

Working out budget priorities

by Dale Getz

■ Coaches and athletes will always want more field time, and we'll always have more things on our "wish list" than the budget will allow, so cooperation within the University of Notre Dame's athletic department is vital.

For example, the varsity team in the midst of its playing season receives the highest priority on practice field use. In the fall, football and soccer get the prime time for practices. Secondary priority goes to other varsity teams. Club and intramural sports needs are worked into open slots in the scheduling.

Our area of Indiana has a short season for active turf growth. Turf establishment or renovation must be scheduled around field use. Most such projects begin in early spring and are completed by late fall.

I work directly with coaches on day-to-day situations like planning field use and rescheduling rained-out practices or games. Low-cost special requests such as field painting that wasn't originally planned generally can be worked into my



Notre Dame's football field to be lowered two feet by staff of Dale Getz (inset).

budget. Requests that require a large allocation of funds or labor hours are submitted to the assistant athletic director for approval and coordination.

Our coaches appreciate the level of maintenance and high standard of field quality. They notice and understand the effect of adjusting mowing height, over-

seeding, aerating and other procedures. Student athletes, alumni and spectators have also grown to understand the importance of superior sports turf.

I submit three budgets each year: for the football stadium, baseball complex and all other athletic grounds. They break planned expenditures into categories like capital improvements, repairs and maintenance, supplies, utilities, postage and phone.

As the level of play rises, so does the quality of the sports fields. The athletic program and its facilities have grown at the same rate.

We've worked to become more efficient as participation in sports at N.D. has increased at all levels. During the last few years, women's soccer and softball have become varsity sports, creating a need for their share of practice and play time.

To expand field space, we're converting a turfed parking area to practice fields. Also, an artificial turf field has been converted to natural turf.

All of this resulted in a 40 percent increase in the number of turfed sports fields, while my staff has grown by one.

The biggest upcoming project is lowering the football stadium two feet to improve spectator "sight lines," effectively adding 20,000 seats. We will install new drainage and irrigation.

Renovation starts at the end of 1995 season. The field will be ready for play by the 1996 season. Renovation will be completed in 1997.

—Dale Getz is Notre Dame University's athletic facilities manager and active member of the Sports Turf Managers Association.

From the business side...

■ Notre Dame's athletic department contains 40 sub-departments: 16 administrative departments and one for each of the 24 varsity sports. Each sub-department budget is reviewed and submitted to the budget committee for approval in October or November. The fiscal year ends June 30th.

We don't budget money to establish or renovate a field, or for other major projects. Those proposed expenditures must be presented as a formal plan.

We prioritize project requests to establish the top 10 according to the total goals of the department and the University. This list is presented along with the standard budget requests.

We show 10 special requests, but seek funding for the top four or five. This lays the groundwork for the following year's requests. For example, because women's soccer recently became a varsity sport, we may show a new soccer field as fourth on the list, and bleachers for that field as eighth. This spreads out a \$200,000 project into workable segments, rather than asking for everything at once. Budgets are approved in April or May.

Funds and endowments can be desig-

nated for athletics by contributors through the central development office, creating an area we can tap for smaller special projects. All management personnel and coaches in the athletic department are available to answer questions, show the facilities and explain needs in further detail to potential donors.

Dale Getz reports directly to me on major issues. The coaches report to the assistant athletic directors. Priorities are set by the administration. This helps us properly manage intra-department needs.

The easiest way to have good athletic fields is to have great people and rely on their judgement. Sports turf management takes the ability to coordinate the complex interaction of science and "art." Dale has the expertise to get and keep the fields in shape and the knowledge of what's best for each field and its turf. Just as the athletic trainer has the final call as to whether an athlete can play, Dale has the final call on whether or not a field can be used.

—The author, Bubba Cunningham, is athletic department business manager for the University of Notre Dame.