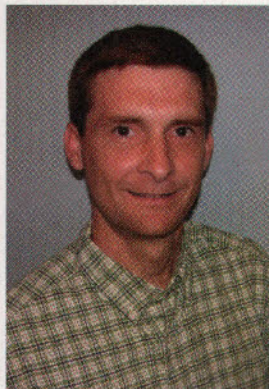


Start your renovation now



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Questions?
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just came from a meeting on renovating our high school's baseball field. The initial plans were to build a new field but now plans are to renovate the old one. Can you advise us on a plan that can get this done ASAP? We need the field ready for the first of the year. Our budget is ok and should be at least adequate to do the project relatively easily. Please let me know what you think is possible.

Thanks for your e-mail. To efficiently help you, I may need more information. While your request may seem simple enough, without some indication of "where you are at" and "where you want to go" it is a little difficult to reply. "Renovate" is a relative term. If all the field needs is some weed control and fertilizer, it is a lot different than turf removal, drainage installation, earth movement, re-establishment, etc., required for other renovations.

I don't know why you want to renovate, so I'm just going to address the steps as they relate to issues. You said ASAP, but no indication of timeline for the work or when it would begin or even who is doing the work (in-house or a contractor). Saying a "good budget" is also pretty relative to how extensive a "re-build" you need and the desired end result.

Off the top of my head:

1. Spray out any living vegetation with Glyphosate (e.g., Roundup applied at 4 pounds of active ingredient per acre). I suggest three applications at 3-week intervals to remove common bermudagrass. I realize this will delay the project 9 weeks, but this will help minimize a reoccurrence of common bermudagrass after the field is renovated. Since it is nearly September as I write this, try to get the first application out as soon as possible to beat the cooler weather. If you delay getting the turf sprayed too much longer, it may be better to wait until spring/summer for renovation. If the field is not bermudagrass, less extensive herbicide applications or alternative products may be more appropriate.

2. Scrape the surface to remove debris. If the vegetation has decayed and you have a sandy soil, then a box blade on a tractor is usually sufficient. If not, go to the next step and come back to this step as needed.

3. Alleviate compaction of field via rototilling or other aggressive soil cultivation (as needed).

4. Have the field surveyed to re-establish proper drainage (you may have to address sideline fences or other structures as well as soil buildup during this step). Have a well-thought out drainage plan; otherwise drainage problems may forever haunt you.

5. Consider infield drainage, leveling etc., with above step if water movement has been a significant problem. You may have to add or remove clay as necessary. You

may also consider replacing infield clay if the existing material is not performing as desired.

6. Determine the appropriate grass for your area. Assuming you are from the Deep South, find a reputable supplier of a quality hybrid bermudagrass (e.g., Tifway, TifSport, Celebration, etc). Often local golf course superintendents are knowledgeable on the better local sod producers. Your local extension service may also have good advice on sod growers. An alternative would be planting one of the new seeded cultivars (Princess, Riviera, etc). The seed can usually be obtained from local distributors. Check your yellow pages under the titles "seed," "farm supply," or "sod."

Generally, the suggested way to establish hybrid bermudagrasses for sports fields is to sprig, but planting sprigs in September or later is generally not suggested. Bermudagrass grows best with nighttime temperatures in the 60s. You could sod but it would be costly. During the late fall and winter you do not have much of an option if you need the field in the spring. Your best bet in the fall/winter months is to get sod that is still green and hope for some warm temperatures. If you are not in the south, then an alternative grass (fescue, bluegrass, etc) may be more appropriate.

7. After planting grass (I am assuming the irrigation system is sufficient), follow good grow-in practices (irrigation, fertilization, soil amelioration, and pest control). There are several good publications available from our University as well as other sources that cover athletic field management practices once the turf is established.

Without more information, I am not sure how much information to share with you. If the school needs extensive help through the process, I would suggest you hire either a knowledgeable contractor for the construction or an experienced consultant. Either can spend the time to write out detailed plans and/or direct the work required to fully renovate a site.

Response from School Representative: Thank you so much for your prompt reply. Yes, my e-mail was vague. Our school is in central Florida and I'm afraid we're faced with "turf removal, drainage installation, earth movement, re-establishment, etc." As you very well know, budgets come and go like the tides. Yes, it would be so much better in the growing season. However, we are subject to lose the funds if we don't use them right now.

Your notes were very helpful; we sprayed the field today. We have a local company that can do the earth movement and is familiar with golf course construction. We have contacted a turfgrass company that is giving us a good price on one of the grasses you mentioned. Thanks again! ■