

# The Spartan Cap Athletic Field System



Alec Kowalewski

Environmental Horticulture Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College Tifton, GA

# High School Athletic Field

#### Sports and community events Football □ Soccer □ Cheerleading Marching band Rugby

Track and field





# High School Athletic Field

#### Sports and community events Football □ Soccer □ Cheerleading Marching band Rugby Track and field



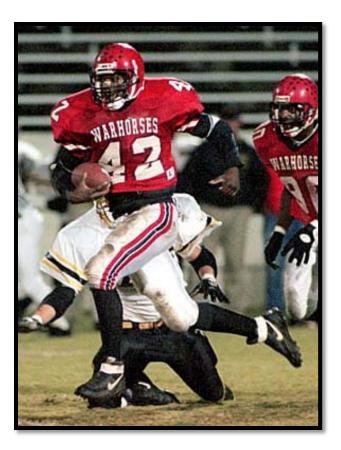
# High School Athletic Field

#### Sports and community events Football □ Soccer □ Cheerleading Marching band Rugby Track and field



#### Native Soil Athletic Fields

- High in silt and clay
   Advantage
   Stable when dry
  - DisadvantageLow infiltration rates



## **During Heavy Rainfall**

# Saturated field conditions Decrease soil stability



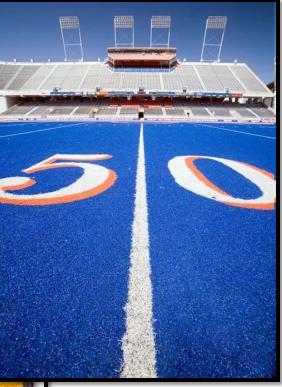


## Haslett, Mich., Nov. 2006

#### Solutions

Complete field renovation
 Synthetic athletic field
 \$600,000 - 1,000,000





#### **Complete Field Renovation**

- Sand-based systems
  - □ Natural playing surface
  - Rapid infiltration rates



Maintain stability during periods of heavy use

#### Sand-based Systems

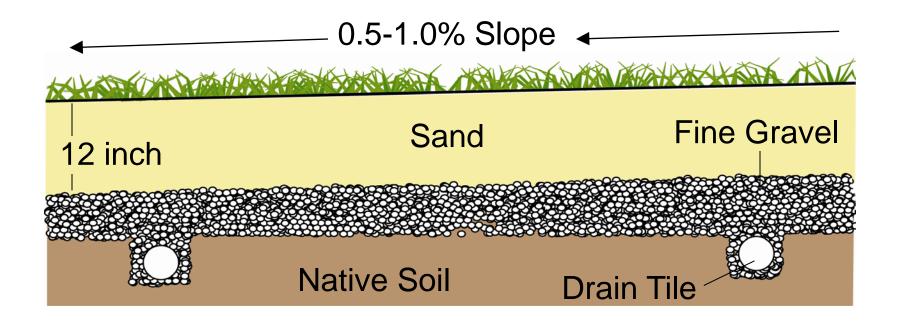
# United States Golf Association (USGA) USGA Green Section Staff, 1960





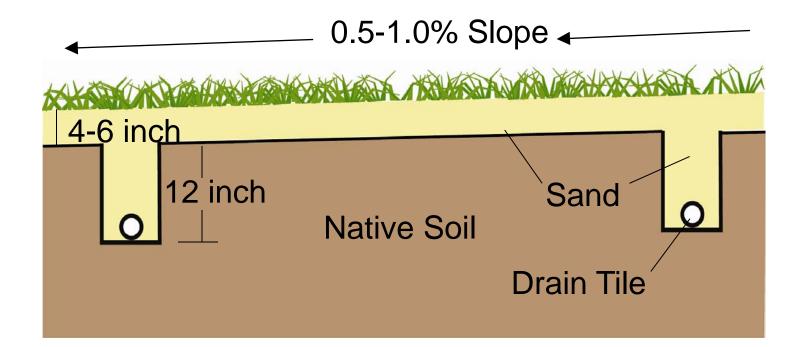
#### Sand-based Systems

#### Conventional sand-based field \$400,000 - 600,000



#### Sand-based Systems

# Sand-capped system \$200,000 - 300,000



#### **Complete Field Renovations**

#### Expensive

#### Field temporarily useless



#### **Alternative Renovation Process**

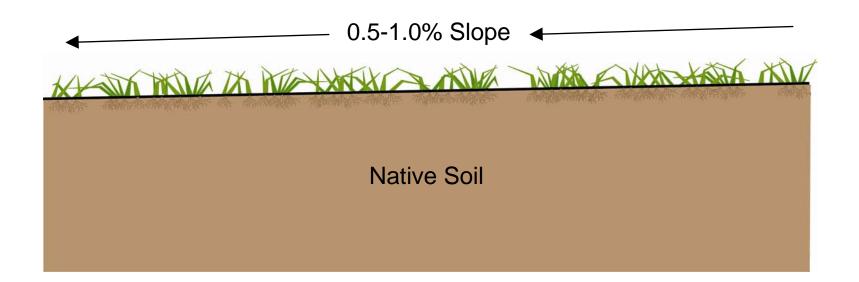
Intercept drain tile installation
 Cumulative topdressing
 Built-up sand-capped system
 Spartan Cap System



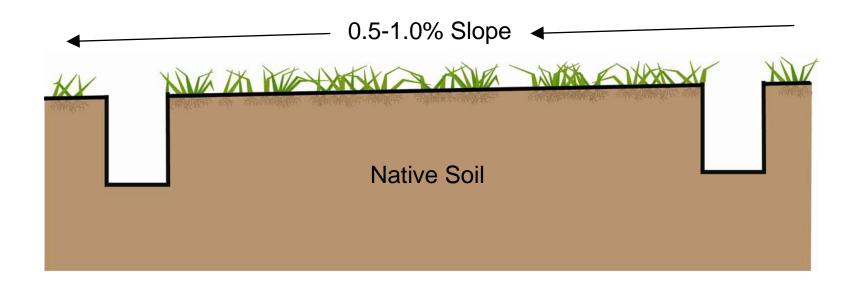




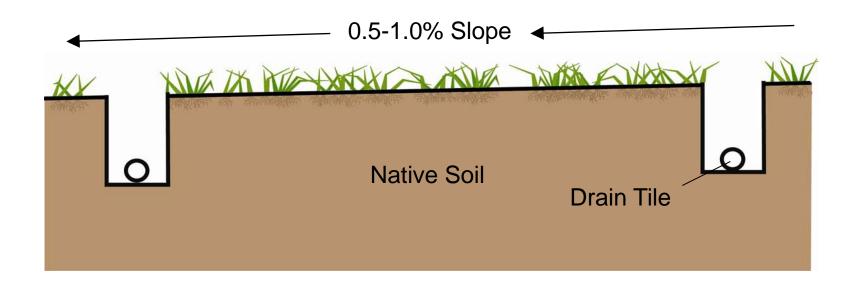
#### Native Soil Athletic Fields



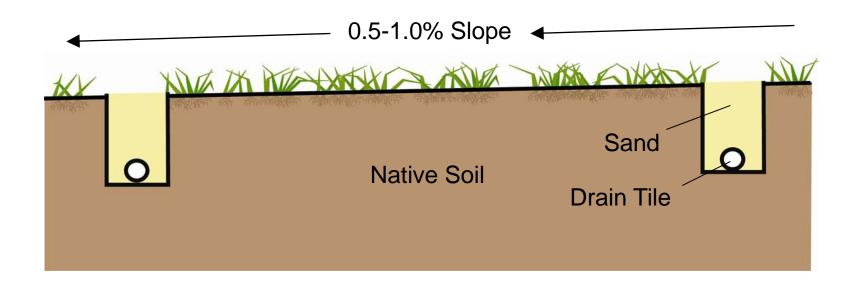
#### **Cut Drain Lines**



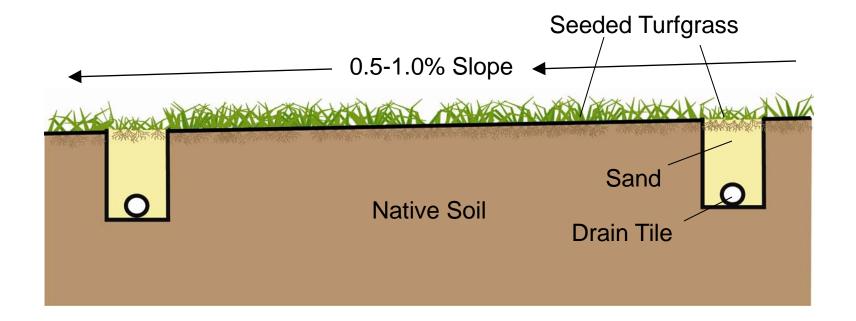
#### **Install Drain Tiles**

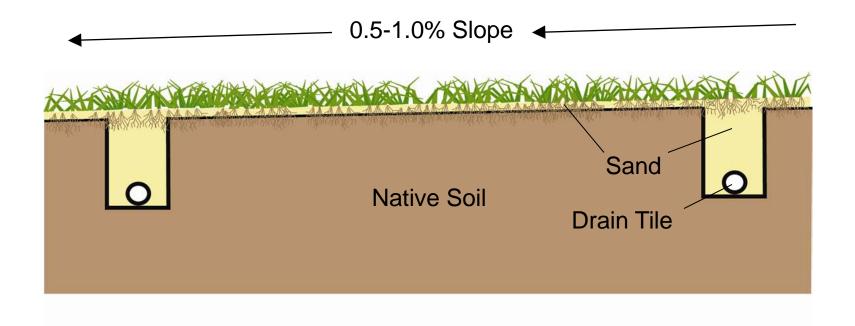


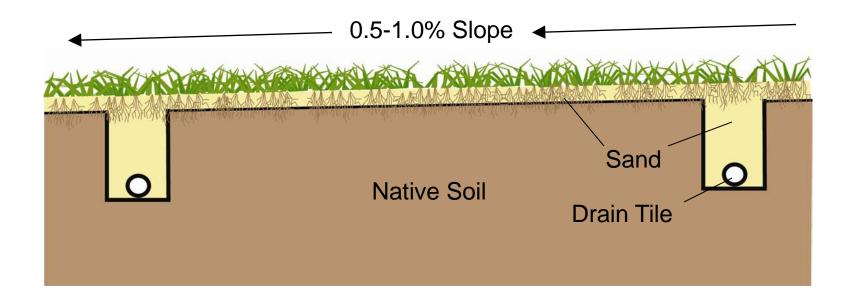
#### Fill Drain Lines with Sand

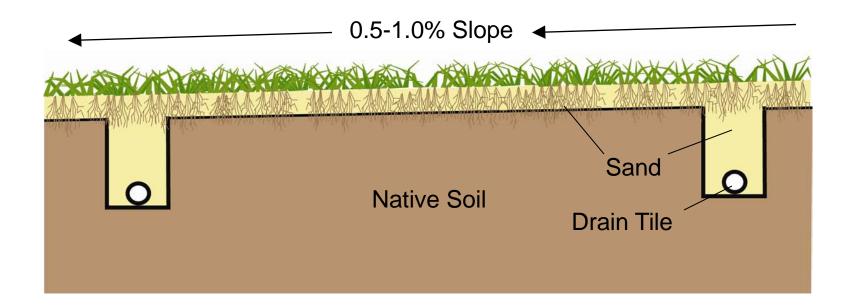


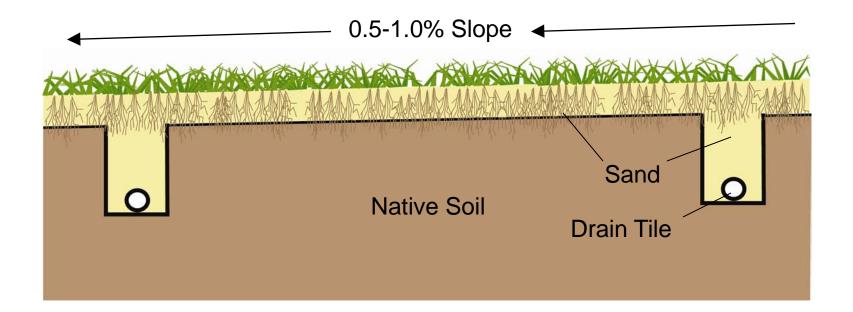
#### Inter-seed











## Spartan Cap System

#### Benefits

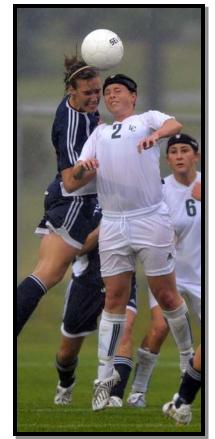
#### □ Field is never totally out of play

#### □ Reduced installation cost



# Spartan Cap System

- Synthetic field
  \$600,000 1,000,000
- Conventional sand-based system \$400,000 - 600,000
- Sand-capped system
  \$200,000 300,000
- Spartan Cap System
  \$144,800 156,000



# Spartan Cap System

- Irrigation system
   \$15,000
- 6.5 ft drain tile spacing
   \$44,800-56,000
- 6 inch sand topdressing
   \$85,000



#### Local professionals

Country Club Turf, Jackson, MI

- □ Water Management Co., Mason, MI
- □ J.W. Surge Inc., Muskegon, MI

#### Questions

How many annual topdressing applications can be made?





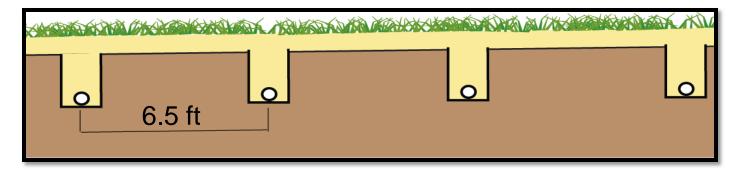
#### Questions

How many annual topdressing applications can be made?

When sand topdressing is included, what drain tile spacing is necessary to provide a dry and stable playing surface?

#### **Current Recommendations**

- Increase drain tile spacing
- Reduced sand topdressing depth
  - □ Further reduction in renovation cost



| 0 | 20 ft | 0 |
|---|-------|---|

# Questions

#### Experiment 1

How many annual topdressing applications can be made?

#### Experiment 2

When sand topdressing is included, what drain tile spacing is necessary to provide a dry and stable playing surface?

# Experiment 1





# Objective

Evaluate the effects of cumulative sand topdressing rates on the fall wear tolerance and surface stability of a coolseason turfgrass stand.



#### Materials and Methods

- Research initiated Apr. 10, 2007
- Hancock Turfgrass Research Center
  East Lansing, MI
- Sandy loam



Seeded (May 29, 2007)
 90% Poa pratensis L. (Kentucky bluegrass)
 10% Lolium perenne L.(perennial ryegrass)

#### Materials and Methods

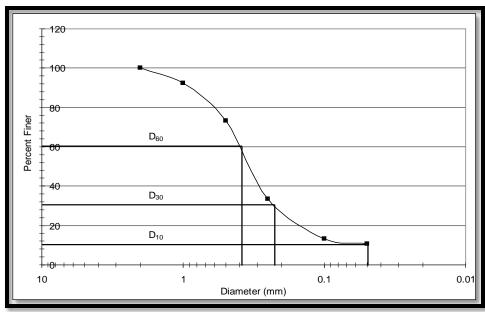
# Treatments Topdressing depth (inch) 0.0 (0 applications) 0.5 (2 applications) 1.0 (4 applications) 1.5 (6 applications) 2.0 (8 applications)

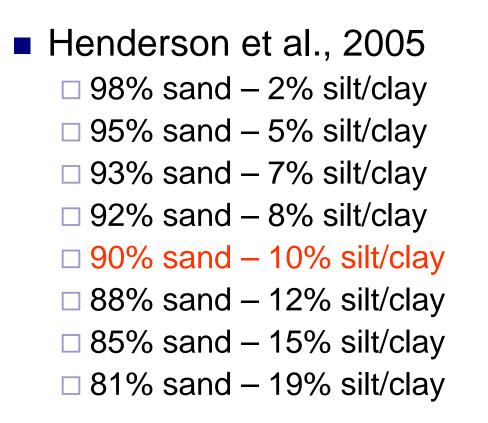


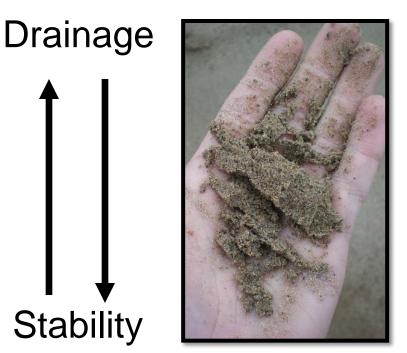
Eight top dressing applications at 9.8 kg m<sup>-2</sup> (0.25 inch) provided a 2 inch sand layer, Aug. 23, 2007.

- July 11 Aug. 15, 2007
- Topdressing material
   Well-graded sand (90% sand 10% silt/clay)









Fall traffic
 Oct. 10 – Nov. 3, 2007

Cady traffic simulator
 4 passes/week
 2 pass backward
 2 passes forward



## Data collected after the fall traffic period Nov. 10, 2007



Response variables
 Shoot density (shoots•13.4 inch<sup>-2</sup>)
 Clegg turf shear tester strength (Nm)





# How many annual topdressing applications can be made?



# Shoot density Turf shear tester strength





Effects of topdressing depth (inch) on turf shear tester strength (Nm) following fall traffic simulator applications, East Lansing, Mich., Nov. 10, 2007.

|                        | 2007 Mean Shear      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Topdressing Depth (in) | Tester Strength (Nm) |
| 0.0                    | 55.8 b†              |
| 0.5                    | 101.8 a              |
| 1.0                    | 87.7 ab              |
| 1.5                    | 56.5 b               |
| 2.0                    | 53.2 b               |



† Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to LSD (0.05).

## 0.5 inch

### July 14 – Aug. 22, 2008

Cumulative topdressing applications

- Applied to the same experimental treatments
- Topdressing depth (inch)
   0.0 (0 applications)
   1.0 (4 applications)
   2.0 (8 applications)
   3.0 (12 applications)
   4.0 (16 applications)



4.0 inches of sand topdressing applied over a two year period, Sep. 18, 2008.

## Fall traffic (Oct. 14 – Nov. 12, 2008) 4 passes/week



#### Shoot density

#### Turf shear tester strength



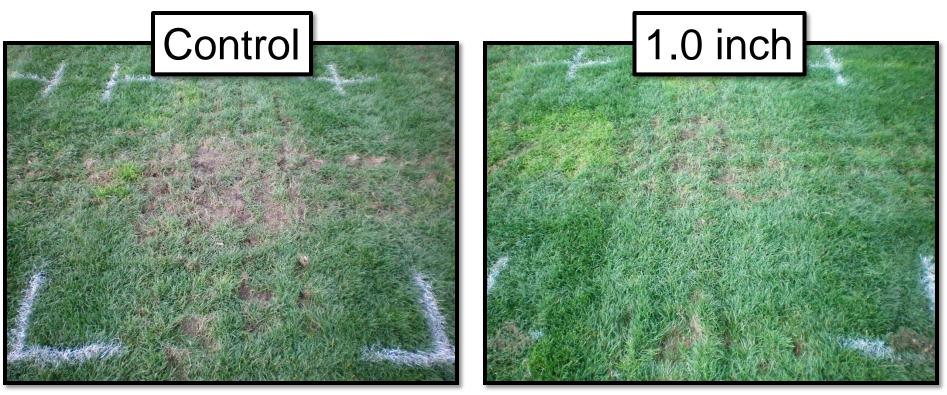


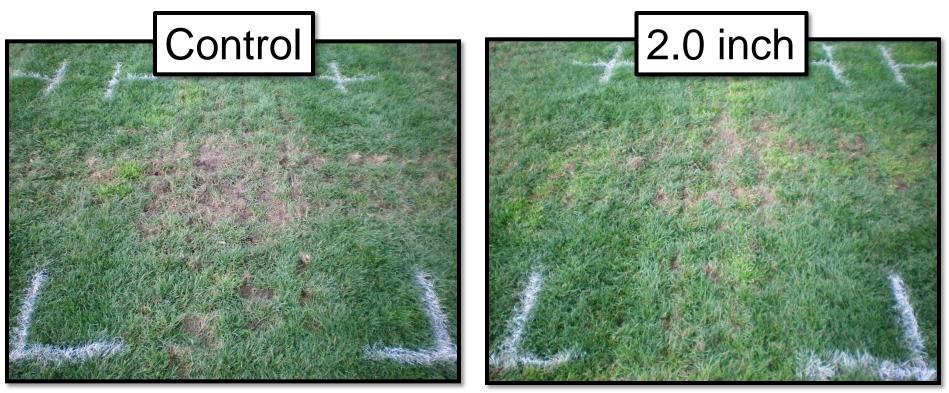
Effects of topdressing depth (inch) on turfgrass shoot density (shoots•13.4 inch<sup>-2</sup>) following fall traffic simulator applications, East Lansing, Mich., Nov. 14, 2008.

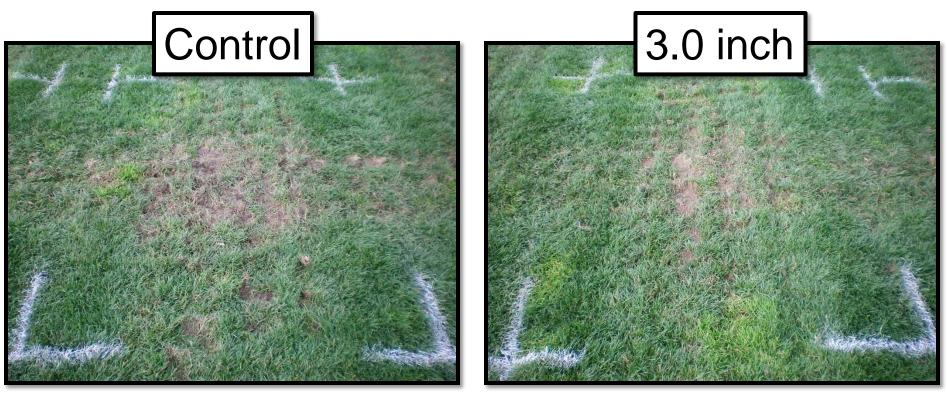
|                        | 2008 Mean Shoot Density          |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Topdressing Depth (in) | (Shoots/13.4 inch <sup>2</sup> ) |
| 0.0                    | 25.3 c†                          |
| 1.0                    | 49.7 b                           |
| 2.0                    | 53.0 b                           |
| 3.0                    | 62.3 a                           |
| 4.0                    | 54.7 ab                          |



† Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to LSD (0.05).



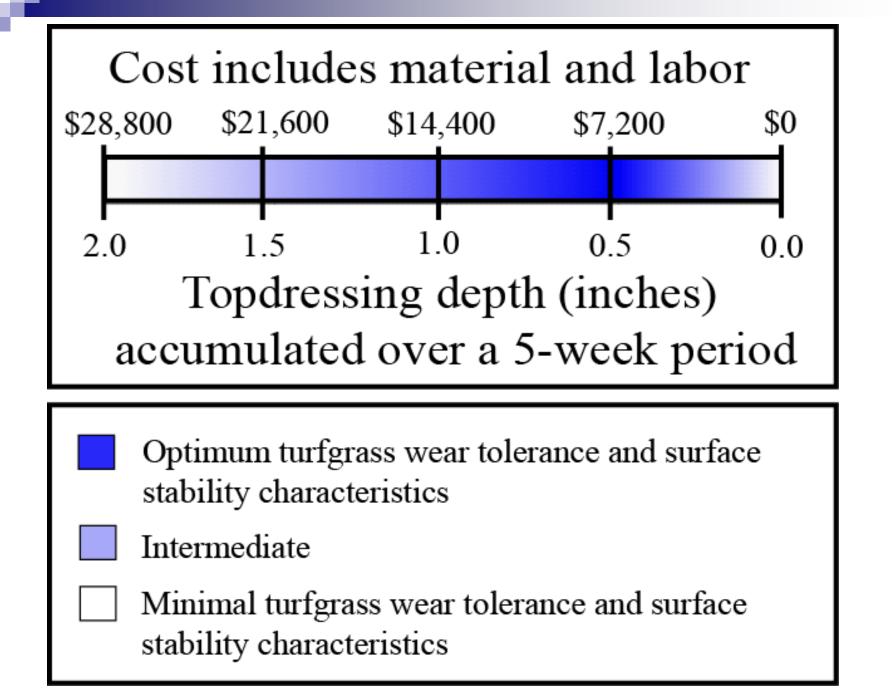






### Conclusions

- 0.5 inch of topdressing, applied over a 5-week period, provided the greatest turf shear tester strength in the fall of 2007 and 2008.
- All cumulative topdressing application rates improved turfgrass shoot density in the fall of 2008.
- Summer traffic was not detrimental to fall turfgrass shoot density or turf shear tester strength.



## Experiment 2





## Objective

Establish intercept drain tile spacing, in combination with sand topdressing, necessary to improve drainage characteristics and surface shear strength on a sandy loam soil.



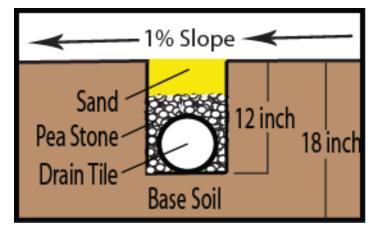
- Research was initiated April 10, 2007
- Hancock Turfgrass Research Center
   East Lansing, Mich.
- Sandy loam
- Seeded (May 29, 2007)
  - 90% Poa pratensis L. (Kentucky bluegrass)
    - 19.7% 'Arcadia', 19.7% 'Odyssey', 19.6% 'America', 19.6% 'SR100' and 19.6% 'Mercury'
  - □ 10% Lolium perenne L. (perennial ryegrass)
    - 34.4% 'Harrier', 34.1% 'Peregrine', and 29.8% 'SR 4600'



# Treatments Intercept drain tile spacing

- ∎ 6.5 ft
- **10.0 ft**
- **13.0 ft**
- **20.0 ft**
- Control

□ 26.5 ft plot without drain tiles





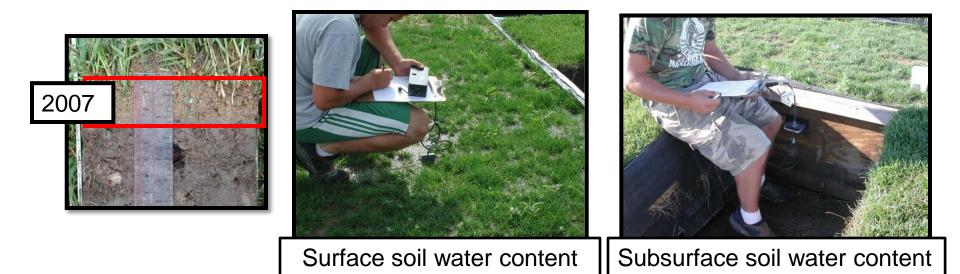
#### Topdressing

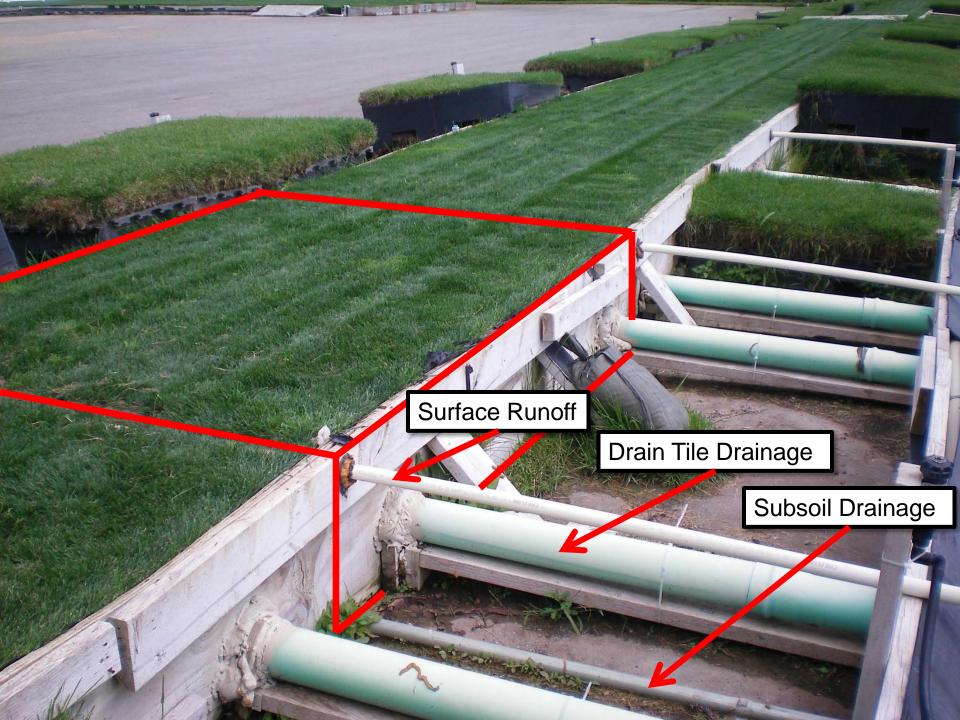
- □ July 11 Aug. 15, 2007
  - 4 applications @ ¼ inch = 1.0 inch

Well-graded sand (90% sand-10% silt/clay)



Response variables
 Drainage characteristic data
 After the accumulation of 1.0 inch sand
 Aug. 18, 2007





Fall traffic
 Oct. 10 – Nov. 3, 2007

- Cady traffic simulator
   4 passes/week
   2 pass backward
  - 2 passes forward



Response variables
 Surface shear strength
 Eijkelkamp shear vane (Nm)



# Surface shear strength Collected after the fall traffic period

Nov. 10, 2007



When sand topdressing is included, what drain tile spacing is necessary to provide a dry and stable playing surface?

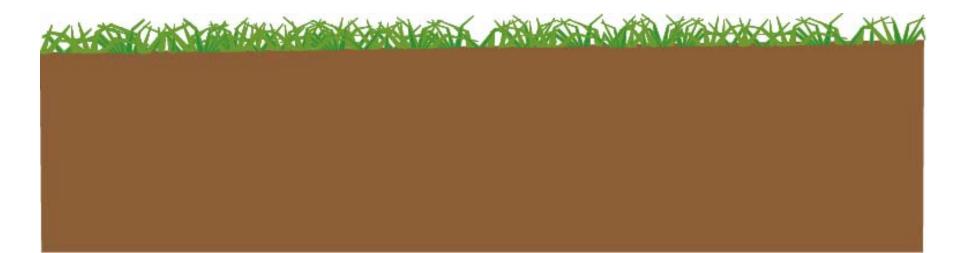


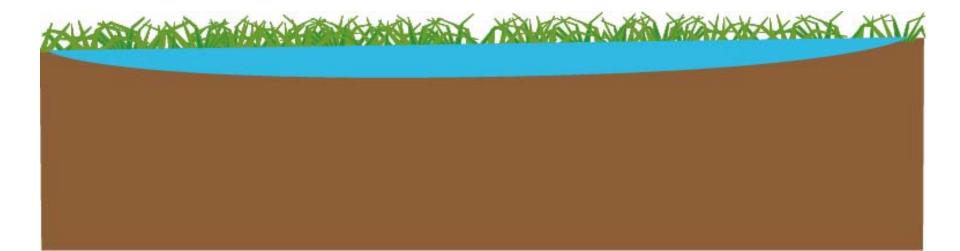
Response variables
 Drainage characteristics

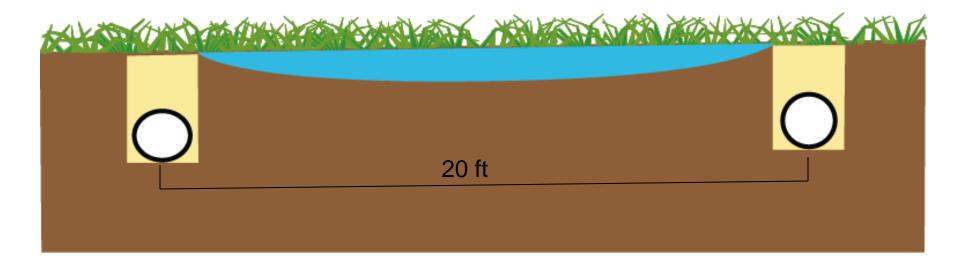
□ Surface shear strength

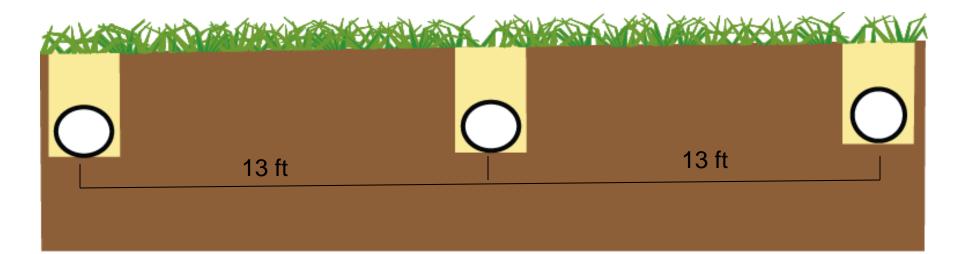












Response variables
 Drainage characteristics

□ Surface shear strength



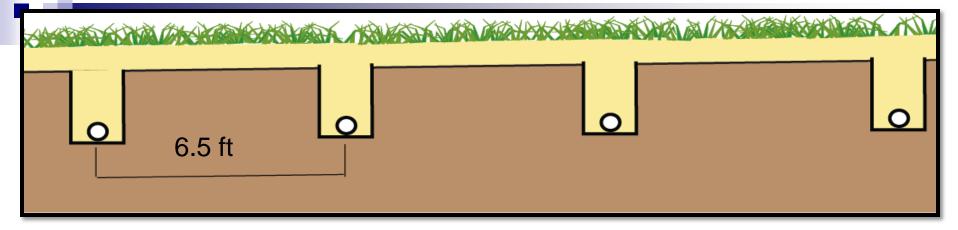


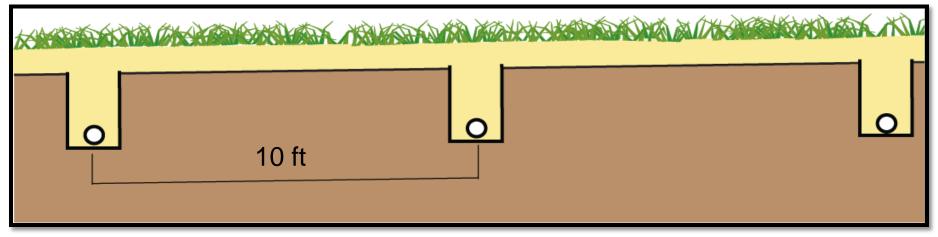
Effects of drain spacing on surface shear strength following fall traffic simulator applications, East Lansing, Mich., Nov. 10, 2007 (1.0 inch topdressing depth).

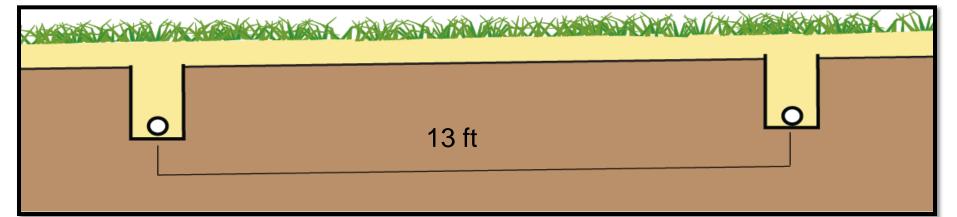
|                      | 2007 Mean Shear    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Drain Spacing (ft)   | Vane Strength (Nm) |
| 6.5                  | 8.0a†              |
| 10.0                 | 7.6a               |
| 13.0                 | 8.6a               |
| 20.0                 | 6.3b               |
| control <sup>‡</sup> | 4.8c               |



† Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to LSD (0.05);  $\pm$ Control = 26.5 ft long treatment, equivalent to the distance from the crown of a field to the hash makers, without drain tiles.







Apr. 22, 2008
 Core cultivated
 Inter-seeded



- July 26 Aug. 22, 2008
  - Cumulative topdressing applications
    - Applied to the existing experimental treatments

# Topdressing depth (inch) 2.0 (Aug. 22, 2008)

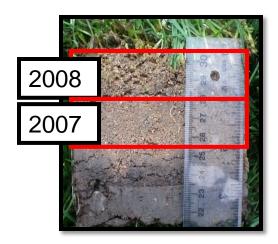


2.0 inches of topdressing applied over a two years period, Sep. 4, 2008.

Response variables
 Drainage characteristic data

After the accumulation of 2.0 inch sand

□ Aug. 28, 2008





## Materials and Methods

# Fall traffic (Oct. 14 – Nov. 12, 2008) 4 passes/week



## Materials and Methods

# Surface shear strength Collected after the fall traffic period

Nov. 14, 2008



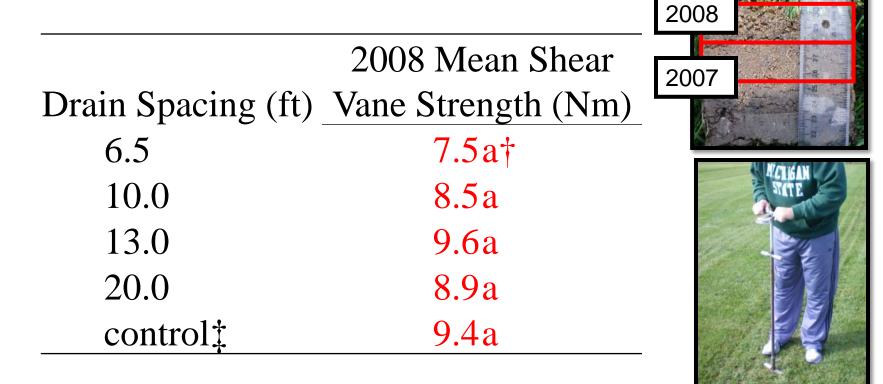
Response variables
 Drainage characteristics

□ Surface shear strength

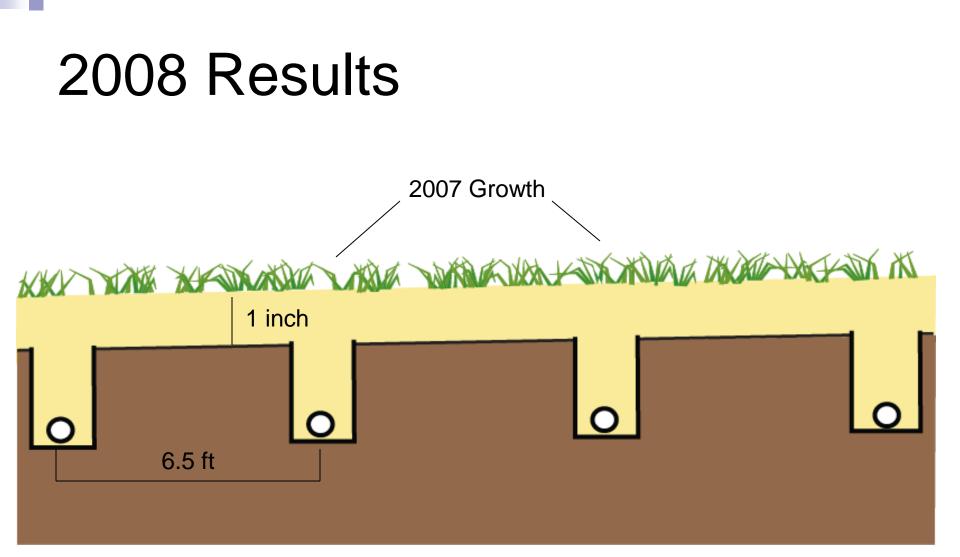


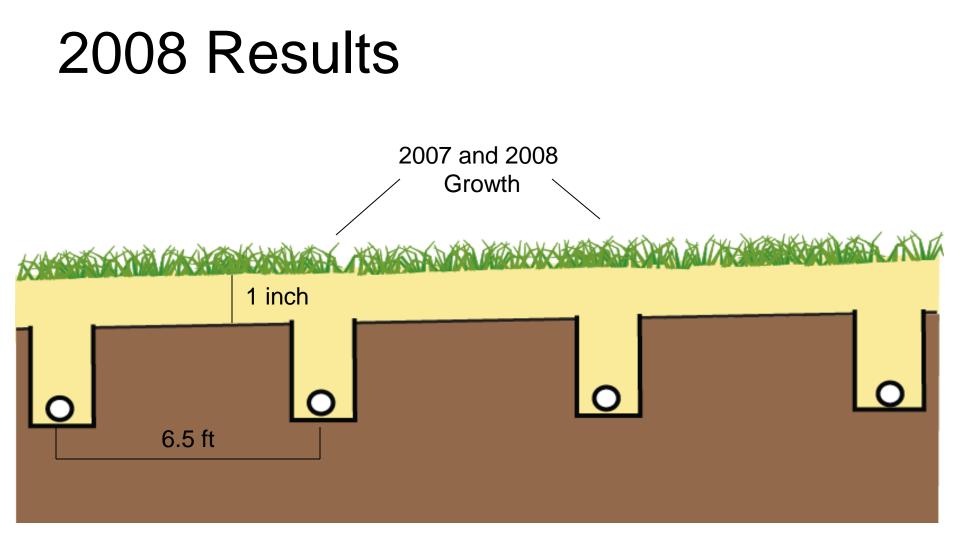


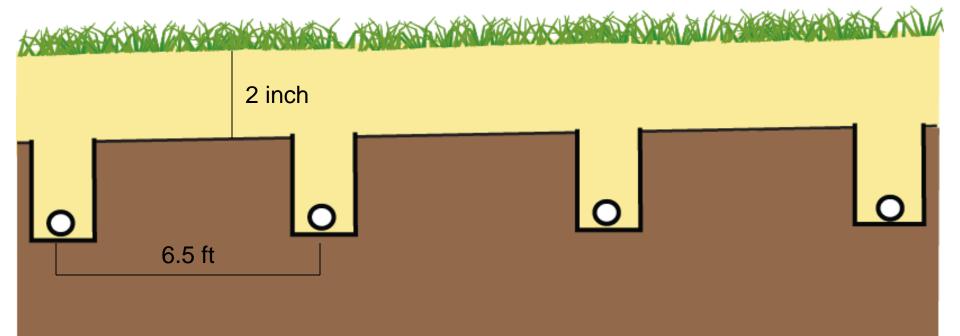
Effects of drain spacing on surface shear strength following fall traffic simulator applications, East Lansing, Mich., Nov. 14, 2008 (2.0 inch topdressing depth).

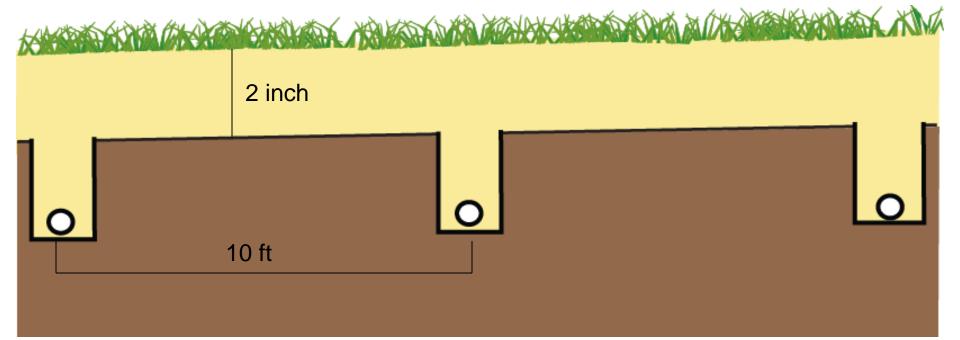


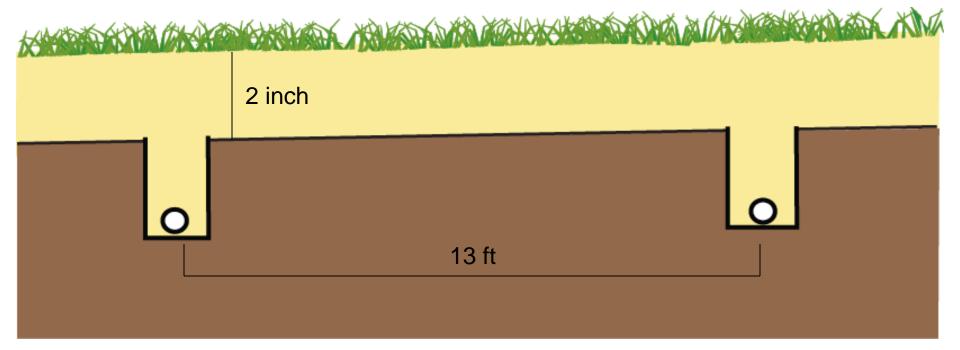
† Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to LSD (0.05); ‡Control = 26.5 ft long treatment, equivalent to the distance from the crown of a field to the hash makers, without drain tiles.

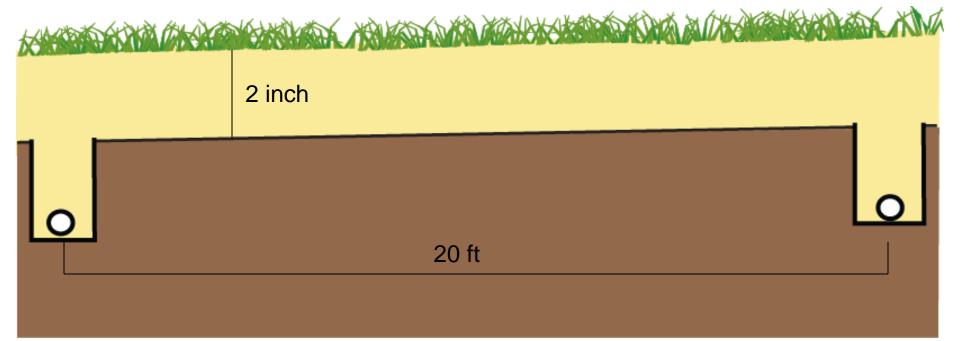


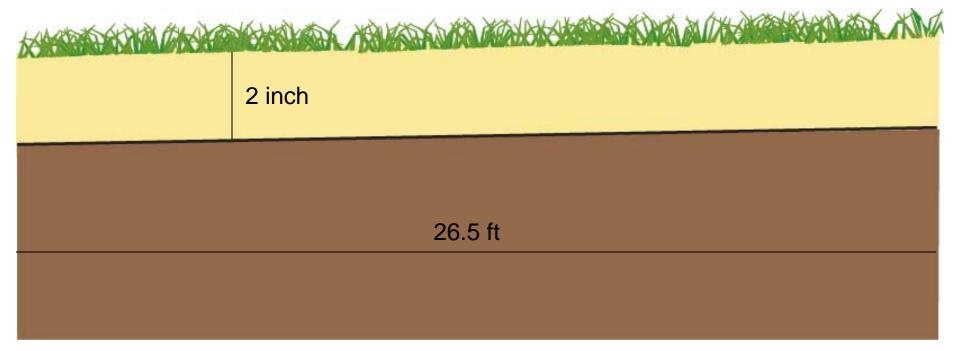












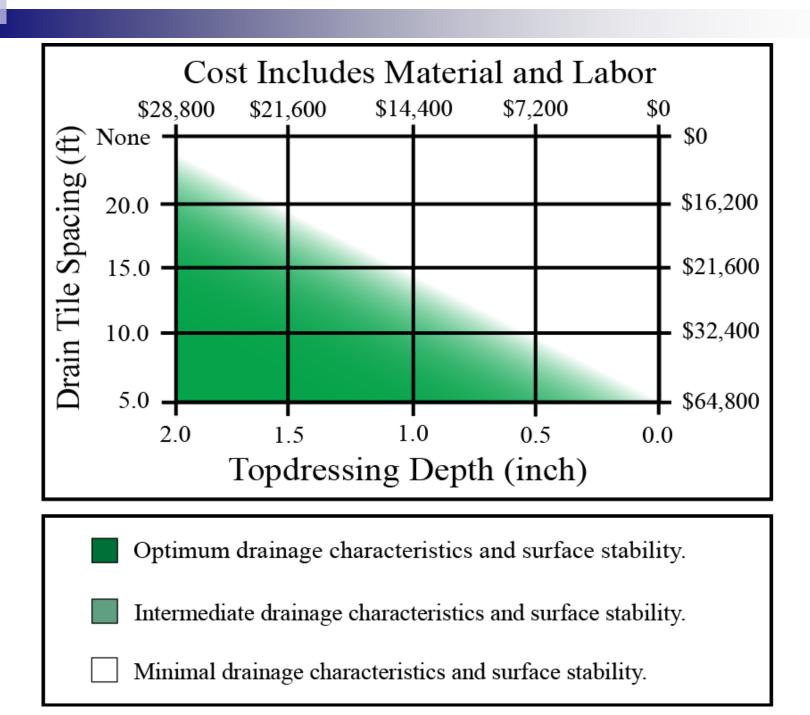
Can topdressing alone provide an adequate playing surface without drain tile installation?



## Drain tiles are still necessary for the removal of standing water from low spots and sidelines.

## Conclusions

- A drain tile spacing of 13 ft apart will provide a dry and stable playing surface when 1.0 inch of topdressing has been accumulated.
- When 2.0 inches of sand topdressing is accumulated, and an adequate surface slope is available (≥1%), drain tile spacing can be increased to distances greater than 20 ft.



## **Overall Conclusions**

## New recommendations Irrigation system **\$15,000** □ 13 ft drain tile spacing \$22,400-28,000 □ 2 inches sand topdressing **\$28,800** □ Total □ \$66,200-71,800

Old recommendations
 \$144,800-156,000





## **Case Studies**

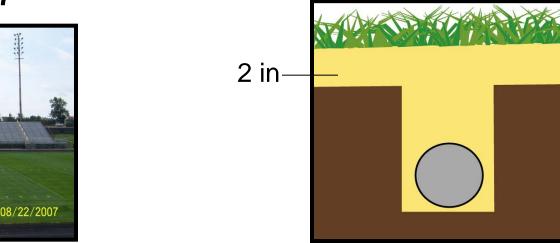


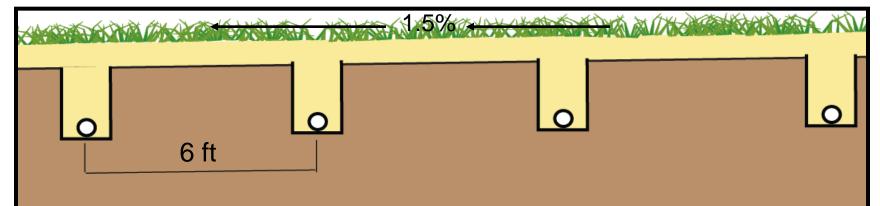




## Grand Blanc High School

# May 2007





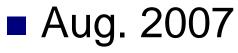
### Grand Blanc HS – Dec. 2007

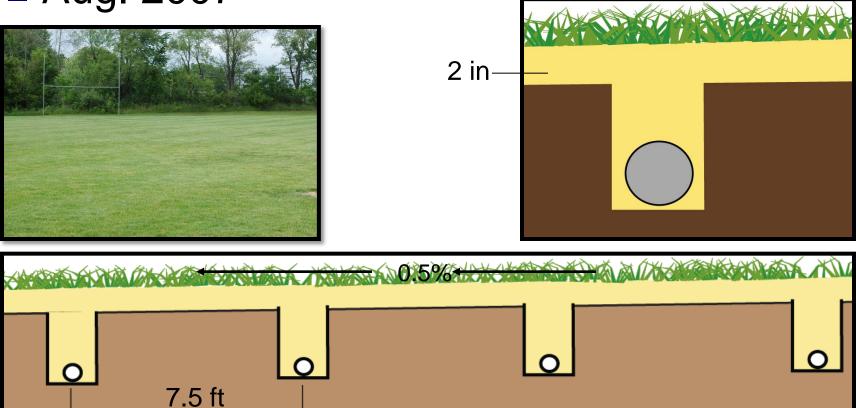


### Grand Blanc HS – May 2009



## **Okemos High School**





### Okemos Practice Field - Nov. 3, 2008





## Maintenance

Moles
 Talpirid (bromethalin)
 20 worms/\$35
 Spring traps



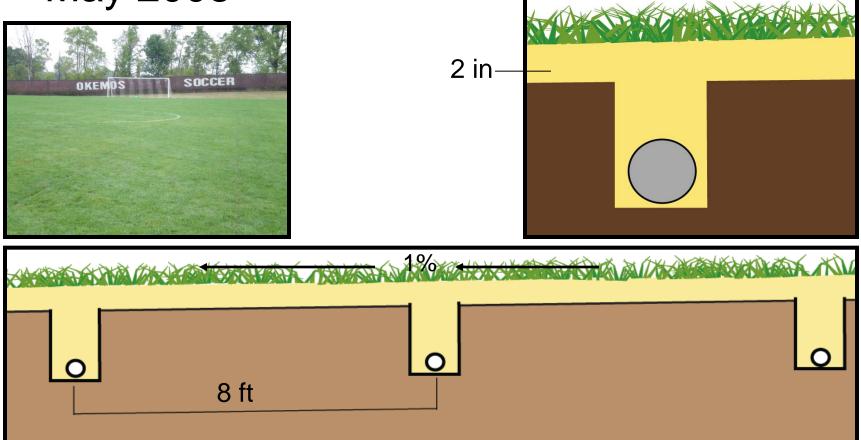




## **Okemos High School**







# OKEMOS SOC

Sep. 5, 2008
 Rust (*Puccinia graminis*)
 Urea 0.5 lbs 1000 ft<sup>-2</sup>



## Maintenance

- 4 applications
   May 25, July 4, Sep 5, Nov. 25
   Controlled release product
   i.e. polyon (26-7-14)
   1 lbs 1000 ft<sup>-2</sup> N
- Supplemental urea (46-0-0)
   0.5 lbs 1000 ft<sup>-2</sup> N

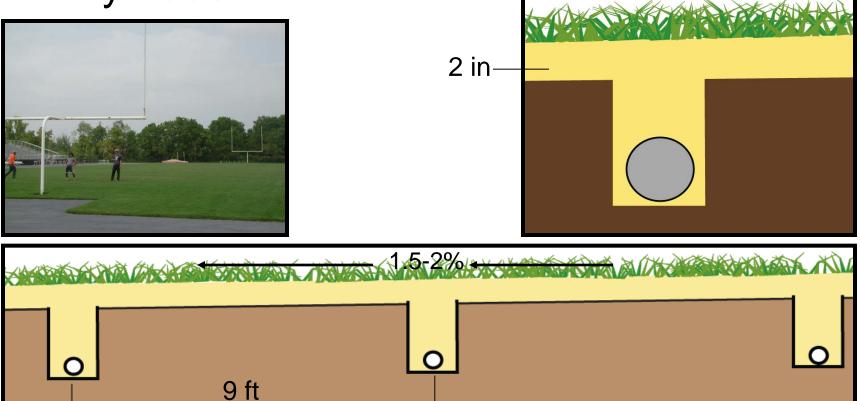


### Okemos Soccer Field – Oct. 27, 2009



## **Okemos High School**







Okemos Football Field - 2010 Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association Field of the Year, Sep. 11, 2009.



### Okemos Football Field – Oct. 27, 2009

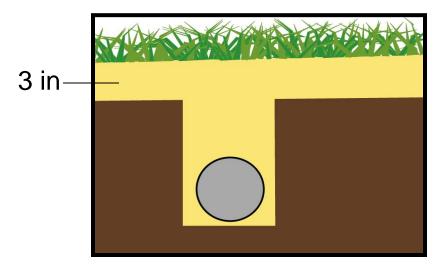


#### East Lansing Football Field – Oct. 27, 2009









| 0 | 10 ft |  |
|---|-------|--|

















#### MSU IM Field – Oct. 27, 2008



# Knotweed Summer annual

#### MSU IM Field – June 16, 2009



Cultivation
 20% affected surface area
 Topdressing
 0.25 inch annually







### Oct. 31, 2009





# 2 inches in 2 years 0.25 inch maintenance

Hollow tine core cultivation

 Remove cores if native soil is excavated

 Solid tine core cultivation

 No organic matter removal





### Vertical mowing

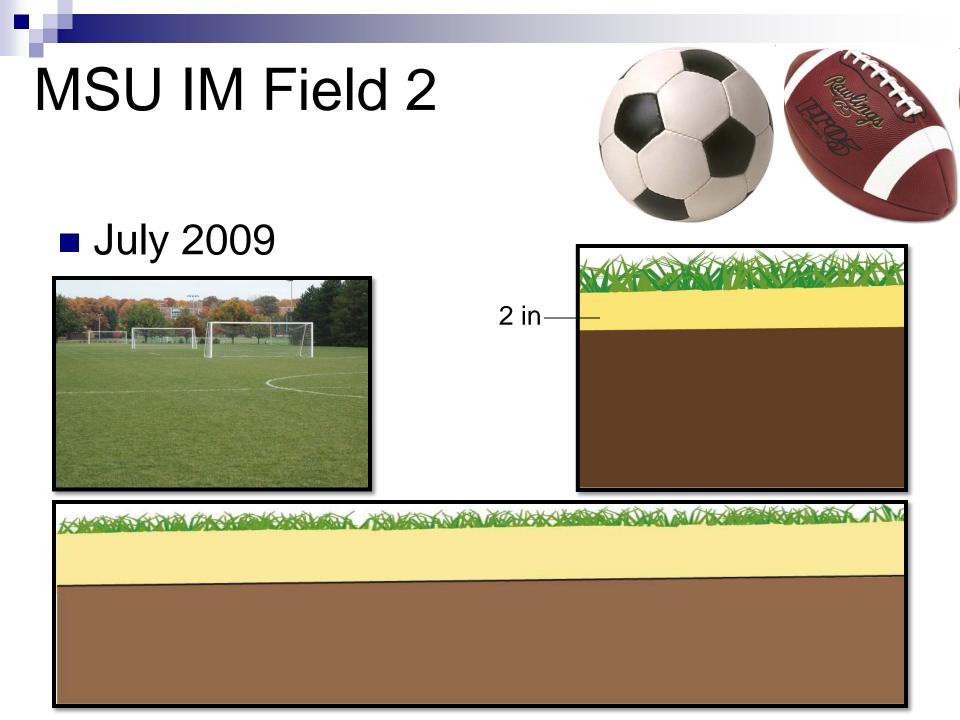


#### MSU IM Field – Oct. 21, 2009



#### Munn Field, MSU IM – Oct. 21, 2009





#### MSU IM Field 2 - Oct. 21, 2009



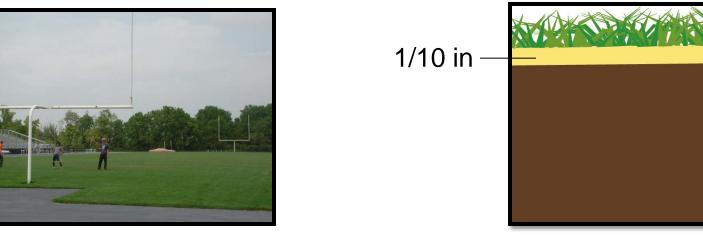
#### MSU IM Field 2 – Oct. 21, 2009

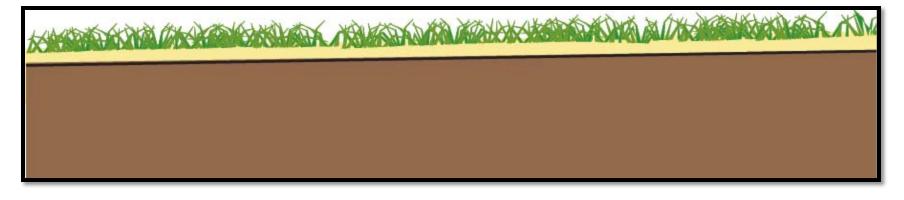


# Haslett High School



### May 2009





#### Haslett Football Field - Oct. 27, 2009



#### Haslett Football Field - Oct. 27, 2009



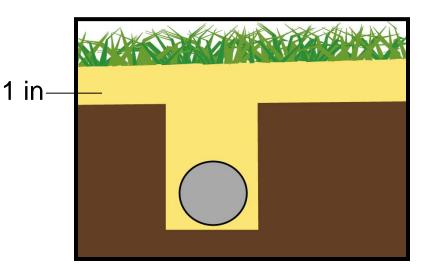
### Built-up sand-capped athletic field system 2010

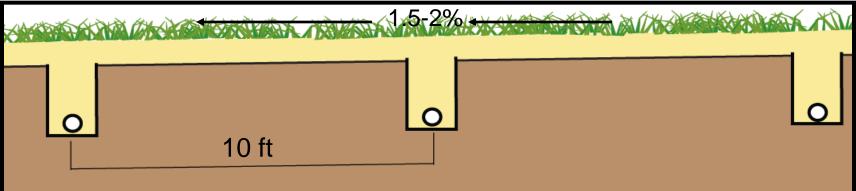


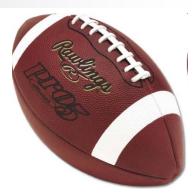
Built-up sand-capped athletic field system 2010
 5 bids within 6%













and sand topdressing.

Oct. 2010: After drain tile installation and the application of 1 inch of sand topdressing.

# **Case Studies**

- Grand Blanc football field
   2007
- Okemos practice field
   2007
- Novi soccer complex
   2007
- Okemos soccer field
   2008
- Okemos football field
   2008

- MSU Intramural
   2008
- Marshall soccer field
   2009
- Sheppard football field
   2009
- East Lansing football field
   2010
- Michigan Center football field
   2010



### More Questions = More Research

Topdressing material

□ 90% sand – 10% silt+clay

- \$14,400/1.0 inch (72,000 ft<sup>2</sup>)
- 1.0 inch x 72,000 ft<sup>2</sup> = 375 tons
- \$14,4000/375 tons = \$38/ton
- Alternative topdressing material
  - \$10/ton









# Objectives

Evaluate the effects of various topdressing materials on the fall wear tolerance and surface stability of a well established turfgrass stand





- Research initiated Apr. 17, 2008
   Hancock Turfgrass Research Center

   East Lansing, MI
- Kentucky bluegrass seeded in 2005

24.7% 'Showcase'
24.6% 'Rugby II',
24.5% 'Midnight'
24.5% 'P 105'

Native soil

Sandy loam





### Treatments

### Topdressing

8 applications @ ¼ inch
 May 29 - Sep. 14, 08

### □ Sand topdressing material

- Sand #1
- Sand #2
- Sand #3
- Sand #4



2.0 inch sand topdressing layer, accumulated over a 3.5 month period, 2008.

|                    | Sand #1                      | Sand #2 | Sand #3 | Sand #4 |  |
|--------------------|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--|
|                    | Sieve fraction sand particle |         |         |         |  |
| Particel Size (mm) | diameter (% retained )       |         |         |         |  |
| >2.0               | 0.1                          | 0.3     | 0.0     | 23.7    |  |
| 1.0-2.0            | 3.7                          | 9.1     | 0.1     | 17.2    |  |
| 0.5-1.0            | 24.0                         | 19.9    | 2.6     | 20.4    |  |
| 0.25-0.5           | 45.8                         | 39.3    | 69.2    | 23.7    |  |
| 0.1-0.25           | 23.1                         | 18.7    | 27.3    | 11.6    |  |
| 0.05-0.1           | 0.9                          | 2.7     | 0.2     | 1.0     |  |
| 0.002-0.05         | 0.4                          | 7.0     | 0.0     | 0.5     |  |
| < 0.002            | 2.0                          | 3.0     | 0.6     | 1.9     |  |
|                    | dollars/ton                  |         |         |         |  |
| Cost               | \$25                         | \$35    | \$15    | \$10    |  |

Crumb rubber
 Particle size

 2.0-6.0 mm
 4 applications @ ¼ inch
 May 29 - Sep. 14, 08



1.0 inch crumb rubber layer, accumulated over a 3.5 month period, 2008.

Sand then crumb rubber
 4 applications @ ¼ inch
 Sand #1
 May 29 – July 10, 2008
 4 applications @ ¼ inch
 Crumb rubber
 July29 – Sept. 14, 2008



1.0 inch of crumb rubber over 1.0 inch of sand, accumulated over3.5 months, 2008.

# Control No topdressing



### Fall traffic (Oct. 15 – Nov. 14, 2008)

2 passes/week
1 pass forward
1 pass backward





- Response variables
   Turfgrass cover (0-100%)
   Turf shear tester strength (Nm)
- Collected following fall traffic
   Nov. 14, 2008



### 2008 Results

Can alterative topdressing materials, other that 90% sand – 10% silt/clay, be used to improve fall wear tolerance and surface stability?



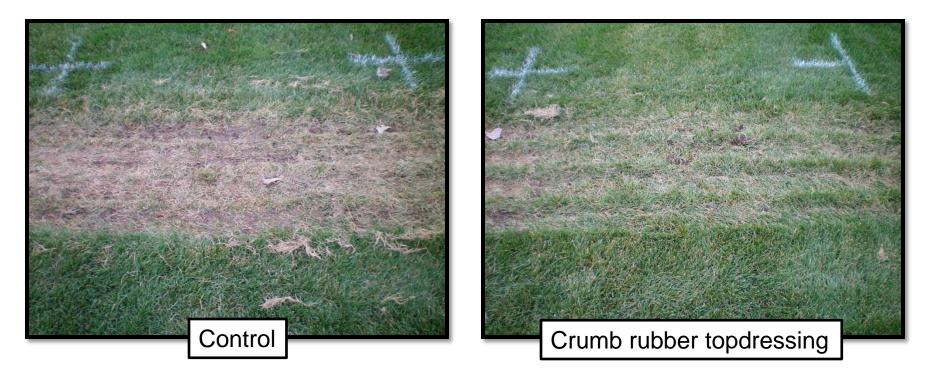


Mean values for turfgrass cover and turf shear tester strength following fall traffic simulator applications, East Lansing, MI, 14 Nov. 2008.

|                           | Cover              | Turf shear  |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
|                           | (0-100%)           | tester (Nm) |
| Topdressing material      | 2008 Mean values   |             |
| crumb rubber              | 85.0a <sup>+</sup> | 120.8bc     |
| sand #1 then crumb rubber | 80.0a              | 143.2ab     |
| sand #1                   | 63.3b              | 139.2abc    |
| sand #2                   | 60.0bc             | 136.6abc    |
| sand #3                   | 60.0bc             | 109.7bc     |
| sand #4                   | 48.3bc             | 107.0c      |
| control                   | 46.7c              | 160.2a      |

† Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to LSD (0.05).

Effects of the Cady traffic simulator on a Kentucky bluegrass stand without topdressing (left) and crumb rubber topdressing (right), Nov. 14, 2008.



### Conclusions

- Crumb rubber, while being the most expensive topdressing material (\$1,000/ton) produced the greatest turfgrass cover.
- The control, no topdressing, while producing TST strength raking in the greatest category, provided the lowest turfgrass cover
- Topdressing sand #1 and 2 produced TST values ranking in greatest category
- Topdressing sand #4, a poorly-graded sand, produced the lowest TST strength

### Recommendations

Crumb rubber
 Sidelines
 High traffic areas



### Recommendations

When selecting topdressing material □ Sand #1 (\$25/ton) Well-graded sand □ Sand #2 (\$35/ton) Well-graded sand □ Sand #3 (\$15/ton) Well-graded sand □ Sand #4 (\$10/ton) Poorly-graded sand

□ Maximum 10% silt/clay

### More Questions = More Research

What practices can be used to speed up turfgrass establishment over recently renovated drain lines?





## Objective

Evaluate the effects of seeding mulch on Kentucky bluegrass establishment from seed over a sand-filled intercept drain line.





### Materials and Methods

- Research initiated May 26, 2010
- Hancock Turfgrass Research Center
  - □ East Lansing, MI
- Native soil
   Sandy loam

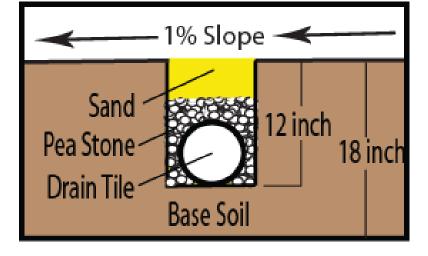


Cool-season turfgrass stand seeded in 2007
 90% Kentucky bluegrass
 10% perennial ryegrass

### Materials and Methods

Existing intercept drain lines
 Excavated
 Filled with sand







### Materials and Methods

# Seeded Kentucky bluegrass blend 1.5 lbs/1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>

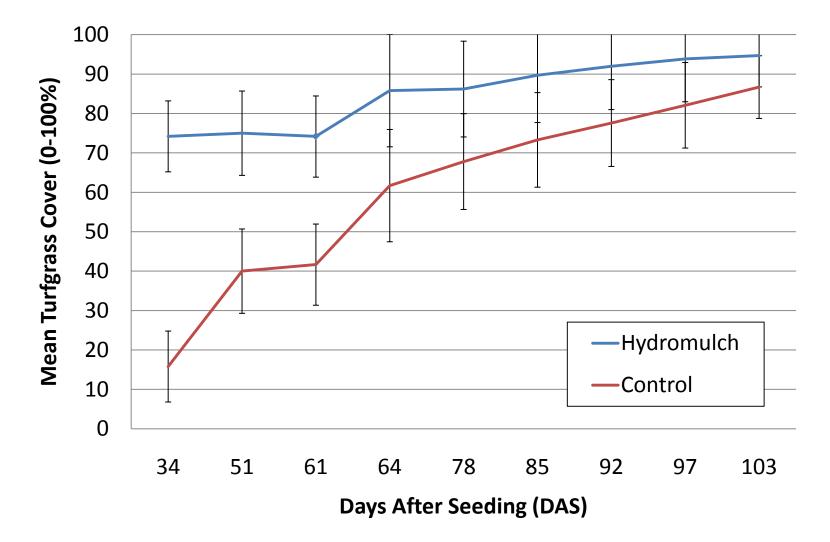
Treatments
 Seeding mulch
 50 lbs/1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>
 Control



Effects of seeding mulch on Kentucky bluegrass establishment from seed over a sand-filled intercept drain line, 51 DAS.



### Effects of seeding mulch on Kentucky bluegrass establishment from seed over sand filled intercept drain lines, renovated May 26, 2010.



Means values with overlapping error bars are not significantly different according to LSD (0.05).

Effects of seeding mulch on Kentucky bluegrass establishment from seed over a sand-filled intercept drain line, 51 DAS.



Effects of seeding mulch on Kentucky bluegrass establishment from seed over a sand-filled intercept drain line, 103 DAS.





### Conclusions

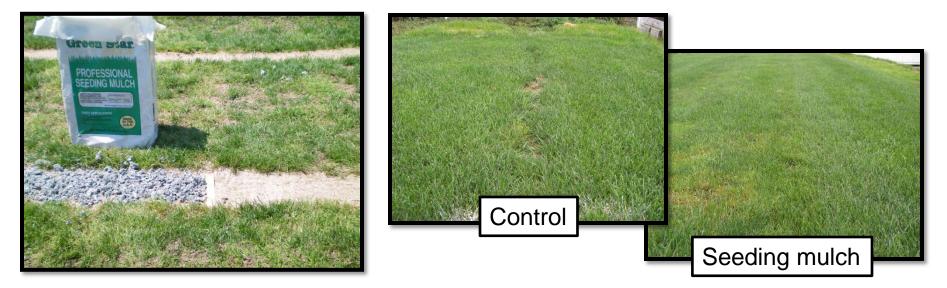
- If field use will begin sooner than 64 days following renovation then...
  - Seeding mulch can provide substantially greater turfgrass cover over recently renovated Intercept drain lines
  - □ Seeding mulch
    - **\$** ??/50 lbs
    - 50 lbs/1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>
  - Intercept drain tile spacing
    - 13 ft/3,000 ft<sup>2</sup>
      \$ ???



### Conclusions

If field use will begin 64 days after renovation or later...

Benefits of seeding mulch are no longer significant



# Questions?



- Extension bulletin
  - Sand-capped build-up systems for Michigan high school fields.
    - http://www.turf.msu.edu/built-up-sand-capped-athletic-field-system

#### Publications

- Sand Topdressing Applications Improve Shear Strength and Turfgrass Density on Trafficked Athletic Fields
  - http://horttech.ashspublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/20/5/867
- Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

http://www.abac.edu

