

Synthetic fields don't have to limit your field markings

By Mike Hebrard of Athletic Field Design, Clackamas, OR



With all of the new high-tech infill synthetic athletic fields being installed in the Pacific Northwest, most of the markings are inlaid or sewn in. Football (usually the main tenant) is distinguished by white and soccer by yellow. With increasing demands to use the facility to its utmost, and thus be able to recoup some of the costs associated with its maintenance, other sports, such as lacrosse, discus and javelin, have been able to acquire the usage time available. The New England Patriots recently replaced their entire field and opted to install a totally green FieldTurf field. This allowed them to remove the painted football markings and repaint the soccer lines for their MLS team without the confusion of a multi-lined field.

Since white and yellow are being used predominantly, I've had to standardize some of the colors so that the play of lacrosse is as consistent as possible as to which color is which. I decided to use blue for the boys, and red for the girls. (By the way, there is not much similarity in the markings or the way the sports are played; boys wear helmets and shoulder pads and girls wear protective lens-less goggles and usually skirts). It is important to know the type of material your field is made of – whether it is composed of rubber, sand and rubber, carpet, or indoor no infill – as this may affect the wear factor of the paint and how difficult it may be to remove it. If the proper paint application is done, it can be easier to remove from synthetic turf than from grass.

Field layout

The boys have a standard overall size in 60 yards wide and 110 yards long. If you have the chance to make a deci-

sion on the length of the soccer field, I recommend 110 yards, otherwise another line would have to be temporary painted in the end zone. The crease is a 9' radius from the center of the 10 yard line. However, the girls are 8 ½' from the goal line of football. The girls can use the same sideline as the boys but until recently, they had no definitive out-of-bounds markings. At about the 30 yard line, both have a solid line across connecting to the sideline. (Sometimes I'm asked to paint a line outside the 30's to highlight them, although most turf managers will simply cone them). The center circle for girls is the same as soccer, but the boys don't use one. The girls have a Fan and an Arc around the crease, whereas the boys have dashes from the end line to the 30 yard line and solid line from 40 to 40 yard line 120 wide.



Many of the teams like to have the benches and penalty boxes on the opposite side of the main stands. (I guess there might be too much coaching and refereeing if they are on the same side).

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GE Park Les Schwab Bowl, (HS All-Star Football game) Portland, Oregon; Application with preprinted mesh.

THE PAINTING OF THE FIELD

It is best to use a proven removable paint such as Temp-Line from Eco Chemical call 1-800-677-7930 or visit their website at www.ecochemical.com). Eco Chemical has provided paint & equipment for the Canadian Football League (CFL), the New England Patriots, the Minnesota Vikings, the Seattle Seahawks, the NFL Pro Bowl and the Baltimore Ravens, and has provided grass fields that need quick conversions, as well as some recent bowl games for colleges, high schools and recreational facilities.

This paint is formulated to withstand the seasonal rains and can be removed by using a liquid eraser along with some scrubbing and agitation with water. Using a cheaper paint makes shadowing more prevalent; as it becomes harder to remove the line completely, more labor is needed.

Depending upon the brightness required, I like to paint a light application first and make sure everyone agrees with the markings. (Even though the paint is removable, I would rather re-apply the paint three times than take it off once. The lines usually wear down enough by the start of football season so the players and the fans don't notice the difference). It is best to use a low pressure paint applicator as you want to keep the paint on top of the fibers and not blown down into the infield. New nozzles or shields will ensure a clean edge on the lines, as well as consistent pressure.

If temporary logos are something you want to use, Temp-Line dries rather quickly, allowing you to move on to the next color much sooner. Since a logo generally requires more paint, this leaves the dilemma of what to do with the excess paint after you remove it. The fields are designed to drain water quickly but the added unbroken paint particles could build up after a while, and may prevent water from draining or compacting the area. Eco Chemical has invented a riding extractor that uses spinning pressure wands to remove paint from the fibers and then vacuums up the paint particles before they start to drain into the field. If you just need to remove the lines, they also have a smaller walk-behind version that breaks down the paint and spreads it so the residue is unnoticeable. Unlike some of the other paint, if you make a mistake or want to add or remove certain markings or logos, you can quickly remove the undesired paint, wait a couple of minutes for the turf to be dry, and then paint the desired markings.

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Right: PGE Park Les Schwab Bowl, (HS All-star Football game) Portland, Oregon; Game Official



Left: Eco Chemical Water Bug Line Remover



Several of this year's Bowl games were played on synthetic infill fields and some had multiple events where sponsor and team logos, as well as numbers and hash locations, had to be adjusted to meet the events' criteria. Some of the facilities are now going with plain end zones and field centers to attract future events that want their own identity.

For some time, the CFL has been financially subsidizing their events by using sponsored logos on their fields. This is beginning to be seen in the States, and in all likelihood will become the norm in years to come. In the past, logo stencils required skill and time to use but with modern techniques, things have changed. Using these stencils with temporary paint does not limit you to synthetic turf alone. In fact, you can put logos on almost any surface, including concrete, asphalt, coated wood, and anything else you can think of.

Synthetic fields have come a long way in the last five years, and so have the techniques and equipment to maintain them. The consistency of play of a synthetic field made them a necessity but with new techniques and equipment it is their flexibility that makes them a valuable asset.

Founded in 1993, Athletic Field Design (AFD) is recognized as the

expert in athletic field design, maintenance and customized graphics. We have worked with professional sports teams, both major and small colleges and local sports programs. We also serve non-athletic activities in need of custom graphics on both natural and artificial surfaces. AFD is a member of the Sports Turf Managers Association, Oregon Association of Nursery Men, Oregon Coaches Association and Oregon Athletic Directors Association.

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