As the end of the season approaches, it may be a good time to evaluate the condition of your athletic fields. "What," you say? "They're not in the best of condition!" How could they be with the constant demand for fields, regardless of weather conditions, tight budgets, and you being spread too thin with your many commitments?

I've visited hundreds of high school athletic fields over the past couple years and I have a few comments on common mistakes, misconceptions and misdirected efforts. I'm going to suggest spending a little more money and in most cases, I really do mean a 'little more.' Your administrators should remember that the local taxpayers view the sports facilities more than any other physical item in the district other than the façade of the buildings and one lawsuit over an injured player may cost the district a hundred times the cost of some additional maintenance inputs.

**Good Drainage is Necessary**

So let's get started. First and foremost is drainage. If the crown of the field is worn out and the athletes are playing in a soup bowl, you need to fix the drainage. If the crown of the field is worn out and the athletes are playing in a soup bowl, no maintenance procedure is going to help until you fix the drainage. Don't be fooled into installing some expensive underground drainage system - they usually don't work in native fields. I've seen school districts waste hundreds of thousands of dollars this way with less than desirable results. Sand-slit trenching can help if the sand trenches are installed...