

# Sports Field Management - Apr/May 2010

## FEATURES

### Painting in Inclement Weather

By by Mike Hebrard

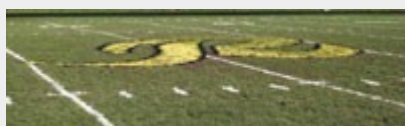


Trace an existing logo on a piece of lace using a large Sharpie. You can use an aerosol paint to spray right through the lace, and it allows you to paint your logo with more detail without the extra stencils. Not having to handle the extra stencils is a great help in wet or windy weather.

At times it seems the most important step for painting for an athletic or special event is being lucky, though that luck most often occurs in conjunction with thorough preparation. I have found that when I have prepared for the worst, the results will nearly always be workable. Sometimes weather conditions will suddenly change, and if you are overly prepared, you'll get better results than you anticipated.

### Preparation

Match your supplies to the surfaces you'll be painting. Some inverted aerosol cans are not designed for applications on natural grass as their propellants will harm the grass blades. Gather all the materials you will need and have them ready to transport to the painting site.



When the field is too muddy to paint a logo, try using a colored calcined clay product in the area. Use bender boards as you apply it to give better definition to the logo.

*Photos by Mike Hebrard.*

Keeping an eye on the weather forecast or getting up-to-date reports from a reliable source is invaluable in making the right decisions about when and how to paint. Sometimes you can wait it out for an hour or two, or even postpone painting until the next day. However, for that big game or a special event, you usually have a painting schedule blocked out that gives you just enough time to complete the artistic process the way you had planned it.

### Painting in wet conditions

When working in wet conditions, be sure to take extra measures to protect the grass or synthetic turf from equipment damage. Start with the driest surface possible. Drag a hose over the turf to remove the dew. Use a backpack blower to dry down the grass blades. Mow any high, wet grass and catch the clippings.

When using liquid paint, get the hottest water possible, even if that means mixing on-site. The warmer water will help the paint mix and dry more quickly. You may be

able to fill cans with hot water at the facility, but I've found many school or parks and recreation sites have limited access to hot water. In those cases, I fill cans with hot water before leaving home and take them with me. Even though it cools a bit on the trip, it will still be warmer than the water you can get at many facilities.

If possible, paint a light coat and blow it dry, then zap it with a second application. Be cautious though, if you repaint too soon you'll dilute the first application. Pick the order of the color application to limit the time you might have to step on the previously painted color. Have a piece of cardboard or tarp available to wipe your feet on to limit unnecessary marks.

If the logo is small enough or you have a tent big enough, covering the area with a tent is an excellent way to protect your work. Side curtains will protect the area from rain blown in by the wind. Use a backpack blower or a portable space heater to help dry the paint if necessary.

Using white and the primary colors of liquid paints, you can mix to create most colors. Get a PMS color code sample. It will give you the colors you need to use to make the others.

During a light sprinkle, apply the paint as heavy as possible to help it last through the rain. Experiment for the right mix before you start the application. If the paint is too thick, it can affect the spray quality as it comes from the nozzle, creating uneven lines and patterns.



Stencil boards with high sides allow you to paint extra heavy in the wind and rain without overspray and still produce a bright, quality, straight line.

If the timetable is tight, lay out the logo with pin line aerosol cans a day or so in advance. That way, when the weather does break, you can quickly apply the paint in better conditions. When using inverted aerosol cans, keep them in a warm area. Don't leave them in the truck or outside. The cooler they are, the longer it will take to shake them to mix the paint thoroughly before use.

If rain persists, inverted aerosol cans might be the only choice. Using them, you can always get something down on the wet grass. Many colors are available, but you need to have them, and enough of them, on-site. To date, I haven't found a removable inverted aerosol can that will withstand the rain and still be removable when you want it to be. Frost can cause problems, too, especially if the paint color is from a tint base instead of a clear base. The frost can cause the paint to separate, leaving a white tint on the grass blade.

When painting synthetic fields, the surface has to be dry. A little sunlight or wind will speed up the dry-down. To test it, use a paper towel to dab the surface. If the paper towel is quite wet, wait a little while longer. If the synthetic surface is too wet, the paint will run. Always use low pressure to paint the blades. Higher pressure can force the paint into the infill, making it hard to remove the shadow. With wet weather on either type of surface, the airless sprayer will tend to atomize the paint, making it dry quicker.

If the irrigation system comes on unexpectedly, use paint buckets over the irrigation heads to protect the areas to be painted. You might have to put a rock or

a second bucketful of paint on top of the first bucket if the water pressure is high. Once the area is protected, shut down the system or make arrangements for others to do so.

### Painting in windy conditions

When working in windy conditions, have lots of help, the more experienced the better. Be sure the placement of your stencil is accurate as you lay it out. Smooth over the surface to eliminate any air pockets, and then use lots of weights or staples to anchor it in place.

With heavy wind, use stencil boards to eliminate the possibility of overspray. You may need to block the wind from a couple different directions if it's gusty or swirling. Move the boards carefully to keep any paint that has accumulated from dripping.

### Painting in the heat

Pete Wozniak is manager of athletic facilities at Arizona State University in Tempe, Ariz. Being in the Sonoran Desert region, his main weather issue is the heat, and he passed along a few of his tips. He says, "We may be painting on a sunny day when the air temperature can be in the 110. I've found the most important thing to remember is to take care of your crew and yourself. Have sufficient water on hand, and remind everyone to stay hydrated. Use sunscreen, and wear hats and sunglasses if conditions warrant. Gloves may be needed, as well.

"Plan your painting strategy in advance. You need to make sure that whatever you are marking is done right the first time. The paint dries very quickly, so there is not time to wash out any mistakes. It's also important to keep a lid to cover the paint that you are working with to prevent a skin from forming on the top."

Extreme heat may cause plugging of the nozzle, as the paint tends to dry right at the tip, so watch it closely. Partial drying of the nozzle can result in a splatter pattern.

Some colors, usually the darker ones, will stress out the grass more than other colors, especially in extremely hot temperatures. If your logos require a lot of dark paint, make sure the grass is in the best possible condition prior to painting. Paint as close to the event as possible to reduce the length of the stress period.

When painting in less than ideal weather, the best strategy combines careful planning, good timing and the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions.



Make sure stencils are anchored securely in windy weather. Even if the stencil isn't damaged by whipping winds or objects it is blown into, it will take extra time and effort to reposition it.

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