

# OUR TOWNS Hartington

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## Hartington Field Greening Up

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON  
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HARTINGTON, Neb. — Although it was built in 2004, the football field at the Hartington Community Complex is already getting some much-needed maintenance.

The field's turf is currently marked with several noticeable bare spots, especially at the 50-yard line. But after it undergoes a process of aeration, fertilization and irrigation, it should be back to a healthy green.

"I think if all those are followed accordingly, it should work out very well," said Kevin Bruening of Bruening Aeration.

The field's biggest problem was compaction, he said. "The base foundation of the football field was heavy clay, and the number one problem was just compaction and lack of root depth on the turf, because it just had nowhere to go," Bruening said.

The field is the current home of teams from Hartington's public and Catholic schools.

This — coupled with last year's spate of wet weather — was also a factor, according to Hartington mayor Bill Yates.

"You've got to remember, in the fall we had all that rain," he said. "We had extra playoffs, and we have two teams playing on that field, and it just tore it up pretty bad."

Bare spots on the field have been an ongoing problem, Yates said.

"The grass has not ever gone down (to take a firm root)," he said. "The roots are going horizontal instead of going down."

This has made it much easier to tear the field up through normal play.

"It's just like if you laid carpet on a cement pad," Yates said. "If you went out and played on it, eventually your carpet is just going to peel up, and that's what happened."

The field will undergo a process of aeration five times between now and the fall season, "probably on the average of every month or so," Bruening said.

The aerator hooks up to a tractor and "will pull a core out of the ground, hopefully three to four inches deep," Bruening said. "Right now we can't get there because it's just too hard. "As we bring that up, the dirt will decompose the thatch on top of the grass, which is too thick because of the lack of root depth," he said. "Then we'll get some air and some water penetrated in there to soften the soil."

This should get the grass growing and properly rooted, he said.

The aeration process is commonly used in the area, Bruening said.

"There's a lot of clay around these parts," he said. "We do a lot of football fields and baseball fields around the area. We've been in Osmond, Pierce,



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D  
The bare spot that stands on the 50-yard line of the football field at Hartington's Community Complex should be gone by the fall, after the field undergoes a process of aeration and fertilization.

Hartington, Wakefield, Norfolk and other areas. It's just a management program that should be followed for the health of the turf."

That program has already started at the Community Complex, with plugging and fertilization, Yates said. "We hope Mother Nature will

provide enough water, and if it doesn't, we'll turn our sprinkler system on," he said. "We're hoping by this fall that the field will be back in perfect condition again."

Apart from looking nice, the fully-sodded field will be safer to play on, as well. Bruening said that the National Football League is contractually obligated to aerate its fields up to seven times a year.

"That's mainly to protect the players, reduce injuries," he said. "Obviously, you can't stop (injuries) but if you have a good solid turf it's going to reduce them."

Yates said the teams that use the field will be glad when the project is finished.

"I'm sure they'll really appreciate having a nice, soft turf again," he said. "Before last fall and we had all that rain, we had a really nice field. Even though the grass wasn't going deep-rooted, it was a really nice field. It was in not too bad of shape; we just had all that rain that tore it up."

The Community Complex is a \$1.6 million project completed in 2004. The park spans more than 27 acres and is equipped with the football field, a track, shot and discus areas, four soccer fields, a practice football field and two baseball fields.

## CEDAR: TREE



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D

A class of Hartington Cedar Catholic eighth-graders plant a maple tree at the Hartington Community Complex Monday morning. The students recently completed a unit on earth science and global warming, and planted the tree in conjunction with Arbor Day and Earth Day. The tree was provided by Fischer Ag Service, and several employees assisted in its planting.

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