Improving High School Sports Fields: Educating & Connecting with Coaches

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Mississippi State University

A former high school football player has been awarded $7.1 million in a case related to his high school's treatment of a concussion he sustained while playing.

A court has ruled that Maximiliano Cruz, of Vista, Calif., will never be able to drive or fly by himself because of his on-field injury and the failure of his school's coaching and medical staff to diagnose his condition.

Because of the delay in diagnosis, the delay in treatments, he is forever going to be in the condition he's in," said Shawn Gonzalez, the Cruz family's attorney. "They continued to play him, even after they warned him that his head was impossible to eat that game. That type of recklessness should never take the place of protecting our kids.

The suit stems from a 2013 freshman football game at Monte Vista High School. Then-15-year-old Cruz started feeling sick and confused. A concerned teammate told the coach about Cruz’s strange behavior but Coach’s remained on the field and finished the game.

According to a report from the San Diego NBC affiliate, Cruz was vomiting in the locker room after the game but coaches did not call 911 or follow proper concussion protocol. Cruz was taken to the hospital by his father where emergency surgery had to be performed to relieve swelling on Cruz’s brain. He was later placed in a medically induced coma.

It was later discovered that none of the freshman coaches at Monte Vista had completed state-mandated concussion training because of a loophole that allowed them two years to complete it.

Andy Berg is Executive Editor of Athletic Business
Facts

- United States
  - 1,006,013 high school boys participating in football
- Mississippi Participation
  - Football: 22,440
  - Baseball: 7,855
  - Softball: 6,290
  - Soccer: 6,742

National Federation of High School Associations (2018-2019)

Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>appropriate Cultural Practices for Sports</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fields - Dr. Barry Stewart</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Equipment &amp; Vendor Demonstration</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:10</td>
<td>Turfgrass Make &amp; Calibrations</td>
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<td>Dr. Michael Richard &amp; Dr. Barry Stewart</td>
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<td>12:15</td>
<td>Water Issues: Cultural and Chemical</td>
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<td>Practice Management - Dr. Michael Richard</td>
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<td>Law &amp; Budget, Weed Control</td>
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<td>Dr. Michael Richard</td>
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What has worked?

- Regional event increased attendance
- County agent participation is crucial
- Time of year event is held
- CEUs — another way to entice participation
1. Proper mowing height – no extra cost
2. Season long fertility program
3. Aerify twice/year minimum – with sand topdressing if budget allows
4. Timely preemergence herbicide application
Mowing encourages thick and competitive lateral growth of the desired turf species and suppresses many broadleaf weeds.

½ in. – Mown twice weekly

1½ in. – Mown once weekly
Do a Soil Test First!

- Any time is the right time to soil sample!
- Keep copies to monitor changes.
- Native Soil - every 3 years
- Sand based - every year

Extension can provide soil sample boxes.

Choices in Fertilizer Sources

- Highly water-soluble sources are considered “readily available.”
- Characteristics of water-soluble sources:
  - Cheaper per pound of nutrient
  - Quick plant response, particularly for nitrogen
  - More leaching potential
  - Require more frequent applications
  - Higher foliar burn potential
- 21-0-0, 46-0-0, 33-0-0, 34-0-0

Choices in Fertilizer Sources

- “Slowly available” sources have significant amounts of water-insoluble nutrients.
- Characteristics of water-insoluble sources:
  - Significantly more expensive per pound
  - Controlled plant response
  - Low leaching potential
  - Application frequency typically cut in half
  - Less foliar burn potential
  - Sulfur-coated urea, polymer-coated urea

Aerification

- 0.5-1 inch diameter
- 3-16 inch depth is ideal
- 1-2 times / year

An Aerifier Is Not A Luxury Tool!

- “We can’t not afford one” is a more fiscal management strategy when one considers potential liability issues.
- A regular, planned cultivation program is a NECESSITY to grow grass!
WORDS TO CAPTURE ATTENTION OF ADMINISTRATORS:

• Risk Management - $
• Liability - $$
• Lawyers - $$ $$ $$
• Lawsuit - $$ $$ $$ $$ $$

We need your involvement!

Consulting

• Maintenance
• Construction
• Renovation

How to connect

• Who’s the decision maker?
  – Athletic director
  – Coach
  – Maintenance personnel

Service

Send letter
Consulting

- Importance
- Connection
- Education
- How To’s - Equipment
- The Follow Through
- 3 types of coaches/administrators/customers
  - Know it all’s
  - Want to learn
  - Do it for me’s