



Crabgrass is a culprit on athletic fields. By waiting until the grass is up and growing before spraying a field, Carey avoids reapplications.



One-man team MENDS LACROSSE FIELDS

John Carey, owner of Field Goal Athletic Turf, Peabody, Mass., does the fields over every spring, and aerates often to mend wear and tear.

Lacrosse players tear up an athletic field worse than any other team sport, says John Carey, owner of Field Goal Athletic Turf, Peabody, Mass. "They have only three areas of play—the face-off area and two goals," Carey adds. "Players put so much pressure on these areas that I usually end up rebuilding the fields every spring."

Among Carey's pet peeves are football and soccer coaches who run their drills on the same end of the field every time they practice their teams. "If the field is set up with one end nearest the locker room, they stay on that end to practice," he explains. "So you wind up with one end of the field really chewed up and requiring a lot of

work. If they would only move them up and down the field and outside the pre-emergence hash marks it would wear the field evenly."

Busy in Boston

A veteran of 14 years in athletic field maintenance, Carey has an intimate knowledge of many of the football, soccer, Little League and lacrosse fields within a 60-mile radius of Boston. Though he started the business with a partner, he bought him out seven years ago and works as a one-man operation for about 45 communities and schools. He specializes in field maintenance but finds himself moving into field construction as time goes on.

"When I first take on an account, I often begin by rebuilding the field," says Carey, a licensed turf manager who regularly attends turf seminars and workshops through the University of Massachusetts. "Generally, I strip out the area, regrade it, bring in some loam, crown it off and resod or reseed it. I use tractor-driven equipment and seed in several directions, paying special attention to the low spots. Athletic fields have to have a more solid root system be-

cause of all the wear and tear. It's not the same as caring for a lawn. Sports turf maintenance is a very specialized industry."

Educating customers

Field Goal Turf's basic program includes four scheduled visits each year, but Carey tries to call on each customer three or four times in between the planned applications. He evaluates field conditions and educates his customers regarding mowing, watering and general maintenance. His motto is: "We grow it, you mow it!" Most of his customers soon learn not to water at night during hot, humid weather and to keep mowing heights at 2 1/2 inches in warmer temperatures.

Aeration is the most crucial component of athletic field maintenance, says Carey. He subcontracts deep-tine aeration for the majority of his fields once a year in the spring. Without aeration, it would be difficult to get proper nutrients and plant protection materials into the root system because of the severe compaction on most athletic fields. So Carey begins his program each year with aeration and slice-seeding sometime in the spring.

"I slice-seed with a 75/25 mix of bluegrass and ryegrass," he explains. "Then I take soil samples from various areas and begin fertilization and weed control in June. I try to put down four pounds of N each year, but I don't apply pesticides unless I absolutely have to. In fact, I can't use crabgrass materials because I'm always seeding. I control crabgrass on a post-emergence basis, making sure the weed is up and growing before treating so that I don't have to come back to reapply."

Carey began using Acclaim 1EC Herbicide for postemergence crabgrass control when the product first came on the market eight years ago. He applies it at the rate of ¾ oz. per 1,000 square feet using a three-wheel Cushman vehicle. He sprays four acres to the tank and normally gets about 16 acres sprayed before the wind picks up each morning. As situations warrant, he

tank mixes Acclaim 1EC with fungicides, insecticides and broadleaf herbicides. "It's great to be able to apply a herbicide just when you need it and to only make one application," says Carey.

Fall treatments

Fall fertilization goes down in September just before football and soccer season starts. His fourth and last treatment is in mid-November, just before the Thanksgiving Day games. He began using Nutralene controlled release nitrogen two years ago: 1 pound of N per 1,000 square feet in his second and third visits and 1 ½ pounds on the fourth visit, with added lime if necessary. "This last application gets me through the first six weeks in the springtime, allowing me to concentrate on aerating and slice-seeding instead," he says.

In recent years, Carey's business has shifted to 35 percent field construction and

65 maintenance. He travels to other New England states to carry out various construction assignments, hiring local laborers and renting out bulldozer work. "This work is basically tearing up the old field, recrowning, putting back the clay and re-sodding the field," he says.

The marketplace has been kind to Field Goal Turf. Carey hasn't made a cold call since his first year in business. "Turf managers are a tight group and they ask each other who's taking care of their fields," he says. "I get all of my work through word of mouth now. But people also get to know me at conferences and shows, where I often give talks or have a booth. That's the great thing about the athletic field industry—business is booming." **LM**

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