

# Turf management strategies for large complexes



THE LOUIE POMPEI SPORTS PARK in Glendora, CA is a community sports park that hosts football, softball, soccer and numerous community events. The high percentage of foot traffic the turfgrass and soil are exposed to create a challenge for George Munoz and myself, our management team. The following are some considerations that must be met for our turfgrass:

- The turf must be green and attractive to the eye.
- It must be safe to play on with no clumps or uneven terrain on the playing surfaces.
- We must implement integrated pest management strategies.
- No standing water on any of the fields; we constantly strive for good drainage.
- An efficient use of water; we must be water wise in our irrigation management practices.

A sports turf manager strives for the concept "green is good." Finding the correct diet for our turf is challenging. It would not be a prudent management decision to use strictly nitrogen as the sole source of a fertilizer on the sports turf.

Before we began to apply any fertilizers to the fields, we conducted a soil analysis. With the information that we now have regarding our soil, we can implement the proper turf and soil fertilizer diet. We use a slow release fertilizer exclusively, which provides a controlled feeding for 10 weeks. Advantages of this approach include:

- Slow release fertilizers provide a sustained color to the turf without sacrificing root growth at the expense of the leaf.
- Particle size of the slow release fertilizer is important; the slow release fertilizer that we use is uniform in particle size, so the application of the product is uniform on the turf. Applying a slow release nitrogen fertilizer to the turf decreases the potential for tissue burn from the application.

We mow our TifSport hybrid bermudagrass twice weekly at 1.5 inches with a Toro Reelmaster throughout the year. At this height we are able to provide the players with a safe cushion during practices and games.

All 7 acres of turf are aerated monthly, based on our windows of opportunity and inconvenience to the players; we aerate with either solid steel tines or hollow tines. When we are planning to topdress we will switch to hollow tines. Hollow tines will remove a section of soil and that exposed soil channel can now be filled with sand or organic matter. The solid steel tines simply push the soil to one side, do not pull a section of soil up, and so we don't have to remove cores.

To keep the turf attractive in cooler temperatures, we overseed with Grand Slam perennial ryegrass. Its seed germinates in 5-7 days, it is not clumpy, and has a nice dark, green color. Grand Slam has a low incidence of disease, though it does get rust but we manage that through a fertilization diet.

### Windows of opportunity

Managing the windows of opportunity is extremely important for us. For example, we begin our overseeding schedule in late June or early July. The existing soil temperatures are warm and there's plenty of sunlight. Football practice at the sports park does not begin until August so the Grand Slam seed is fully developed by the time football starts. The seeding rate that we implement is 10 pounds of seed to 1,000 square feet of turf. In conjunction to applying the seed we also apply a starter fertilizer, such as 6-24-24 (follow the label rate for seeding purposes). We apply the perennial ryegrass seed a minimum of three times before our window of opportunity closes. The final reseeding is usually done in mid-November.

We use IPM strategies to assist with weed control. We manage crabgrass two ways: first, in the early spring we will treat our 7 acres with pre-emergent herbicide pendamethalin (Pre-M). This allows us flexibility for duration of control; in our case, 6-8 weeks. Secondly, we aerify. To effectively manage crabgrass in a sports turf, you must manage compaction because crabgrass thrives in soils that lack oxygen. This means you also have to manage the percentage of water that

the turf receives since soil that is allowed to become saturated has a good chance of becoming anaerobic. Soil that does not drain effectively will become a habitat for crabgrass.



### Help needed

Having adequate labor to manage your turf is the single greatest limiting factor. In addition to the sports turf we also have hardscape and numerous planters that require attention. In order for us to be successful with our turf management program, we have introduced drip irrigation to all of the planters throughout the park. By regulating the percentage of water in selected landscape zones we have been successful in reducing our labor time in these areas. Consequently, we can now spend more time managing the sports turf.

The entire sports park is run on a Rain Bird Maxicom irrigation system. Its efficiency allows us to grow healthy plants without introducing a weed problem in the planters. Hand weeding is not an efficient labor management strategy!

As with most municipalities we must watch the bottom line. Fortunately, by being proactive with our best management practices throughout the park we are capable of producing a very competitive stand of sports for the community to play on. ■

*Mike Ventura is landscape maintenance supervisor for the City of Glendora, [mventura.ci.glendora.ca.us](mailto:mventura.ci.glendora.ca.us).*



## John Mascaro's Photo Quiz

### >> Answer: from page 17

This is a new method for topdressing that has not quite caught on nationally...April fool! Actually, the sand being deposited and spread out on this stadium field is in preparation for a 3-day AVP Pro Beach Volleyball tournament at the University of Colorado's Folsom Field during the July 4, 2008 holiday. The event featured Olympic Gold medalists Misty May-Traenkle and Kerri Walsh. First, railroad ties were used to outline the five regulation sized sand volleyball courts that were strategically located directly on top of the stadium turf. Next, 25 ton semi trailer end dump trucks drove directly onto the field and deposited the sand into the court areas where

massive front end loaders (like the ones pictured on page 17) spread it out. After the event, stages, stands, plywood and railroad ties were removed and then the sand was removed with front end loaders. Next, 4 inches of the field was excavated using a Koro TopMaker, then 2 inches of USGA sand was brought back in, tilled and then laser-graded. Irrigation heads were then re-installed before the laying of big roll sod. This process finished on July 16 which was 51 days before the first home football game.

*Photo submitted by Jason E. DePaape CSFM, Athletic Field Manager, University of Colorado at Boulder.*

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz please send it to John Mascaro, 1471 Capital Circle NW, Ste # 13, Tallahassee, FL 32303 or email to [john@turf-tec.com](mailto:john@turf-tec.com). If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos submitted will become property of SportsTurf magazine and the Sports Turf Managers Association.