

2002 NJTA EXPO AND SFMANJ PERFECT TOGETHER

By George Van Haasteren CGM

The New Jersey Turfgrass Association (NJTA) recently held its annual Expo at the Trump Taj Mahal Casino and Resort in Atlantic City, NJ. Held on December 10, 11 and 12, 2002, the Expo featured educational sessions for the turfgrass professional to improve his/her knowledge and expertise as well as ways of staying abreast of recent developments in the industry. The Expo is also known for having a great Trade Show that displays the latest in equipment technology, supplies and materials that clearly are on the cutting edge for all that are involved in the turf industry. SFMANJ was a part of the trade show having a booth on the floor. Trade Show registrants had a chance to drop their business cards at the booth for a chance to win leather travel bag and a portable TV.

Realizing the importance and growing concern over the last several years of having athletic fields maintained at their best SFMANJ helped facilitate sessions geared specifically towards the sports field manager. The first session was held on Wednesday, December 12. Pens (donated by Jim Hermann, CSFM of Total Control Inc.) and pocket calendars were presented to each individual in attendance.

A panel discussion that was titled "**Successes in Athletic Field Improvements. The Problem – The Procedure – The Results**" was the theme for the afternoon. Panelists included Dr. John Grande, Director, Snyder Research Center, Rutgers University, Eleanor Murfitt, President, SFMANJ, Dr. Henry Indyk, Professor Emeritus, Rutgers University, and Barry Imboden, Grounds Supervisor, Hunterdon Central Regional High School. Afterwards Ann Waters from NJ DEP discussed "**Keeping Up-To-Date On Pesticide Regulations.**"

On Thursday, December 12 morning and afternoon sessions were held. The morning had three speakers. Dr. Stephen Baker from the Sports Turf Research Institute of the United Kingdom gave a presentation on "**Athletic Problems and Their solutions in the UK.**"

Dr. Jim Murphy, Extension Specialist in Turfgrass Management, Rutgers University spoke on "**Mowing Management As It Affects Turf Quality**" and Steve Trusty, Executive Director of the Sports Turf Managers Association discussed "**Professionalism In Sports Field Management.**"

Thursday's afternoon session focused on the SFMANJ Annual Business Meeting. Elected to serve on the board of directors were the following:

Bud Perdun, N. Brunswick Board of Education, North Brunswick, NJ.
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Eleanor Murfitt CRS, Washington Twp Parks & Recreation, Long Valley, NJ Representing Parks & Recreation, Buildings & Grounds, DPW

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George Van Haasteren CGM, Sports Field Management Systems Inc., Paramus, NJ Representing Professional Facilities

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Dean Marzocca, Deans Lawn & Landscape, East Millstone, NJ (1year term) Representing Commercial/Contractors

Dr. James Murphy, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ Representing Education/Extension

Returning Board Members include:

Jim Hermann CSFM, Jeff Cramer, John Salisbury, Tom Torpe and Dr. John Grande. Advisor, Dr. Henry Indyk.

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SFMANJ BUSINESS

Next Board of Directors Meeting – Monday, January 13, 5:00 pm at Storr Tractor Company, Rt. 22 Somerset, NJ

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This newsletter is the official bi-monthly publication of the Sports Filed Managers Association of New Jersey. For information regarding this newsletter, contact:

SFMANJ at 908-236-9118 or 730-7770

Co-editors

Jim Hermann, CSFM & Eleanor Murfitt

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“Monthly Field Tip”

Turf Blankets by Bob Curry

Turf blankets, also called turf growth blankets, create a greenhouse effect over covered turf. Properly constructed blankets allow turf to breathe, while trapping optimum amounts of heat, light and moisture to develop an ideal environment for growth. The effect encourages deep root growth for strong, healthy plants.

Originally developed to protect natural turf against winter wind and desiccation damage, turf blankets have proven to be useful tools in all seasons. They can hasten spring green-up, especially in cold climates. In some cases, field use can begin two to three weeks sooner than normal on covered fields. Blankets can also delay dormancy of Bermuda in autumn to provide green fields late into the season.

Blankets can help expedite recovery of heavy-wear areas. They can also speed new seed germination. As an added benefit, blankets reduce seed loss, since they guard against both wind and birds.

Turf growth blankets are even used to protect against morning frost. Covering areas where frost is forecast at night can minimize or eliminate the effect.

Construction

Blankets should be treated to withstand damaging ultra-violet sun effects. They must be highly rot and mildew resistant to hold up to the elements. Properly treated blankets should not show significant wear, even after years of use.

Turf blankets should have smooth surfaces to prevent dirt and debris accumulation. They should feature lightweight construction for quick and easy installation and removal.

Whenever possible, use a one-piece cover. Avoid overlapping sections to prevent quality and color variation of covered turf. ▲

Bob Curry is president of Covermaster Inc. He also serves as STMA's commercial vice president. To contact the company, call: (800) 387-5808, or visit: www.covermaster.com.

DID YOU KNOW? Recurring weed problems may be linked to drainage patterns. (IPM Handbook)

Continued from page 1 "NJTA"

Dr. Henry Indyk received an honorary lifetime membership. Following the business meeting a panel discussion ensued entitled "Expectations of Athletic Fields." It dealt with perspectives from different individuals. Jeff Thorne, Hunterdon County Little League spoke from the perspective of a coach. Dr. Walter Mahler, Superintendent of Schools, Springfield Township, NJ gave a perspective from the administration's side. Jim Herman CSFM, Total Control, Lebanon, NJ gave his perspective from one who provides services as a contractor. Dr. Frank Rossi, Extension Specialist from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY concluded the session with the topic "Developing an IPM Program for Athletic Fields."

The participation and involvement of SFMANJ in the NJTA EXPO is very evident. Over 50 and 85 registrants attended the two-day sessions respectfully, specifically geared towards sports field management (a half day more than in 2001.)

At the General Session, Eleanor Murfitt received an award for her hard work and involvement in bringing the role of the sports field manager to the forefront as well as her dedication in developing the state's chapter of STMA. Eleanor's award is proof that SFMANJ is making an impact on the state level and will continue to grow.

If you did not have the opportunity to make it to the 2002 Expo, mark your calendar for December, 2003. SFMANJ plans once again to be there, be a part of it and to continue to be the voice of sports field managers in the State of New Jersey. ▲

George Van Haasteren, CGM is an owner of Sports Field Management Systems Inc. He is also newly elected to the board of directors for SFMANJ.

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This year Wilfred MacDonald will be celebrating its 75th year servicing those in the green industry. The company began as a small lawnmower business in Weehawken, NJ back in 1928 distributing Jacobson power reel mowers to local dealers serving the home –owner market. Wilfred (Mac) and his brother Charles both helped the business grow through the years. In 1962 the operations moved to Clifton, NJ and became a dealer for Jacobson selling turf and commercial equipment. Mac's nephew Jim Pelrine started with the company in 1963. When Mac decided to retire in 1966 he turned the reins over to Jim who then incorporated the company in his honor.

In 1977 Wilfred MacDonald was growing and a second building was added to house a new warehouse with shop operations. 14 full time employees were employed as well as 3 new salespersons being added to the staff in the early 80's. By 1995 Wilfred MacDonald was moving again to a larger site in Lyndhurst, NJ due in part to the growth in their distribution and their product line growing as well. The size of the staff also grew to 30. Preparing for the new millennium and with the company still growing in 1999 Jim with the help of his staff packed up everything and made the move from Lyndhurst to their current location in South Hackensack, NJ. Today Wilfred MacDonald has a staff of 29 employees including 6 full time salespersons, 2 On the road mechanics, 3 in-house service techs, 1 grinding tech, 1 set up man and one warehouse foreman, a service manager, an assistant service manager along with 2 full time truck drivers, 5 who handle parts, service, shipping and receivers. There are also 3 office staffers and a controller.

Wilfred MacDonald has been a strong supporter of the sports field industry. If you have been fortunate, you may have attended one of their field days at Giants Stadium. As Mike Pelrine puts it: "We try to be the best service and support turf equipment company in the area. We also want to go the extra mile for our customers because we believe that they are the most important thing to us."

For those sports field managers looking for that special piece of equipment to assist in maintaining or renovating their fields give the folks at Wilfred MacDonald a call. They are ready to assist and serve you. ▲

By George Van Haasteren CGM

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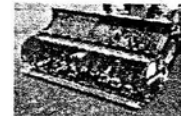
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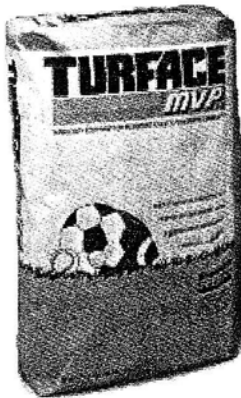
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“Avoiding Liability Lawsuits”

By Floyd Perry

Avoiding liability lawsuits is probably not part of your written job description, but it's definitely part of your day-to-day duties. Whether you're the facility manager, sports turf manager, crew chief or crew member, your action -- or lack of action—could put you and your facility at risk of time-consuming, costly litigation.

In Liability cases, lawyers focus on the three big issues: “prudent,” “reasonable” and “consistent.” More clearly defined, *prudent* means wise in handling practical matters; exercising good judgment or common sense. Would you and most people consider your actions the practical, logical thing to do under the circumstances?

Reasonable means in accordance with sound thinking; within the bounds of common sense. Would any similarly employed person, or group of people given the same set of circumstances, choose to act in the same Manner?

Consistent means uniform, reliable, steady. Are conditions the same as usual and to be expected given the past level of maintenance and the past performance level of the facility or field during similar circumstances?

Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey

Any facility, on any budget, should be able to comply with the *intent* of these three issues. The key is:

- applying the best techniques given the facility's budget and equipment,
- doing it regularly and on schedule,
- documenting that you are doing so.

Basic Management Guidelines

First, assess your situation. Develop a clear picture of the practical problems that face facilities such as yours. Gain an understanding of common law pertaining to your job and responsibilities and to the jobs and responsibilities of those whose work you supervise.

Continued on page 11.....



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"RUTGERS CORNER"

"Aerification and Repair of Athletic Fields"

by Dr. James A. Murphy, Extension Specialist in Turfgrass Management

Regular aerification of the turf and soil is necessary on athletic fields subjected to intense traffic, especially for soils that are highly susceptible to severe compaction. Effective aerification requires the use of equipment capable of extracting ½ to 1 inch diameter soil cores to a depth of at least 2 to 3 inches. Frequency of aerification is determined by the intensity of field use and severity of compaction. High-priority fields that receive intensive use will most likely benefit from two to four aerification treatments per season. The fall and spring seasons are the best timing for this procedure. Removing the cores or working the cores back into the turf minimizes the objections to the soil cores brought to the turf surface. Soil cores can be broken up and re-incorporation into the turf through verticutting or drag-matting the cores. Soil cores dried to the proper moisture content will be easier to break-up and work back into the turf.

Deep Subsurface Aerification. Many old athletic fields that were established on soils that are highly susceptible to compaction will benefit from deep subsurface areification, which will create ½- to 1-inch diameter holes to a soil depth of 6 to 16 inches. This aggressive form of aerification can alleviate deep compaction of the soil, thereby improving water drainage, as well as infiltration and turf performance. The equipment needed is expensive to purchase, however, it can be readily contracted from local vendors. Cost for contracting will vary; but it is commonly priced for pennies per square foot of field area. Treatment with deep aerification equipment has sufficiently improved many older sports turfs and, as a result, helped avoid the high costs of reconstruction. It is important to note that deep aerification will not solve compaction problems associated with improper construction practices (i.e., severely compacted subgrades that limit drainage of water).

Repair. Many factors can contribute to a weakening or loss of turf. But intensive use is often the primary factor associated with severe loss of turf, particularly on finer-textured soils with slow drainage. A good turf can be restored on worn-out fields through renovation procedures, except for the cases that requiring reconstruction

(initial construction was incorrect). Renovation may involve eliminating weed infestations, applying lime and fertilizer, aerifying, overseeding/silt-seeding with a mixture of appropriate turfgrasses, verti-grooving, and dragging/brushing to mix the seed with the soil. Because of rapid establishment and excellent wear tolerance, the improved turf-type perennial ryegrasses or turf-type tall fescues should be considered for overseeding or reseeding mixtures. Refer to Rutgers Cooperative Extension publications FS108, "Renovation of Turf," and FS989 and FS990, "Perennial Ryegrass and Tall Fescue Varieties for New Jersey," respectively, for more information. Renovation is an effective means of introducing seed into an existing turf without destroying the existing grasses, grade, or contour. It will not, however, solve drainage problems, which require partial or complete reconstruction. Late summer through early fall is the best time for repairs. Where the field is actively used for football, the procedure can be successfully per-formed in late fall or early winter; success for this timing is dependent on soil and weather conditions. Early spring would be the next best time for renovating football fields. Where use of the field cannot be restricted to permit adequate establishment of a new seeding, sod should be considered for the establishment of a turf.

Please refer to Rutgers Cooperative Extension publications FS105, FS684, and FS738 for more detailed information.

These can downloaded for free at <http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/category.asp?cat=5> ▲

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“On the Subject of Soil Fertility”

by Jim Hermann, CSFM

Over the course of my career in turf management, from my earliest involvement in residential turf to my current obsession with sports turf I have had the opportunity to use different nitrogen sources on different sites. I have experienced different results in different situations. The different results I have obtained were many times caused by a lack of understanding on my part on how the different nitrogen sources react in the soil and how the turf responds to their use. The objective of this article is to inform you of one such experience in the hope that you can possibly gain some useful information.

Nitrogen comes in different forms. There are liquids, granules, prills and powders. The bacteria in the soil can make some nitrogen sources available to the plant. Nitrogen can be cold-water soluble, warm-water soluble or water insoluble. It can be sulfur coated, polymer coated or combined with any number of products used to control the release pattern. It can have a lower salt index or a higher salt index. Some nitrogen sources are available to the turf almost immediately and others take years to become available. An understanding of the release characteristics of different nitrogen sources is essential in formulating a fertility program. It is the responsibility of the sports turf manager to select the most effective nitrogen source while taking into consideration objectives and existing conditions.

Choosing the best nitrogen source for a given situation or objective is not always as simple as it might seem. You can't assume that the most expensive source is the best nor can you eliminate the least costly from consideration. The nitrogen source you choose depends on what you want to accomplish. Before I discuss a situation I encountered this past season, I would first like to explain some of the objectives I am attempting to achieve in my fertility program.

My first priority is to address soil pH and apply any necessary lime based on a soil test. My second priority is to develop a plan to bring both potassium and phosphorous to optimum levels.

You can sometimes apply the entire amount of potassium and phosphorous recommended by a soil test in one application. This concentrates the fertilizer formulation on the potassium and phosphorous needs of the turf, with nitrogen as a secondary consideration. If you decide to apply all the phosphorous and potassium in one application, always be aware of the maximum amounts that can safely be applied without turf damage.

Another possibly more popular option is to use a product formulated with a nitrogen/phosphorous/potassium ratio such as 4-1-2, 4-2-2, 4-2-4 etc. that will supply your nitrogen needs along with fulfilling your potassium and phosphorous requirements over the course of an entire season, utilizing multiple applications. The seriousness of the individual nutrient deficiencies will sometimes determine your individual fertility strategy.

I personally prefer to address phosphorous and potassium needs independent of nitrogen. By addressing nutrient needs separately I have the ability to be more selective with the individual nutrient sources and select the source that I feel will work the best under the circumstances. I am therefore not dependent on standard fertilizer formulations that are sometimes formulated with nutrient sources I might prefer not to use at a particular time of year or for a particular purpose.

I am responsible for the turf management of a little league baseball field. I had a soil test completed on this field in July in preparation for the fall fertilizer program. The test results showed that the pH of 6.5 was adequate but showed a need for phosphorous in the amount of 50 pounds per acre and a need for potassium in the amount of 60 pounds per acre. Both levels were reported as good but not optimum. As I stated earlier, I strive for optimum levels of all major nutrients.

Continued on next page..



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were already falling below freezing and growth had slowed considerably. The time line discussed here may not coincide with fields located further south or in a warmer location.

After the last mowing I wanted to continue to promote root development and lateral growth with an application of nitrogen and remember, I still needed to address the potassium and phosphorous requirements of the soil as per my soil test. For this purpose I chose an agricultural grade 10-20-20 fertilizer to be applied at the rate of 1.5 lbs. potassium and phosphorous per thousand sq. ft. This rate would closely fulfill the potassium and phosphorous requirements along with giving me $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. nitrogen per thousand square feet. By waiting until this time of year to address the potassium and phosphorous needs of the turf I was able to use muriate of potash as my potassium source. This product is less expensive per unit of potassium but has a higher salt index than some other potassium sources. I felt it would be safe at this time of year at this rate with no burn potential. The nitrogen in the 10-20-20 is all fast acting water-soluble nitrogen. Again, at this time of year at this rate I didn't feel there would be a problem. With cooler temperatures and higher moisture levels I wasn't as concerned with volatilization into the air or a slow release pattern as I would have been when the weather was warmer and drier. All in all I was able to use a relatively inexpensive product to achieve my objectives.

It is again important to realize that I was dealing with an established baseball field that would have 3 people in the outfield in the spring with minimal traffic. I might have elected to apply more than $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. nitrogen at this time with some slow release if I were more concerned with early spring green up and growth as would likely be the case with a soccer field.

Although I may see some late season response from the nitrogen in color improvement and a small amount of growth, I won't know the total results of my late season fertilization until next spring. The turf likely used some of the nitrogen in the fall and some will be held in the soil for utilization in the spring. At any rate I don't anticipate the need for additional fertilizer on that field until mid May. Only a visual evaluation in the spring will tell the tale.

In closing I would like to suggest that if a person suggests to you that he or she could give you a product at a cheaper cost that would do the same thing, always consider the source. ▲

Note: The intent of this article is not to promote any one nutrient source as the best or to say one is superior to another. The intent is to give you different circumstances, and options available for satisfying the nutritional needs of athletic field turf. If you have an experience you would like to share or have any questions or comments contact me at Jimtc@worldnet.att.net or (908) 236-9118

Jim Hermann is President of Total Control Landscape & Athletic Turf Maintenance. He is also vice president of Sports Field Managers Association of NJ and co-editor of this newsletter. He recently became the second certified sports field manager in New Jersey.

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Continued from page 7 "Avoiding Liability Lawsuits".....

Concentrate on developing quality solutions to common problems, starting with the "big picture" of departmental philosophies and working through the practicalities of staffing and budgets. Set up plans before the facilities are built, if possible. Establish standards that are within the policies of the community, the facility and your supervisors, but be sure to "cover all your bases." Once procedures are in place and work is under way, continue to educate your staff and yourself about new and innovative techniques.

Positive Maintenance Systems

Establish overall maintenance systems for field care that cover the basic criteria -- playability, durability, safety, appearance and economy -- and that address the concerns and responsibilities of common law.

Evaluate all aspects of your facility to decide where priorities should be placed and how to make field maintenance more equitable. Remember the three big issues: prudent, reasonable and consistent. If your department is in charge of a Minor League field and multiple public use fields, is it prudent and reasonable to allocate major resources to the high-profile field used only by one team and visiting players and minimal resources to public fields used by 8,000 tax-paying people? If public fields are used daily, is it consistent to perform field preparation procedures once a week? Documentation is a vital part of the process.

Develop maintenance checklists both to instruct and remind crew members of the steps that must be taken and to provide a record of procedures for legal review if necessary. Monitor the checklists regularly to ensure proper procedures are being performed -- and documented. Keep written or computerized records of all maintenance procedures, including such key data as aerification and irrigation schedules and what products were applied in what quantities to which fields on what dates. Include weather conditions in your daily reports. Track equipment use and record equipment maintenance. Note the use of rented or borrowed equipment and any costs involved.

Establish practical field-use guidelines, based upon your conditions and resources that allow you to protect the integrity of the field. Develop methods to control the schedule to avoid overuse or use in unacceptable conditions. If field maintenance and use procedures consistently cause conflicts between the sports field manager and the scheduling coordinator or user groups, request a quality control audit by a qualified third party. If the results of this audit don't help you convince the powers-that-be to implement necessary changes, keep copies of the audit and your written requests to comply with it in your files. This should help shield you personally from liability lawsuits and community criticism. If the conflict becomes a serious professional concern, changing jobs may not be out of the question.

Photo Documentation

Back-up your computer and written documentation with a photo record. Photos help you to evaluate management and maintenance practices and to document problems and potential problems. Photos provide a visual record of conditions, good or bad, at any given time. Photos taken at regular intervals, such as weekly or bi-monthly, help you compare current field conditions to those of previous periods.

Photos can augment your explanation to superiors about a problem and help establish the need for supplies or equipment to solve it. Pre- and post-game photos can assist you in showing field users the damage caused by play in wet conditions and why cancellations are necessary. Photos taken before and after a specific maintenance practice can both show the results of the action and document that the practice took place.



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Continued on next page.....



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Continued from page 11 "Avoiding Liability Lawsuits"...

Create an annual physical exam policy for staff health that screens both for health risks and for alcohol I- or drug-related problems. This also demonstrates that your department is professional and is interested in the well-being of its personnel.

Instruct your staff always to use good common sense. Err on the side of safety. For grounds managers and grounds personnel, this includes practical measures for their own health and safety, such as using proper protective clothing and equipment, following safety guidelines and not working on difficult tasks or tackling any heavy unloading alone.

An Accident Action Plan

Develop a step-by-step action plan to follow in case of a serious or catastrophic accident. The plan must consider the needs of participants, spectators and facility personnel. Instruct your staff on how to implement this plan. Keep copies of the plan easily accessible in a checklist format, so it can be followed even during a crisis.

In dugouts and locker rooms, post copies of an emergency action plan that concerns players, and be sure visiting coaches are aware of them.

Provide the proper tools to implement the accident action plan and to ensure all on-site steps involving the injured person or persons follow the best medical procedures. This includes training (and hopefully

certification) in First Aid and CPR, and such other lifesaving tactics as the Heimlich Maneuver. Supply a cellular phone or quick and ready access to another phone on-site, specify that the call to 911 be made immediately, and designate which person should make the call. emergency entrance will be unlocked and void of pathway obstructions

Designate the proper alignment of staff members or volunteers to aid and direct a rescue vehicle immediately to the site of the injured victim. Ensure that your to provide clear access to the victim.

Develop a spectator witness form as part of your emergency kit. Have accident witnesses use the form on-site to report their observations so there's an unbiased record of what occurred. This key point is one of the more important defense steps that your facility has. Also in the emergency kit, keep a Polaroid camera and a throw-away camera filled with film. Take pictures of the accident scene. Whether the photos are favorable or unfavorable, this can be prudent and valuable in proving your case.

Plan beyond on-site care. To speed emergency room access, make sure all medical and insurance forms are up-to-date and carried with the ambulance. For an underage victim, the parents or legal guardians must be contacted and instructed of the action taken for their child.

Stay involved after the accident. Make every attempt to visit and console the injured person. This is the time when a good bedside manner plays and important part in the victim and family's feelings concerning the accident

Review your procedures after an accident. Determine what worked as planned and what was inefficient or ineffective. Correct any weaknesses.

Continued on next page...

DID YOU KNOW? Most spring insect applications should be made shortly after forsythia is in full bloom and shortly before flowering dogwood is in full bloom. Most summer applications should be made within a week of July 4th. Timing varies depending on spring temperatures. (IPM Handbook by Patrica Cobb)



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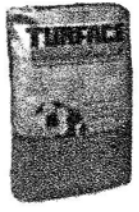
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Continued from page 12 "Avoiding Liability Lawsuits".....

No Guarantees

Having a First Aid certificate, a cellular phone on site, an emergency procedure in place and follow-up actions documented doesn't necessarily mean you're out of the lawsuit woods. But you can show to the court and the injured individual that serious problems have been discussed and thought out, and that your policies and procedures were in place.

You, your department or school may still get sued and even lose when you have done everything correctly. But there is some consolation. The most important feature of your precautions is that you might have saved a life or saved a life-threatening situation because you were ahead of the liability wave. So, although you lost in court, you won on the field. ▲

As owner of Grounds Maintenance Services, Orlando, Fla., Floyd Perry provides consulting services and gives safety and field care seminars. He's the author of a set of books titled Pictorial Guide to Quality Groundskeeping and two videos, The ABCs of Grounds Maintenance for baseball and for softball, and is a member of the STMA Certification Committee. He was named the 1996 sportsTURF Manager of the Year for his contributions to the industry.

DID YOU KNOW? Soil content in the soil is a particular concern in drier regions where irrigation water or rainfall is restricted. (IPM Handbook)

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"Athletic Field Reconstruction"

by Dr. Henry W. Indyk

All too often, the blast of an official's whistle signaling the start of an outdoor sporting event brings two opposing teams together on a barren field speckled with ragged tufts of green. Many of these tufts are the sad remnants of a once-proud turfgrass cover, intermingled with a variety of coarse, aggressive weeds – commonly knotweed, crabgrass and Goosegrass.

In dry weather, the playing surface is hard from compaction, rough from previous activities, dusty from a lack of turf cover and resistant to the penetration of an athlete's spikes or cleats. If it rains a week before the event – or worse, during the event – the surface is slippery, muddy and soft, with virtually no traction. Such conditions give natural turf playing surfaces a bad reputation and stimulate visions of miracle grasses, super products and other surfaces as alternatives. However, criticism of natural turf fields should be aimed at weaknesses in construction or maintenance, but not the limitations of natural turf.

Natural grass has been and will continue to be the best playing surface for a wide variety of outdoor sports and playground activities. Its characteristic resiliency and cushion not only contribute to the enjoyment of a specific sport, but also provides superior footing and reduction in sports-surface-related injuries. These advantages, combined with aesthetic and economic considerations, make natural turf and its management high priorities for sports in the coming years.

Using appearance as the primary criterion for a successfully managed field can be misleading and generate false impressions of natural playing surfaces. Appearance is undoubtedly important, but durability to intensive use under a wide range of conditions is more critical.

Athletic fields proven to be most successful are based upon similar principles in design, planning, construction and maintenance. Failure of these surfaces also is based upon a set of similar mistakes. Failure of natural turf to provide the aesthetics for the spectator and a safe, firm surface for the players can be linked to the following causes:

Improper Specifications

Too often in the original construction of an athletic field, standard specifications are used with little or no regard for the varying conditions peculiar to a specific site. Each proposed site should be evaluated critically before formulating accurate specifications. If this approach is not utilized, there exists a high potential for a field with "built-in" problems that are very difficult or impossible to correct with the best of maintenance procedures.

Enforcement of Specifications

The best of specifications are of little or not value unless construction procedures adhere to the stipulated requirements developed for the site. Too often, construction is allowed to proceed without the "watchful eye" of a knowledgeable individual. Under such conditions, the temptation to bypass or eliminate critical procedures becomes too great for proper construction particularly where contract responsibilities are awarded to the low bidder.

Improper or Inadequate Maintenance after Successful Establishment

Once a satisfactory turf of properly selected grasses has been established, its future performance depends upon the type and amount of attention devoted to a maintenance program. The investment in establishing a turf cover is wasted unless proper provision is also made for maintenance. A well-planned program should include equipment, materials, personnel, and an adequate budget. In addition, supervisory responsibilities should be entrusted to a conscientious individual knowledgeable in turfgrass management principles and techniques.

Abuse in Field Use

A well-established and maintained turf can withstand a considerable amount of use without serious damage. However, there are limits to the tolerance of turf to continued intensive use. Damage will be most serious where proper construction procedures

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Continued from page 14 "Athletic Field Reconstruction"

have been bypassed, particularly in situations of excessive soil moisture. Under such conditions, use should be curtailed or minimized to reduce the damaging impact on the turf. Decisions of this nature, including the responsibility of determining the intensity of use of the field, should be delegated to the grounds superintendent. *Continued on the next page.....*

Provision for Inadequate Facilities

Closely allied to field use is the surging interest in outdoor athletic activities and the resulting increased pressure on existing facilities. Because of economic reasons and/or unavailability of open space for the construction of additional fields, the use of existing facilities is intensified. Most of the existing fields are improperly constructed. As a result, these fields are unable to accommodate more intensive use without exhibiting serious deterioration of the turf cover. As the intensity of use increases, it becomes imperative for the survival and wear tolerance of the turf that the fields be properly constructed.

Inadequate Drainage

The single most influential factor in failure of natural turf fields is inadequate drainage. Poor drainage not only affects the playability of the field, but also has a strong negative influence on the growth of turfgrass and increases maintenance costs.

Various reasons can be cited for overlooking drainage as a critical factor in athletic field construction. Perhaps the most important is a lack of understanding or appreciation of the importance of drainage while formulating the specifications for the field or in the finalizing process before submitting for bids. Unfortunately, in many instances, adequate drainage is eliminated or reduced to inadequate by cost-cutters who do not realize the future cost of improper drainage.

In some cases, poor drainage conditions prevail in spite of efforts to improve these conditions. Such failures most likely can be attributed to improper specifications and/or other deficiencies in construction. Some of the common faults of ineffective performance of drainage systems include:

- Provision for Surface Drainage Only. A crowned or turtle-backed field with a few catch basins on the sidelines can facilitate removal of surface runoff, but will do little for improving internal drainage.
- Improper design of the drainage system involving pipe spacing, depth, grade and outlet.
- Installation of drainage pipe on improper grade.
- Backfilling of drainage trenches with heavy textured material restricting percolation of water to the drainage pipes.
- Improper physical properties of topsoil above the drainage system. The physical condition of the topsoil is a major factor limiting proper functioning of a drainage system. Soils containing excessive amounts of silt, clay and very fine sand are often used above the drainage system as the growing medium for the turf. Soils of this nature tend to restrict proper drainage due to slow percolation of water. Consequently, during rainy conditions such soils tend to be soft and soggy in spite of a

properly installed drainage system. Soils of this nature compact very readily when subjected to traffic. Compaction makes the drainage problem more pronounced. Air porosity tends to be reduced by both moisture saturation and compaction. The situation becomes increasingly complex, resulting in a less favorable environment for proper root growth as reflected in a shallow root system, weakened top growth, reduced wear tolerance and turf deterioration.

Results approaching miracles can be achieved in temporary restoration of improperly constructed or maintained fields. Recent advances in turfgrass breeding have made available superior varieties of turfgrasses, particularly among the Kentucky bluegrasses, turf-type tall fescues and turf-type ryegrasses adapted for athletic fields. These can be effectively established in existing fields by renovation techniques. They include core aeration to relieve compaction and verti-grooving to prepare a seedbed without destruction of grade or established turfgrasses.

The new seedlings introduced during renovation can be nurtured to a mature, dense turf with adequate provision for lime, fertilizer, supplemental irrigation, mowing and restrictions on use. To fully restore a field in this way, a restricted use period of at least six months is needed. If this amount of time cannot be sacrificed, restoration with a high quality sod can provide instant results.

As impressive and effective as a successful renovation effort may seem, and improperly constructed field will rapidly decline again. Repeated renovation efforts will follow the same pattern until inherent construction problems are corrected. Reliance on such procedures to overcome initial construction weaknesses will be discouraging and costly.

Natural turf is becoming increasingly recognized as a superior surface for sports fields. However, avoidable failures are a major deterrent to its increased popularity. Failure in recognizing and providing for the factors essential to establish and maintain a satisfactory natural turf playing surface is a sure path to failure. Success, on the other hand, characterized by an aesthetically pleasing surface supportive of intensive use, is a realistic objective. It can be successfully achieved and ensured through adherence to essential basic principles involving planning, design, construction, maintenance and use. ▲

Dr. Henry Indyk is a turfgrass consultant for Turfcon GSI Consultants, Inc., Somerset, NJ. Extension Specialist Emeritus in Turfgrass Management, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. And advisor of SFMANJ.

DID YOU KNOW? The effects of over watering your turf are soil compaction, root deterioration, increased disease activity, increased weed establishment, leaching of chemicals, non-point pollution, decreased playability, less aesthetically pleasing landscape, erosion, wasted dollars and wasted water.



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