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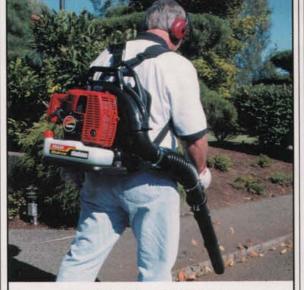


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ADVERTISER INDEX

AerWay Bannerman Beacon Athletics BLEC Bobcat Covernaster	32 Cover 2 39 39 17 9 7 28	168 146 171 173 154 150 149	
Beacon Athletics BLEC Bobcat Covermaster	39 39 17 9 7 28	171 173 154 150	
BLEC Bobcat Covermaster	39 17 9 7 28	173 154 150	
Bobcat Covermaster	17 9 7 28	154 150	
Bobcat Covermaster	9 7 28	150	
Covermaster	9 7 28	150	
SALES OF THE PARTY	7 28		
Covertech	77.7		
Diamond Pro/TXI	40	163	
Diversified Sports Specialties		175	
Dixie Chopper	39	170	
DuPont/TMSG	25	161	
Earth & Turf	39	172	
First Products	32, 40	185, 176	
GreenOne	36	184	
GreensGroomer	15	153	
lacobsen	Back Cover	187	
IDR Enterprises	40 177		
K Rain	5	148	
LR Nelson	29	164	
Lands Expo	34	151	
Laser Leveling	19	156	
Lebanon Turf	33 167		
Newstripe Inc.	40	178	
Pacific Earth Resources	30	165	
Partac Peat/Beam Clay	40	179	
Peat Inc.			
Pennington Seed	18	169 155	
Pennington Seed	40	180	
Pioneer Manufacturing	20	157	
Shindaiwa	41	181	
Reel Rollers	41 18		
Southern Athletic Fields	41	188	
Sports Turf Managers Association	3, 21	147, 158	
Suntec Paint	39	174	
TIF 94 Growers Associates	26-27	162	
Trac Vac	41	182	
Turfco Manufacturing	31	166	
Turf Specialties	41	100	
Turf Seed Inc.	23	160	
	Cover 3	186	
Varicore Technologies	Lover 3	152	
West Coast Turf World Class Athletic Surfaces	22	152	



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If you can't take the heat.

early all age levels for organized sports are now using rubber-infillfields (RIF). Those that manage both synthetic and natural grass surfaces observe substantial improvement in their grass fields because of the option to move some activities onto the synthetic turf, especially during

Even though RIF fields are constructed with very repeatable materials they react differently as climate, season, and environmental conditions change. Just as with grass fields, temperature, rainfall, and humidity can effect the playing conditions on and above RIF fields. In most cases rainfall improves the playing surface conditions of RIF fields, yet most fields are constructed without irrigation systems that could be used to maximize playing quality.

I spent 20 days in August measuring temperature and humidity on RIF fields in Iowa, Colorado, Maryland, Oklahoma, and California. The footing and playability of RIF fields may remain consistent throughout changing seasons and regions; however the heat generated at the surface and in the playing space above the surface can substantially increase during the summer. Heat load to players is a concern among trainers especially during two-a-day practices in July and August. To reduce player heat load morning practice is usually held on the RIF field while afternoon practice is held on grass. Schedules often change, however, to fit weather conditions and coaching desires. In all cases it is best to have a synthetic option and a grass option to maintain flexibility in choosing the best playing surface for changing conditions.

Summer temperatures usually peak from 12-5pm. Three things were apparent from these summer observations: 1) Grass surfaces are much cooler than non-irrigated RIF surfaces; 2) non-irrigated RIF surface temperatures can be as high as 177°F; and 3) surface temperature of RIF fields can be reduced by 33 percent with proper use of irrigation cycling. Data in the table was collected at a high school athletic facility in San Diego. The Bermudagrass practice field had not been watered for five days before data collection and it was just beginning to show signs of moisture stress.



puddles disappeared in less than a minute, a real advantage of an RIF field. It was surprising, however, to note that some of the sand and rubber appeared to be hydrophobic and did not wet. The heavily watered test area soon dried out on the surface and temperatures quickly increased as the sun heated the dry surface.

For cooling to occur a film of water needs to be on the surface. Lick your finger and blow on it to get the idea of cooling the surface. There is much to learn about RIF fields and the January 2005 STMA conference in Phoenix has six hours of instruction dedicated to this topic

After taking data on an RIF field for four hours it became evident that there is an undeniable heat load issue during the summer. At the professional, college, and high school level where trainers are involved it is likely that RIF field use will be limited when heat is a problem. A greater concern is for youth programs, summer camps, and contracted tournaments where events are less likely to be canceled and participants could dangerously overheat.

The heat load problem on RIF fields is manageable with irrigation, the problem is the cost of an irrigation system is not an

I spent my summer vacation watering rubber, sand, and fibers; it didn't grow but it

did provide a better playing surface. If you are putting in a new RIF field listen to the companies that are trying to sell you irrigation, they are looking out for your bottom line. ST

that most fields have been constructed without irrigation. The market is competitive and attractive selling point by RIF contractors, but consumers need to know that synthetic turf without irrigation is an inferior product and in some situations a dangerous and liable com-

Acknowledgement: Thanks to all those who assisted with data collection at their facility: Troy Smith Denver Broncos Training Facility; Vince Patterozzi Baltimore Ravens; Ron Hostick San Diego State University; Steve Wightman, Patrick Henry High School, San Diego; Ted Thorn, University of Iowa; and Bob Weibel and Bob Shipley, University of Tulsa.

QUESTIONS? Send them to Dave Minner at Iowa State University, 106 Horticulture Hall, Ames, IA 50011, or email dminner@iastate.edu. Or, send them to Grady Miller at the University of Florida, PO Box 110670, Gainesville, FL 32611, or email gmiller@mail.ifas.ufl.edu.

Measured field conditions from noon to 3pm on Sept 4, 2005 San Diego, CA

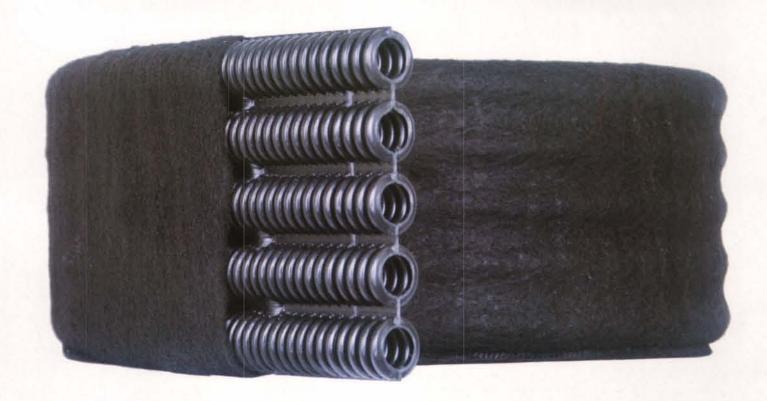
Location relative to surface	Non-irrigated RIF		Irrigated RIF		Bermudagrass	
	Temp F	RH%	Temp F	RH%	Temp F	RH%
2ft above	92	20	87	23	89	21
1inch above	102	21	94	45	93	46
Surface	163	-	108	-	104	_
0.5 inch below in rubber or soil	138	_	102	-	84	_

At the Denver Broncos training facility the cooling effect of grass was even more noticeable. On a day when the local weather reported a high of 80 degrees, the measured peak surface temperatures for non-irrigated RIF, irrigated RIF, and well-watered Kentucky bluegrass were 150, 105, and 83 degrees, respectively. Watering the RIF reduced surface temperature by 30 percent while grass reduced surface temperature by 45 percent.

The best cooling effect occurred when 0.10 inches of water was applied each hour from 11 AM until 4 PM. Increasing wind and decreasing humidity enhanced the cooling effect but it also required more irrigation water. It shouldn't be too difficult to develop an irrigation strategy that will cool the field if you have an irrigation system that supplies multiple cycles during the day.

On one trial area we thoroughly soaked the RIF by running a hose on it for more than an hour. The water rapidly drains through the synthetic surface and

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