

# from the sidelines

## Weather permitting

I remember trying to keep ready to move quickly as a teenaged centerfielder during wet chilly spring practices and games. Such conditions also prompted my using a Nellie Fox model (wood of course, back in the day) bat with the thick, tapered handle to take some sting out of making contact. But yucky spring weather is a fact of life. Here's what two turf managers experienced:

### From Virginia:

"I could write a book" about how his spring has gone, says George Mason University's Mike Sullenberger, who moved 24 inches of snow off his baseball field one week in February so the team could play that Friday. "Move water. Move water. It's been the toughest spring but also the most gratifying," he says.

Sullenberger enlisted the help of sod farm crew to lay down piecemeal 100 x 150-ft. old tarps, black side up, to help melt the snow, and then systematically pushed the moisture off. He even put plywood strips on his reel mower to help the effort.

More recently the area took 3 inches of rain in a week. "I'm spending a lot of money on drying agent but we haven't cancelled too many games," Sullenberger says. "My bluegrass baseball field looks good."

### From Iowa:

"We had no moisture from November 1 to mid-January then had a couple snows, ending with a 10 inches on Valentine's Day. Of course March came in warm and our teams wanted the fields (worn out from fall) to work out on. The temps were 40-70 degrees but the fields were so dry. They played fine because they weren't sloppy wet, but with dormancy they sustained lots of wear damage from traffic that normally would have happened inside," says Mike Andresen, CSFM, at Iowa State.

"We were rushed to get irrigation fired up for the fields during mid-late March because the temps were such (up to 89 degrees!) that grass would grow but there just wasn't sufficient moisture to 'kick it in'. Over the first weekend of April an arctic front hit us with temps in the teens and 7 inches of snow.

"Now temps are back in the 60's, the snow has melted, the moisture has really turned our fields green, and they're growing! In Iowa we have 'billion-dollar rains' in July for our corn crops. This moisture, even though it was snow, may prove to be a 'field saver' by forcing the growth they need to survive the traffic. A 'billion-dollar snow' in Iowa, imagine that."

I trust most readers will have figured out a way around their weather issues by the time you read this in early May. And I wonder, do aluminum bats sting?



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