



Athletic Field Design

Coaches take "The Walk of Life"

By Mike Hebrard Athletic Field Design

Fall sports are now in full gear, the student athletes are well conditioned, religiously lifting weights, eating the proper diet, and running their wind sprints. We are even starting to listen to my famous line, "start getting your fields in shape, the same time you tell the athletes to prepare for fall sports".

Well what else can we do to our fields? We, collectively as coaches, athletic directors, groundskeepers, and concerned parents can do what I feel is the most important field maintenance of all, and it won't even cost you a dime. I am referring to "the walk of life." Before each and every practice and game, walk the entire field with your team and staff and look for that one little thing that could turn a season, career, or even life around. I am talking about objects that are left on the athletic fields, such as broken glass, metal, rocks, bricks, holes in the turf, needles, condoms, leftover grounds tools, (yes even from me), irrigation heads, chemicals, GOLF BALLS, garbage, and worst of all, dog poop.

In recent conversations with some area coaches, the following have been discovered by their walk or lack thereof. Terry Summerfield, head football coach at Central Catholic, found what he believed was a crude booby trap made of power saw blades and a metal spike. Frank Geske, head football coach at Franklin H.S. told me that his son Matt, after recovering from a severe sprained ankle, reinjured it running onto the field for pre-game warm-ups by stepping on an

improperly laid brick. Geske also says that "nothing cuts as bad as a broken bottle or glass." During my most recent layout of Sellwood Park for Portland State University, describing these situations to Assistant Football Coach Jeff Hoover, we discovered a 10" metal spike sticking out of the ground in a deadly angle with the sharp end up. Coach Bill Dressel from Benson H.S., walked the field with his staff and found a generic hypodermic needle on the practice field. If you do use hardware to mark or layout your fields, I suggest you paint them bright orange for easy detection.

Be prepared for the obvious, the week before school reconvenes, the on-the-field parties by local vandals, and Homecoming Night, are setting the stage for that early P.E. class or Monday practice. Even secured locked gates are not immune from reappearing broken glass. Sometimes it's hard to understand how glass and weeds grow faster than grass, and hold up to traffic too.

I'm sure you all have stories of similar occurrences, and I would love to hear them so that I can educate others how important it is to make that "walk of life."