

“Shoulda, Woulda, Coulda” - Three Limiting Factors in a Turf Management Program

Jim Hermann, CSFM

I “shoulda” fertilized in September but the turf didn’t look as yellow as it does now. I “woulda” applied preemergent crabgrass control if I had known it was going to be like this. I “coulda” budgeted for grub control but I forgot how badly they damaged the turf last year. Been there, done that.

There are two basic means of dealing with turf management. The first and typically most effective management method is a proactive method. This consists of developing a program that anticipates reoccurring problems and deals with those problems preventatively, before they reach damaging levels in the turf environment. The probability of occurrence and the decision to treat preventatively should be based on effective record keeping and knowledge of prior incidence. If left unchecked, history will repeat

itself.

Prime examples of a proactive program would be the spring application of a preemergent crabgrass control product to prevent unacceptable populations of crabgrass or the scheduled application of fertilizer at a rate determined to maintain or boost turf quality.

With any program, be it proactive or reactive, the overall affect of an application or procedure should be understood prior to its implementation. As with preemergent crabgrass control, a spring application can have adverse effects on desirable seed germination for up to four months or more after the application.

Typically, a proactive maintenance program will provide a higher level of quality than a reactive program given the same level of understanding on the part of the technician.

I have observed that spring, fall and

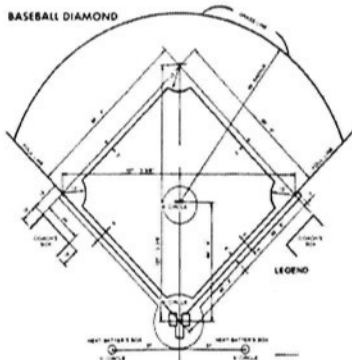
late fall applications of fertilizer, spring and fall aeration and overseeding (allowing consideration for crabgrass control), along with an application of broadleaf weed control every two or three years would significantly increase the quality of most athletic fields not receiving these procedures.

The second strategy (or lack of) and unfortunately a very common strategy in dealing with turf management issues is a reactive strategy. If you get grubs, treat for them. If the turf turns yellow or dies, test the soil and address deficiencies. I think we can all see the lack of wisdom in this type of program.

In general, a basic proactive turf management program will require less expertise than will an effective reactive program. However, a basic understanding of turf nutrition and common pest problems and their control is extremely beneficial and highly recommended. This is the primary reason for continuing education

In truth, the most effective turf management program is a program that is both reactive and proactive in nature. This program utilizes and

Continued on page 7



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Delaware Valley Regional High School Wins 2005 Field of the Year

By Ken Mathis*

Congratulations to Delaware Valley Regional High School for winning the 2005 SFMANJ Field of the Year. The winning SFMANJ members were Dennis Anderson and James Stryker. The Supervisor of Building and Grounds and Athletic Director are William Hunt and Susan M. Hammerstone, respectively. Dennis and James did an outstanding job of renovating their school softball field that originated back to the early 1980's. The pride these men had in their work shows as "Terrier Field" looked magnificent when Del-Val hosted the Group IV State Semi-Finals. Most schools would be very proud to have a field as good as theirs.

I would like to thank all the contestants this year and we look forward to having more of you participate for next year's award. Remember, the winner receives 2 free nights stay at NJTA Expo 2006 in Atlantic City, NJ and paid access to the entire 3 days of educational sessions and trade show.

* Ken Mathis is President, SFMANJ; 2005 SFMANJ Field of the Year Contest Committee Chair; and Superintendent, Brick Township Dept. of Parks

reacts to historical data on a given turf area while continually monitoring and scouting for new problems based on the probability of their occurrences. The information gathered is utilized to formulate and initiate a proactive management program based on the establishment of pest population treatment thresholds, the probability of reoccurring pest infestations and the desire for a predetermined level of safety, playability and turf quality. In addition, every turf management program should always utilize the most effective products with the least potential for negative impact on the environment.

In essence, this is the principle behind an IPM pest management strategy. Not only is IPM environmentally responsible, if you are a part of a school system in New Jersey it's the law.

* Jim Hermann is a Certified Sports Field Manager, a member of the SFMANJ Board of Directors, and has over 20 years experience in sports field management as President, Total Control, Inc. ♦

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