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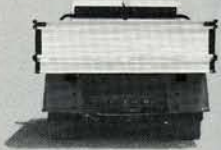
turfgrass selection, grooming infields, pesticide usage, multi-use fields, field coverage, and much more.

- Dynamic speakers covering the past, present, and future of sports turf, development of Oriole Park, innovation in the turfgrass industry and tips on teamwork from the pros.

Look for registration and exhibitor information this summer. For more information, contact Susan Seibert, STMA Headquarters, 312/644-6610. STMA's Fifth Annual Conference and Exhibit — Come grow with us!



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VOLUME NINE, NUMBER SEVEN

JULY 1993

MAIN EVENTS

8 WINNING TACTICS FOR HANDLING UNWANTED WATER

Infield puddles or outfield bogs, excess water on athletic fields is detrimental to turf health, aesthetics, playability and safety. Combatting the problem requires integration of effective drainage, proper cultural practices and, when necessary, several water control and removal tools.

14 STMA PROFILE: CREATIVE FINANCING PAYS DIAMOND DIVIDEND AT MUNDELEIN HIGH

As new grounds foreman at Mundelein High School in Illinois, Scott Gaunky stepped onto a baseball diamond with a sorry past and a dismal future — no funds for reconstruction were available. Undaunted, Gaunky rallied the community, turf product suppliers and turf professionals to help transform the diamond into one of the finest in the area.

18 SPOT MANAGEMENT: KEEPING HIGH-USE AREAS IN PLAY

More than visually unappealing, worn spots on athletic fields caused by excessive traffic present a safety hazard to players. The best defense is a strong offense, minimizing traffic in these areas through field rotation. However, when that's not possible there are number of steps you can take to bring worn spots back to health.

22 ROAD TO HEAVY-DUTY VEHICLE SELECTION

Today's heavy-duty utility vehicles offer far more than basic transportation — they can be an integral element of your overall turf maintenance program. With the range of choices in the turf utility vehicle market, adding a heavy-duty model to your equipment arsenal can boost your crew's productivity. Here are a few basics to look for when you buy.

LINE-UP

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ON THE COVER: Proper maintenance of baseball diamond skinned areas prevents low spots and lips that can lead to infield puddling during rainstorms. Atlanta Fulton County Stadium, photo courtesy: Aimcor.

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THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

Changing Attitudes, Pursuing Solutions



A friend of mine “plays” league softball two nights a week. I emphasize the word “plays” because, to be honest, I don’t think he has much fun at it, and there’s supposed to be a causal relationship between the two, as in, “If you play, then you have fun.”

Not for my friend. He approaches each softball night like it’s Game 7 of the World Series, as if the future of his wife and children rest on every swing of his bat. Losing sends him into a two-day funk.

“I play to win,” he tells me. “I’m competitive.”

“You *work* to win,” I tell him. “You’re unbalanced.”

He usually laughs at that, if his team won the night before.

A few weeks back we went mountain biking. He showed up at the trail head on his bike, his right leg decorated by an assortment of day-old scrapes and bruises. I asked him what happened.

“Dove for one in right field last night,” he said “It’s like rock out there.”

During the ride, we got onto the subject of field maintenance, what it costs, and the effects of budget cutting. I launched into my well-worn speech on the correlation between poor field maintenance and injuries, but before I could really get rolling, he cut me off.

“Gotta make budget cuts somewhere,” he snapped. “It’s not like we’re the Los Angeles Dodgers, I mean, we don’t need a field like theirs anyway.”

I was stunned. Here was a rabid, certifiable softball lunatic, with a field-induced injury looking like something out of a Stephen King novel, telling me field quality was low on his twisted list of priorities. He’d sell his soul to win games, but when it comes to adequate surfaces on which to play them, he’d rather give blood.

That’s a tough attitude to change — you can present the facts and figures with all the logic and rhetorical brilliance you please, and most of the time you’ll still get, “Gotta make budget cuts somewhere.”

Despite what often amounts to an exercise in futility, attempting to inform the unenlightened is a worthwhile pursuit. However, it might be more effective to balance our attempts to change attitudes, with finding ways to *get around them*.

That’s well-known territory for Scott Gaunky, grounds foreman of Mundelein High School. Gaunky inherited a baseball diamond in pathetic shape. He walked right into a “Sorry, but we gotta make budget cuts somewhere” situation, which would have doomed the field to yet another season of inadequacy.

That didn’t deter Gaunky, who applied a combination of creative thinking and hard work to make the rebuilding of the field into a *community effort*. The story begins on page 14, and I urge you to read it — it is among the most valuable articles we have printed.

Today, the Mundelein High Mustangs play on one of the finest baseball diamonds in the region. I think they even manage to have some fun, unlike my softball fanatic friend.

Matthew Trulio

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JULY

23 STMA Southern California Institute, San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium. Contact: Chris Bunnell at (619) 432-2421 or (619) 945-8518.

AUGUST

5 National Turfgrass Evaluation Program turfgrass research field day. Beltsville Agricultural Research Center-West, Beltsville, MD. Contact: Kevin Morris or Jennatte Wills (301) 504-2125.

17 Wisconsin Turfgrass Field Day. O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, Madison, WI. Contact: Dr. Frank Rossi (608) 262-1490.

SEPTEMBER

14-15 Southeastern North Carolina Professional Turfgrass Conference. Wrightsville Beach Holiday Inn, Wilmington, NC. Contact: Dr. Bruce Williams (919) 253-4425.

26-29 Florida Turfgrass Association’s 41st annual conference and show. Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, FL. Contact: FTGA (800) 882-6721.

NOVEMBER

1-3 National Institute on Park and Grounds Management annual educational conference. Sheraton Denver Tech Center, Denver, CO. Contact: National Institute (414) 733-2301.

15-18 Green Industry Expo ‘93. Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD. Contact: Green Industry Expo Management (404) 973-2019.

16-18 Penn State Golf Turf Conference. Nittany Lion Inn, University Park, PA. Contact: Peter Landschoot (814) 863-1017.



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Absorbent calcined clay products, such as Quick Dry, shown in application here, can be used to dry up shallow puddles. Photo courtesy: Aimcor.

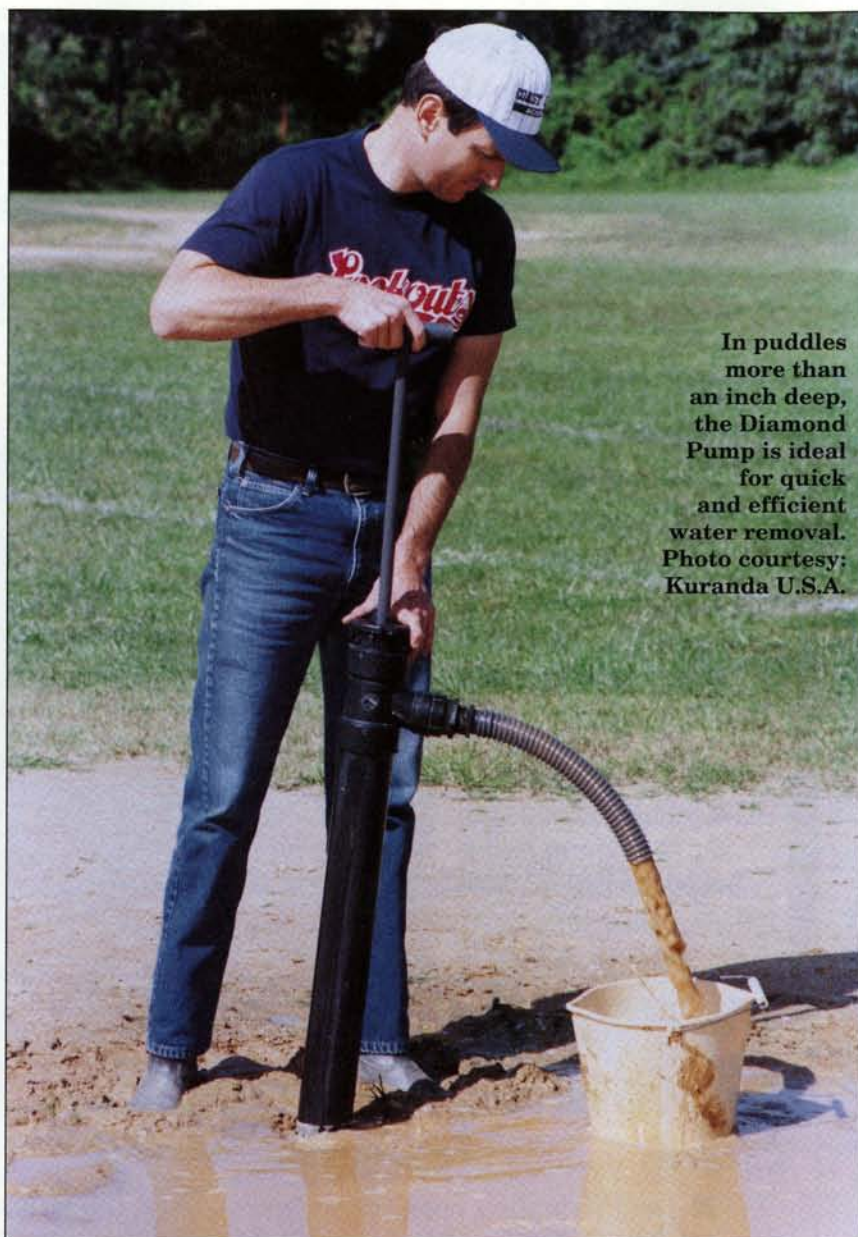
By Matthew Trulio

On June 5, something extraordinary happened in Southern California — it rained. Rainfall totals for the day varied between trace amounts and more than an inch in some areas. The bulk of the rain came in a four-hour period. By the precipitation averages of most of the country, it wasn't terribly impressive. However, by Southern California's standards it was a record, for both for the day and *entire month* of June.

The storm was well-forecasted and caught few people by surprise, least of all Steve Wightman, stadium turf manager at San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium, home of the Padres and Chargers. Despite the generally idyllic San Diego climate, Wightman stays "dialed into" the weather forecasts. It's a good habit he picked when he managed the field at Mile High Stadium in Denver.

"We have a pretty good dialogue with the National Weather Service — we can call any time, 24 hours a day, and talk to a person," he explains. "At Mile High, we actually had a meteorologist on retainer."

Wightman's concern over the weather on June 5 wasn't casual or curious — the Padres were scheduled to play the Florida Marlins that evening and season-high attendance was predicted.



In puddles more than an inch deep, the Diamond Pump is ideal for quick and efficient water removal. Photo courtesy: Kuranda U.S.A.

WINNING PLAYS FOR HANDLING UNWANTED WATER

"We were looking at having some 50,000 people," he explains. "It was bat night, and that always draws a big crowd. We didn't want to lose that game, so every effort was made to keep it.

"The National Weather Service sure hit this one right," he continues. "We were ready for it. On Thursday [June 3] we started going over our plans for putting

down the tarp and dealing with the rains during the game. Once we thought the rains were coming, we elected to put down the tarp. We got it on just as the rain hit and had to cancel batting and infield practice. At 6:20 p.m. we pulled the tarp off, and at 7:20 p.m. the game started, although the chance of showers was still there. The crew did a terrific job."

The Padre lost to the Marlins that evening. The game, however, was *saved*.

Where Water Troubles Start

In a perfect world, all athletic fields would not only have subsurface drainage systems, but also soil percolation rates that actually allow these systems to function at their optimal levels. (You may have a drainage system that can "drain 6 inches per hour," but if your percolation rate, the rate at which water travels through the soil profile, is 1 inch per hour, your rate of drainage will be 1 inch per hour.) But as any turf manager on an athletic field after a summer squall can attest, the world is less than perfect.

There are a number of reasons for poor field drainage. Compaction caused by traffic is probably the most common. But even an uncompacted soil profile can become "clogged" with organic matter over time in the natural drainage process. Thatch buildup can further inhibit drainage. Low spots, caused by traffic, improper daily maintenance or poor field layout, can produce pond-sized puddles on an athletic fields after even a moderate rain. And, of course, climate plays a role. By virtue of simple weather patterns, the water removal headaches of a turf manager in a dry climate are much less severe than those of a turf manager in a high rainfall area.

Cultural and Maintenance Solutions

Short of completely rebuilding an athletic field that becomes a quagmire with the first morning dew, there are a number steps you can take to relieve excess water problems on an athletic field. The first is to improve whatever drainage you have. That can mean retrofitting the field with subsurface drainage. However, without addressing the soil profile the new system will be of little benefit. Regular *aerification* and other maintenance practices are crucial.

"You have to perform the necessary cultural practices that address the most important issue of any athletic field, which is drainage," Wightman asserts. "It's not just for handling heavy rain before and during games. Drainage contributes to the healthy growth of turf. Make sure all turf areas are well-aerified and topdressed frequently, and dethatched if necessary."

Low spots on baseball diamond infield skinned areas, which lead to puddles, are created as much by improper dragging

as they are by player traffic. Low spots should be lightly excavated, moistened, refilled with the appropriate infield mix, tamped and dragged.

Improper dragging also creates lips. Not only do lips make for erratic baseball hops, but they also form mini-dams, which prevent water from draining to the outfield and cause puddles on skinned areas. Using correct dragging techniques (see *sportsTURF* January 1993, "Big Game Field Preparation") will help alleviate this problem. If lips do build up during a game, they should

be removed after the contest is completed.

Water Control Arsenal

There a number of tools for controlling excess moisture on athletic fields. One of the most effective, in both preventative and curative applications, is calcined clay.

In general, calcined clay products are made of extremely porous clay materials. Part of their manufacturing process includes being fired at high temperatures, which keeps the otherwise unstable materials from breaking down

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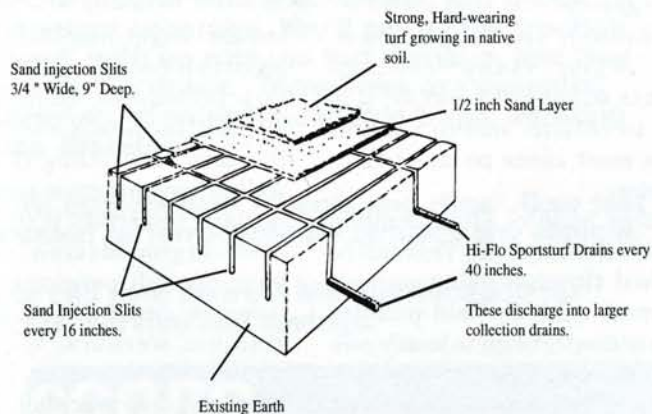
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