

PRODUCTS AND CONSTRUCTION FOR ATHLETIC FIELDS IN THE 90's

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We are entering an exciting period of time for those of us working with natural athletic turf. During the past two decades, there has been a feeling that somehow artificial turf would offer a superior playing surface for less money. History has shown we, who used artificial turf, traded one set of problems for another such as (turf toe), short field life, and overall high cost. The reasons officials opted for artificial turf remain the same including uneven playing surface, sporadic vegetation cover, mud, and limited use in adverse weather.

Natural turf has a bright future due to people such as yourself. In the near future, you will make use of sophisticated drainage systems developed for athletic turf that guarantee water removal in a stated period of time. These are based on proven computer models. There are several systems on the market now including Prescription Athletic Turf, By Pass Drainage, and the P. M. Pitch System.

The coming years will see us using grass reinforcement materials. These include Fibresand which is a rot free fiber mixed into sand that makes the sand stable while not affecting its drainage properties. V. H.A. F. is a loosely needled polypropylene fabric used as a root strenghtener when grass grows through it or it can be sand top dressed and used as the end playing surface. Dr. Beard continues to work with mesh elements that provide a system for roots to interlock and stabilize a surface while Dr Daniel works with a variety of fibers to stabilize the root zone for athletic turf. With this many new surface stabilization products on the market, more are soon to come.

Heat will be used by more of us as the above items are placed in service. Hot water or glycol will be the preferred heat source over electric. The heated liquid is carried in one of two patented piping systems presently on the market. The key is uniform spacing and depth of heat source to ensure uniform warming. Three million BTU's are required in this climate for professional fields to be used in January but as little as one half million BTU's will ensure grass is able to grow through November thus replacing the worn turf naturally. On a high school basis ventilated covers will be used to conserve heat in the fall and to promote early turf growth in the spring on baseball fields.

Natural grass has a bright future, thanks to the above products as well as improved grass varieities, irrigation equipment, and research into improved soil mixtures. Attractive athletic facilities are a source of pride in any community which you can create. Just as today's golf course superintendent is recognized professionally for his improving golf through better playing conditions, you will share the same esteem as athletic turf is upgraded.