



Maintaining your **synthetic** field

By Troy Squires

The 3rd-generation turf revolution is well underway. Only a few years ago, installing 60-70 fields a year was considered a major breakthrough; now we do that many just in the month of June.

At the same time, we have some cause for concern.

It's related to the lack of maintenance on some of these new fields. In the beginning, infilled turf fields were being sold as "maintenance free." As many of you know, this simply isn't the case. What worries us at FieldTurf Tarkett is that some companies are still stressing that fields can go without much maintenance.

Do infilled turf fields reduce maintenance? Absolutely. They also reduce water and pesticide use, mowing, topdressing, etc. Are they maintenance-free? Sorry, but no way.

Our company provides a comprehensive maintenance manual to all of our clients. By following the maintenance procedures outlined in this manual, the field will be kept in optimum condition and the playing characteristics will be maintained longer. We have compared fields closely after years of heavy use and those that get consistent, thorough maintenance simply look and play better over time when compared to fields that get little or no maintenance.

First, let's talk about "break in." After installation, your field surface may feel softer than anticipated. Full penetration of the infill between the grass fibers and its subsequent settling into a uniform playing surface

will occur naturally over time with normal rainfall and initial use of the field. Depending on climatic conditions, this "settling in" period usually reaches its optimum, generally after 2 to 3 months of use, maybe less. After this period the field will stabilize to perform according to design specifications.

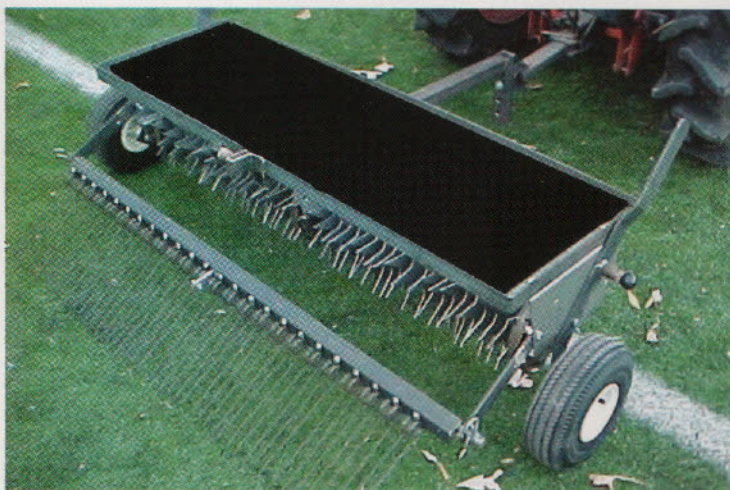
To maintain optimum performance and appearance of your field, the following maintenance procedures must be performed regularly using the recommended maintenance equipment. One maintenance ally you have, as usual, is a good soak of rain:

Litter removal

Use a lightweight, "estate" sweeper designed for litter removal, e.g., peanut shells, paper, confetti, etc. This kind of sweeping activity is quick and easy and should be done on an "as needed" basis, but generally once a week during heavy use. (FieldTurf provides one to customers.)

Weeds and moss

Like its natural cousins, the infilled turf may still become susceptible to weeds. It is important to prevent weeds and moss from growing on FieldTurf as it can affect the playability of the surface. Although routine maintenance will prevent this from happening, weeds may occur at the interface between the synthetic grass and the perimeter curb. Should this occur, weeds should be treated with the biodegradable



weed killer such as RoundUp, which won't negatively affect the fibers or the coloring of your field. If the weed problems should arise, a 3-prong tool can be used to remove weeds and moss from the affected areas. This should be done carefully to not tear the backing and damage the fabric.

Moss can grow on the field surface if the following conditions are present:

- The field surface has not been maintained or groomed over a long period of time.
- If there is an unusual amount of shade on the field and the field has been neglected.
- If the field surface has been left covered with vinyl tarps over a long period of time.
- If there is sufficient moisture and all other conditions for growth are met.

Weed and moss can only occur if the field has been neglected.

Fill displacement

FieldTurf has a very heavy fill of sand and rubber that is unlikely to float, even in heavy rain. But routinely grooming the field will assure that the infill is uniformly distributed at all times over the entire field surface. Intensive and repetitive use of certain areas of the field such as the kicking action of the players may cause the infill material to be displaced. Particularly for soccer fields, these specific areas are: penalty shots, center spots, and corner kick areas.

Field Protection

Today's athletic facilities must be able to accommodate additional events to increase the possible revenue sources. If events or venues other than approved activities are to be held on your field, the surface must be protected at all times to prevent possible damage. Tarps are good for general purposes; however, special events may need additional protection, such as plywood to spread the loads of stages or vehicles. A call to the synthetic system's service department can get you the right information on loading and special protective equipment that is recommended.

Disinfectants

The issue of disinfecting turf is a subject unto itself. Bottom line, synthetic fields, like grass, gym floors, wrestling mats and other sports surfaces can harbor microbes that can cause infections. It is a hygiene issue. Scrapes and cuts, if they occur, must be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly (because synthetic fields are not muddy or dirty, players sometimes think cuts are "clean" and do not clean and disinfect them as aggressively as they do on natural grass fields).

Players should not share whirlpools or towels, must shower after every activity, and should wash towels and uniforms frequently (daily is recommended). (FieldTurf offers cleansers and other anti-microbial treatments.)

Troy Squires is vice president of marketing for FieldTurf Tarkett, www.fiel dturf.com. ■

product spotlight



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VA Tech applies antimicrobial to all fields

The synthetic turf fields, sports medicine training room, locker rooms, whirlpools and wrestling rooms of Virginia Tech Athletics have been treated with the colorless, odorless Sports Antimicrobial System (SAS). Virginia Tech is the first Division I university to apply the antimicrobial to its athletics facilities.

The product creates a long-lasting antimicrobial layer effective against a very broad spectrum of all known bacteria, mold, fungi and algae, says the manufacturer.

"With bacterial staph infections like MRSA and fungi like ring worm and mold affecting many student-athletes across the country, the need to protect your facilities has become a necessity. We were not going to wait until we had a problem," said Jim Weaver, athletics director at Virginia Tech.

Hokies' sports turf and athletic grounds manager Casey Underwood told *SportsTurf* the concern of MRSA outbreaks at some other institutions this year brought about the treatments. "The company handled all applications. The artificial turf was sprayed with a three-point mounted rig," said Underwood. "I can't see it or feel it."

The TurfAide Platinum program comes with an 8-year extended warranty. Included in the package, CSG will make annual service checks to ensure the antimicrobial layer remains active and retreat as needed, according to the manufacturer, SportCoatings.

"Unlike conventional disinfectants that wash away and dissipate quickly, SAS durably bonds to the surface, actively fighting microorganisms 24/7," said SportCoatings president Art McWood.

SAS is comprised of three products: TurfAide provides antimicrobial protection to synthetic turf systems; SportsAide protects athletic



facilities including training rooms, locker rooms, whirlpools, gym mats and exercise equipment; and SportsAide Fabric Conditioner provides antimicrobial protection, stain releasers and odor control to sports laundry.

"Using the SAS system is like having an airbag in your car," said Mike Goforth, Director of Athletics Training, "you may not be able to see it, but the parents of our athletes can feel confident knowing that their sons and daughters are training in safe facilities when they come to Virginia Tech."

"You could tell it worked quickly. Within 24-hours of the application it erased the typical locker room scent. It brought a noticeable freshness to our facilities" said Denie Marie, facilities manager of Rector Field House.

The nano-technology powering SAS is the ÆGIS Microbe Shield that has been safely used in consumer goods ranging from shoes to diapers surgical dressings for more than 30 years. Registered with the EPA, it imparts an invisible layer of antimicrobial protection that will not leach any chemicals or heavy metals into the environment and will not rub off onto a player's skin.

"What makes the ÆGIS Microbe Shield unique is that it functions through a physical mode-of-action versus the chemical poisoning associated with traditional antimicrobials," said Curtis White, Chairman and CEO of ÆGIS. "This physical mode-of-action prevents microbes from adapting to the shield so there is no ability for 'super bugs' to develop resistance."

Extensive warranties and service agreements are available on SAS applications to ensure the active antimicrobial layer remains intact. ■