

## **PUBLIC FIELD CARE TOPIC OF FOURTH TURF INSTITUTE**

Improvement and care of public baseball and football fields were emphasized during the recent Fourth Annual Sports Turf Institute held at California Polytechnic University, Pomona. Nearly 500 turf managers attended the one-day conference and equipment display.

The main problem with public fields develops during construction said Don Hunt, park planner for Rancho Simi Valley, CA. "Engineers specify a soil density of 95 percent for all areas which is far too compacted for proper drainage of sports fields," he stated. "The main priority should be trying to achieve a percolation rate of two inches per hour to avoid wet surface conditions so fields will resist compaction."

A big factor in getting the budget you need to upgrade field drainage is the way you ask for money according to Sal Genito, grounds supervisor for the Clovis (CA) Unified School District. Clovis High School had spent a considerable amount of money on new stadium seating without considering the impact that the drainage from the seating would have to the field. Genito connected the needed field improvement to the drainage of the stands. For \$12,000, he was able to correct the drainage for the stands, install new drain lines in the field and resod. "Once your supervisor trusts your judgement and use of funds, he will approve your requests with less hassle," said Genito.

Lowell Cordas, superintendent of grounds for the University of Portland, OR, gave public field managers some hope of improving their fields without massive correction of drainage systems. "We all live with budget restrictions," said Cordas, "and we can't do everything we know we should do to make the fields their best. So, we have to improvise."

Cordas described a program of deep aeration and sand top-dressing to give a field the ability to absorb a certain amount of rainfall without getting muddy. By using a Verti-Drain machine, which penetrates the soil nearly a foot deep, and filling the holes with sand, Cordas hopes to turn silty-loam fields into sand-loam fields in a few years. Each spring Cordas repeats the process until a majority of the soil is sand.

Skinned infields for softball also need adequate drainage, especially public fields, said Bill Wrobel, vice president of AIMCOR. Wrobel described a project by Chicago White Sox Field Manager Roger Bossard in Crystal Lake, IL, where a network of ten-inch-deep trenches were cut across the infield and filled with calcined clay. These trenches fed into a main trench along the third base line containing six-inch perforated drain tubing that deposited water into a city drain. Calcined clay was then tilled into the top three inches of infield soil to provide the consistency and particle integrity needed to keep an infield playable under wet or dry conditions.

Sam Monson, grounds superintendent for the Minnesota Vikings in Eden Prairie, MN, encouraged public field managers to try ideas like pregerminated seed, regular overseeding, proper irrigation and fertilization to get fields up to par quickly. Munson also described his role in preparing Wembley Stadium in London for the 1986 NFL exhibition game.

John Macik, sports medicine coordinator for the National Football League Players' Association, explained the latest research on player injuries at both the professional and college level. "The courts are getting involved in injury cases today," said Macik. "Either the sports turf industry develops safety standards for fields, or the courts will do it for them. Once the courts get involved, the stakes are much higher. Now is the time for all public and private institutions to seriously consider the safety of their fields."

Stephen Cockerham, superintendent of agricultural operations for the University of California, Riverside, told the field managers that progress is being made in developing methods to judge dangerous field conditions, such as compaction and cushion of the playing surface. "The industry needs to support sports turf research to a greater degree if we are to provide the needed solutions to injury rates," stressed Cockerham.

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April, 1987

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