

# How Do You Do...?

## **The question: How Do You Maintain Field Playability During Weather Extremes?**

*Answered by Boyd R. Montgomery, CSFM, Sylvania (OH) Recreation Corp.*

Northwest Ohio has seen its share of rain this spring season. We have also taken an aggressive approach in trying to get games played on SAFE fields during weather events. For our baseball/softball fields, we work the infield material every day, sometimes twice in a day if the wet weather has caused them to become overly saturated. Our goal when we have games on the diamonds is to make sure that all the players on the skin surface will have a safe, firm base for the game. We will work in calcined clay after we have blown the puddles with back pack blowers and then rake the area out. We stock around ten tons of our diamond material on site so if we need some drier material we can go to our storage bin area and pull from it. In extreme conditions, when we have an area that has become over saturated, we will pull the material out and replace it with new dry material mixed with calcined clay. The outfield areas generally drain well, although we have one chronic corner that always seems to gather water (it's the lowest spot in the park). We have a trash pump that we keep fueled up and, if we get standing water, we will go out and pump the water away into a catch basin 100' away. It's always a challenge when Mother Nature decides to throw you a curve ball, but we try to attack each challenge positively. And, it sure feels great when you get that game in and someone thanks you for the hard work you have done!

*Answered by Jody Gill, Blue Valley School District, Overland Park, KS.*

I think the two most important things are to have excellent drainage and an adequate water supply. During wet periods, drainage is everything. We maintain a 1.5%-2% crown on turf areas and a 0.6%-0.9% crown on skinned areas and always make sure that storm drains are open and functioning. When we know we are entering a wet period, we will roll skinned areas to a tight, compacted condition to minimize percolation and pinspike or needletine aerate turf areas to increase percolation through the rootzone. We also make sure coaches and ADs know what it costs to rebuild a field and remind them that they could destroy a field with one practice in saturated conditions. During periods of high heat, water supply is everything. We use water to soften skinned areas and we have chosen irrigation controllers that are capable of multiple syringe times (one or two turns of each head) to cool turf canopies. We also base irrigation schedules on daily evapotranspiration rates to avoid overwatering.

*Answered by Steve LeGros, HersheyPark Stadium, Hershey, PA*

The best way to handle these curves that Mother Nature throws at us is to be proactive for the worst, and not reactive. I suppose we could talk about aeration, seeding, rain covers, and soil amendments. But let's not put the cart before the horse.

What I mean by proactive is to be two steps ahead of what's

coming (rain, hail, snow, etc.) always being aware of the weather forecast two, three or four days out.

Format a plan if the worst should happen. Determine what you will do prior to it happening and what to do if it should arise during an event. Keeping the staff aware of these plans so that everyone's on the same page. Talking it out with them and kick around ideas that you may have overlooked. Put it down on paper as a guideline so that, in the heat of the battle, something is not forgotten. And until you have lived this experience what you format is only in theory. So after the ship is once again afloat sit down with all who were involved and go over how it was handled and what could be improved upon.

Remember each facility will be different, but instead of reinventing the wheel make some calls to other sports turf managers to see what they have done and what to expect.



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