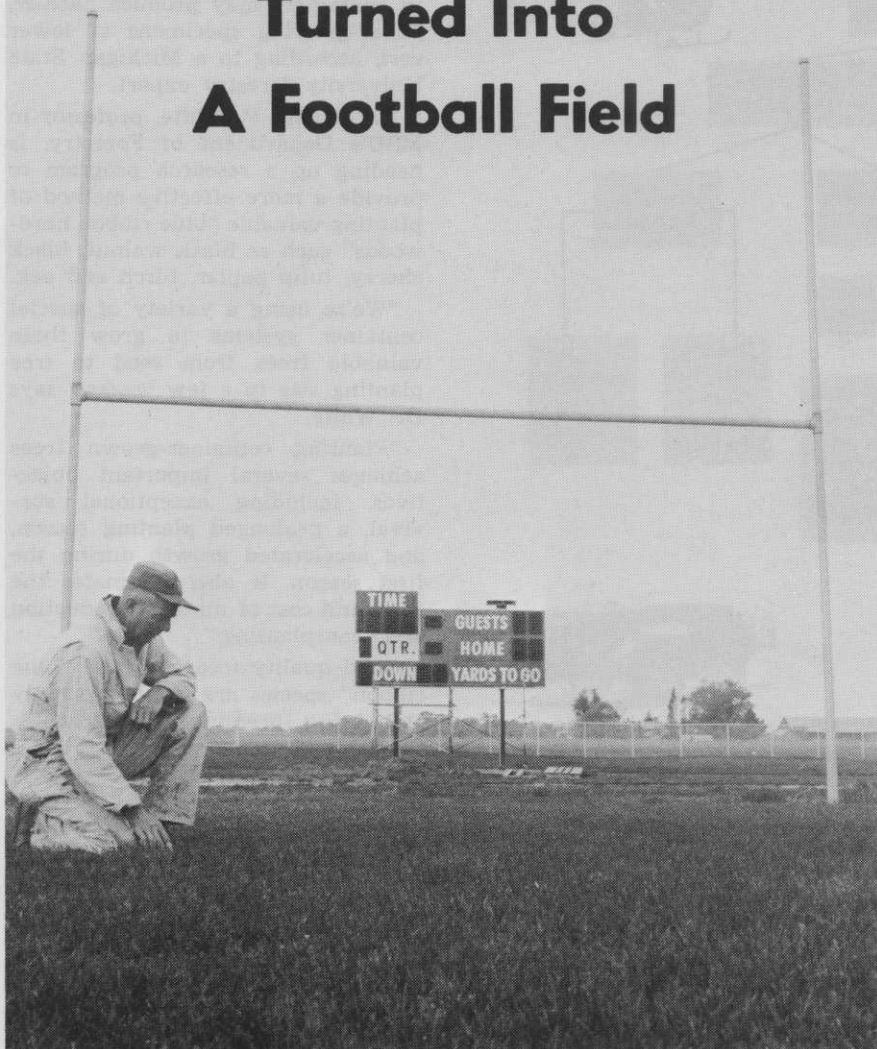


How 'Thistle Down' Turned Into A Football Field



WHEN THE SCHOOL BOARD of Indiana's new Heritage High Consolidated School, near Hoagland, asked Don Bohnke what he could do about the mess that was to become their new football field, he wasn't really too sure.

"I called that area 'Thistle Downs'," Bohnke recalled. "I'd been spraying that ground with 2,4D for three years before the Board bought it for the football field." He does a lot of custom spraying in the Hoagland area, in addition to his own farming and a dealership in seed, fertilizers and chemicals.

"We successfully spray some 500 acres of corn and grassland a year with 2,4D," he says. "That field was covered just about 100% with thistles." And they weren't just any particular variety. "We had Canadas, sowthistles, bullthistles, and just about every thistle you can name in that field, both before and after it was seeded to grass in the early spring of 1969. I'd say, though, that the majority were Canadian and sowthistles."

The situation looked pretty desperate in late June when the School Board asked Bohnke to try something else, since the 2,4D itself just wasn't doing the job. The field was promised to be ready to play on in the fall of 1969, and the newly planted turf was so badly infested you could barely find the grass. In fact, it looked as if the players could end up smarting as much from thistle stickers as from bruises, if something wasn't done to solve the problem fast.

"We've had good experience with a different type of phenoxy herbicide, Dacamine, where we've had bad broadleaf infestation in corn," Bohnke told the Board. "I can't promise it'll do the job on as bad a mess as this, but it looks like it has more weedkilling power than standard 2,4D amines, even though it works a little slower than many 2,4D's. That might sound like a drawback, but when it comes to thistles it's a big 'plus'. Instead of

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"This is what the entire 'Thistle Downs' used to look like (left)," reports custom sprayman Don Bohnke, as he looks over a small patch outside the Heritage High School field that didn't get treated with Dacamine herbicide. "Now, you'd need a magnifying glass to find a thistle seedling in the thick, healthy turf."

Thistle Down . . .

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just burning off the tops and leaving the healthy root systems to sprout again later, it gets all the way down into the roots and kills from the bottom up."

The Board was impressed, but also had heard about another post-emergence herbicide they wanted Bohnke to try—dicamba.

"We figured the Dacamine probably would do it by itself," Bohnke says, "but they asked us to try the dicamba, also, so we mixed the two on some parts of the field—at a rate of about a quart and a half of Dacamine and a half-pint of dicamba. A large part of the field was sprayed with Dacamine at about a quart to the acre, though, and it did every bit as good a job as the combination.

"Even though I knew Dacamine works slowly, the first time we sprayed this field, boy was I sick!" Bohnke exclaims. "I came back in here two weeks after we had gone over the field and the thistles were coming up thicker than hair on a dog!

"I figured we'd come back again in three weeks and spray again," Bohnke goes on. "When we got back, I couldn't believe my eyes—they were all just about gone! We sprayed it with another quart to the acre, anyway, just to make sure. That shot really got them down, and by the time we went in the third and last time I don't think we had a 10% thistle crop in here anymore. The grass was in beautiful shape, filling in where the thistles were dying out."

The weather at the time of the control job was far from ideal for weed control, although it was perfect for growing thistles. "We might have gotten them with a little less material and fewer applications if we hadn't had so much wet, cool weather," Bohnke admits.

The first application was made during the second week of July. The second shot of Dacamine went on three weeks later, and the last one was applied just before the football season started in September.

The School Board certainly had no complaints about the results. You've got to go over the field with a magnifying glass to find a thistle seedling anywhere. "If we see a new one peek up anywhere now," Bohnke says, "we give the boys a little Dacamine in a hand sprayer and let them give it a shot. With that kind of continuous control, we don't expect to have any thistle problems in 'Thistle Downs' any more."



After two games, six-month-old turf is in excellent shape, even after a heavy chemical weed control program to rid it of a serious thistle problem. Bohnke, left, and Diamond Chemicals representative Steve Derrick look over the luxuriant grass.

New Golf Course Product Boosts Microbial Activity

American Bio-Turf, a bio-chemical solution which aids the biological control of microbial environment through stimulation of microbial activity, has been introduced as an aid to golf course maintenance by Farm Builders, a division of American Bio-Culture, Inc.

Jack Grover, president of Farm Builders, announced that the opening of the American Bio-Turf division brings to the golf course superintendent the experience gained through more than ten years of research and development, pioneering the practical application of soil microbiology to everyday agriculture.

American Bio-Turf's stimulation of the soil microbes results in better water retention and penetration. Microbial activity also makes more efficient use of fertilizers applied to and turf.

The aerifying action of the microbes in the soil also minimizes the need for mechanical aerification of turn areas, thereby creating another budget savings for the golf course superintendent. For more details, circle (723) on the reply card.

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