

BY **BOYD MONTGOMERY, CSFM**

Top 5 Reasons Why Athletic Field Construction Fails

Number 1

Not understanding that a sports turf manager is needed to give input and care for the facility.

The sports turf manager is like any other member of the team and has a wealth of knowledge and resources that can help guide in any phase of the project. CSFMs (Certified Sports Field Managers) can help everyone understand the complexities of growing and sustaining healthy viable turf. Too many times the process goes as follows: hire the architect, design and bid the project, hire the contractor, begin construction, hire a sports turf manager. While this may seem like a good process to many, it should be looked at as the wrong way to build proper fields. The sports turf manager should be the first person hired, and they will then help in every process along the way. Not having a good foundation to start equals failure or struggles down the road.

Number 2

Not involving an expert on the design and construction phases.



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The design phase of any project is one of the most critical input stages that everyone involved in the project must be able to give guidance. This stage should be a team input effort and everyone from the end user, to the person caring for the facility should be on the team. Too many times the design phase is completed before the sports turf manager can provide any input on the project. Sports turf managers are a vital key and should be consulted or used during every step of the design phase.

The sports turf industry has a wealth of experts to consult with during this phase.

Let's define experts! Sports turf managers who have been in the industry have a proven track record of success in construction and maintenance practices. Certified Sports Field Managers, and consultants have specialized in construction and design of successful sports turf facilities. As in any process, make sure that management does its homework when hiring a consultant. Would you hire a person for your business unless you checked the background and references?

Number 3

Hiring the architect that designed your new and expensive recreation center.

Too many times when a project starts, management does not understand the need to seek qualified architects. Usually, they hire architects that might be great at designing the newest and hottest recreational centers, but have very limited or no understanding of the complexities of design for athletic fields. Architects should be chosen on the successes of the facility. In order to find that out, this means management will need to conduct background checks with previous project owners to see how the project went.

In simpler terms, you would not hire a building architect to build a multi-million dollar golf course or athletic complex! Architects need to be experts at understanding the different regiments of use and needs to design a soil that will hold up with the proper maintenance to the use of the facility.

Number 4

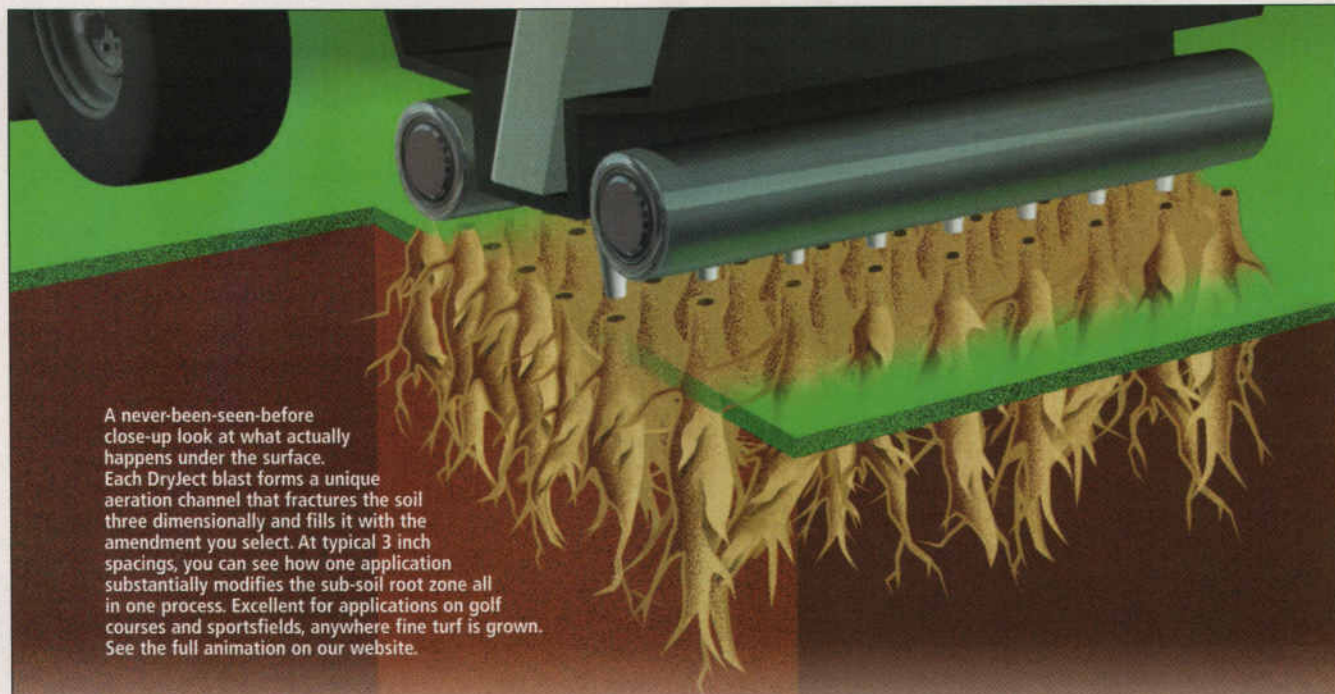
Writing construction contracts with the word "topsoil" instead of "growing medium" and/or "soil structure."

You tend to see the word "top soil" used often in construction projects where money or knowledge seems to be lacking. Trouble begins when this word is used because there are so many definitions of topsoil. The architect will have one, you might have another, and I can guarantee the contractor will have another.

Why is this important? Turf in athletic fields is a living, breathing

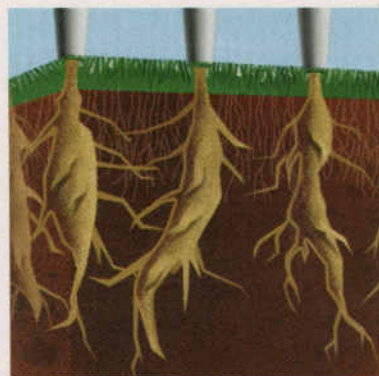
organism and it needs to have a support system designed in order to support success. If you start with a poor surrounding, then you will have poor results!

Understanding that you need to define "topsoil" into the growing medium or soil structure is critical to the success of the construction. Instead of getting the cheapest topsoil available, by defining it, you are able to specify the soil texture, soil porosity, soil infiltration rate, etc. These now give you a tight specification that is better defined and easier to hold contractors accountable if testing shows (continued on page 40)



A never-been-seen-before close-up look at what actually happens under the surface. Each DryJect blast forms a unique aeration channel that fractures the soil three dimensionally and fills it with the amendment you select. At typical 3 inch spacings, you can see how one application substantially modifies the sub-soil root zone all in one process. Excellent for applications on golf courses and sportsfields, anywhere fine turf is grown. See the full animation on our website.

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(continued from page 37) the product is not correct.

Number 5

Hiring the wrong contractor for the project.

Contractors must be hired who have an understanding of how to build athletic fields. Street contractors, generally low bidders, are not acceptable contractors!

Construction is generally awarded to those low bidders and you end up with poor results! Why? Because these contractors, while experts at building streets, have no understanding of the importance of proper construction of athletic fields.

For one, compaction needs to be looked at differently. For streets, the goal is to compact, compact, compact the sub-base. In athletic fields we all know what happens when this occurs.

Another thing is the equipment. While large excavators are great and fast, athletic field construction requires lighter equipment that may add additional time to the project.

Understanding that contractors, just like architects, need to have a complete understanding and successful history of construction is vital. Management must understand that they must do their homework before they award the contract.

Low bid is always a problem at some levels of this industry, and it should not be. The reason this should not be an issue is that the bid documents must be written with the specific qualifications required, and you should be able to eliminate any contractor that is not qualified to build your fields. Then you can feel comfortable awarding the low bid because that contractor meets all the qualifications. Be more specific than just requiring a contractor who builds athletic fields. **ST**

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Pastel green is passé. TifSport's dark emerald green color will make your fields the envy of the neighborhood.

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