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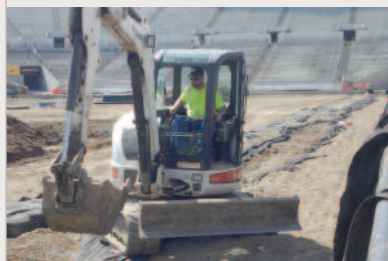


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Remembering Coach Ed Thomas
BY DR. DAVID MINNER

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David Moyes, head coach of the English Premier League's Everton Football Club, says, "Dick's Sporting Goods Park is the finest pitch in all the places I've been in America."



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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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Education, networking opportunities keep coming

THE 2ND SPORTS TURF MANAGERS ASSOCIATION'S REGIONAL CONFERENCE was held in Ames, IA June 24 and 25. Nearly 150 attendees from eight supporting Chapters, and 51 commercial companies participated in 2 days of education, networking, and fun. STMA is committed to hosting more regional conferences throughout the United States to bring the national educational program to local areas. The association is fully aware of the tight budgets facing all of us, and these regional conferences are just one way STMA seeks to bring more value to sports turf managers. The regional conferences provide low cost and high quality educational opportunities to chapter and national members in these areas. The conferences also allow STMA to reach out to non-members, making them aware of the resources available to them through the national organization and the local chapters. The more education we can provide, the stronger our profession becomes. Please contact headquarters if you have any questions regarding the regional conference program.

Whether you have grass tennis courts, a lacrosse field, a baseball, football, or soccer field, have you thought about submitting a Field of the Year application? Now is the time. Think about all of the ways that you and your staff have been successfully preparing your field through the challenging schedules and tightened budgets. Submitting a Field of Year application is a great way to evaluate your field, your maintenance program, your staff, and your budget. Preparing an entry can be challenging, but well worth the time to fill out the streamlined application. Those who have gone through the process—whether the facility won or not—have reaped the rewards of validating their good work and that of their staff. And, for those who win, the honor is even greater visibility and recognition of your professionalism. Winning has also brought members new equipment, extra budgetary dollars and more staff. STMA provides to the Field of the Year winners a plaque, a conference registration, 3 nights of accommodations at the conference host hotel, signature clothing, recognition at the Annual Awards banquet, and a feature article in *SportsTurf Magazine*. I would encourage all members to consider submitting a Field of the Year application. Any natural grass field can be submitted. For more information go to STMA's website, www.STMA.org.

Now is the time to also plan to attend the 21st STMA Conference and Exhibition at the Coronado Springs Hotel and Convention Center on the Disney property in Orlando. The Conference Education Committee has created a top-notch educational program for the January conference that is themed around value, sustainability and proactivity. You will not find a richer program, learn more practical ideas, connect with more peers, and view more industry technology, than at this event. Our conference program is developed for sports turf managers by sports turf managers and well-respected academics. Look for the complete brochure next month. I'm sure that you will agree it is the 'must-attend' conference in 2010.

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Advice for converting from cool-season grass to bermudagrass



» EMERGING bermudagrass seedling.

THERE IS NO MAGIC, "PERFECT" GRASS. Each species has its own limitations and there will be times that even a vigorous grass will not be ideal. For example, even the most cold-tolerant bermudagrass may experience winter-kill. This could be due to being too much traffic when not actively growing. Additionally bermudagrass planted in low-lying, poorly drained areas, mowing too close and other factors may cause poor performance. Furthermore, competition from species like perennial ryegrass that may have been overseeded for winter color will limit future bermudagrass persistence.

The advantage to bermudagrass, however, is that under ideal conditions it will establish and spread much more quickly than cool-season grasses when seeded. Additionally, a mature bermudagrass plant forms a dense network of rhizomes and stolons that is conducive to a stable, high quality playing surface. Turfgrass scientists will continue to work for developing improved cultivars with better leaf texture, growth habit, etc. How they are implemented is up to you, the end user. We scientists are not only interested in the genetic potential of these grasses but also the potential management questions/challenges. Communicate regularly with your local turfgrass specialists as we learn as much from you as hopefully you do from us. -Cale Bigelow, PhD.

THROUGHOUT MUCH OF THE COOL-HUMID REGION the primary turfgrass species used for athletic fields are Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, turf-type tall fescue or a mixture containing combinations of all three. While these cool-season grasses are originally planted, regular re-seeding due to traffic occurs; sports turf managers normally use perennial ryegrass or 50:50 ryegrass:bluegrass mixture.

Inevitably the composition of these fields shifts to ryegrass. While ryegrass is very popular turfgrass species its biggest drawback is summer performance, and susceptibility to potentially devastating fungal diseases. Where severe stand damage occurs this will require re-planting before or during late-summer/fall use period. Poor stand density can lead to potentially unsafe field conditions. Many of these summer diseases can be effectively controlled with fungicide applications; however, access to appropriate spraying equipment, cost, and the potential for unwanted pesticide exposure to users often prohibits these products from being applied.

Today all turf and facility managers are carefully reviewing their programs and systems to potentially reduce maintenance inputs and save money. For sports that demand a smooth, closely mowed turf canopy it is not uncommon to consider bermudagrass. In fact, bermudagrass may be less costly to maintain than many of the cool-season grasses. It is a durable, fast growing warm-season turfgrass. In terms of recovery from traffic it is difficult to find a species that is more aggressive during its active growth period (e.g. summer).

Additionally, it is less disease susceptible and less sensitive to post-emergent herbicide applications for annual grassy weeds like crabgrass, etc. Furthermore, since bermudagrass is a warm-season species it has much higher water use efficiency compared to cool-season grasses. In practical terms, this means that bermuda may require or be more tolerant of less than ideal (e.g. non-uniform) irrigation coverage.

Brown in winter

Probably the biggest negative to using bermudagrass on fields would be the straw-brown color associated with the winter dormancy period. This can be overcome by a proper overseeding program but that is a whole other topic in itself. Additionally, it is important to remember that bermudagrass areas that are used excessively during their winter dormancy period will likely be subject to death and require replanting. Therefore, bermudagrass is not generally recommended for fields that receive substantial early spring use.

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➤ Above: **REMOVING** competition before seeding.
 ➤ Right: **CONTRAST** between perennial ryegrass, left, and bermudagrass, right.



Choosing a bermudagrass cultivar:

This is not an easy decision. Before planting bermudagrass you should visit with some managers who regularly cultivate bermudagrass and see their fields. Then I suggest you contact your local land-grant University. They will have the most current information regarding suitable bermudagrass cultivars for your region.

The other item you need to consider is what planting method you will use. Will you sod, sprig or seed? Traditionally bermudagrass was planted using vegetative methods. This is more expensive than seed; however, a lot of work has gone into improving seeded warm-season cultivars. Over the past 10 years a great deal of progress has been made in improving the appearance, growth habit, greenness, and cold temperature hardiness. For most situations seeding is the most economical decision and thus, the improved seeded cultivars are planted.

In the upper cool-humid region (transition zone and further north), winter hardiness is a primary consideration and for seeded bermudagrasses the gold-standard has been Riviera. While there are other cultivars that are equally cold hardy like Yukon, Riviera is most widely planted. Other factors may include seed availability (this has periodically been an issue), and cost.

Establishment process

The first step in renovating any existing turf area is to remove or dramatically reduce competition from any existing undesirable plants. Traditionally, this involves applying a non-selective herbicide containing the chemical glyphosate. In many situations more than a single application will be required to completely eliminate well established vegetation.

Are there other, less aggressive strategies? Attempts have been made to “passively” introduce plant material by applying plant growth regulators (PGRs) like trinexapac-ethyl instead of a non-selective herbicide to slow the growth of existing plants rather than

killing them. Generally, these practices have not been very successful in the long-term. Plain and simple, the existing plant rebounds quickly once the PGR wears off, and the newly planted seedlings are crowded out by the more mature existing plants. Remember that all plants are competing for sunlight, water, fertilizer/nutrients and the space to grow and thrive. The bigger plants normally will win!

Passive systems that involve banding herbicides in narrow (1-3 inch wide) localized areas and directly seeding or sprigging into these areas have had some success. The concept is that the bands are less visually disturbing compared to a completely brown, dead field. The next point in this process is to get the new plants established, then adjusting maintenance practices to favor the bermudagrass as opposed to the cool-season grass. This may involve adjusting irrigation schedules, mowing heights (e.g. lower than 1 inch will favor the bermudagrass), summer nitrogen (N) fertility (e.g. more summer

N will stimulate the bermudagrass), and possibly not treating for fungal diseases during the summer months. Anything that favors the bermudagrass will promote its growth and spread.

The key here is that these practices can only be conducted on “established” bermudagrass. It is unrealistic to adjust these practices immediately, especially for seeded cultivars. Once established, however, taking advantage of the aggressive spreading growth habit during June through August may pay dividends in terms of field coverage. In all practicality, this may not be realized until Year 2 of the establishment process.

Researchers in Kansas found that this practice resulted in approximately 55% cover in Year 1 and nearly 90% coverage in Year 2.

Timing: In general when planting seeded bermudagrasses it is best to start as early as possible. For the transition zone and more Northern locations the ideal window is May 1 through mid-July. For later dates, the plants may not mature as quickly since temperatures begin to drop and day length continues to decrease. Thus, you can still seed but you may need to realize there may be some winter mortality.

Some managers may consider covering the fields to decrease the risk for winter damage on underdeveloped plants. The upside to these late seedings is that there may be hope with the practice of dormant seeding. In other words, seed while the turf is dormant in late-winter/early spring. Research conducted at the University of Arkansas reported that seeding even in the late-winter months was successful the following year. The benefit to this method is that ground tends to be moist and will promote germination. Subsequent plant development would occur as soon as the environmental temperatures were favorable. The downside is that there may be some issues with plant mortality if the field is inappropriately used at this