

Time-saving techniques soccer

BY DARIAN DAILY

“Work smarter not harder.”



How many times have we heard that old saying? If you are like me, you never seem to have enough time when it comes to getting all of your jobs completed. When I get one job completed, two more pop up.

Here are some effective time saving practices that can help complete your soccer pitch duties in record time:

The best time-saving practice is to use “cheater points.” Our cheater points are plastic anchors we drive into the ground. We have placed two sets of points to mark the corners of a soccer field and a football field. These points allow us to easily find the outer boundaries of each playing area.

We also have a set of cheater points that gives us a center line on an east to west axis and a set to give us a center line which runs north and south. By having these two extra sets of cheater points, we can get the correct measurements for any size field. These points also come in handy when we have events that we typically don’t host such as lacrosse, rugby, field hockey, and others.

You can use anything as cheater points, the pre-made plastic anchors or an 8-inch metal spike with a washer on top. It is important to always make sure that you drive these objects deep enough into the ground to protect from injury and insure that you don’t hit it with a piece of equipment. You can save numerous man-hours over the course of a year when you have your fields pre-marked.

Painting

Painting on any field, including soccer, is a very important job. When we paint any field, we always string line the entire field to ensure that we have straight lines and to give the painter a guide to follow. The key to having straight lines is pulling the string line as tight as you can and then “popping” it. This is similar to what a carpenter does before they chalk a string line on wood.

If you have a loose line, you may have a string line that has a bow in it and when you pop the line, the line will fall untrue. If you have a bow in the line and the painter does not pay close attention, they will paint along the line, with the bow, and paint a crooked line.

Maintaining the Grounds



When it comes to marking the field for play, soccer is unique in that there is no set field length or width.



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The most frequently asked question from those who have not painted a soccer pitch is "How do you paint the circles?" I have learned two ways. The first is to have a person walk backwards and mark a line in the turf and then have the painter follow the marked line with the painter. This method is labor intensive, not to mention the fact that the person who draws the short straw and walks backwards tends to get a headache from the blood rushing to their head.

Another method is to have a pre-cut rope or chain that you attach on one end to a spike or nail at the center of the penalty dot and on the other end to your paint machine. The total length from the spike to the outside of your painted line should be 30 feet. Once you have the rope tight, just start walking. The rope will pull the paint machine in an arc and will give you your line. This method is very easy and, best of all, only requires one person, thus saving time.

Using stencils has long been a standard "short cut" for sports turf managers. In soccer, the use of a corner arc stencil is a great way to give an accurate, sharp, and consistent mark. We made the 1-yard arc cut into a thin piece of masonite board. We measured 3 feet from the corner of the wood and then cut out the 4-1/2 inches to form the corner kick arc. This stencil gives us a consistently duplicable arc.

Managing wear areas

Soccer is a little different than other sports when it comes to marking the pitch or field for play. Soccer has a unique distinction that there is no set length or width for their playing surfaces.

The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) rule book only gives the maximum and minimum dimensions for a field. The law states, "The field of play must be rectangle. The length of the touchline (or sideline) must be greater than the length of the goal line." FIFA says a soccer pitch may have a length of between 130 yards and 100 yards and a width from 100 yards to 70 yards.

By using this law, you can change the dimensions of your pitch so that you can move your wear areas. You can change the length of the pitch if you need to give the goalmouths a rest or change the width if you need to move the sidelines.

It may sound strange to move the sidelines but if you deal with soccer, you know about the "Deer Run," the area that the referee assistants run up and down all along the sidelines. To help cut down on the damage, you can fluctuate the width by 2-3 feet on each side and still adhere to the laws of soccer. This may sound like a small thing to do, but it will save lots of time and energy in trying to maintain these areas.

I found most damage to goalmouths occurs during training sessions. To help save your goalmouths, place the goals at the top of the 6-yard box or the 18-yard box to reduce stress that is placed on the area. If you are in a multi-use situation, you can move the goals completely off the field when not in use. If removing the goals is not an option, try removing the nets. I have found that people do not like chasing after balls when there are no nets up.

I hope you find that these few timesaving techniques make your jobs easier and more enjoyable as they have for us.

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Darian Daily is director of stadium grounds, Columbus Crew Stadium, Columbus, OH.



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