

Football Field C. P. R.

(Compaction Pressure Relief)

By Bryan Wood

One of the main contributing factors to poor turf conditions on athletic fields is compaction. Along with water and nutrients, oxygen is vitally important to the turfgrass plant. **When the soil particles are so tightly compacted together that there's no pore space left for water, nutrients, or oxygen the plant will die.**

Besides the risk of player injury on rock-hard ground, you can see why a strong aerification and decompaction program is important.

Even if you only have a small rolling type aerifier that can only pull a 2 - 3 inch core, that's better than nothing at all. However, in the center section / high-wear areas of a field, you're usually trying to build a thatch "cushion" not take it away. A coring machine can be useful in bringing up soil to use for top-dressing, but I'd prefer to leave my established turf intact and buy a good sand based top-dressing mix.

For proper aerifying equipment, I would recommend using a solid tine machine that has a positive loosening action. A solid tine that's just going in and out of the ground can actually add to your compaction problems. The proper action is important for positive results. While a quick shallow spiking can be beneficial from time to time to open the surface, a deep compaction-relieving aerification should be performed as soon as agronomically possible.

As the great sports turf guru Dr. Minner advocates, broadcast seed often throughout the season and let the players cleat it in. A lot of this seed will get torn out or otherwise destroyed, but some will survive. Some is better than none. Once the season is over, get a good "turf seeder" in there and do it right. Even if it's November or December this seed will come up in the spring and hopefully fill-in before the weeds do.

If you have any questions about aerifying or seeding, please call our office @ 800-748-7497 and request a free copy of "Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Aeration But Were Afraid To Ask".