



Q&A

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Have Questions?

SEND THEM TO GRADY AT: P.O. BOX 110670, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE, FL 32611-0670

I have an unusual situation. At our sports complex we are a multi-use facility. We have sod in our arena for about eight months, during which the field gets used by two local high schools and a junior college for football (15 game days in 2 1/2 months). After football season ends, five to eight soccer games are played on the field. After these matches we remove the sod (usually finding another location on-site to move it to) and the arena is used for equestrian events through the end of July. In August we level the field to prepare for sod. This year we used large-roll sod with the grass a Kentucky bluegrass and fescue mix. The sod, at best, has 30 days to establish before we begin using it. Needless to say, after about six games the field is showing typical wear between the hash marks and between the 30 yard lines. We overseed with fescue weekly and aerate about every three weeks to alleviate compaction. Toward the end of the season, our turf has lost the battle: Any suggestions on how to put up a tougher fight?

Roger La Fountain
General Manager
Salinas, California

I like your approach to dealing with these difficult growing conditions, but I have a few suggestions. First, let me go on record that not having spent a great deal of time in your area, that I am glad I called you to discuss your local weather conditions. As I indicated to you on the phone, my first reaction after reading your letter was to suggest you switch

to bermudagrass. In warm climates, bermudagrass rhizomes and stolons provide great wear tolerance and a quick recuperative potential. But with your cool, cloudy climate you have made a good decision to choose a cool-season grass.

My first suggestion would be to alter the cool-season grass mixture. I suggest that you add some perennial ryegrass to your mixture, reducing (or eliminating) the percentage of tall fescue. Perennial ryegrass is a bunch-type grass with fine to medium leaf texture, similar to the Kentucky bluegrass. Perennial ryegrass will withstand low mowing heights (3/4 inch) and has excellent wear tolerance, but recovers more slowly than Kentucky bluegrass. Perennial ryegrass' greatest benefit in your situation is that it germinates rapidly (in 4 to 7 days). Weekly overseeding with perennial ryegrass should provide a quicker cover than the tall fescue. You may also consider using pre-germinated seed to further reduce germination time. In addition to perennial ryegrass' quicker germination, I suspect the seed may be a little cheaper than tall fescue.

This change may still not solve your wear areas. Limiting play/use may be the only way to solve that problem. Unfortunately, this is not often an option. If you have another location on-site that you use to move the sod to in the off-season, you may consider growing extra sod on this site during the season. This will give you a similar sod source to patch

worn areas during the season or between seasons. This could be especially helpful between the football and soccer season for repair of field areas key to soccer play (i.e., goal mouths, corner kick areas, and midfield).

You are addressing the compaction with regular aerifications, which is a good practice. Though it may seem counterproductive, you may want to lightly roll the field to improve seed-to-soil contact. This will also increase the soil to root contact following an athletic event that has heavily disrupted the surface. The roller should not be so heavy that it causes soil "rippling" as it passes over the surface.

Your fertilization program was not mentioned, so I will only bring up a few topics as reminders to the readers. A good fertility program begins with a soil analysis to determine nutrients status and pH. For cool-season turfgrasses, a soil test in mid to late summer helps in planning nutrient applications before the fall growing period. A soil test in August just before laying sod would work best in your situation. Soil test and limitations dictated by field use, desired growth rate and potential turf utilization should have a bearing on fertilizer sources and fertilization rates.

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