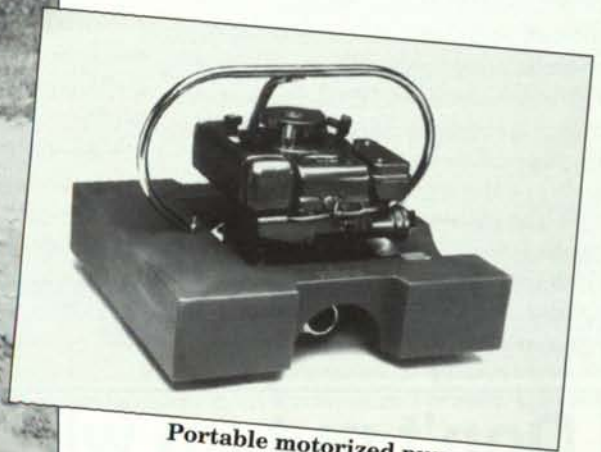


PORTABLE PUMPS PERFORM IN A PINCH



A hand pump solves many small drainage problems.
Photo courtesy: Kuranda, U.S.A.



Portable motorized pumps speed up removal and can deliver water through hoses to nearby drains.
Photo courtesy: Otterbine/Barebo.

By Bruce Shank

Sports turf managers have a strange assortment of specialized tools tucked away in their maintenance buildings. Each tool has a unique purpose and isn't easily obtained from a local rental shop in case of emergency. They include touch-up paint and stencils, rolls of cord marked for specific distances, a transit, a nail drag, bags of absorbent, bolt cutter, small plastic flags, various nets and goals, bases, fuses, extra bulbs, and a soil sampler. The totally prepared manager has one more item of importance, a portable pump in case weather or a broken sprinkler or pipe floods part of a field. This odd collection of supplies makes you look like a hero during emergencies.

Water can destroy the playability of a field faster than insects and diseases combined. Playing on a wet surface causes damage that can take weeks to correct. After trying so hard to get conditions right, months of work can literally go down the drain. A little insurance in the form of a pump seems wise.

Of course, a pump is no substitute for a sensible drainage system and tarps. Runoff from surrounding features, such as bleachers and buildings, should always be directed away from any field. In-field subsurface drains should be augmented with perimeter French drains and catch basins. Have your mowing crew remove any debris on top of drainage grates regularly.

Wise sports turf managers are compulsive about weather. They watch the

Weather Channel, scan radio stations for weather reports, and know the person at the local weather bureau by name. They know the various types of clouds, the likely result of changing winds, and how long it will take a storm to reach their facility and leave. They also run percolation tests on key fields every year.

When a storm departs, tarps should be emptied carefully toward the perimeter drains. In fact, one of the major uses of pumps is to remove water dumped from tarps. Many tarps consist of two or more pieces. Water can run off at the seams between the tarps and flood areas. The problem can be solved in minutes with a pump and application of calcined clay. Veteran grounds crews have the routine down pat.

continued on page 18

Portable Pumps

continued from page 17

Horsepower or Manpower

Hand pumps are both portable and simple. They operate in reverse of a bicycle pump. Water is drawn into the base of the cylinder and pumped out the hose. The hose can be placed in a bucket or a larger tank on a trailer. Small puddles can be eliminated quickly. If rain is common in your region and emergencies occur regularly, you might want to invest in powered pumps.

Larger drainage problems require the assistance of a motor. Small gasoline-powered pumps, designed to handle muddy water, can move hundreds of gallons per minute through a hose to a catch basin. No buckets or containers are required. Nevertheless, the pumps are small and light enough to move easily between different problem spots on a field.

For large areas with standing water, there are specialized rollers that utilize drum-shaped sponges to pick up water. They were developed initially to dry off synthetic turf surfaces. Walk-behind units and large riding units are available.

**Nobody likes to wait very long
after the rain stops
to get back on your fields.**

Handy Secondary Uses

Newer sports have increased the need for water removal machinery. Beach volleyball and roller hockey present new challenges for drainage. Sand pits for volleyball are like bunkers on golf courses. Without sufficient sub-drainage, they become lakes. The only way to remove water is with a pump. Outdoor roller hockey rinks are like hard-surface tennis courts. They must be squeegeed and pumped because of the boards on the side.

Then there are always dugouts built below grade that collect runoff during storms. Buried utility and valve boxes are unpleasant to address when full of water. Making irrigation repairs is much more convenient if you have a way to remove water as the pipe drains.

Nobody likes cancellations. And nobody likes to wait very long after the rain stops to get back on your fields. By adding a pump to your bag of tricks you can stay a hero in any weather. □

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