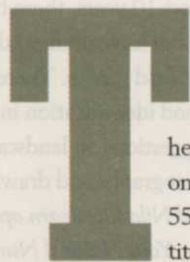


# Fields of change

*More effort needs to be directed to the fact that turf is a growing plant that needs a certain amount of care to continue to grow properly.*

By FLOYD PERRY



The climate for better and safer athletic facilities is changing on all levels. In my travels across the country to more than 5500 facilities, I have seen a complete metamorphosis in attitudes involving athletic/football/soccer fields:

- ▶ Gates are locked after school hours.
- ▶ Permission slips and liability waivers are required to use fields, thanks to the frequent lawsuits.
- ▶ Internal scheduling regulates the amount of weekly traffic.

For example, at a particular campus there is one field used to share football and soccer play. The football team has the field two hours each week, on Thursday before the Friday game. The band has the field for two hours a week on Wednesday. Soccer team gets two hours to work on game patterns, with no drills. And outside institutions—concerts, art shows, fairs—are not getting the fields during the season.

These procedures were not put into place overnight, but became policy after a serious injury lawsuit over a poorly maintained field.

Also, this institution had the foresight to set up enough practice areas for individual activities, including their physical edu-

▲ **With no management program, fields become better suited for parking lots.**

cation program.

## **Rotation or split fields**

Some institutions (and this is probably directed to larger recreation departments and colleges) have established a program in which two fields a year (cool-season turf) are closed and renovated. This involves re-leveling; reseeding or spot-sodding and giving an irrigation system upgrade. This allows the community to start the Pop Warner football/youth soccer/intramurals on quality turf and creates a strong confidence factor with the parent/taxpayer.

## **Cross-field use**

The more practical way to create safe athletic turf—field rotation is not practical in many locations—is cross-field design.

Divide your main field into two opposite length fields and avoid play in the center. Outstanding facility managers got this idea from the design of inside basketball courts with side baskets and different colored lines.

*cont. on page 8L*

## **...or fields of mud**

- ▶ *As coaches, teachers and administrators we create a 365-day plan for our individual teams or students. The facility manager must begin to create his/her plan and seek the administration's support.*
- ▶ *Do we have policies in place for rainouts or cancellations?*
- ▶ *Do we have a policy providing that teams cannot practice if the moisture level is too high in heavy clay subsoils?*
- ▶ *Or do we just go ahead and destroy whatever has been achieved?*

cont. from page 6L

If the coaches and field personnel work together to create quality turf by moving their workouts around and shifting their heavy work to the end zones or sidelines, they would have a better chance of keeping a strong bio-mass of turf for their big ball games.

#### The pendulum swings

Some institutions and recreation boards are creating safety committees of peers to help solve this 21st Century dilemma of not having sufficient quality turf for young people to play on. Some colleges, high schools and recreation boards have set aside funding for equipment which aids in turf protection and establishment. I tip my groundskeeping hat to those groups.

Turf grows by the inch and is killed by the foot. Truer words were never spoken. □

—The author is president of  
GMS For Sports Fields, Orlando, Fla. He  
has written *The Pictorial Guide to Quality*



This multi-purpose field is used for football/soccer play in fall, and lacrosse/field hockey in spring. The field manager needs the administration's support and help in scheduling.

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