

This field is closed!

It's possible to take a field out of play for a year. Start by proving the field is overused.

By DAVID D. MINNER

If your playing fields are in serious need of a long-term rest, develop a program where one or more fields are taken out of play for at least one year. Impossible? Try this.

As an example, let's use four soccer fields that are intensely used spring and fall. All attempts at coring, drill seeding, and other reestablishment practices have not produced acceptable grass cover because there has not been enough time for grass to reestablish and mature.

Explain to parents, coaches and others that a one-year rest period is important so that the field can be used continuously for the next three or four years.

Fair warning

Don't announce at the start of soccer season that you want to renovate a field and that it won't be available for play. Instead, get involved in scheduling for the entire soccer league. Find out when it has its first meeting so that you can present your plan for providing a safer facility by removing



Closing a field for one year gives you time to get it back into shape.

one field each year for renovation. Be firm, and don't accept any period less than one year to rest the field.

Explain that 95 percent grass cover may occur two months after seeding, but it will take at least one year for plants to produce enough biomass to form a protective mat of grass that is more traffic tolerant and shock absorbing. Insist that a game schedule for next season be produced without using the field. Once the schedule has been set without using the "rested" field, you're home free. If you approach the planning

committee after the game/practice schedules are set, they will be reluctant to change the schedule to rest a field.

Use sod to reestablish

Next year repeat the process: play on three fields and rest one. This three-year rotation will improve the playing conditions of all fields. Sodding is preferred when reestablishing the "rested" field. Don't compromise the renovation process by sodding and then allowing play before the full one-year rest period is over.

Take a positive approach. Let the committee know that they will affect field conditions when they use their expertise to make the schedule work with one less field. Acknowledge that the dollars spent on seed, coring and other materials will be more effective since the "rested" field won't wear out as fast as the others.

Don't say, "it will sure make my job easier". Some may perceive that as laziness.

What you mean to say is that your time and resources spent on renovation will be the same, but the field performance will improve. □

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Concentrate on high-traffic spots

Identify high traffic areas on each field and concentrate resources on those areas to provide a better return on your investment. High traffic areas of a football field (10,000 sq. ft. center plus side lines) that require more resources are usually six to 10 times smaller

than the entire area in and around the field (60,000 to 100,000 sq. ft.). If you are treating the entire field area with one management program then you can reduce input from lower traffic areas and increase input on higher traffic areas. High traffic areas require additional coring, seeding, fertility, and topdressing with amendments such as sand, calcined clay and compost. □

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