



# What 'down time'?

*Sports turf managers must be experts at meeting field agronomic needs within short and infrequent windows of opportunity allowed by intense field use schedules.*

by STEVE & SUZ TRUSTY

**T**he high school football field becomes the center of activity during the school year. At all levels, field use is close to being year-round, with any significant "down time" often coinciding with unworkable weather conditions.

Invariably, the football stadium is the premium site for the school's outdoor events, such as graduation. It may also serve as the outdoor site of choice for elementary schools, middle schools and various community-wide athletic associations.

#### **Football, soccer and band**

In some school districts the football game field is also the soccer game field, a practice field for both sports, a once-a-week practice site for the band, drill team and cheerleading squad—and the spot for overflow P.E. classes. It may be used throughout the spring, summer and fall (and during the winter in southern locations) by school-sponsored football and soccer camps, and by the local teams of various age groups for these two sports.

A major college football game field may be used exclusively for games, with one short on-field practice allowed for both the home and visiting teams each week. But the games also may include the underclassmen's football team and the men's and women's soccer teams. The marching band will want at least one on-field practice prior to each performance.

At some colleges the game field doubles as one of the practice fields for both football and soccer. It's frequently the site of key games for regional high school playoff and championship games. As with high schools, the college stadium is the prime spot for other outdoor events throughout the year.

College football has both a spring and fall season, and numerous camps. Soccer programs may run throughout the school year. The stadium also may produce revenue for the school as a rental site for athletic events, band or drill team competitions, or concerts.

#### **Other events increase field stress**

Professional football game fields don't get off any easier. Whether owned by the team or by the host city, these arenas must be money makers. The field may be converted for baseball, soccer, or both. In between sporting events, the field becomes a staging and seating area for concerts and massive meetings and rallies. Some fields even become heavy equipment display sites or mud pits for "monster" trucks.

Sports turf managers are becoming experts at meeting field agronomic needs within the short and infrequent windows of opportunity allowed by intense field use schedules. □