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, nonpartisan 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.
**September**

7-8 Southwest Horticultural Trade Show, sponsored by the Arizona Nursery Association. Phoenix Civic Plaza, Phoenix, AZ. Includes "Turf Stress Management," presented by the GCSAA and Sixth Annual Xeriscape Conference. Contact: (602) 966-1610

9-12 American Society of Irrigation Consultants Annual Conference, "Broadening Our Horizons." Georgia Tech University, Atlanta, including tours of major 1996 Olympic venues. Contact: Wanda Sarsfield, ASIC, (510) 516-1124. Fax: (510) 516-1301.

12-13 University of California, Riverside, Turfgrass Research Conference and Field Days, UC Riverside campus. Contact Susana Denney, Department of Botany and Plant Sciences, (909) 787-4430.


**October**

5-6 Texas Turf Irrigation Association convention and trade show, Grapevine Convention Center, Dallas, TX. Certified Irrigation Professional CEU courses will be offered. Contact: TTIA, (817) 598-0907.


9-12 Forty-ninth Northwest Turfgrass Conference and Golf Tournament, sponsored by the Northwest Turfgrass Association. Skamania Lodge and Conference Center, Stevenson, WA. Contact: (206) 754-0825

12-13 Texas Turf Irrigation Association convention and trade show, San Antonio Municipal Auditorium, San Antonio, TX. Certified Irrigation Professional CEU courses will be offered. Contact: TTIA, (817) 598-0907.


**November**

9-10 Golf Course Expo, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL. Contact: (207) 846-0600.

Send announcements of your events two months in advance to:

**Sports Turf Manager**

68-860 Perez Road, Suite J
Cathedral City, CA 92234
Fax: (619) 770-4380

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The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) is an organization of professionals representing all segments of the sports turf industry. Our members work to combine the science of growing grass and the art of maintaining sports turf to produce playing fields that are both safe and aesthetically pleasing.

STMA provides members with a variety of benefits, including: Education through regional institutes and conferences; support for sports turf research; facilities tours; a national awards program; access to the STMA National Conference and Exhibition; complimentary subscriptions to *Sports Turf Manager* and *SportsTurf Magazine*; and much more.

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