

cannot be topped with soil or the system will fail. The trenches these systems create should run perpendicular to the way the water flows, end zone to end zone, in order to catch the water as it runs off the crown. Contractors don't always like to do this because they have to create more fall in the trench. Running the length of

The trenches these systems create should run perpendicular to the way the water flows, arranged end zone to end zone.

the field means now they need 65 yards of fall, but going sideline to sideline means they only need 25 yards or so. A herringbone system is a workable compromise. Collection pipes run the length of each sideline and the slit trenches run at a 45-degree angle off of each collection pipe.

A common mistake made is installing a slit trench system and then maintaining



the field as you had in the past. When core aerating, if you bring the cores to the surface and then drag them back into the field, eventually you are going to dirty the sand in those drainage channels and plug them up. You will eventually 'cap' the trenches

Above: Installing a grid drainage system.

with soil. Once the slit trench system is installed, it's time to start sand topdressing and removing aeration cores. I suggest topdressing immediately after the slit



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trenching is installed. To be ready for fall sports, you should put down about 3/8 inch of straight sand across the whole system in spring. Run some test strips in the field surrounds until you become calibrated. This is a lot of sand. It looks like you are burying the grass. The grass will grow through the sand and in four days you'll be mowing again so don't be too concerned. You shouldn't plan on playing on the newly topdressed turf for some time.

tem under the sand. This can provide you with the best of both worlds – a quick draining firm surface but the roots will still be able to find the native soil underneath for nutrients and water.

This approach is a great way to go but it does require more money to maintain the field. You'll need to purchase sand every year, you'll need a large capacity topdresser, and one of the new core harvesters. It moves you to a higher level of

A common mistake made is installing a slit trench system and then maintaining the field as you had in the past. When core aerating, if you bring the cores to the surface and then drag them back into the field, eventually you are going to plug your drainage channels.

The grass needs time to 'secure' this new sand topdressing.

In addition to straight sand topdressing, when it's time to aerate, harvest the cores each and every time and then topdress with sand again. You'll be treating the field like a push-up green and you must sand topdress every year and you must pick up the cores. You build up that layer of sand on the surface with the trench sys-

tem, but remember the worst thing you can do is spend money on a trench system and maintain the field the way you always did. If you don't core aerate, or you do core aerate and drag the plugs back into the field, eventually the trench system will clog and stop working. ♦

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