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Sport Field Painting Tips

Straight lines, crisp numbers, and clear markings on your field can set your field apart. Using the right equipment, with good application techniques and quality paint, your field's aesthetic appearance and playing conditions can be greatly enhanced. Poor quality paint applied repeatedly on a field will lead to turfgrass die-back, which will impact player footing and safety. Field markings establish the parameters by which the game is played and poorly applied field markings can impact the quality and even the outcome of the game.

The following tips are excerpted from STMA's SportsTurf Magazine, Top 5 Painting Recommendations, Parts 1 and 2, July and August 2007. Authors include: Bob Campbell, CSFM, Eric Fasbender, CSFM, Tony Leonard, Mark Malloy, Greg Narmour, Jay Warnick, CSFM, and Steve Wightman.

For additional information, contact the STMA at ph. 800-323-3875, or STMAinfo@STMA.org

Planning

- Develop your painting schedule according to scheduled games/events and time of year. Try to paint within 48 hours of your event to have the freshest look.
- Have a contingency plan if inclement weather delays your painting, i.e. using a fast drying aerosol, or painting in sections as practices and weather allows.
- Make certain all equipment, product and personnel are ready.

Preparation

- Mow the field before painting, but keep it to a minimum after painting.
- Set benchmarks around the perimeter of the field to eliminate the need to measure. Layout sets are available each time for all sports - every level - from industry suppliers or you can make your own.
- When measuring for field lines or setting benchmarks always use a steel tape measure for the most accurate measurements.

Paint Mixing

- Use the correct paint – there are different types for natural grass and for synthetic turf.
- There are two options for paint when painting Natural Grass fields.

Aerosols

The advantages of aerosols are that they are quick drying and that the machine used is inexpensive and easy-to-use.

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Bulk paint

Bulk paint can be bought in 1 gallon cans or 5 gallon pails. The advantages with bulk paint are that you can dilute the mix and get numerous applications from one pail. Another advantage of bulk paint is that the quality of the lines and logos are outstanding. A disadvantage is that you have to have a “Paint Machine” to apply the paint, and the machine has to be cleaned after every paint application. Overall, the use of bulk paint will be less expensive in the long run compared with aerosols due to the average cost of the bulk paint versus the cost of aerosols.

- Mix it thoroughly in a safe, nearby area and do not let any paint run into storm drainage areas. You can use a large electric drill with a mixing blade.
- Mix paint at a 1:1 ration for the first application, then a 3:1 or 4:1 (water: paint) for a second coat or touch-ups.
- Always strain paint as you fill the paint machine.

Estimate on Amount of Paint to Use:

A regulation size football field (53.3 x 120 yards) uses about 15 gals of MIXED paint to the field numbers and hashes, but not the white 6’ border. Using the 1:1 ration, you would need approximately 7 ½ gallons.

A smaller Pee Wee field would use less than 10 gallons of MIXED, thus they would need 5 gallons of paint.

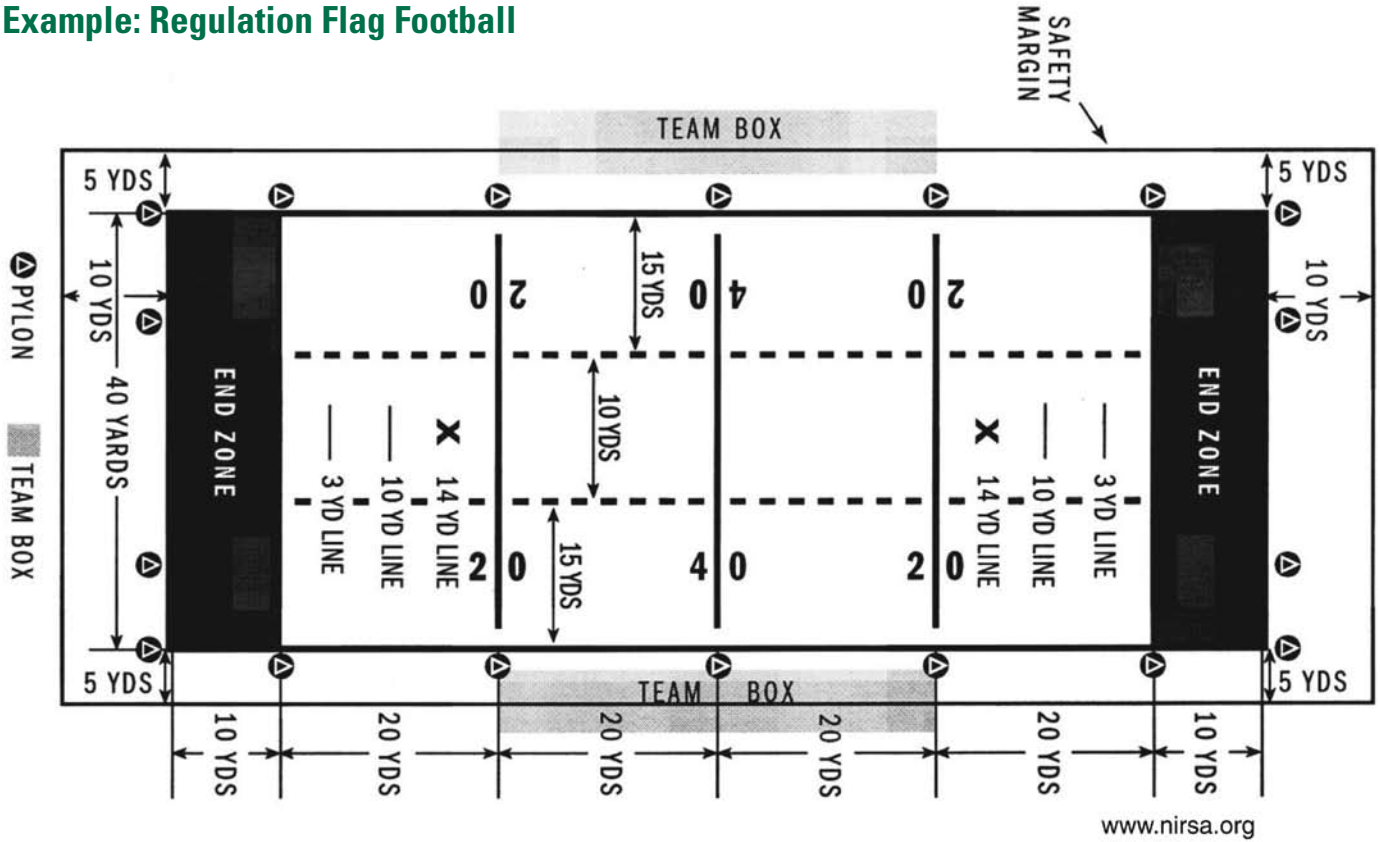
A high school soccer field would need approximately 7 gallons of paint.

Painting Techniques

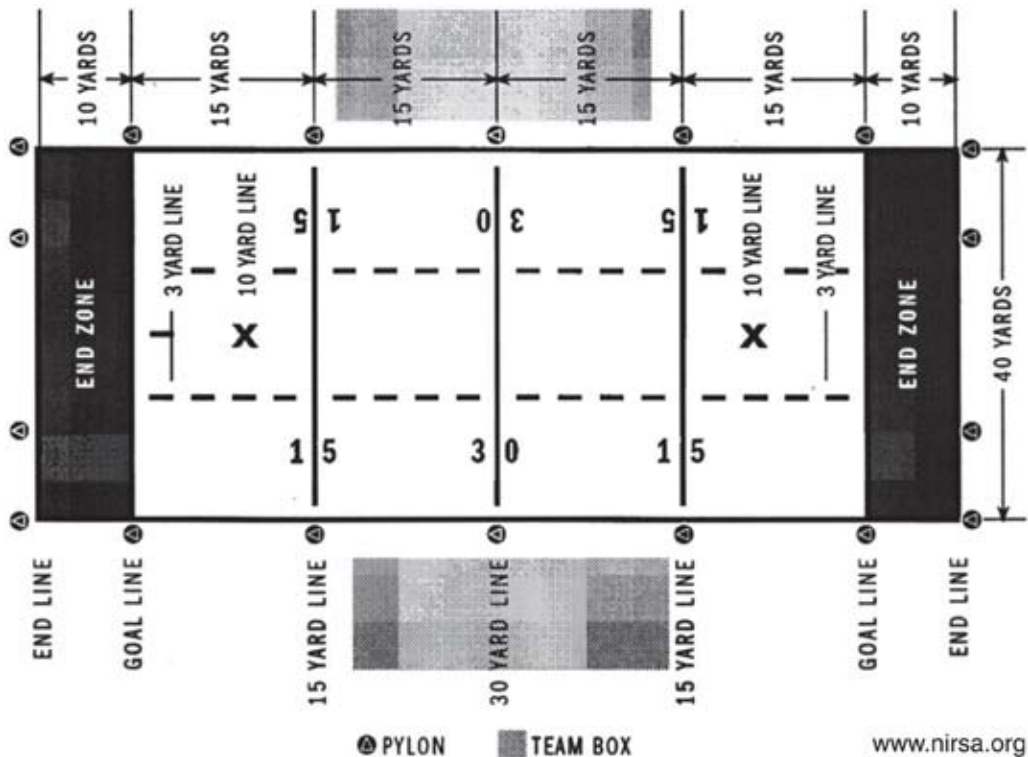
- Use templates, stencils, paint lining machines, and string lines for professional results.
- Use paint machines that provide a uniform spray at various pressures (“airless” paint machines work very well).
- Use the least amount of paint possible to adequately cover the surface (paint only the leaf tissue, not the soil)
- Paint logos from the inside out. When spraying large areas in a back and forth motion, always start and stop the spray gun with each change of direction to avoid putting too much paint down at that point.
- Use a cardboard or flexible, lightweight, plastic “shield” when painting logos and numbers to avoid overspray. One person holds the shield, while another person sprays.
- Paint all the areas that have the same color, then clean the machine and change colors.
- Small logos and detail areas can be painted with a pump-up sprayer, brushes or rollers.
- Always have a bucket of warm water and rags to wipe up any “oops” that occur.
- Begin the job with enough time to complete the task and have it dry before play.
- Always thoroughly clean up after each painting day, including your paint machine, tips and screens.

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Example: Regulation Flag Football



Youth Flag Football



Field layouts provided courtesy of Pioneer Athletics