Working out budget priorities

by Dale Getz

Coaches and athletes will always want more field time, and we'll always have more things on our “wish list” than the budget will allow, so cooperation within the University of Notre Dame’s athletic department is vital.

For example, the varsity team in the midst of its playing season receives the highest priority on practice field use. In the fall, football and soccer get the prime time for practices. Secondary priority goes to other varsity teams. Club and intramural sports needs are worked into open slots in the scheduling.

Our area of Indiana has a short season for active turf growth. Turf establishment or renovation must be scheduled around field use. Most such projects begin in early spring and are completed by late fall.

I work directly with coaches on day-to-day situations like planning field use and rescheduling rained-out practices or games. Low-cost special requests such as field painting that wasn’t originally planned generally can be worked into my schedule. Requests that require a large allocation of funds or labor hours are submitted to the assistant athletic director for approval and coordination.

Our coaches appreciate the level of maintenance and high standard of field quality. They notice and understand the effect of adjusting mowing height, overseeding, aerating and other procedures. Student athletes, alumni and spectators have also grown to understand the importance of superior sports turf.

I submit three budgets each year: for the football stadium, baseball complex and all other athletic grounds. They break planned expenditures into categories like capital improvements, repairs and maintenance, supplies, utilities, postage and phone.

As the level of play rises, so does the quality of the sports fields. The athletic program and its facilities have grown at the same rate.

We’ve worked to become more efficient as participation in sports at N.D. has increased at all levels. During the last few years, women’s soccer and softball have become varsity sports, creating a need for their share of practice and play time.

To expand field space, we’re converting a turfed parking area to practice fields. Also, an artificial turf field has been converted to natural turf.

All of this resulted in a 40 percent increase in the number of turfed sports fields, while my staff has grown by one.

The biggest upcoming project is lowering the football stadium two feet to improve spectator “sight lines,” effectively adding 20,000 seats. We will install new drainage and irrigation.

Renovation starts at the end of 1995 season. The field will be ready for play by the 1996 season. Renovation will be completed in 1997.

—Dale Getz is Notre Dame University’s athletic facilities manager and active member of the Sports Turf Managers Association.