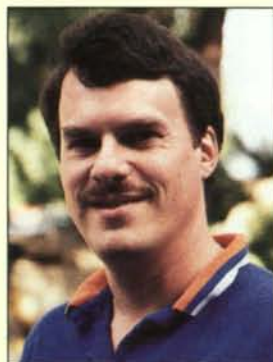


THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE



SETTING STANDARDS FOR FIELD CONSISTENCY

Problem-solving is one of the most important skills a turf manager can have. Sometimes solving a sports-turf problem is a simple matter of applying logic to the situation. Some situations, however, call for creativity more than logic. Steve Cockerham of the University of

California at Riverside applied some creativity to the problem of field consistency and came up with the idea for the UCR Fieldgauge pictured on the cover of this month's issue.

This month's cover shot may remind you of the ramps Evel Knievel used for his motorcycle stunts. Actually, it's more like a stimpmeter for athletic fields. While nobody expects sports-turf managers to cut their fields to USGA greens standards, consistency between fields is an important factor, particularly in the case of a major event that is conducted at several different venues, such as the World Cup soccer matches. Cockerham and John Kiesling, agricultural operations shop manager at UC-Riverside, designed a unique tool that measures the action of a soccer ball on turf. They tested all nine U.S. venues for World Cup soccer and with the help of the field managers attempted to create consistent conditions for players at the venues.

The UCR Fieldgauge (sometimes called the "Cockerham Fieldgauge," despite Cockerham's objections) has obvious applications for sports-turf managers who coordinate operations at large soccer complexes in terms of keeping field conditions consistent from field to field. Logically, the concept could be extended to baseball fields. (Sports-turf managers with an entrepreneurial streak may want to think about designing a version of the fieldgauge for baseball.) While individual field quirks, such as Fenway's Green Monster or the wind at Wrigley, are part of the game and probably always will be, field consistency should be a desirable quality, and we should not have to resort to plastic grass to obtain that goal. While some may argue that certain teams benefit from a "fast" or "slow" infield, the outcome of a baseball game should be decided by the talent of the players, not the condition of the field.

Sports-turf managers should be more like baseball umpires: objective, non-partisan experts charged with the responsibility of getting the field in the best condition for competition — for both teams. Most sports-turf managers try to do just that, despite the fact that few guidelines for creating field consistency have been set. Perhaps the UCR Fieldgauge is a step in that direction.

Mike Augsdorfer

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EVENTS

CALENDAR

August

3-6 "The World's Showcase of Horticulture"™ Conference, trade show and golf tournament sponsored by the Southern Nurserymen's Association. Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta. Contact: (404) 973-9026 or (912) 377-3033.

4 Application deadline for the fall session of the Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Management School, October 2-December 9. Contact: Cook College Office of Continuing Professional Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, (908) 932-9271.

4 Deadline to submit entries in the Professional Grounds Maintenance Awards Contest. Contact: (800) 609-PGMS.

6-9 Fiftieth Annual Soil and Water Conservation Society Meeting and Expo, Des Moines Convention Center, Des Moines, IA. Contact: (800) 843-7645 (THE-SOIL), ext. 18. Fax: (515) 289-1227.

16 Hands-On Field Day, sponsored by Pesticide Applicators Professional Association. Mission Bay Park, San Diego, CA. *Limited to 90 participants.* Contact: (408) 442-3536.

16 Grounds Maintenance Update, sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension. The Reading Country Club. Fee includes dinner. Contact: Judith Schwank, (610) 378-1327.

22-23 Sports Turf/Groundskeeper Clinic, sponsored by California State University, Fresno. CSU Fresno campus. Contact: Connie Cline, (209) 291-8024

24 Turf, Insect and Grub IPM, Rockland County (NY) location TBA. Contact: Anna Perkins, (914) 429-7085.