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it involves much more than the scope of this article allows. Healthy grass contributes strongly to all three aspects of a quality football field: safety, playability, and appearance.

You need to continually educate yourself in turfgrass management. Education can be formal or informal, but it is an absolute must. The technological advances in our

industry move fast, so it takes a process of continual education to keep up.

- **Be flexible**

Troy, Wes, and I often joke that we don't really make plans, we just develop scenarios and figure out how to address them. I'm sure you can relate!

## Mowing practices

by Steve Wightman,  
Qualcomm Stadium

When attempting to provide a better and safer playing surface, few things are more important than a thick, dense turfgrass cover. Many factors, such as proper soil conditions, prudent irrigation, and fertility play a major role, but proper mowing practices can contribute significantly to a safe, dense, playable turfgrass cover.

- **Height of cut**

Different types of grasses prefer different mowing heights. Knowing the predominant turfgrass species on your field is the first step in proper mowing. If your field consists of warm-season turfgrass species, the preferred mowing height is typically lower than that of cool-season turfgrasses.

Warm-season grasses, such as bermudagrass and Zoysiagrass, prefer mowing heights between 0.75 inches and 1.0 inch. Hybrid bermuda prefers a 0.5-inch to 0.75-inch height.

Cool-season turfgrasses, such as Kentucky bluegrass, prefer mowing heights between one inch and two inches. Perennial ryegrasses, tall fescues, and others prefer to maintain a 1.5-inch to 2.5-inch height.

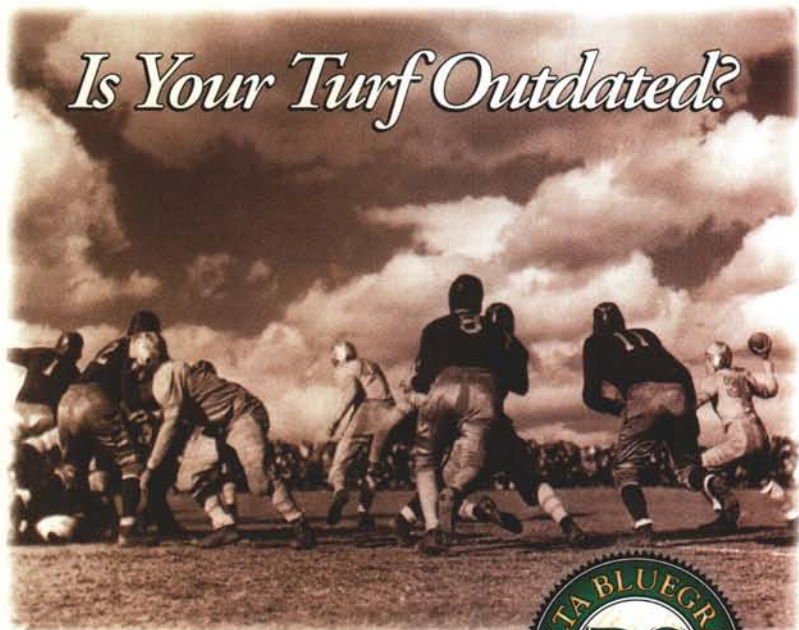
Mowing within preferred height of cut ranges will promote a denser canopy without sacrificing root growth. Mowing lower than the preferred height adversely affects root growth, and mowing higher usually promotes a thinner canopy that encourages weed encroachment.

A single field may have many different turfgrass species with both warm- and cool-season grasses. It's important to identify the type of turfgrass you wish to maintain. The time of year play occurs on your fields usually determines which species to promote.

If your field is heavily scheduled during autumn and/or spring, promote your cool-season turfgrasses with mowing heights between 1.0 and 2.5 inches. If your field is heavily used during the summer months, warm-season grasses should be promoted with mowing heights between 0.5 and 1.0 inch.

There are times when it makes sense to manage both warm- and cool-season grasses simultaneously. If this is the case with your field,

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choose a height that will provide a happy medium. Your choice should fall at the upper end (if not higher) of the warm-season preferred range, and within the preferred range of the cool-season species.

If heavy traffic is scheduled during the summer months in the northern part of the country, where only cool-season grasses are used, the mowing height should fall at the upper end of the range for the particular species. In fact, the upper end of the height range should be used on any field where heavy traffic dominates. This provides a greater amount of biomass for plant crown protection and player safety.

• **Mowing frequency**

Mowing frequency is most often determined by other cultural practices and by temperature. It should always be dictated by the 1/3-inch rule, which states that you should never remove more than 1/3 of the total length of the leaf at one time.

Lack of water and fertility will obviously slow down a turfgrass' growth rate. Low soil temperatures also affect growth, particularly in stressed cool-season grasses. However, when adequate irrigation and nutrients are provided during the growing season, you should mow two or three times per week.

Mowing more frequently will help ensure that you follow the 1/3-inch rule. It will also promote more tillering, which thickens the turfgrass stand for a denser canopy. A dense canopy provides plant crown protection, greater biomass for wear tolerance, and a more resilient playing surface for field safety.

**Practice field renovation**

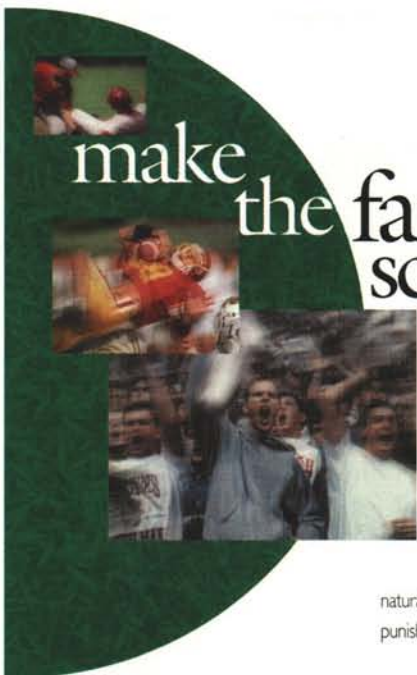
by Rich Genoff,  
San Francisco 49ers

The San Francisco 49ers are currently growing Tifway II hybrid bermuda at the team's training facility in Santa Clara, CA. I have approximately 290,000 square feet of practice fields.

At year's end, the fields are like most NFL practice fields: beat up and worn out. In my case, they are also dormant.

The bermuda starts going dormant or losing its color at the first frost. This usually occurs toward the end of November, or by mid-December each year. When the season ends, I immediately start my

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