

## From the Sidelines



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## Work now for better fields next spring

**D**EPENDING ON WHERE YOU WORK, October is either a string of football and soccer games and spring sport fall workouts, with maybe some field hockey or lacrosse thrown in, or maybe a slowdown from summer baseball and softball leagues, with just a fall league or two still playing. So some turf managers have it easier in finding time to complete work this fall that will make their jobs easier come spring; if you are one of those, read on:

Mike Trigg, CSFM, superintendent of parks for the Waukegan (IL) Park District and former president of the Sports Turf Managers Association, responded to my request for some advice.

“Fall renovations are scheduled at season’s end to repair worn turf areas, such as the front of pitcher’s mound or goal mouths. Getting turfgrass segments of the field in the best possible condition in the fall gives a much better playing surface for the early spring use when turf may still be dormant.

“A fall renovation can be as simple as edging along the infield arc or base paths to give that crisp, clean finish look. A fall renovation may require the use of an outside contractor for a portion of the project. One such project we scheduled for the month of October is reducing a grass infield skinned area back to proper field dimensions with the installation of big roll sod. Reducing the skinned area back down to proper dimensions also reduces time required for the daily field prep during the season.

“Just as fall is prime time for turf cultural practices, so should it be for field renovations. Taking advantage of the fall months to prepare fields for spring use will be appreciated by many who will play safely because of your prior planning and prudent preparation.”

Another idea is to be diligent with herbicide applications for weed control on skinned areas. Backpack applications of Roundup herbicide, with a color dye indicator, control miscellaneous weeds that appear on skinned areas, fence lines, and warning tracks. This is particularly beneficial to ball diamonds that go out of play in August, with no scheduled use until next spring.

No matter what level of turf maintenance now is a good time to identify and correct hazardous conditions that may exist on your facilities. The goal is to reduce frequency and possible severity of player injury and unnecessary accidents through proper field inspection and maintenance.

On a playing field there are many hazardous conditions that can be easily identified because they are visible and obvious. However, there can be problem areas that are not so obvious, and often only detected via a thorough inspection.

Here’s an annual inspection checklist that Mike included in an article he wrote for us a few years back:

Maintenance of skinned areas: Inspect infield composition; level worn areas near bases/rubbers; cone build-up between turf and skinned area; check that base anchors are correctly installed; and inspect pitching rubbers.

Maintenance of fencing and backstops: Check exposed concrete footings. Make sure all chain link fencing is properly secured.

Additional safety considerations: Inspect bleachers and player benches, as well as all field lighting installations. ■

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