

ROLLINS COLLEGE: HEAVY USE OF EIGHT ACRES

Jim Boston is assistant to the physical plant director at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. One of his areas of responsibility is the grounds at Rollins, including the athletic facilities.

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Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, has only eight acres of athletic grounds. However, the patterns of use are intense, and Jim Boston, assistant to the physical plant director, fights problems common to all turf managers.

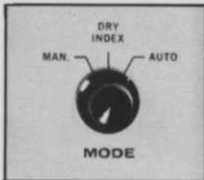
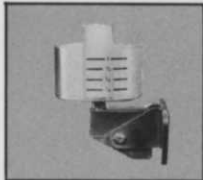
A fertilization program, and control of disease and insects are the items of major concern to him. However, he is limited to how much he can do and when, because the fields are in use almost constantly. The soccer field, for example, is also used for intramurals during the day and through the off sports season. "We're fortunate if we can keep the field in good shape half a year, much less a full year, because of this constant use," says Boston.

"We're involved with a very limited space. We're in an area that is built up in every direction with no room for us to expand. Our baseball outfield is used for soccer practice, because the game is so damaging to turf. The only area that we can treat properly and keep in a condition where we don't have an excuse is the infield of the baseball field, because it is not used for anything but baseball."

"The rest of the field does have some weeds," says Boston. "It has some worn areas, simply because we can't control it." Boston feels that the key to maintaining healthy turf lies in the root system. "When turf-grasses are trampled down, just worn out so to speak, they're going to bounce back and fill in the bare spots a lot faster if the roots are strong, deep and healthy."

One very important aspect of keeping healthy turf in the South is pH. "We use dolomite lime to keep pH at its optimum to get the best growth from the grass during the periods when you have to try and coax it to do so. We apply 10 tons per year."

"Every two or three months, I



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will pull plugs from our fields and check the condition of the root system. If I am satisfied with it, but yet the greenness I want isn't there, I'll apply heavy nitrogen or iron to bring it out. If not, then I will apply something that will be more beneficial to the roots. When I'm trying to recover an area, I'm more concerned with the roots than I am the top. The top will come if the roots are there."

Both of the athletic fields at Rollins are bermudagrass. No overseeding is done, because the facilities aren't in use during the

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winter months. That can be good and bad, according to Boston. "We would like our facilities to be growing and recovering during winter, but they're not because it is winter. They're also not in use, so we're not really in that bad of a shape."

Right now is the rainy season, and the fields might get rainfall almost every day. This past winter there was maybe only one shower during three or four months. During those periods, Boston relies heavily on irrigation through his quick coupler system. "Sometimes we may have to water night and day to supplement the lack of rainfall. We don't like to water at night, because of the increase in disease susceptibility, but we're more concerned with keeping the grass alive than we are with fungi."

"I'd say that nematodes and mole crickets are our biggest pests. We have our fields treated for nematodes at least once a year. For some reason this also tends to drive the mole crickets out. It doesn't kill them, they just leave."

"Since our soil is 90 percent sand, and with the heat in Florida, we have a considerable weed problem. I approach it a little differently than most, however, because of the timing of our baseball and soccer programs.

Spring baseball practice begins right after the winter months and their game season comes in right behind that. So you've got a decision

"Do you want to kill the weeds and leave bare spots or do you want the games played on a green outfield?"

to make. Do you want to go in and kill the weeds and leave bare spots to gradually fill in, or do you want the games played on a green outfield. The spectators from the stands can't tell if they're weeds or grass. I wait until May before I treat for broadleaf weeds. I lose a month of growing time, but the baseball team had a green outfield."

Boston does not consider the budget for athletic field maintenance high, neither does he feel that it is low. "You have to look at

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priorities. You've only got so many dollars for the school to work with and our athletic facilities are not on the very top of the priority list. We don't get the dollars that we'd like to have, but we get enough to do a decent job."

One full-time employee takes care of the athletic grounds. An additional person is hired during the summer. "I'm fortunate to have an individual that's taking care of the grounds who really cares about what he is doing and enjoys the results of his labor. That's the key to the whole ball game in taking care of turf-grass." **WTT**