

## Grass Corner

Winter 2020

By Matt Baines

After a fast-paced Spring and Summer - with the initiation of new sports and the usual day to day care of our fields – the transition into Winter can bring a time of reflection and respite.

In 2019, HRSC welcomed a new sport in field hockey. Due to repairs being made at the national field hockey center down the road, women's collegiate field hockey teams competed on our two synthetic turf fields. Beginning in January 2020, a new kickball league will kick off on Sunday's and continue throughout the winter months. With the continuation of flag football mixed in with soccer, the makeup of the complex continues to grow in diversity.

A congratulations is in order for Travis Ansell and Matt Baines, for getting certified as registered technicians in pesticide application. After studying and passing a test through the Virginia Department of Agriculture, they are now able to spray chemicals on our fields.

A common statement we hear is how dead the grass on our fields look during Winter. Our Bermudagrass turning brown only means it has gone into hibernation during the cold months. Bermuda is native to tropical climates and once the temperature gets below 50 degrees F, the grass goes dormant. As the temperature drops, reserve carbohydrates take over in the stems in order to preserve energy in the colder months. Just as a bear goes into hibernation for the winter, so does our Bermuda.

Bermudagrass has a strong, deep rhizome that lets it heal quicker than other grasses, after many hours of use. A rhizome is a stem that grows horizontally underground. Being in Tidewater means our soil has a higher concentration of sodium than other localities away from the coast; and with bermuda being tolerant against sodium, makes it ideal for us. As well as being tough against drought, it is strong during unpredictable weather cycles. For these reasons, bermuda is popular for use on sports fields; be it soccer, golf, football or rugby.

Just because the grass goes dormant doesn't mean that the hardworking crew at HRSC does as well. If you've ever visited HRSC one week and then the next week something seems different, it's not your eyes playing a trick on you. A couple times a year, we shift our fields. This is in order to help areas of the field – such as the center, goal mouths and sidelines – that get high foot traffic, time to repair. This is done with a tripod to make sure the fields line up evenly. A field may be in good enough condition where it may not have to be shifted completely. In this instance, only the sidelines will be moved in or out 3.5 feet to let the areas where sideline referees run during matches heal.

It may be too cold for most to think about Sand Soccer, but it is always on our minds. We have been hard at work organizing our Sand Soccer shop, putting together bins for our volunteers. Each bin: containing field tape, sand bags and tent stakes is made for a satellite tent that serves as a headquarters for six to eight fields. With 61 fields and over 800 teams during 2019's tournament, it is important for us to help out the many volunteers as much as we can; we are always grateful for them.

Have any questions or just curious about anything about the Hampton Roads Soccer Complex? Give Matt an email at [mattsbaines@gmail.com](mailto:mattsbaines@gmail.com) and maybe your answer will end up in the next newsletter.