

STMA's Playing Conditions Index revisited



Mike Tarantino, director of maintenance and operations, Poway (CA) School District.

IT'S BEEN SEVERAL YEARS now since the Sports Turf Managers Association unveiled the Playing Conditions Index (PCI). I still believe this is one of the most valuable tools that the organization has given to us.

How many of you reading this article know what the PCI is? How many of you that do know are using it? Hopefully, all of you know what it is and are using it.

I was fortunate to be on the committee that developed the PCI. The PCI's original intent was to be used as a way to evaluate your sports field and provide a ready reference as to its current condition. It has, for me, become more than that.

I use the PCI for field evaluation; however, I take it a few steps further. I use the PCI four times yearly on my "show case" sports fields; four should be a minimum. I not only answer the questions honestly but my PCI is a road map for the maintenance and renovations I perform on my sports fields. My PCI is full of notes. The notes include weather conditions, type of products used, pest identification, weed identification, percentage of field that was renovated, exact area of the field that was renovation and results of the renovation. Why? What I have found by using the PCI is it isn't just a simple tool to evaluate the current playing condition of the field. Using the PCI evaluation along with the notes I write down on the PCI gives me the overall picture and history of that particular sports field.

Whatever you do, do not toss your old PCI's in the trash! I use my old PCI's and compare them to the new; weather conditions jotted

down now provide me with an historical look at the weather conditions. Weather plays a major role in what we do, soil temps, air temps, rain or drought all contribute to the safety, playability and aesthetic quality of our sports fields. Weather may affect the pesticides or herbicide we select to control a fungus or weed infestation problem. By comparing past PCI's with the present I can now determine what products worked, what renovation practiced worked and I can now make educated management practices and budget decisions based on the information I obtained from the PCI.

What's on the horizon? At STMA's National Conference in Orlando 2 years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting Ian Lacy, who is with the Institute of Groundsmanship in the United Kingdom. We became friends while discussing the PCI and the United Kingdom's Performance Quality Standards (PQS). Ian and I picked up our friendship again in Austin this past January and soon began talking about the PCI and the PQS and where both of these valuable tools are headed.

We agreed to beginning looking at both documents to see if they could be merged to become one. Imagine having a document that meets the needs of Sports Turf Managers around the world! I have begun to look at developing a database for the information collected on my PCI's so that it would be readily available for applying management practices, budget and board meetings and for media releases. I am also hopeful that the database can then be merged with the use of a specific sports field. Merging these two data bases may provide valuable information into the management practices used vs. the sport or sports that is played on them. There is work to be done in the future to hone this tool into what it really can be, maybe the most valuable one we have in our tool box.

There are three things I don't leave my office without when evaluating my sports fields: the PCI, my maintenance standards and a passion for what I do. ■

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About the STMA PCI®

SOME OF THE COMMENTS that were made by PCI Task Group members and those who "piloted" the PCI are:

◉ "It is a great start to something that can be used as a tool for managers to tune their programs, and help as fire-power when asking for a better budget."

— Peter Lockwood, Head Groundskeeper, Nashville Sounds, Tenn.

◉ "The worksheet is a good tool for assessing your fields. It forces you to take the blinders off and really look more specifically at your field instead of generally, as I tend to do when conducting a daily inspection."

— Scott Phippen, Superintendent of Streets and Parks, Village of Lincolnshire, Ill.

STMA members who have already used the STMA PCI in its formative stages, either those in the Task Group or those in

the Focus Group, state several reasons that the STMA PCI is a useful tool to them in their current situation. There are primarily three reasons cited:

◉ "will allow me to go to my administration to justify additional resources"

◉ "a tool for my media relations department"

◉ "it will help me to communicate with all the constituent groups involved: parents, coaches, players, administrators, etc."

STMA is dedicated to making the STMA PCI a useful tool for the Sports Turf Manager. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please note them in the Comments section on Page 4 of the STMA PCI Worksheet and fax or email them to STMA at 785.843.2977 or PCI@STMA.org. If you need more immediate assistance, please call STMA Headquarters at 800.323.3875. ■

To download and print the STMA PCI in its usable format, please log on to www.stma.org.