

PURDUE UNIVERSITY: THREE TYPES OF TURF

Melvin J. Robey is superintendent of athletic facilities at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, a position he has held for the last ten years. He received his Bachelor's degree from Utah State University and his Masters at Purdue, both in turf management. He is author of the book *LAWNS*, published by Davis McKay Company in New York and has another in the works which will be out soon.



All of the athletic facilities at Purdue University under the supervision of Melvin J. Robey are used extensively. They include an outdoor track, hockey field, baseball diamond, a natural turf practice field, a synthetic turf practice field, and the football stadium, a Prescription Athletic Turf system.

The stadium is used for spring football practice, anywhere from two to four times per week, averaging probably twice. In the Fall, it is used maybe 25 to 30 times for practice and games. It has also been used for the women's hockey games, and probably will be again this year. The field is seeded with a mix of Bonnie Blue, Baron, Nugget and Glade. It has just been recently resodded for the first time in four years. Plans in-

After the sod is put down, it is lightly rolled. The PAT system does not have a crown.

The first step in resodding the center of the practice field is removing the existing turf.



clude overseeding heavily this fall with Warren's A-34. The center of the practice field is resodded every year after spring ball is over. This includes an area about 40 feet wide and 30 feet long. The practice fields and baseball diamond have been overseeded with Manhattan ryegrass for the last ten years. This has proven to be a very tough, durable grass for athletic areas, according to Robey.

All of the fields except the stadium receive a complete fertilizer, including four pounds of nitrogen,

per year. The stadium receives more.

Normal herbicide applications include a mixture of 2,4-D, dicamba and MCP, depending upon the species of weed. Pre-emergence weed control includes applications of Dacthal. Diazinon and malathion provide insect control.

Grubs and the like have not been too much of a problem, says Robey, but leaf hoppers are, from a standpoint of annoyance to the football players.



Vacuuming the stadium turf gives it a well manicured look.

An endzone design requires painstaking measurement and painting.



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The fields are normally mowed twice a week in the Spring and Fall, sometimes three times if growth is especially rapid. Frequency is cut down to once per week during the hot season.

Mowing height varies slightly for the fields. The baseball infield is mowed at one inch, while the outfield is mowed at 1¼. The other

areas are all mowed at one inch. Height depends primarily upon the coaches preference, according to Robey, and management procedures are developed accordingly. The stadium is the only athletic field that is on a preventative disease program. Manhattan's susceptibility to pythium becomes a problem in the stadium, where air circulation is

limited. The stadium is sprayed every ten days. The other fields are watched with a sharp eye for disease signs and sprayed accordingly.

Fusarium hasn't been a problem in the stadium, but dollar spot, pythium and leaf spot can cause problems if not kept after. Snow-mold hit hard this year, hitting the ryegrass a little harder than the blue. Quite a bit of grass was lost, although not enough to cause major concern.

The stadium does have heating cables, but Robey wasn't able to use them at all this year, due to the coal shortage.

Equipment used to maintain the fields include a nine-gang reel mower, a seven-gang hydraulic reel mower, a smaller riding reel mower, a 48-inch rotary, and four 21-inch trim mowers. A monofilament trimmer is also frequently used. Utility vehicles include two trucksters, a pickup and a dump truck. A 100 gallon chemical sprayer and fertilizer spreader are used from the back of one of the trucksters.

There are three full time employees whose primary concern is athletic field maintenance. During the summer Robey picks up three to five college students.

Robey has found that he can maintain the natural turf systems with considerably less money than the artificial. He does feel a need for all three types of fields across the country. "The National League football players just held a vote and decided that they like the sand root-zone of the PAT system to play on the best," says Robey. (There are 11 PAT systems installed around the country presently.)

The Athletic Department at Purdue, of which Robey is a part, is responsible for maintaining its own facilities. Robey feels that it is much easier to maintain nice facilities under such a program. "I'm able to be associated much more closely with the various programs and coaches, and know what their needs are. I'm also able to explain my problems to them," Robey adds.

One thing Robey does like to stress, in maintaining athletic facilities, is that it is extremely important for the band to have a practice area other than the game field. Marching in place, as a band tends to do, creates severe compaction problems. The band will often do more damage to the field than the football team will." **WTT**



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