



Show Off Your Hidden Talents

by Mike Hebrard, Athletic Field Design

Everyone has a multitude of hidden talents, but sometimes it takes a challenge to bring out your best. A typical request I receive might be, "We have a big game against our cross town rival and we want to make the field look really special." By the way, I get the request on Wednesday and the game is on Friday. That doesn't leave much time for making an elaborate stencil or pattern.

Or maybe the request is for a one-time special event, like the designs I paint at the Nike World Campus every time they name a building after one of their Sports Stars. The actual event might only last an hour or two, then I'm asked, "How long will the



It's a smart idea to use heavy plastic or a tarp when painting an entire endzone or an elaborate logo. Photos courtesy: Mike Hebrard

design last?" or even, "How do we get it to come off?"

I'm going to share some quick and professional field painting methods that I have learned over the years to jazz up the big game or event. One of the methods that I have used is a grid method, making an enlargement of your logo, then drawing a series of lines in a graph format on your drawing at a workable uniform spacing.

Lay out the size of the logo,

converting inches to feet, and mark dots on the grass at the edges of the design. (I like to use inverted spray chalk or blue to do the initial layout.) Repeat the graph, using string and long nails, going back and forth until the graph is completed. By looking at the drawing, note where each line crosses a grid and duplicate it on the grass by painting a line, gradually connecting the shape of the logo.

I like to use the inverted aerosol cans to differentiate the different colors and features. Once the logo has been completed, you can brighten it using your airless sprayer.

This method takes a lot of set up time, but without hiring a sign shop to lay it out on a tarp, it is the most accurate way to create the design quickly.

Probably the most popular method of painting on athletic turf is the stencil on a heavy plastic or tarp. These are readily available from most athletic paint suppliers. I highly recommend that you use them if

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that I use can easily project the image and trace it onto the white surface.

Once the outline is done, cut half moons every couple of feet or at each corner. Mark on the tarp where the center is so you can properly align the stencil. Use an inverted aerosol can to paint in each cutout. I quickly learned that you paint red in the red areas, blue in blue, and white in white. Otherwise, once you pull off the tarp, you have a mess of white dots without knowing where to start. Connect the same colored dots and fill in. It helps to have a laminated colored drawing on hand to catch the details.

After I lay out the logo, I fold up the stencil and put into a marked duffle bag to store and identify its contents.

Some other commonly used logos include shapes, such as circles, stars, ovals, triangles, squares, etc. A lot of logos feature a school letter inside an

After laying out the logo, fold up your stencil and place it into a marked duffle bag to store and identify its contents.

you are painting an entire endzone or an elaborate logo. I like to use a

white poly tarp with grommets. The sign company (North Pacific Sign)

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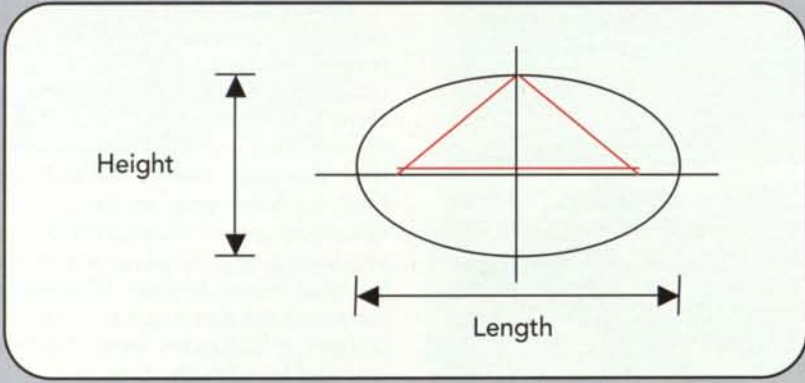


"We make the game look better!"

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Diagram 1.

Editor's note: red is the string connecting all of the points).



Painting dirt can be a tricky task: Painters must find the proper level of moisture to take the paint but not make the colors bleed.

oval or ellipse. For this, create an axis, measure and mark the desired length and height. Using half of the length, measure from the top of the vertical axis to each lateral axis. Tie a string connecting both the new end points and the one top point. Remove the top pin and use your aerosol hand painter to follow the taut string around until the ellipse is complete.

A five-point star can be developed in a couple of ways (see diagram 2). The angle is 72 degrees if you are able to acquire that measurement. It also has five lines of equal distance.

One of the easiest methods is to paint a circle the diameter of the star. (Use spray chalk for this so no trace of the circle remains when the design is completed.) The best way to describe the process is using a 7:6 ratio. Multiply the radius of the circle by 7 and then divide by 6.

For example, on a circle with a 9-foot radius, you'd have 9 feet X 7 = 63 feet divided by 6 = 10.5 feet. Start at the top of the circle and measure to each side of the circle until the 10.5 foot mark intersects with the arc. Repeat from that point to the next 10.5 foot mark until each of the five points of the star is marked. (See diagram below.)

Another way to paint logos is to make a plywood cut out of the design and piece it together. These forms are very durable, but take up lots of storage space. Foam core works well also, but can blow around in the wind and usually last for only one or two applications. These work best when painting on synthetic fields where detail is

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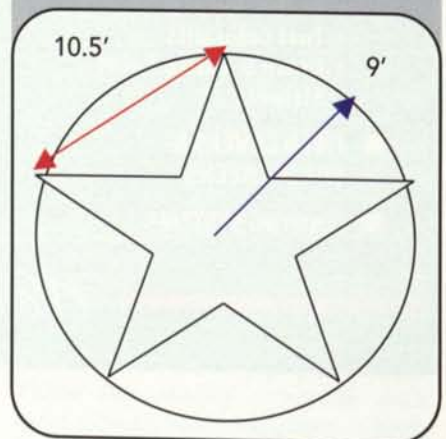
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Diagram 2.



critical. After one color is dry that piece can be placed over it and the next piece removed and painted.

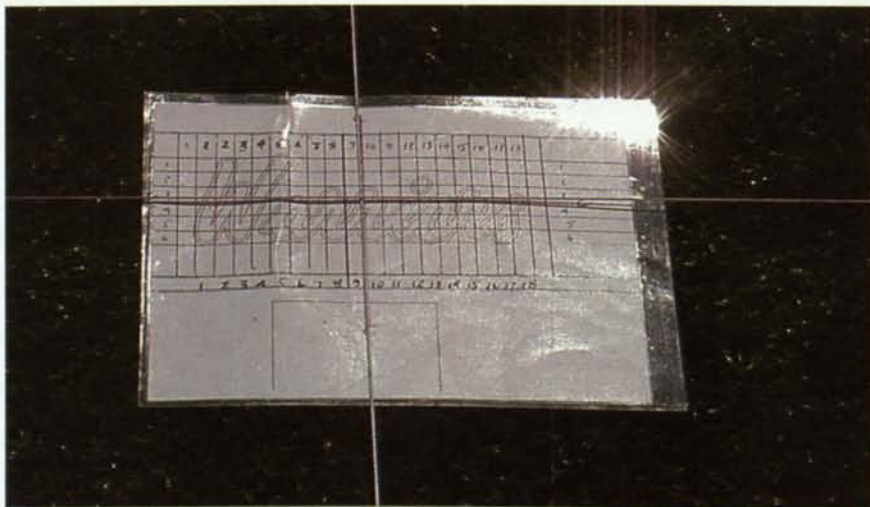
If painting that perfect straight line is your goal, try using the sled method. Aluminum works best for constructing the sled because it is lightweight. I have even seen used bleacher seat parts used because they are inexpensive or free.

Bolt the sled "runners" 4 inches apart and attach a "T" handle to each end. Simply have one person pull the sled and another one push it, while another person pushes the painter and the fourth person sprays the paint between the stencil.

At Qualcomm Stadium, Steve Wightman's crew rotates every couple of lines, so everyone pushes, paints and rests. This method takes a lot of labor power and can be very strenuous if your crew members aren't in shape. But for that big TV game or special event, it can be worth the effort.

The sled method also is very effective if the grass is wet or it is raining. I use inverted aerosol cans in these situations. You'll at least have some lines when no one else can imagine how you were able to paint.

My most famous logo painting might be painting on dirt for the State High School Softball Championship for Oregon. The OSAA sponsors the event along with corporate sponsors that want to advertise their affiliation with the event. Because the softball complex does not have any grass close



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to the stands, I paint on the dirt near the coaches boxes and dugouts.

The key to painting dirt is to have it moist enough to take the paint, much like staining wood. If it is too wet, the paint will bleed into the other colors. If it is too dry, the paint will not be very bright and will wear off quickly. Placement is a big key, as the State of Oregon has all three levels of play at

the same site one after another.

This also works in painting lines. Wet down the line area, let it air dry and paint. It will look nice and bright for the big game.

Most importantly, take lots of pictures to remind yourself how talented you really are. Now, I do have a brother in law that is turning 40 next

month, and I do have those 6-foot number stencils at the football field. I wonder if I have any black paint left.

Mike Hebrard is owner of Athletic Field Design of Clackamas, Oregon. The company provides products and consultation on athletic field improvement. Mike is a frequent speaker at turfgrass conferences and contributor to turfgrass publications.



When Lou Gehrig's

widow chose an agency to lead the fight against amyotrophic lateral sclerosis — the muscle-wasting disease that killed her husband — she selected the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

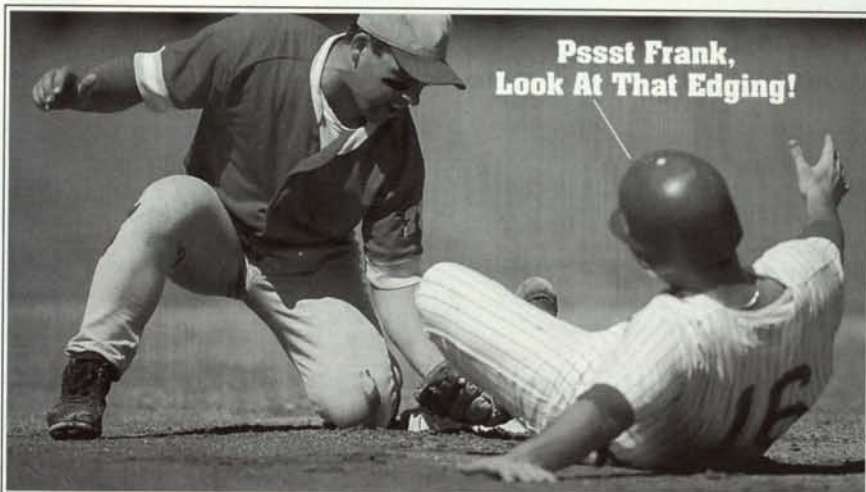
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