

# solutions center

WEED CONTROL

## Goodbye Crabby

**Veteran turf manager lets the crabgrass poke its nasty head up before he attacks**

BY FRANK ALLEN

**W**ith 12 years of experience, Damon Ervie is no stranger to turf management. For the past three years, this director of fields and grounds and his staff of five full-time employees have been maintaining and renovating 87 acres of high-profile sports turf, as well as 230 acres of common areas, for Liberty Public Schools in a suburb of Kansas City, MO.

**The problem:  
crabgrass on a rampage**

As with all maintenance and renovation projects, Ervie had some interesting challenges. One was the crabgrass at the Liberty Soccer Complex, a soccer field that had been renovated and seeded with Kentucky bluegrass. The preemergent herbicide he'd used to control it had been a disappointment.

"The window of application for this herbicide is crucial," Ervie explained. "And we had to have perfect conditions for application." Ervie also said he was disappointed with the product's results. Since he had to apply it in early spring — the same time as seeding — it thinned out the grass.

"About 90% of the time, the roots were thin and came to the surface," Ervie

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### Damon's domain

**Institution:** Liberty Public Schools

**No. schools in district:** 20

**No. grounds employees:** 5 full-time, 10 seasonal

**No. of acres maintained:** 230 common school grounds, 87 sports turf

**Herbicide used:** BASF's Drive

**Equipment:** Toro mowers, John Deere tractors



When Ervie and his crew renovated the school's soccer field, they ran into a serious problem with crabgrass.

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says. "The grass had tip burn. Add foot traffic to that, and you know you'll wear out a field fast."

Besides the poor results in the grass he was trying to grow, Ervie was getting less than desirable crabgrass control. "We were lucky if we got 50 to 70% control," he says. "More often, it was 40%." Plus, he had as much as six to eight months of residual activity with this herbicide, so he had to wait up to eight months before he could reseed — regardless of how the field looked.

## The solution: let 'em show themselves first

The solution for Ervie was to use a post-emergent herbicide. He used BASF's

Drive 75 DF postemergent.

"We can get grass up and going before we apply the herbicide, so we know what we're up against when it comes to weeds," says Ervie.

Ervie also reports that the post-emergent product is more flexible to use. He can make an application as soon as the crabgrass germinates — even in temperatures as low as 50 to 60 degrees. And when he applies it to weeds early, there's normally no need for reapplication.

"Now, we're in a maintenance phase, and we only have to put down a half-application each year or do a spot application, as needed," says Ervie. The lack of residual activity with product is



The new school soccer field is one of the nicest in the Kansas City area, green and weed free.

another plus. "Most people with high-profile sports turf don't want a preemergent because of residual," Ervie says.

The effectiveness of the treatments resulted in significant savings to Ervie's budget. "It cost us about \$700 an acre to use our previous herbicide when I took into consideration all the equipment costs, labor and product costs," says Ervie. Using the post-emergent product he figures the cost is about \$150 to \$200 per acre." **LM**

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