

ASTM developing new sports field standards

By J.T. Brosnan and M. DePew

At the recent meeting of the ASTM F08.64 and F08.65 subcommittees, new sports field standards were proposed that will benefit Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) members and all turf managers in the near future. The issue of lead chromate in synthetic turf fibers was also discussed at the meetings in great detail. The F08.65 subcommittee on synthetic turf athletic fields has formed a task group to work on this issue.

The STMA is actively involved with ASTM International, one of the world's largest and most recognized standards writing organizations. The standards produced by ASTM are reference documents that attempt to limit variability between the products and services of many different industries. ASTM standards exist for a wide variety of products including both natural and synthetic turf athletic fields.

Guide for Quality Control Procedures During The Construction of Natural Playing Surfaces. This new standard outlines proper practices to be used in the sampling and quality control testing of rootzone materials used during the construction process. The standard covers gravel, sand, organic amendments, and finish-blended rootzone mixes. It will be a valuable tool in future construction specifications.

Evaluating Warm and Cool Season Athletic Field Maintenance Programs. These two proposed new documents will provide a standardized method for evaluating the quality of maintenance programs used to for warm- and cool-season athletic fields. Factors such as soil testing, aeration, fertilization, and mowing frequency (including many others) will be weighted in order to assign a rank/grade to a facility's maintenance program.

New Equestrian Surfaces Sub-Committee Formed. Increased attention has been given to "alternative sports" within both STMA and ASTM over the past 2 years, with the majority of

this interest focusing on horse racing. Little scientific information exists regarding how to properly maintain surfaces used for horse racing. Furthermore, acceptable levels of surface quality have not been outlined. The new ASTM subcommittee is Equestrian Surfaces, F08.28.

The Issue of Lead Chromate on Synthetic Turf Fields. Lead chromate is a pigment used to color synthetic turf fibers. Fibers with lead-based pigments are brighter than those with non-heavy metal pigments. Lead chromate is often confused with lead carbonate, which was a principle component of lead-based paint. Lead chromate must be encapsulated in order to be incorporated into synthetic turf fibers.

In light of the recent media controversy regarding potential health hazards to athletes

competing on synthetic turf fields from lead chromate exposure, ASTM subcommittee F08.65 formed a task group to work with the Synthetic Turf Council (STC) on this issue.

The STC released a statement in April 2008 on this issue. The STC said, "Trace amounts of lead exist in everyday products. The key issue is ensuring that quantities of lead that might be harmful to health cannot be absorbed into the body. Used to extend the yarn color lifespan in some synthetic turf products, lead chromate is encapsulated in plastic to prevent any health risks."

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John Mascaro, president of Turf-Tec International, smells a soil sample during a tour stop at this year's STMA Conference in Phoenix.