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August two-a-days on the way out?

AUGUST TWO-A-DAY FOOTBALL PRACTICES are changing around the country on the heels of a recent study by the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA). At least 42 states have some sort of heat illness prevention guidelines, said David Csillan, a New Jersey trainer and co-author of the report, in an Associated Press story.

Last year's tragedy involving a 15-year-old Kentucky boy who collapsed during practice has brought more attention to the issue. In Florida, for example, contact drills are prohibited during the first 3 days of practice; in Texas, players must have a minimum 1-hour break between practices. The co-author, Douglas Casa, told a NATA gathering that the report's first recommendation is cutting back of two-a-day practices during the first week to a single daily practice. Other recommendations include:

- Total practice time limited to 3 hours/day
- A 1-hour maximum walk-through during days 1-5 with a 3-hour break between a walk-through and a practice
- Helmets should be only protective gear worn during first 2 days of practice
- Starting on Day 6, two-a-days should be followed by a single-practice day.

If more schools follow such professional guidelines the result might be less foot traffic, more recovery time for your turf.

STMA, NTEP seek best football cool-season turfgrass

Speaking of foot traffic, we all know properly maintained turfgrass, if allowed some no-play dates, can offer exceptional playing conditions. That's one reason why the STMA has joined with the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) to evaluate the traffic tolerance of cool-season grasses under simulated football conditions. STMA's Safer Athletic Field Environment Foundation (SAFE) is serving as coordinating agent for the 3-year trial.

Trial's objective is to determine the best cultivars, blends, mixtures, and species for football traffic and it begins this fall. Simulated traffic will be imposed over an 8-10 week periods in 2010 through 2012 at six to eight locations across the country.

One-half of each plot will be overseeded in spring 2011 and 2012 to simulate that process. Data will be collected on percent ground cover weekly during traffic, rate of recovery after traffic, and turfgrass quality. These trials hope to add to the knowledge base on traffic that has been collected previously at Iowa State, North Carolina State and Rutgers, among others.

Regional event

I'm sorry I missed STMA's Regional Conference in Ames, IA earlier this summer, I think. Our reporter, Cyclone journalism grad student Steve Adams, said it was a scorcher one day but everyone survived even with softball thrown in the mix. These kinds of events offer advice from experienced turf managers, chances to meet and greet like-minded people, equipment demos and more. Take advantage of the next opportunity near you.

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