

May 14, 2019

Welcome to the Grass Corner, the place to find information and updates about the Hampton Roads Soccer Complex from those that help make it tick- the grounds crew.

Joni Mitchell once sang, "You don't know what you've got til it's gone." That lyric rings true every year here when we welcome warmer temperatures as winter swings into spring. Freezing while searching for gloves and long johns soon turns into cursing as we blow pollen out of our noses and search for sunscreen. What may be annoying for us is perfect for the bermuda grass on our fields as it grows out of dormancy, beginning in late March. Higher temperatures and humidity also means higher grass, and with 8 inches of rain in April (over twice the average we get in the month), our bermuda grass is not shy in letting its presence known. With plenty of rain sure to come during the summer months, our Toro 4700 Groundsmaster mower will be put to good use. With its seven decks and eleven foot wingspan; it can mow a full size field within 20-30 minutes. This makes the 4700 one of our most important machines. Weather permitting, we try to mow fields twice a week because of the rule of thirds. This rule tells us that you should not cut more than one-third of the leaf blade. If grass is allowed to grow too tall, and then is cut, the grass is put into shock and stunts the growth. Fields are not mowed in the same direction back to back. If we mow vertically in the beginning of the week; we will then switch to mowing diagonally during the next mow. This makes for a more consistent cut with the height. If fields are mowed the same direction each time, the decks of the mower will begin to not cut certain areas.

In order to have healthy grass on the fields, water and nutrients must be able to reach the root system. This is where deep tine aeration comes into play. Our deep tine aerator sits next to our 4700 Groundsmaster as our most important machines. Between training and games throughout the year, soil on the fields become compacted from the continuous foot traffic. If left untreated, the surface of the fields will begin to feel more like a basketball court rather than a soccer field. Mostly, our deep tine aerator is set between six to eight inches in depth. As the tines penetrate through the soil, it leaves behind a quarter-sized hole. Although it may look strange, fields are ready to play on the same day as they are aerated. This can be seen as giving the field a massage or letting it breathe by maximizing water intake and root growth. The goal is to help new roots form deep into the channels created by the tines that will then increase the growth of grass in surrounding areas; including any bare spots that may have formed.

If you've ever competed in the annual North American Sand Soccer Championships (NASSC) at the Virginia Beach oceanfront, or just enjoyed a day at the complex, you should thank the countless volunteers and the staff of HRSC. All of the goals used during NASSC have been welded by the grounds crew, who also deliver them to the boardwalk for the tournament. As the main fundraiser for HRSC; we would not be here without it. Whether watching a game or participating in one, make sure to thank all those who help make this annual event possible.

Have you ever wondered how we get our weather data? It is from a weather station located next to the playground. It collects high and low temperatures, total rainfall with the rate of rain per hour,

wind speed and humidity. Since its installation in July of 2016, September of that year holds the record for most rain in a month- where we can thank Hurricane Matthew for contributing to 21.64 inches.

A special anniversary was held in April. Matt Baines, Koffi Soklu and Russ Powers all celebrated their 10 year anniversary of working at the Hampton Roads Soccer Complex. Not enough thanks can be given towards their hard work and dedication over the past decade. Congratulations to all.

Have any questions or wonder how something works? Email Matt Baines at mattsbaines@gmail.com and you may see the answer in the next Grass Corner.