceed Natural

Grass—by Dr. Brad Fresenburg, MU extension turfgrass specialist

Business Management

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