



Have you used the PCI?

ACRONYMS ALWAYS SEEM TO CATCH MY ATTENTION when reading through a magazine; sometimes it's just the pure fun of trying to guess what the acronym stands for or just curiosity.

PCI. I hope most of you are saying to yourself, "Ah, I remember that, Playing Conditions Index." Now the big question is are you using it? The STMA Playing Conditions Index was developed to give sports turf managers a "snap-shot" of a specific field at a given point in time. Approximately 30 questions related to resources, activities, and agronomic performance are used to produce a numerical value that ranks a field from excellent to unplayable.

The continued use of the assessment tool provides invaluable information to the sports turf manager and can help guide field management practices, assist with communication to user groups, can help to substantiate the need for more resources, and as needed provides a way to provide information to the media relations department. The package contains a Media Advisory Bulletin with instructions to help convey information on field conditions and its effect on athlete performance to sports information professionals on game days. I happened to have found another use for the PCI. If used correctly and honestly (we all like to brag about our sports fields) the PCI will become the sports turf manager's favorite tool. I have used the PCI to track maintenance practices or in some cases lack of. The PCI is telling me what is working and what isn't; for example did the fertilizer I selected provide the desired results? Were the climatic conditions applicable to the fertilizer selected? Not only is this information valuable for product selection but if you're a creature of habit and do specific applications at certain times of the year, logging comments about weather conditions that to coincide with those applications, you will be able to log weather data that will pertain to those applications for years ahead.

Did we have an irrigation problem? Were soil samples taking

before application? You can apply the PCI to every maintenance practice you use to maintain your play field and every resource applied to that maintenance i.e. manpower and money. This alone will be a benefit when budget justifications are due, trust me, we managers love this type of real, documented information.

The PCI shown was done in June on the Poway High School varsity baseball field. The great assets of using the PCI is not only are you collecting data to be used later but the PCI serves as a note pad to record data while you're observing the playing conditions. I use the PCI assessment tool to note what maintenance practices may have worked or failed and to plan upcoming needed maintenance.

When the form is complete (with notes) three copies are made; one is given to the grounds staff so they can plan the needed maintenance, one to the Athletic Director to keep them abreast of the work needed and the condition of the playing field and the last copy is to the coach so they know we aren't neglecting their field. The original will stay in a folder dedicated to that particular playing field. This system allows me to keep track of the maintenance performed, when the maintenance was performed, what worked and what didn't, and weather conditions. It is also a communication tool with the grounds staff, athletic director and the coach and will allow me to review all four of the PCI's when I begin to prepare the budget and look at next year's maintenance plan.

To get the full benefit out of the PCI, use the PCI at least four times per year with one of those times close to budget preparation. If you haven't used the PCI, give it a try, you may be surprised at the amount of information you'll be able to collect and use at a later date.

STMA members can access and print out the PCI at www.stma.org/MemberServices/PCI (see page 16). ■

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