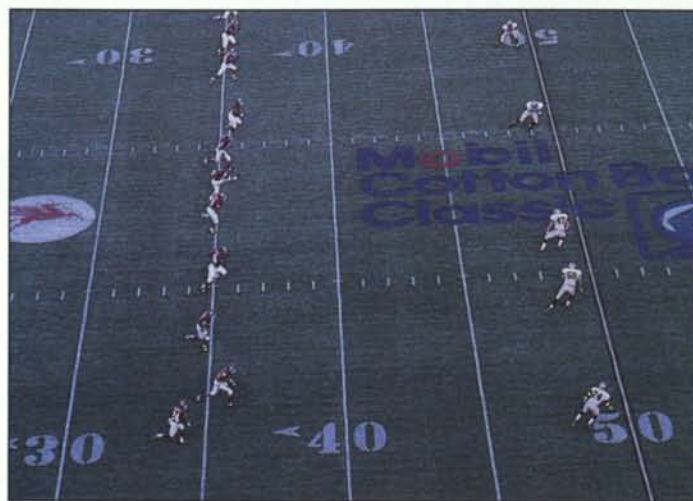




Chemical Log:



The Cotton Bowl in Dallas, TX, uses a turf paint to touch up the color on the bermudagrass field. Photo courtesy: World Class Athletic Surfaces.

Regreening Dormant Turf With Paints and Dyes



These before and after shots of the softball facility for the Johnson County Girls Athletic Association in Texas illustrate the effectiveness of green dyes on turf. Photos courtesy: Jack Schwarz.

Maintaining a consistent green color is a high priority for most sports turf managers, especially those charged with the care of high-profile athletic facilities. While most sports turf managers use overseeding to maintain green color on their fields during the winter, sometimes a quick fix is needed in time for an important game or a television appearance. That's when sports turf managers turn to paints and dyes to provide quick color in emergency situations.

World Class Athletic Surfaces of Leland, MS, provides turf dye in a concentrate form to many high schools and colleges in the southern U.S. It also provides the dyes used on a number of fields used for college football bowl games, including the Cotton Bowl in Dallas and the Liberty Bowl in Memphis.

"The bowl teams have been doing it for years for the aesthetics," says Tra DuBois, president of World Class Athletic Surfaces. "It's caught on with high

schools and colleges. At the end of the season, it's very popular."

The dye is sent to the customer in concentrate form and is simply mixed with water to match the color of the natural grass on the field. DuBois explains that he can formulate the dye to match virtually any color of turf. "Different areas of the country demand different tints of dye," he relates. "Some of the grass in the south that's a 419 [bermudagrass] is a springy grass that's more of a yellow-green. Others are a more blue-green shade."

At the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, TX, sports turf manager Roland Rainey uses a turf paint from World Class to touch up the color on his bermudagrass field. "We started blending colors," he explains, "so as to not show a great texture change, we started adding yellow to the dye until we got closer to the bermuda color."

DuBois says his dye sets up like a film, similar to a good quality latex house

paint. "It dries pretty fast — 45 minutes to an hour," notes DuBois.

Is the dye harmful to the dormant turf? "Surprisingly, no," says Dr. Coleman Ward, professor and turf extension specialist at Auburn University. "Bermuda is a remarkable grass," Ward continues. "The latex-base paints don't seem to harm the bermuda."

Wott Whatley, turf manager at Memorial Stadium in Jackson, MS, prefers to overseed his field with ryegrass but admits that paint is fine in certain instances. "We use it for some of our designs," he says, citing the end zone decorations used for the NFL exhibition game between the Philadelphia Eagles and New York Jets that was held at Memorial Stadium. "If I were to have something happen to my ryegrass, I wouldn't hesitate to paint it."

Bart Prather, who maintains the football stadium at the University of

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Arkansas in Fayetteville, faced a minor crisis last year and used the dye produced by World Class to revive the color in his field. "I had a ball game two weeks after a Rolling Stones concert, and I had some damage I had to mask," he relates. Prather also uses a green dye on the game field toward the end of the football season instead of overseeding. "We do it gradually," says Prather. "It makes the grass look green all winter." Prather estimates that he used about 100 gallons of dye to cover the football field last year, and he plans to use the dye again this season.

Jim Wellborn, president of Green Graphics of Albuquerque, NM, markets a green dye that is used extensively by golf courses and athletic facilities throughout the country. "Actually it was developed by my dad in 1972," he explains. "The original color was targeted toward warm-season grasses like bermuda." To match the color of other turfgrasses, the dye is simply modified with different pigments. Wellborn notes that sports turf applications tend to be quite different from

other uses for the dye. "More often than not, sports fields are emergencies," he admits.

Pete Flynn, head groundskeeper for the New York Mets, was faced with just such an emergency when Shea Stadium hosted an Elton John concert just prior to a Mets homestand against the Pittsburgh Pirates. "We had a cover on it for four days, and the field was wet when we covered it," Flynn explains. "The grass was dead when we took the cover off." Flynn obtained some of Wellborn's dye and sprayed the field. "It wasn't too bad," Flynn admits. "It wasn't the same as the natural color of the field, but it served a purpose."

Wellborn claims that the product is colorfast and extremely safe to use. "If it's really humid, it takes maybe a half hour to dry," says Wellborn. He notes that his product is non-hazardous and will not harm the turf in any way.

Jon Graves, president of Missouri Turf Paint and Field Graphics in Kansas City, says his company carries the Green Graphics product. "We like to recommend a combination of overseeding at a much lower level and applying dye and using that in combination," says Graves.

"That gets a better field appearance and helps protect the sub-strata root system for the turf."

In some cases a green paint or dye on dormant turf can provide a measure of protection for the grass. To the untrained eye, dormant turf may display characteristics of diseased, dehydrated or undernourished grass, and grounds crews may be tempted to apply fungicide, fertilizer or water when these treatments are unnecessary and, in fact, do more harm than good. Dormant turf which is painted or dyed *looks* green and healthy, so the temptation to over-manage the turfgrass is removed.

When overseeding is not an option due to time or budget constraints, and a green field is needed for a high-profile event, regreening dormant turf with paints and dyes can provide dynamic color for your field without harming the turf. In some cases, especially when fields are not in use during most of the time the grass is dormant, a field paint or dye can be used successfully to keep the turf looking green through the end of the season. Paint can also be used for spot touch-ups on problem areas of turf until the problem can be resolved. □

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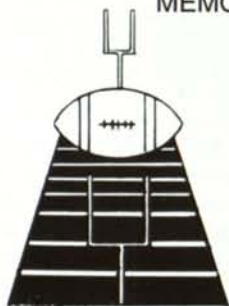
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