

**Tell me about yourself, your background, and how you got to San Antonio?**

I've lived here all my life, and I actually started working here [at the Alamodome] when I was 19 years old. I started off with the cleaning [crew]. So, I used to help clean the building after events, and I think I did that for five or six years and then I became full-time. Then I started working with the conversion crew – setting up the football field, the concourse, and that's when the Spurs were still here back then so we would set up the basketball court. Over the years, I just moved up little by little. I was a crew leader for six years, then I moved up to building maintenance manager and I was that for about eight years. Then they moved me to department facility coordinator and I was doing that for about seven-eight years, and then I finally just recently got promoted.

**What are some of the major milestones in the set-up leading up to the Alamo Bowl?**

When we're getting ready for the Alamo Bowl, it just depends if we have an event [before]. If they throw an event in there right before the Alamo Bowl, that's when it could get kind of hectic. Because say, if they throw a concert in, then we have to make sure the floor is clear, we got to set up the turf, stuff like that. So, we try to get everything set up ahead of time – all the meeting rooms, all the outside like the bike racks, everything for the gates. We have to make sure all our equipment is working, our turf machine, our forklifts, and we have enough staff. We have to bring all the turf in, because we keep it outside in the warehouse. We have two big forklifts that have to bring the big racks in, because the turf rolls are on big racks, like real giant racks. Then we have to take them out of the racks, each row, and we have to put them in order because they're numbered.

Once we get the turf down, adjusted and everything, after that we still have to put the goalposts up. They come in pieces and we have to put them together. Then after that, we have to do the blue pads on the north and south, those attach to the front of the seating. After that we set benches, tables, trash cans. We also have to do camera platforms inside the seating for the cameras. Another thing we do is drop the [field goal] nets. We go up on the catwalk and then drop the nets down.

**How long does the process of laying the turf take?**

Usually if everything runs smooth, there's no mechanical errors, no machines breaking down, it takes anywhere from four to six hours to bring everything in and unrack it, and a total of eight hours to take everything back out to the warehouse. When we start bringing the racks in, we'll make a space in the warehouse and start taking [empty racks] in the warehouse as we're putting the turf on. To roll out all the turf completely, we use approximately 15 people, and we break them down into groups.

It also depends on the operator on the lift at the time. We are constantly training staff on it, but then they decide to go elsewhere and we have to get back on the machine. I used to do it for a while. At first I was slow, then I picked up speed, and I got better, then we trained somebody else.

One challenge is you have to get the first roll, which is the 50 [yard line], perfectly straight, so everything else can come out straight. We throw a string line down, so when we roll out the other rows all the hash marks and the sidelines line up. Then if we have all the turf down, we have to still adjust it. We have to put Velcro on, because each seam takes Velcro in between. I think we have 46 rolls total. After that, we use another attachment that goes to a smaller forklift. We call it the “bump”, and it has a bunch of claws. It’s just like a giant rake, and that’s what they use to move the turf [pellets] over. It’s about a six foot wide, 18 inches deep, and you just grab and pull. It’s a pain. Oh, my God, it’s the worst. Nobody likes doing adjustments, everybody tries to disappear on us. But I mean, it’s just us. The good thing here is if we lose staff, we know how to use the equipment. Like me and [Building Maintenance Manager Tom McAfee] and [Building Maintenance Officer Mike Limón]. So, we know how to roll the turf out. We don’t like to do it, we’d rather have other people do it because we have other stuff we have to take care of.

Overall, it’ll take us at least two days to get everything in and set.

**What are some of the biggest challenges in preparing the stadium for a game like the Alamo Bowl?**

Usually, the worst problem is mechanical failure. Having a hydraulic line bust on the machine while you’re doing it is no fun. Another big challenge we have is we get [temporary workers] to help us and sometimes they don’t all show up, so it leaves us shorthanded. We’re really small crew, so if we don’t get our temps in that makes it a little bit more difficult for us to complete what is needed.

**Are there any particularly memorable years that you’ve had with the Alamo Bowl?**

I remember working one year and it was New Year’s Eve. So, I was actually here and I saw the fireworks on the TV screen and we’re all like, “Happy New Year!” It looked pretty cool, we were here with our employees and then we went outside and we get to see all the fireworks downtown. So that was pretty cool.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job?**

The most rewarding is when everything is complete and done on time, and the client is happy and the doors are ready. There's no delays, the doors are ready to be open and then you see the people coming in and they're all excited about it. I like to see that. Sometimes when we first start I'm like, "Oh, this is going to take forever!", or we have a lot to do and I don't think we're going to finish and then once everything is complete, we're just amazed like, "Wow, I can't believe we did this." You know, even after all these years, we still surprise ourselves. And we're still amazed at the building, the way it looks like once everything is set. Like the Alamo Bowl, you set all the banners and everything, it makes it look really nice. The main thing is that we all work as a team here and we all get along. We're like a family. A lot of these people I've been working with over 20 years already.

**What do you feel like is the key to managing a small team?**

We always meet before we have a conversion. We talk to staff and we let them know what to expect and what's coming up, and if they have any ideas or input we're open to anything like that. Tom and I, sometimes we'll buy lunch for the guys like pizza and drinks just to kind of keep the morale. Or say it's close to a holiday, Tom will always find a way to get staff food. I don't know if it was for the Alamo Bowl but we had to be here for Thanksgiving one year, and they had turkey and everything for us. This is a good place to work. Our bosses are pretty awesome, everybody upstairs, they're good to us. But down here [at field level], I think we're more like a family and communication is the key. That way everybody knows what's going on and we're all on the same page. And a lot of stuff is memory. They'll send out an overview, but a lot of times we already know how certain rooms are set, how everything's set in the Bowl. We've just been here so long that we have everything memorized. Another thing – pictures is the key. I try to take pictures of everything. You have to because we have so many events going on and it's kind of hard sometimes to remember how setups go. We make a lot of notes. After the Alamo Bowl's over, we'll all get together and say, what's something we might have forgotten or something new? Then we put it on file so we have it for the next year. That helps.

**What do you feel like is something about stadium operations that fans don't really get to see?**

I guess what we were talking about, like if equipment breaks, people don't realize what we have to go through sometimes to make sure it gets fixed, or stuff we have to do extra to make sure that it gets done. The only other thing that we can do if our turf machine ever breaks would be to use two forklifts on each side and try to roll it out. The machine helps a lot because we can stretch [the turf] out, so if our machine breaks, that would be pretty bad. Also, a lot of people don't realize it takes a lot of hours. We'll have to work sometimes

12 hours a day to get everything done, but sometimes we'll stay later. We could stay here up to 15, 16 hours. We can go from a full stadium concert to a football game the next day. We've had to do [conversions] like that before. I actually had a family member ask me, "So y'all have to clear all that floor and then you got to put the turf down?" I'm like "Yes, it doesn't just appear." It's a lot of work.

**What has this job and working here at the Alamodome meant to you?**

One thing I can say about my job is that I love my job. I've been here for a long time, since 1993. If I didn't like what I did, I wouldn't be here. One thing with the Alamo Bowl too is [VP of Operations Julie Baker], I have known her too for a long time and she's really awesome. That has a lot to do with it, as the client, because sometimes you get some clients that aren't really friendly, but Julie's always really good with us. I guess you could say she cares. We know that she cares. So that helps a lot when it shows that a client cares about us. Even though we're supposed to just do whatever's needed, that helps a lot. I think that's what makes it more comfortable whenever I'm getting ready for the Alamo Bowl because I know the people I'm going to deal with, they're friendly and they care about our staff. Sometimes I can't believe I'm still here. But I've never missed an event and I never really thought about that until awhile back. The only time I was not here was back in 2018 when I got diagnosed with breast cancer, I was out for 10 months. So those 10 months is the only time I've actually missed an event.