

# THE FRONT OFFICE

## OPINION PAGE

### No Easy Answers



If you want something done right, like the construction of an athletic field, you *don't* necessarily have to do it yourself. However, if you're going to be responsible for a field under construction in your town, campus, or stadium, you'd be well-advised to watch the process carefully. If you have any questions at all regarding meeting specifications, building procedures or materials, you shouldn't hesitate to ask. Any reputable field builder will gladly answer your questions.

"That's easy to say," a grounds manager told me during a panel discussion at the Sports Turf Managers

Association's recent annual conference in Indianapolis, "but how are you supposed to know what's right and what isn't?"

If only it were that simple. Unfortunately, there is no single "correct" way to build a field, although proponents of various concepts and techniques would argue otherwise. A number of field construction philosophies have met with success. A number have failed. But very few of these successes and failures, at least in my limited experience, can be attributed to a single factor. Most are caused by a combination of factors. I subscribe to "domino" theory of why things, including athletic fields, go well or poorly.

Consider the following scenario: A contractor cuts corners on root zone drainage materials during spring time construction. That winter, the field receives more rain than it has in the last 20 years. The sports turf manager is new and has never faced a drainage problem.

On its own, each factor isn't necessarily a field killer. Combined, they spell disaster.

Sports fields are dynamic—they're living, constantly changing things. Their construction is important, but no more than the expertise and dedication of the people managing them, their equipment and budget, and in the cases of diminished resources, their *resourcefulness*. Plenty of turf managers have done well with poorly constructed fields. Plenty have done poorly with well-constructed fields. Rarely is there a simplistic explanation for each success or failure.

In this issue, there's an article detailing the drainage philosophies of four major sports field design and construction companies. I encourage you to read and digest it. I encourage you to contact each company with questions.

You cannot have *enough* information. Combined with your watchful eyes, it's your best insurance against the domino effect that leads to field disasters.

Matthew Trulio

# EVENTS

## CALENDAR

### FEBRUARY

**24-25** The Landscape Industry Show, Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach, CA. Contact: (916) 448-2522.

### MARCH

**1-3** Massachusetts Turf and Lawngrass Association 62nd Annual Turfgrass Conference and Industrial Show, Springfield, MA. Contact: MTLA (413) 549-5295 or Mary Owen (508) 831-1225.

**3-4** Ontario Parks Association 37th Annual Educational Seminar, Humber College, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Ontario Parks Association (416) 495-3440.

**4-5** Golf Course Wastewater Symposium, Newport Beach Marriott Hotel, Newport Beach, CA. Contact: Dr. Michael Kenna (405) 743-3900, or Dr. Kimberly Erusha (908) 234-2300.

**9-10** Sports Turf Management Short Course, Riverside, CA. Contact: UC Extension (909) 787-5804 x624.

**12** 4th Annual Turf Management Seminar, Cuyamaca College, El Cajon, CA. Contact: Diana Landis (619) 670-1980 x262.

**23** Sports Turf Institute & Grounds Operations Conference, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA. Contact: Dr. Kent Kurtz (909) 869-2219.

### JULY

**8** University of Georgia Turfgrass Field Day, Georgia Station, Griffin, GA. Contact: Georgia Turfgrass Association (404) 975-4123 or Extension Conference Office (912) 681-5189.

**18-24** International Turfgrass Society's 7th International Turfgrass Research Conference, Breakers Resort, Palm Beach, FL. Contact: Dr. George Snyder (407) 996-3062 or Dr. John Cisar (305) 475-8990.

Send announcements on your events  
two months in advance to:  
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