



Comprehensive Green Industry Web Site

I've been doing a lot of traveling during the past few weeks to a number of industry trade shows. In addition to seeing old friends and making new ones, I've been attending general business seminars. An underlying theme has been the implications of technology: electronic commerce, the Internet, and the Y2K issue, to name a few.

Let me tell you, if you haven't taken a serious look at these issues, you better start today. If you don't take immediate action, you'll be left behind and your business will be negatively affected.

Here at Adams Business Media and within our Horticulture Group, we're accepting and embracing technological improvements — especially with our Web site.

Many of you have already visited our site. For those of you who aren't familiar with the Internet's comprehensive Green Industry Web site, you're missing out on an educational adventure.

Turn your computer on, get connected to the Internet, and dial up the following address: <http://www.sportsturfonline.com>. Don't be afraid; it won't bite. Our site serves landscape, irrigation, turfgrass, and tree care professionals. You'll be amazed at what you'll discover.

Let me whet your appetite.

Publications: www.sportsturfonline.com gives you access to the entire line of horticulture magazines published by Adams Business Media: *Arbor Age*, *California Fairways*, *Irrigation Journal*, *Landscape Design*, *Landscape & Irrigation*, *Outdoor Power Equipment (OPE)*, and *sportsTURF*. Each magazine's site is updated monthly and allows you access to the current issue.

Archives: Our site gives you access to back issues of all of our magazines, and our archives are easy to use. If you've misplaced an issue, or you want to find previously published articles on a particular topic or by a certain author, www.sportsturfonline.com gives you access to the information in seconds.

Show Calendar: Our comprehensive online trade show/meeting calendar keeps you up to date on what's happening in the green industry. It's updated weekly, and it lists scheduled events through 2001!

Discussion: An online discussion room allows you to post questions or enter a chat room to have online discussions with peers.

Industry Links: Our site provides links to industry distributors, professionals, associations, and advertising/public relations firms.

E-Mail Editors: www.sportsturfonline.com gives you access to all of our Green Industry editors through e-mail.

Products/Services: A comprehensive database of suppliers, vendors, and partners gives you access to a broad range of industry products and services. You can search by company name, product/service, or alpha company.

We're always open to new ideas. Our Web site is a living document, and we add new information daily. Please don't hesitate to call or e-mail your ideas to me or one of the editors, and be a part of the Green Industry's ONLY comprehensive Web site.

Have fun on your journey, and I hope to hear from you.

Rob Benes, Editorial Director/Associate Publisher
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Tip o' the Month

Safety First

by Kevin Robinson

When discussing field safety, many factors need to be addressed. A single overlooked detail can cause an injury, so it's important to be meticulous. All safety points should be monitored weekly, if not daily.

One of the best ways to watch for unsafe conditions is to stay alert while mowing. You cover the entire field during mowing, and if you're observant, you'll see conditions that need to be corrected. Keep an eye out for grading, drainage, compaction, lips on softball and baseball fields, worn areas, obstacles, and irregular irrigation heads.

Alert mowing can help you spot trouble areas, but it's still necessary to walk your field daily to get a first-hand feel for what's going on.

Grade and drainage

Initial grade work and drainage are probably the most important field safety factors. A field that has a consistent slope with no bumps or swells will avoid numerous potential injuries. Good grade work will also allow you to get more games in, since your field will recover quickly after rain.

Improper grade and drainage problems will produce standing water, which will result in divots and rutting — common sources of injury. Without good drainage, you'll end up with muddy and unsafe playing conditions. Field damage will be intensified, and the resulting beat-up surface can continue to contribute to injuries down the line.

Each sport has different specifications, and there are many ways to grade a field. However, there are a few guidelines that apply to all fields.

A one- to two-percent slope is optimum. This will allow some surface drainage in heavy rain events. The crown should fall in the middle of the field, and the catch basins should be

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placed out of play to protect the players.

On native-soil fields, it may be necessary to add some drain lines. As far as placement is concerned, drain lines can be adapted to your situation. They should be approximately three feet deep and approximately two inches wide, and surrounded by pea gravel and coarse sand on top.

I recommend allowing the turf to run across the line with rhizomes and stolons so an organic layer is not on top of your line.

Compaction

Compaction is another big safety concern. A hard field can make footing a problem, and injuries can stem from athletes sliding, diving, or being knocked to the ground. An aerification program can help avoid these problems.

Aerification helps reduce the bulk density of your soil, creating a softer, less-compacted field. Aeration tines are available in a variety of sizes; your choice of equipment will depend on how much recovery time your turf will have before the next event, how

much damage to the turf is acceptable, and the severity of your soil's compaction.

Your irrigation program will also affect field hardness. If the proper amount of moisture is not maintained in the soil, it will become so dry that it will crack and become extremely hard. This type of field will not cushion an athlete's fall, and the possibility of injury increases dramatically.

Lips

For baseball and softball fields, lips that occur where the skinned area meets the turf create common safety hazards. Lips cause horrendous and unpredictable bounces, and players can be severely injured attempting to react. They also create a tripping hazard for players running between the skin and the turf.

Preventative maintenance is key to solving this problem. Use brooms and rakes on the edges of your skin after events, and wash any lips with a hose when the field will be out of use for a few days. When large lips develop, you can pull up the sod and rake the excess soil.

Skinned soil

Many factors come into play with skinned area maintenance. When prepping the field for a game, you need to consider weather (humidity, temperature, chance of rain, cloud cover, dew points, etc.), your soil composition, watering practices, and player preferences.

Scarifying the mix will blend the material and fill in cleat marks and other indentations. If you only use a mat drag, the divots will fill with loose material, and you will not alleviate bad hop problems.

Once you've scarified, mat drag to make your surface smooth. You can then use water to get it to the desired consistency.

Worn areas created by too much play can also cause injury. Worn areas diminish field uniformity. They can give different footing than surrounding areas, and can give athletes different than expected results.

Time is the key factor here. If you've got the luxury of time, you can use methods such as topdressing, fertilizing, and sprigging the



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Before the season, during the season, and after the season, fields need to be monitored for safety. Here is a short checklist of things to look for:

- ✓ Wet areas (grade/drainage problems)
- ✓ Compaction
- ✓ Lips on the borders of skinned areas
- ✓ Skinned area consistency
- ✓ Worn areas
- ✓ Field equipment hazards
- ✓ Irregular irrigation heads

worn areas if it's in the budget.

If the turf needs to be repaired quickly, you must sod. But remember, it's important to keep the turf consistent for ball roll.

Any material you add to your infield should be applied to a small, 10-foot by 10-foot test section before it's added to the entire skinned area. If you're happy with the test area's performance after a trial period, then and only then should you incorporate the material into the entire area.

Above the turf

Field safety concerns extend beyond the playing surface. All nets, cages, walls, fences, and poles need to be maintained to protect the safety of all facility users. All of this equipment must be checked before each event.

Nets and cages should be examined for holes. These could allow balls to sail out of the field of play into the crowd, and they can cause balls to bounce back unpredictably at players on the field. Walls, fences, and poles need to be properly padded to lessen the impact of potential collisions.

Below the turf

If improperly installed or maintained, equipment within the turf can be dangerous as well. Irrigation heads that sit too high or too low with reference to the soil surface can cause players to trip or misstep.

Even irrigation heads that were initially installed correctly can pose problems later on if left unchecked. Thatch and topdressing can cause a field to rise above the level of the original installation. You should adjust irrigation head height as part of your rou-

tine maintenance program.

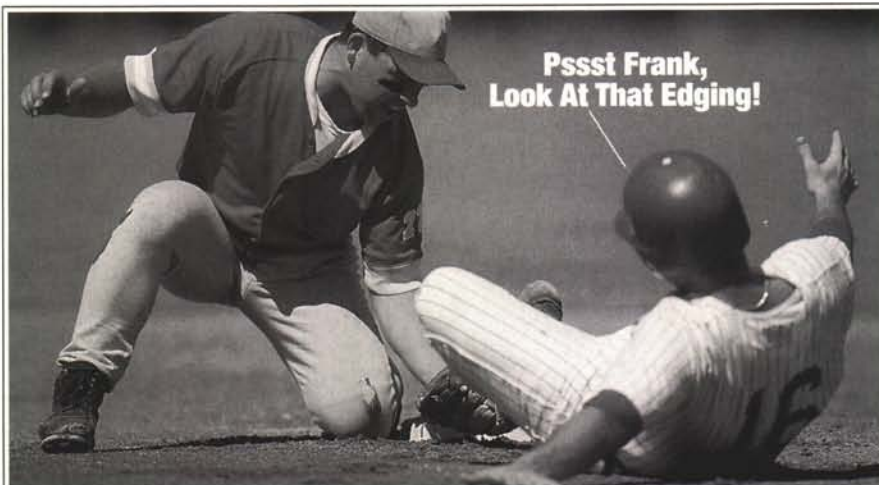
Placement of the heads is also important. You don't want to sacrifice field safety for good coverage by placing too many heads or by placing them in high-traffic areas.

The first and foremost job of the sports turf manager is to protect athlete safety. No matter what the level of play, you don't want to end an athlete's career. If the field is

safe, you can watch events without worrying, and know that you've done your job.



Kevin Robinson is head groundskeeper for Durham Bulls Athletic Park, home of the Durham Bulls, AAA affiliate of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.



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