President's Message

continued from page 2

$123 -- single or double occupancy. Tax is currently 11%. And, as a Disney property, it offers the full inter-park transportation package.

And -- your Conference Committee is working with Disney to provide a special multi-day, multi-park admission package so you can add some family vacation time to the beginning or the end of the Conference.

During the short breaks in our meetings, we scouted for Tigers, some of us trying to catch a glimpse of the great young golfer, Tiger Woods, who was on-site for a combination exhibition and taping, others for Tigger, the famous character from Winnie-the-Pooh. Be assured, your 1998 Conference will have something special in store for everyone!

Mike

How Do You Do...?

The Question -- How Do You Prepare Your Fields for Spring Activity After Winter?

Answered by David Hanus, Bryan (TX) Independent H. S. District

Our bermudagrass athletic fields experience heavy use from fall football and winter soccer, so we like to start recovery work on them as soon as soccer is over and the weather permits, usually mid-March. Our first step is to mow the fields at a lower height than normal to encourage green-up and reduce thatch. Re-entry requirements for school grounds in Texas make it difficult to apply herbicides on a timely basis, so this scalping and the resumption of our normal mowing schedule reduces the need to treat for any winter weeds.

Soil compaction is the main problem on the fields, so most of our early spring work is spent on aeration. This will be our second spring to deep tine aerify the fields with an Aer-way unit with 7" shattertines. We've been able to get 5-inch penetration even on our most compacted fields, so it's done a good job of breaking up the soil profile. Each field is aerated in at least two directions, with a second aeration scheduled 4 weeks later.

Soil tests in January help determine the amounts of gypsum to apply, which is used to offset the high sodium found in our local water supply. Each field receives half of its gypsum allotment in April. The first of the regular fertilizer applications won't be done until soil temperatures reach at least 70 degrees. After that we start our normal bermudagrass maintenance schedule to transition out perennial ryegrass on the overseeded fields and to encourage as much growth and recovery as possible before football practice starts again in April.

Answered by Mike Trigg, Waukegan (IL) Park District

Since Illinois weather is so unpredictable, we pack as much spring preparation as possible into the fall. For example, we'll repair any worn turf areas and core aerify soccer fields. During late fall and winter we check material supplies and place orders so we'll have everything on hand we need when the weather breaks. We start with a field/facility check on EVERYTHING, infield and outfield condition, lighting, turf condition, fencing, benches, bleachers, etc. The MAIN thing is to do the pre-planning so we are ready for spring. The requests for athletic field use come earlier each year and the window of opportunity can vary so much that you have to be prepared for anything.

continued on page 4

How Do You Do...?

continued from page 3

Answered by Jack Thompson, Northwest Nazarene College, Nampa, ID

At our school, much of the equipment is used not only for turf care, but also for snow removal. Before we switch over the brooms to mower decks, the brooms are used for removing thatch. This allows us to get the proper start to our season. We apply a pre-emergent on our turf areas and weed control in the flower beds. Then we aerate all of the turf areas, concentrating our efforts on the athletic fields because of compaction from extreme use. In these areas, we aerate in three or four different directions.

After that, we are ready to use our topdresser with a mixture of 50% sand and 50% topsoil. If there are areas that need to be overseeded, we do this before the topdressing. Although we do our heaviest fertilizer application in the late fall, we do apply a light fertilization in the early spring.

Now we're ready for the start up of our sprinkler systems on campus and the mowing season.

Answered by Timothy Peterson, Arizona Cardinals

No two fields are completely alike. The following steps have worked for me the last four (4) years. I start my preparations about the end of December and this process continues until the first of May.

I start with a good soil sample in November. Because our fields are sand-based, every two years I add gypsum at 1,000 lbs. per acre. The three fields are cored and this year, the cores were collected. Next an application of phosphorous, usually triple phosphate (P205) is applied at 1 lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. Assuming the field pH is between 7 and 7.5, an application of water soluble sulfur with Mn and Fe is applied at 5 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. (if pH levels are higher, more applications may be required to amend this condition). I next top dress with sand. About 3 weeks after that I de-thatch in two perpendicular directions and then scalp the grass to remove unwanted stubble. I await the warmth of spring before fertilizing. We use one application of granular fertilizer @ 5 lbs/M and two applications of flowable K with Fluid Minors package, one week apart. Sometime in May, I apply a time release 32-3-8 fertilizer at 5 lbs/M and stand back - instant job security. This work is good until about the 15th of July when I start it all over again.

Answered by Jack Schmidgall, Town of Danvers (MA)

As of March 24th, the fields in Danvers have still been freezing at night. Average soil temperatures have been 38^{o} in direct sunlight. With 18 ball fields to prepare by the middle of April, our first step is to do a visual survey and make a written list of procedures and materials required to attain our goal. We start this at the beginning of March because each field has its own drying characteristics which will determine how it can be worked.

At this point in the game, our initial concern will be the preparation of our clay surfaces which we will scarify and grade well enough to begin practices and scrimmages. Drying agents will be used as necessary. This year, we have the added challenge of winter weed growth in the clay areas and the clumping of annual bluegrass which has to be removed mechanically AND by hand. Once the temperatures start to rise, we will apply weed control to thoroughly resolve this problem.

Once the turf is dry enough, we can core aerate and dethatch the infields. This must be done before our first scheduled chemical application (currently set for April 15th). In the meantime, we try to maintain our daily clay maintenance and keep the practice fields up and running. We are now in the process of scheduling overtime crews so that we can take advantage of ***every minute*** of cooperative weather in order to meet our responsibilities. *STM*

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Look for the How To article in our next newsletter.