

An acronym for the scouts might be SCATTR – Scouts Come Again To The Rescue.

IV. Development of group leaders – Provide hands-on training programs particularly for group leaders.

V. Be sure to get “Moms” involved. There is no stronger force on earth than a mother’s desire to provide for her children. PTA’s and other parents groups and women’s auxiliaries of various organizations provide a powerful source of assistance and leadership in all such endeavors.

VI. Start with just one field. Some refer to it as the “Adopt a Field” Program or other catch phrases. Be sure that you know exactly what kind of assistance you need. Work out the timing involved and assign clear responsibilities and the aforementioned training to group leaders.

VII. Develop a short contract showing some minimal formalization of the agreement to help and have “save/harmless” clause in it to protect the Board of Control in the event of accident or injury. Be sure assignees have their own insurance coverage and are willing to assume certain risks.

VIII. Widely publicize early successes and praise the volunteer efforts

with pictures of improvements and estimates of savings to the community. Refer to individuals and organizations by name.

IX. Give all volunteers, both individuals and groups, distinguished status within the community by providing identification cards that give them “free” access to all games, concerts, or special events for which one otherwise would have to pay admission.

X. After the program is in “high gear” so to speak, get donations and volunteer assistance to provide an annual dinner for all volunteers. As a special feature of the event give awards for various categories, i.e. most hours logged by and individual, largest single financial contribution, most innovative idea introduced, field most dramatically improved (use before and after pictures, etc.) and other kinds of incentives to encourage increased participation and a sense of satisfaction and belonging to those actively engaged in the program. Be sure all community dignitaries are present and offer words of gratitude.

XI. Publicize and communicate everything to the end that the program is recognized as an indispensable part of the fabric of the community.

XII. After a time, seek to have the group become more self-sustaining by election of officers from within the group to provide leadership and inspiration to the group, with community officials acting as resource people as opposed to occupying leadership roles.

To reiterate a point, remember that individuals and groups can only give what they know you need. To accomplish this, you must “reach out” to them. We live in the most dynamic country in the world and one which repeatedly gives and gives to help each other and to provide relief around the world in time of crisis.

We have a crisis in America. Our athletic fields are not sufficient in numbers or in quality to support the programs and expectations of our citizens. We must do something about it. Volunteerism can provide significant relief to the “public purse”. Perhaps it’s time you tried it.

I sincerely hope that the thoughts and ideas offered herein will be of some assistance.

*Dr. Richard G. Caton “Doc”, recently retired, served as the Executive Director of New Jersey Turfgrass Association since 1993. ♦

Renovation of Athletic Fields

by Dr. Henry W. Inkyk*

Natural turfgrass athletic fields provide not only an aesthetically pleasing and attractive appearance but also more importantly a high quality dense resilient playing surface as a cushion for accommodating athletic activities. Intense use of natural turf athletic fields

can severely impact on the suitability of the playing surface. Symptoms of intense use are reflected in severe wear, loss of density, resiliency and cushion. Additionally, the soil may become severely compacted and the surface pocketed with footprints. Under such conditions, the increased potential for athlete injury and impact on playability

are of major concern.

The degree of sensitivity of the playing surface to athletic activities is closely associated with a variety of factors closely associated with turfgrass growth. Included among the major factors are the following:

- Intense use above and beyond the wear tolerance of the specific turfgrasses.
- Uncontrolled or lack of supervised use particularly under adverse soil and weather conditions.
- Deficiencies in construction procedures particularly with respect to proper soil drainage.
- Absence of a well-planned maintenance program directed toward the most favorable conditions for turf grass growth and persistence performed effectively and timely.
- Acidic and/or low fertility soils.
- Appropriate and proper diagnosis and timely treatment (if required) of weeds, insects and/or diseases.
- Delay in repair until relatively complete obliteration of the playing surface rather than at an early stage of turfgrass damage.

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Continued on page 16

- Budgetary restrictions limiting the availability of essential materials, equipment and/or qualified personnel for proper maintenance.

- Reliance upon unproven miracle products and/or procedures for the correction of deficiencies and/or maintenance.

- A lack of understanding and appreciation of the value of a high quality natural turf-playing surface for the protection of participating athletes and pride in the facilities.

Turfgrasses on playing surfaces which have deteriorated for any one of the cited and/or other reasons can be effectively restored to a satisfactory condition by means of renovation procedures exclusive of correction of built-in construction deficiencies. The specific steps in the renovation procedure are determined by:

- Soil sampling and laboratory testing as a means of determining soil acidity, soluble salts and available nutrients (macro and micro). This information will serve as a basis for the correction of deficiencies by appropriate liming and fertilizing.

- Removal of exposed surface

debris (rocks, glass, concrete, macadam, construction debris, tree remnants) of any type, which contribute to a potential risk of injury.

- Proper application of an appropriate herbicide for the removal of any weed infestation – a selective broadleaf herbicide for broadleaf weeds and preservation of existing turfgrasses. In situations of very little or no turfgrasses, and/or a heavy infestation of weeds resistant to selective control, the application of a non-selective herbicide such as glyphosate would be appropriate.

- Fill-in holes and major depressions with high quality sandy loam topsoil. Smooth out rough surface areas, including the entire field if necessary with topdressing with a high quality sandy loam solid mixture.

- Cultivate by means of intensive core aeration to alleviate soil compaction.

- Apply lime if necessary in accordance with the results of soil test to correct soil acidity.

- Slit-seed with an appropriate slit-seeder capable of rotating blade penetration of at least one inch into the soil with a minimum width of two inches between blades. A wider spacing

of blades will necessitate double or triple slit seeding. Seed with a high quality turfgrass seed mixture or blend in accordance with Rutgers Extension Service FS 105. Turf-type perennial ryegrasses are a major consideration because of their rapid germination and establishment together with a high degree of wear tolerance.

- Drag with a flexible steel drag mat when dry and remove any surface debris.

- Apply fertilizer in accordance with the results of soil tests.

- Maintain satisfactory soil moisture if irrigation is available. In situations where irrigation is not available, the fall season would be the most desirable period for renovation.

- Mow as needed at a height of 2.5-3.0 inches at a frequency that will avoid clipping accumulation.

- Restrict use of the field until the new seeding has become strongly established and sufficiently mature to tolerate use without quick obliteration of the seeding of turfgrasses.

In situations where the restricted use of the field is in conflict with the demand for use of the field, a more rapid renovation procedure to reduce the period of restricted use is sodding.

Although more costly than seeding, sodding will substantially reduce the period of restricted use from 6-9 months for seeding to 4-6 weeks for sodding.

Sodding requires an increased effort in site preparation and the establishment of a new mature playing surface. Important considerations in the sodding procedure include the following steps:

- Removal of the existing vegetative growth (turfgrasses and weeds) from the area of concern by stripping with a sod cutter removing as little topsoil as possible remove and discard.

- Minor correction of deficiencies in grade with filling of major depressions with a high quality sand loam topsoil and/or light grading for a finish grade.

- Light tillage by means of aggressive core aeration to alleviate surface compaction and provide a more suitable solid environment to enhance rooting of the sod. The Aeravator is an effective aerifier, which can achieve this objective with a firm surface. Rototilling is not suitable from the standpoint that it will produce a very fluffy soft surface, which would require rolling or some other means of firming or proper installation of the sod.

- Apply lime (if required) and

Continued on page 18

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Continued from page 16

fertilizer in accordance with the results of laboratory analyses on soil samples taken in preparation for the sodding procedure.

- Drag with a flexible steel drag mat and if the soil surface is dry lightly irrigate cautiously avoiding excessive wetness.

- Installation of a pre-selected high quality "Big Roll" sod containing a blend of improved cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass ore a mixture of improved cultivars of tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass (refer to FS 105 and FS 738). Sod should be delivered within 6 hours after harvest and installed within 6 hours after delivery.

- Sod should be placed in a manner to avoid overlapping of sod pieces with tight joints free of voids. Roll and irrigate immediately after installation. Maintain satisfactory soil moisture with frequent and light irrigation. Avoid excessive wetness, which can contribute to a variety of other problems. Immediately after installation of the sod and until the sod develops a new root system, the sod is very sensitive to soil moisture stress. Close monitoring of soil moisture during his sensitive period is very critical for the survival and establishment of the

sod.

- Renovation with sod should not be attempted without adequate provision for maintaining favorable soil moisture conditions.

- Mow at a height of 2.5-3.0 inches as soon as the topgrowth grows to a height of 4 inches and at a frequency to avoid clipping accumulation on the surface. The use of a lightweight walk-behind mower is preferred to a heavier riding mower.

In the sodding procedure, an alternate to the stripping of the vegetative growth with a sod cutter is the incorporation of this material into the soil. The vegetative growth can be incorporated in its green condition or after complete eradication with a non-selective herbicide such as glyphosate. The use of a Rota-Dairon is an effective means of achieving thorough incorporation (including surface stones) and a clean resultant soil surface. The resultant fluffy soft surface must be firmed with rolling to obtain the desirable firmness for sod installation.

The outlined Renovation Procedure by means of seeding or sodding is an effective means of restoration of a suitable natural turfgrass-playing surface for accommodating athletic activities. However, it is important to

understand that it is not a substitute for negligence in maintenance, abuse in use and/or drainage problems associated with deficiencies in construction. Furthermore, there are no miracle products and/or procedures in any maintenance program that can overcome or alleviate drainage problems. In addition, drainage conditions impact not only on the turfgrass growth and its sensitivity to destruction from athletic activities but also upon the safety and playability of the field. In situations where soil drainage is a major problem, consideration should be given to procedures for improvement. Substantial improvements in drainage conditions can be achieved without a complete destruction of an existing field by means of the installation of a sand/slit drainage system. A more costly and invasive procedure is complete reconstruction of the field with the proper installation of an internal soil drainage system. The most opportune and less costly time for providing satisfactory drainage would be during the initial construction of the field.

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