

Searching for

Dimensions

Have questions? Send them to Dave at: ISU, Hort. Dept., Ames, IA 50011.

by Dr. Dave Minner

Where do I go to get specific guidelines for layout and dimensions of sports fields? Specifically, I'm interested in the size of the base cutouts for an all-grass, women's fast-pitch softball field.

—Bob Stonebraker

Grass fields that host multiple sports will often cutout only the base and pitching areas, so that these small skinned areas can be easily sodded when converting the field for sports other than baseball or softball. The circle cutout for home plate must have a 13-foot radius, while the pitcher's mound should have a nine-foot radius cutout.

A 20-foot by 20-foot square should be used for all other base areas (See **Figure 1**). Replace the corner that faces the mound with a 45-degree diagonal. This diagonal should bisect the two sides closest to the mound.

It's important to remember that cutout bases are best suited for temporary fields. Permanent skinned infields are more durable, and are better suited for both softball and baseball.

Dimensions and field layout

Different associations may have slightly different suggestions for field layout. Here are a few organizations that have excellent printed guidelines for field dimensions:

- **United States Baseball Federation**
2160 Greenwood Ave.
Trenton, NJ 08609
(608) 586-2381

- **American Amateur Baseball Congress**
118 Redfield Plaza
P.O. Box 467
Marshall, MI 49068
(616) 781-2002
- **National Federation of State High School Associations**
P.O. Box 20626
Kansas City, MO 64195
(816) 464-5400

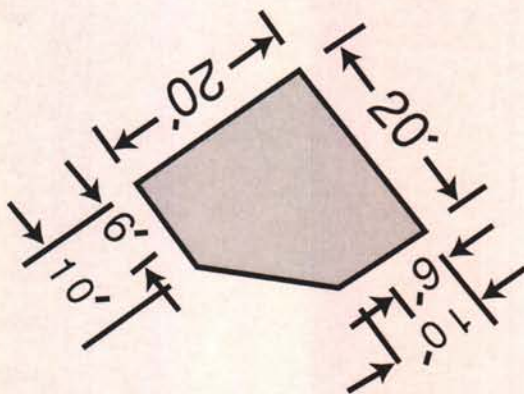
will have a set of guidelines for a suggested field layout. The key word here is *suggested*. The specific dimensions for boundary lines, pitching distances, hash marks, and other field components can easily be obtained through the listed organizations.

Even with the exact guidelines, there are many undefined dimensions. Some quantities are not specifically determined, and are left to the discretion of the coaches and field managers. These include: the width of the base path and the distance between the grass and the foul line; the shape of the mound area; the coaching boxes; the infield skin in the foul area around first and third bases; the cutout shape at first and third; and the fungo, on deck, and batter approach areas.

Sports turf managers should have an official set of rules that serve as guidelines for field dimensions. They should further understand that the loosely defined suggested dimensions offer a valuable opportunity to make changes that will allow more efficient management. Where time and resources are limited, an efficiently managed field often translates to better and safer playing conditions. □

David D. Minner, Ph.D., is an associate professor with the Department of Horticulture at Iowa State University. He serves on STMA's Certification Committee. Contact Dave at: ISU, Hort. Dept., Ames, IA 50011; or call: (515) 294-2751, fax: (515) 294-0730, or e-mail: dminner@iastate.edu.

Figure 1. Dimensions for third-base cutout



- **National Collegiate Athletic Association**
6201 College Blvd.
Overland Park, KS 66211-2422
(913) 339-1906
- **United States Soccer Federation**
1750 East Boulder St.
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
(719) 578-4678
- **American Youth Soccer Organization**
5403 West 138th St.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
(310) 643-6455

The organization, league, or federation that sponsors your particular sport