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LEGAL ISSUES

ADA legislation was an enormous help to individuals with physical limitations, but it's far from the end of the road. Parents of students with physical challenges want their kids to be able to participate in sports, and athletic associations are working to develop programs to accommodate their needs.

In addition, new laws are being enacted all the time. One that has the potential to impact all athletic programs in schools across the state of Maryland, for example, will take full effect in 2011: the Fitness and Athletic Equity Law for Students with Disabilities. In short, it ensures that students with disabilities are provided equal opportunities to participate in physical education programs, and athletic activities in Maryland schools. Other states may follow with their own versions.

If you're just starting out, you might be thinking that everything seems very complicated. Remember that making an athletic facility accessible is a process and not an event. Start by seeing to the little

things, e.g., ensuring adequate handicap-accessible parking, curb cuts, etc. Check the width of any gates, and make sure a wheelchair can fit through. Talk about the necessity of shady, cool areas for athletes and spectators. Familiarize yourself with the rules of adapted sports and see if changes need to be made to your facility. Talk to coaches, athletic directors and your local high school or college athletic association.

At the end of it all, though, kids in wheelchairs are, well, kids. And just as with their able-bodied counterparts, they may be interested in any number of different sports; therefore, a sports field should be ready to accommodate those. The Cotting School initiated its Challenger Little League program this spring, according to Manzo, who says students were expressing interest in the program as early as winter.

“The kids were really excited,” Manzo says happily. “Our teams are the Orioles, the A's, the Dodgers and the Cardinals. We don't have the Red Sox because we're in Massachusetts, so obviously every kid would want to be on the Red Sox. And we don't have the Yankees. Obviously.” ■

Mary Helen Sprecher is a free lance writer who previously has written articles for this magazine on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) is a non-profit association helping designers, builders, owners, operators and users understand quality sports facility construction, www.sportsbuilders.org.

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the World Cup, and topdress with the sand and fiber mix.

Because Cloete and his crew are maintaining the fields during South Africa's winter season ("the coldest winter ever on record," Cloete said), certain concessions had to be made. Cloete noted, "We are currently mowing at a height of 3/4 inch on the stadiums. Because of the cold, we have to leave the practice fields at the mowing height of a true inch."

The crew was able to recover after a potentially devastating incident right before the World Cup: "The fields were specified to be overseeded at a very high rate, 300-lbs per acre," Cloete reported. "This overseeding practice used quite a bit of water that caused Pythium on one field in particular. This wiped out 1/3 of the field 2 weeks before the World Cup started. Because of budget, the entire field could not be removed, so we resodded certain areas with the reinforced sod. These resodded areas performed better than the rest of the existing field."

This year, the World Cup fields have had to deal with a particularly blustery winter. How do these temperatures affect the soccer matches? Cloete responded, "The grass was not growing as much as we anticipated. It never reaches below 25 degrees in Johannesburg, but it has several times this winter." Yet, with peculiar weather patterns came anomalies that can be devastating to grass: "It is not a wet cold, just a dry cold that creates a black frost." Despite these challenges, Cloete is satisfied with the results. "We are very happy with how well the fields are holding up during this cold."

Still, managing to elicit great performances from fields under such conditions involves some ingenuity. "There is one area at Soccer City that is completely shaded," Cloete explained. "In this area we bring in grow lights overnight. Because this area was left untopped, it was hit with some black frost that produced slight discoloration. Other than that the field is looking very well." Looking well is an understatement for a field that has seen quite a bit of activity, the Super 14, Confederations Cup, British Lions Tour, Tri Nations Tournament, normal soccer matches, and World Cup games in recent months. Even with such activity, Cloete noted there have been no compaction issues on any fields that have the Fiber Reinforced Natural Turf, but some of the other fields required VertiDraining before the World Cup.

Cold, disease, long hours, and heavy traffic, despite all of these challenges, the results of Cloete's expert management are noticeable by FIFA standards. FIFA grades the fields by the amount of slips per game, with five or fewer slips considered a perfect field. Soccer City averaged only two slips per game. Cloete believes careful construction and meticulous management aside, there is one substantial reason for the performance on these fields of the World Cup: "You really saw better performance on the base camp fields that get 3 to 4 hours of intense practice a day. When we resodded the wear areas with the reinforced sod grown it withstood traffic as well, if not better than the established sod."

Not only are the benefits of Cloete's hard work evident on the field, but the off-field rewards are noticeable in countless ways: "We are all a bit more relaxed now," Cloete admitted. "Guys are having fun all over and there is enough beer to keep them warm. It has been really a great experience for South Africa as we have seen more than double the amount of tourists than were expected." ■

Michael Petitti is a freelance journalist working in Los Angeles.

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University of Tennessee and AstroTurf break ground on new research center

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE and AstroTurf recently broke ground on the new Research Center for Safer Athletic Fields. The ceremony was held at the UT Institute of Agriculture's East Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center in Knoxville. Former UT football star Eric Berry was on hand along with researchers and AstroTurf representatives to celebrate the occasion.

The center, which is the first of its kind in the country, will conduct research on both natural and syn-

thetic playing surfaces, using 60 small-scale athletic research fields, as well as mechanical and human studies in order to simulate playing conditions. The overall goal of the project is to make playing fields safer for athletes in the future.

This project is the brainchild of Dr. John Sorochan, associate professor in plant science at UT, and Dr. Jim Brosnan, assistant professor in plant science. The two will head the research at the center.

"This is something I've dreamed about for a long time," said Sorochan. "We do have now, easily, the single largest sports turf research program in the world and our

efforts are dedicated to making athletic fields safer for all levels of playing surface, synthetic and natural grass, but more importantly, it's for all levels of play."

"We both got involved in sports turf research because we knew that there were things we could do to athletic fields to make them safer for athletes," Brosnan said.

Eric Berry, who attended as the ceremony's special guest, explained his enthusiasm for the new research endeavor.

"I'm very excited to get this under way," said the Kansas City Chiefs 1st-round pick. "A lot of people don't understand how much strain and how much stress turf can



"This is our field of dreams. It's been built and everyone is coming."

» Above: DR. JOHN SOROCHAN Below: GROUNDBREAKING LINEUP at the new Research Center for Safer Athletic Fields at the University of Tennessee.





» JIM PRETTYMAN, left, COO of AstroTurf, with Eric Berry, former Volunteer safety and #1 pick of NFL's Kansas City Chiefs.

actually have on an athlete's body.

"I think this is a very good deal," he said. "I think this research will benefit a lot of athletes, and I'm very appreciative of everything being done to help us out and just for looking at us as people.

"As athletes, we already have 11 guys trying to take our heads off every play, why have the turf after you also?"

AstroTurf, which is donating the start up and construction costs for the new center reiterated their commitment to safer athletic fields and the research necessary for them.

"AstroTurf stands for quality, research, ethics-based marketing, and excellence in products that we make and we are extremely interested in safety," said COO Jim Prettyman, who was on hand as the company's spokesperson for the event.

"This was a really great opportunity for us to take what we stand for in AstroTurf and put it into play with a world class university and I can't tell you how excited we are to be working with the University of Tennessee," he said.

"I want to give a lot of accolades to AstroTurf because they've had the vision and they are actually funding more natural grass research for athletic fields than anyone else has in history," said Sorochan. "This is our field of dreams. It's been built and everyone is coming."

Research at the outdoor facility will begin as soon as fall 2010, and the center is expected to be fully operational by 2011. ■

Justin West is Website Editor, School of Journalism & Electronic Media, University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

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By **Tim Richardson**
and **Andrea Kunicky**



“After seeing how much the players enjoyed the mound, I showed it to a few coaches and others in the local baseball community,” said Murphy. “It seemed to just take off from there.”

As demand for the mounds grew, he set up a side business out of his parents’ garage and made mounds at night. Murphy eventually gave up his teaching job to focus full-time on ProMounds, Inc. as the demand for the product grew. He never expected the mounds he made from his parents’ garage would ever turn into a multi-million dollar business.

But Murphy was hearing from customers that they were unaware that he sold anything more than the original mound. Since indoor facilities were such a key part of his business, Murphy wanted to upgrade his service to them. So he asked his clients about their specific needs and launched On Deck Sports, the retail division of ProMounds, Inc.

“After surveying the indoor facilities that we worked with, our catalog expanded to include the items they needed, not just our mounds,” Murphy said. “Creating On Deck Sports seemed to be the most appropriate way to demonstrate that our company was more than just the mound. Our product lined included artificial turf, netting, screens and more.”

Today, On Deck Sports’ offers over 3,000 products, including various items under their budding recycled turf operation. The company’s first entrée into recycling turf came in 2003 when it purchased an 18,000-square foot soccer field that was being removed. In purchasing the field, Murphy saw two immediate opportunities.

Coach-turned-businessman recycles synthetic turf fields

Editor’s note: This article was written by staff of Maroon Public Relations, Columbia, MD.

While recycled turf is a core business area for the retail division of Massachusetts-based ProMounds, Inc., the baseball manufacturing company was actually formed in 2001 out of a need for a different product.

Former Division I player Joe Murphy was teaching and coaching high school baseball in New England and was frustrated by the snow prohibiting his team from practicing outside. Needing a way to workout his pitchers, he developed a portable mound with a high-density foam core that could be used in the gym without harming the surface. The mound was a hit with his players and its popularity quickly spread throughout the New England baseball community.

“After seeing how much the players enjoyed the mound, I showed it to a few coaches and others in the local baseball community,” said Murphy. “It seemed to just take off from there.”

Murphy said, "I saw a situation that enabled us to help protect the environment by ensuring the field didn't wind up in a landfill, and allowed us to provide our clients with a quality product. Plus, it helped reduce the disposal costs for the group from whom we were buying the turf."

Recognizing the versatility of the turf, On Deck Sports recycled the turf by customizing areas for batting cages, indoor training facilities and even doggie day care centers. But the company's major acquisition in this business area came in 2005 when it purchased the turf from the Carrier Dome at Syracuse University. After that transaction, On Deck Sports began to aggressively pursue purchasing more used turf.

"This gave us the opportunity to offer our clients a quality product at a price-point that was more affordable for them than purchasing the product brand new," said Murphy.

On Deck Sports began working with a company in Georgia to store and distribute the turf to customers worldwide. Among the additional turf fields they purchased were the SkyDome in Toronto, the Louisiana Superdome, the Indianapolis Colts' field from the RCA Dome, the Duke University practice field and the field at BC Place Stadium before the 2010 Winter Olympics. On Deck Sports has donated turf to U.S. military posts for use by troops as golf mats while serving in the Middle East.

Beginning in 2006, On Deck Sports began purchasing 10-12

On Deck Sports has donated turf to U.S. military posts for use by troops as golf mats while serving in the Middle East.

fields a year, the equivalent of around 1,000,000-square feet of turf. To help accommodate this significant component of the company's business, Murphy purchased a 30,000-square-foot turf warehouse and distribution center in Georgia.

"From indoor facilities and baseball fields, residential lawn projects to custom commercial ventures, turf presently accounts for a significant portion of On Deck Sports' sales, said Murphy. "While the most popular application is for use in baseball and softball batting cages, we have provided recyclable turf to clients for use in dugouts, football sidelines, facilities for soccer, lacrosse and paintball, track covers and much more." ■

Tim Richardson is executive vice president and Andrea Kunicky associate account executive with Maroon Public Relations, Columbia, MD. Photos courtesy of ProMounds, Inc./On Deck Sports.

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Survey reveals NCAA athletic departments are going **Green**

PROGREENSPORTS has announced the results of its second annual survey of environmental sustainability practices among NCAA athletic departments.

Key decision makers in over 70 large NCAA athletic departments participated in the May 2010 survey. More than 90% of the survey respondents are Associate or Assistant Athletic Directors of Facilities or Operations, Facilities Managers, or Campus-wide Sustainability Directors from Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools.

The 2010 Athletic Department Sustainability Survey indicates that 80% of key decision makers in athletic departments have a positive perspective on developing environmental initiatives. Nearly 40% of athletic departments have formed an internal “green team,” almost twice as many as in 2009. More than 35% of the athletic departments have developed or are actively considering developing a sustainability plan with short- and long-term goals. More than 80% of athletic departments expect the emphasis on environmental programs to be increasing in the future.

Mark McSherry, President of ProGreenSports, said, “College sports programs are a powerful venue to engage ath-

letes, students, fans and alumni in environmental initiatives. Athletic departments are starting to recognize the leadership opportunity and are looking to implement meaningful and authentic green programs that make good business sense too.”

McSherry points out that the University of Colorado at Boulder has a best-in-class zero waste and energy reduction program at Folsom Field and has attracted significant sponsorship support. “College athletics can leverage their brand and develop a profitable green business model that attracts sponsorship and green advertising while expanding their environmental programs and impact,” McSherry said. “A green athletic department can be the ideal public face of a university’s overall sustainability program.”

The 2010 NCAA Athletic Department Sustainability Survey reveals detailed information on sustainability initiatives for energy, recycling, water conservation, green building and renovation, and green maintenance. The full Survey Report is available for free at www.ProGreenSports.com and includes key findings, trend analysis, survey results and a comparison to green practices among professional sports teams. ■

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More views on synthetic turf irrigation

RUNOFF & BMPS

Irrigation of synthetic turf is an issue which will be debated as to whether it is a necessity or a luxury. Whichever side you align yourself with, the need to manage storm water runoff or irrigation water, will become an important issue as states and metropolitan areas begin to implement Best Management Practices (BMP).

Most everyone is familiar with storm water retention basins or “Bio-remediation”; the intent of such a facility is to collect and filter storm water runoff from parking lots or other paved areas, filter out debris and chemicals deposited by cars and people and reduce peak flow amounts from a storm event. These same principles are being applied to synthetic turf fields in more and more communities.

Certain permitting agencies in Pennsylvania and Maryland, for example, have adopted a policy that all synthetic fields shall be treated the same as any paved surface requiring new installations to collect runoff, detain and clean the water before releasing into a regulated watershed. This is requiring the sports field designer to incorporate innovative methods to address BMP’s to meet newly adopted policies.

Some options have been to create detention basins below the synthetic turf surface within a deeper stone profile thus increasing the storage capacity of the base stone and controlling the outflow of storm water through smaller outflow pipes. Another common option is to create a large subsurface detention basin at



The highest recorded synthetic surface temperature to date was **196.4 degrees** by Penn State University at the Center for Sports Surface Research.

the perimeter of the field allowing for a certain amount of ground water recharge to occur and only allowing excess storm water to flow into a watershed at a reduced volume and flow.

Since synthetic fields require some irrigation to either reduce heat gain or flush contaminants from the surface and infill, there is an opportunity to capture and reuse storm water that falls on the field. There are many different types of subsurface storm water capture systems available for collection and storage. Several are complete systems with booster pumps to supplement an irrigation system or an engineer can design a system to meet specific needs.

As more and more sports complexes are installing multiple fields to meet increased user demand the need to address storm water runoff becomes more acute. To understand the impact of a single 1-inch storm event on a regulation soccer field the collective runoff quantity would exceed 58,000 gallons. If we were to assume an average monthly rainfall amount of 4 inches, a single field will receive 232,000 gallons each month. A 12-field complex would receive 2,784,000 gallons of runoff per month. The ability to capture this water for reuse to irrigate

synthetic fields to reduce summer heat gain would significantly reduce the cost of domestic water to accomplish the same effect.

The benefits of collection and storage would allow for sufficient irrigation water to reduce excessive surface temperatures reducing heat stress issues with players. Studies have shown that the amount of water required to reduce synthetic turf surfaces 14 degrees for a period of 2 hours is approximately 3,000 gallons. With summer temperatures reaching 90 degrees or higher, synthetic surfaces can reach 180 and higher. The need to manage these surface temperatures through irrigation to protect players from heat related illness or reduce the potential of contracting infections from pathogens or microbes on the playing surface increases the importance of having a sensible water management program that includes a storm water collection and reuse system as part of the field design. Incorporating a subsurface collection and booster pump to operate the irrigation system has the capability to provide the needed quantity of water to manage surface temperatures and reduce the potential of health-related issues for players.