



Accidents Happen

I always welcome reader feedback. I rely on your calls, letters, and e-mail messages to bring me up to speed on the industry's most current issues.

I recently received an e-mail message from a Canadian reader who wanted to draw attention to facility liability. Stan Szwajkowski writes:

We all need to do a better job at communicating liability issues, whether it's up here in Canada, or in the U.S.A. The latest one that I've heard about is the injury to a football player on a high school site.

It is common practice where I'm from to utilize the football post as soccer nets. Most multi-use posts have tabs or rings welded to the top bar, and the support posts to tie the soccer nets to.

A football player, after scoring a touchdown, jumped up and attempted to slam-dunk the football over the up-rights on the goal posts. The palm of his hand caught on one of the rings or tabs used to tie down the soccer nets. The result was that he tore off the palm of his hand.

This resulted in a large settlement through the courts. Please advise your readers of this concern. After inspecting our schools and parks, I've found more than 10 sets of posts with this type of hazard present.

Thanks,

Stan Szwajkowski
Supervisor of Sportsfields
City of Kitchener
Ontario, Canada

General consensus designates safety and playability of sports facilities as the first priority of a sports turf manager. Idealistically, this goal would stem exclusively from a desire to protect the health and well being of field users. But get a couple of lawyers involved and you've got an entirely different scenario.

Apparently, accidents don't happen anymore. The courts seem to have decided that people can no longer be held responsible for their own actions. Somebody else is always to blame, and that somebody is usually the one with the deepest pockets.

You have to cover your back these days. Accidents can happen any time, and you never know when you're going to find yourself staring down the barrel of a pointed finger.

Working in the schools is, by nature, a risky business. Parents trust you to keep their children safe, and you're going to take the heat if something goes wrong.

I'm sure this kid's parents gave him permission to play football, and they probably came to cheer at every game. However, this zeal gets thrown out the window the second their son gets hurt.

It doesn't even matter that the school never intended the goal post be used as a basketball hoop, or that the boy's actions didn't officially have anything to do with the game. A big scar and permanent damage are difficult things to argue against.

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Tip o' the Month

Budget Approval

by Bob Tracinski

Equipment manufacturers are using new technology to design machines that help sports turf managers do their jobs faster, more easily, and more effectively.

The advantages of this equipment may be readily apparent to the sports turf manager, but budgeting entities are often more difficult to convince. Here are some strategies:

- **Explain cost advantages**

Calculate the number of labor hours saved per day, week, and month by: adding a ride-on triplex reel mower that delivers a game-quality cut; grooming baseball and softball skinned areas with a field rake; or adding a utility vehicle with multiple attachments.

- **Explain effects on the overall program**

A faster mower can cover a greater area in less time. More work can be done without increasing staffing levels.

With a field rake, the existing crew can prep a greater number of fields for weekend play.

The utility vehicle will free a truck from on-site people or materials movement. It can be equipped for spraying or snow removal, or for cross-department use as an emergency medical transportation unit. q

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