



Exhibition Place

FOR INFORMATION

Item No. 14

April 16, 2011

To: The Board of Governors of Exhibition Place

From: Stadium Advisory Committee

Subject: **BMO Field – Condition of Natural Grass Field**

Summary:

The field condition is monitored by the BMO Field management team and coaching staff of Toronto FC. On a monthly basis it is graded for drainage, consistency, firmness and overall plant health. Each area of the field is looked at (6 yard box, 18 yard box, centre pitch, east and west sides) and also graded on over all condition. The field is given a rating in one of four levels poor, fair, good or very good.

There are many controllable and uncontrollable factors that affect the condition of the field including precipitation, hours of sunlight, temperature, maintenance and hours of use.

The controllable factors are the maintenance program and hours of use. A professional maintenance program is in place that includes regular cutting, fertilizing, aeration and top dressing. The most detrimental factor to the field's condition is exceeding the recommended number of hours of use per month. The recommended maximum hours of use for a professional soccer field are 48 hours per month.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications to this report.

Decision History:

At its meeting of April 18, 2011, the Stadium Advisory Committee reviewed the subject report submitted by Peter Church, General Manager/BMO Field & Ricoh Coliseum, and referred it to the Board for information.

Issue Background:

The playing surface at BMO Field was changed from synthetic turf to natural grass in April, 2010. In the month of June, 2010 it was brought to the attention of BMO Field Management by the Toronto FC that the condition of the grass was at an unacceptable level of quality for a professional soccer team.

Comments:

A turf management consultant was retained to conduct a full field assessment in July. This assessment reviewed field use, maintenance and soil testing. The report determined that heavy use in the months of May and June had deteriorated the quality of the pitch causing safety concerns for players.

Recommendations were made on reducing the hours of use on the field, increasing the frequency of the maintenance program and reducing the frequency of the rolling the field.

It was recommended that use on the field be reduced and limited to 40-48 hours per month including games and team practices. To improve water, air and nutrient penetration through the soil layer, it was recommended that the field's aeration maintenance be changed to a hollow tine core and the frequency be increased to six times per year or more. It was also recommended that rolling of the field be kept to a minimum of 3-4 times per year, which should be possible if the hours of use were reduced to recommended levels. Frequent rolling of the field contributes to the hardness of the field as it compacts the soil layer, which reduces the air, water and nutrient penetration necessary for health grass growth.

As recommended by the consultant the hours of use were reduced and the field underwent an extensive maintenance program. The field started to improve in quality as the maintenance program progressed and reached a "Good" rating by the last game of the season in November.

Current Field Condition:

The field came out of the winter in poor condition and was not of acceptable quality for the first Toronto FC game of the season on March 26, 2011. Maintenance that occurred in November after the last game of the season was not successful and there were areas in each goal mouth where the grass had not rooted properly. Unfortunately replacement sod was not available at this time of year and patches had to be replaced from low use areas of the field.

Sections of the field had also settled during the winter creating an uneven playing surface that required the field to be rolled twice. This rolling has compacted the soil and will delay the recovery time of the grass.

On March 31st the field was given a "Poor" rating by our Team and Field Manager. As of April 16th the field received a "Fair" rating. As a result of the "Poor" rating in March it was recommended that the number of hours for community use at BMO Field be reduced to zero in the month of April and those hours be made available at Lamport Stadium. It should be noted that grass fields are not available to be rented in the month of April anywhere in the GTA. Most municipalities do not start to permit their premium grass fields until the May long weekend.

The condition of the field is expected to be "Very Good" for every Toronto FC and CSA game played at BMO Field. In any month where there is a field condition rating that is less than "Very Good" the number of hours of use must be reduced. A rating of "Fair" would reduce the number of community hours available to the minimum of 24, a rating of "Good" would reduce the community hours available to 36 and a rating of "Very Good" would allow for the maximum number of community hours of 48 per month. A reduction in hours of use is the single biggest factor in helping the field recover to an acceptable level for professional soccer.

In the month of May there are currently 20 hours booked for Team use and 8 hours booked for the Ontario Soccer Association. We are holding 24 hours for community use and 16 hours for Parks and Recreation. This totals 68 hours and exceeds the recommended total hours of use for the month by 20 hours or 41%. This will likely mean another "Fair" rating for the grass condition at the end of May.

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Stadium Advisory Committee