

Selecting a field marker

BY MARK HALL

What should you look for in a new field marker (other than aerosol or chalk markers)? There are several different types of field markers available. You should assess your capabilities for field marking operations and maintenance before making a purchase. Do you have staff who can manage the equipment effectively to reduce any down time?

Today the acrylic latex paint field markers are cheaper to operate than an aerosol marker if you have two or more fields to line regularly. You also might reduce the time involved as some markers can line a field in one pass.

There are three primary capabilities of the athletic field marker to consider: the line spraying operation, the method of powering the field marker and the platform for performing field marking. You need to evaluate performance, versatility, durability, and ease of operation and maintenance.

The field marker spraying operation consists of the plumbing for applying the acrylic latex paint, the assembly for laying down the line, and how the paint and assembly is controlled. Here are some things to consider:

What coverage does this field marker provide, one or two nozzle spraying? How flexible is the marker for adjusting to different line widths and the height of the grass? How does it help you get straighter lines?

Are the spray nozzles easy to adjust and clean? How does the unit prevent nozzle dripping? How are spraying accessories connected to the unit? Most units come standard with a spray wand and extension hose for tight line marking requirements, such as soccer field corners and stencil operations. The spray wand and hose should not be charged with paint until required by the operator. Other accessories should be easily attached to the unit without tools and impacting normal operations. Does the unit come with a means to keep the paint in suspension, such as a tank return line for agitation?

Today there are primarily three types of field markers, compressed gas (CO₂), gasoline, and 12-volt battery power units. The compressed gas or carbon dioxide powered unit uses a rechargeable canister that will normally mark in the neighborhood of 20 fields before recharging. Determine your access to inexpensive compressed gas! The compressed gas is regulated and fed into the paint canister to force the paint to the paint shoe assembly. The gasoline-powered units normally have a lawn mower-type engine run a compressor that pumps paint to the shoe.

The 12-volt battery power units consist of a deep cycle 12-volt battery with an associated recharging unit and an electric motor with a pump to support operations. This new technology means airless operations and easier maintenance. The electric motor and pump is normally an integrated unit with internal diaphragms and valves.

Other issues to think about: How is the handlebar integrated into the field marker? The control of paint operations should be easily accessible near the handlebar grips so operator control doesn't suffer.

How easily and accurately does the unit move across the field during mark-



ing operations? A wider platform provides more stability in rough terrain. The center of gravity of the machine when fully loaded is important when moving the unit. Can one man easily move the machine?

How easy is the unit to clean and maintain? For paint preparations, painting, cleanup the operators should need minimal training. The operational parts of the equipment should be easily accessible with minimal tool requirements for adjustment, cleaning, and repair. With acrylic latex paint the clean up procedure should be quick while thorough to prevent paint residue build up.

Servicing of any field marking equipment is vital to the organization's operations and use of their resource constrained budgets. The manufacturer of the unit should have parts readily available and answer questions on operations and maintenance. Quick access to parts and the ease of replacing parts should be considered in your organization's maintenance capability. Most units should be maintainable with a minimal of set of tools such as screwdrivers, allen-head wrenches, and adjustable wrenches along with an operator's manual with trouble shooting steps.

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