

Football field prep for small crews

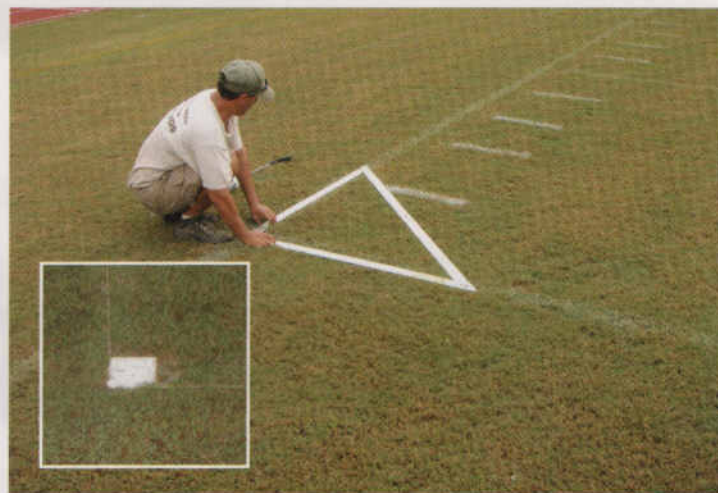
By Floyd Perry

Small, two or three-person grounds staffs can create fields that look great during prime time on football Friday nights. You can set up a schedule that can accomplish your goals with a minimal amount of effort. Let's set up a staff checklist for materials, equipment, and supplies so everything is in place and ready to go when you punch in Thursday mornings.

Mow the game field in two directions on Wednesday afternoon, the day before painting. If your mower has a set of rollers behind the blades (reel or rotary), then make your second mowing sideline to sideline with every other 10-yard section in the same direction to create the light/dark striping effect. This brings out the "TV look," especially with cool season turf blades. The higher your bleachers rise, the more effective the striping appears to fans.



- Before placing strings, go over the lines with your mower without the blades on to remove moisture from the turf so the paint adheres upon spraying. You can drag in the same direction or use mower rollers as your final mowing pattern.



- Set your 4 x 4 corner markers in the proper position and correctly located throughout the year. Notice when setting your plates you use a triangular template so every corner is square and accurate.



- Pull your string with a large reel and carry a bucket of pins and hammer for efficient placement. If you can hold 500 yards on your reel, then you can lay out approximately one-half of the field before getting another reel. When setting the yard lines, create a 6-inch separation from sidelines so officials can correctly visualize the foot placement from the sidelines.

- Set up the strings for numbers and hash marks by using the same 4-inch square metal, sub-surface plates positioned below the playing field. Once the hash mark and number plates are used for the first game, you can repaint future games by just using aerosol paint.

Quality football field painting requires some hard work and cooperation between turf managers and coaching staffs. Encourage the pre-game warm-ups to be accomplished off the yard lines and away from yard line numbers. By doing this your lines will remain bright for the game.

Please encourage line drills and heavy foot action to be done in the endzones or behind the goal posts. Also encourage the teams to enter from the side of the field rather than through the goal posts, if possible.

Many of the above previous points are the last thing considered on Friday nights by the team or coaching staff so on Monday morning it's the turf managers who must overhaul the surface for either next Friday's game or in some areas of the country, Tuesday's soccer match. If dual sports are played on the same field, try to use a light-colored paint for your soccer line marking and attempt to solid tine aerate whenever possible.

Please remember: "Turf grows by the inch and is killed by the foot," so have all your equipment and supplies ready each week since you are always on the "hot seat" when it comes to quality playing fields. The more efficient you can be as a staff, the more respect and cooperation you will receive from administration and coaches. ■

Floyd Perry is president of Grounds Maintenance Services and is one of the most recognized turf managers in the country. He can be reached at 800-227-9381.



- Set up your logo stencil and conference stencils in the correct position and attempt to use white paint as your primary color to avoid turf decline due to lack of photosynthesis from darker colors over the course of a 10 or 12-week fall season.



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