

## Infield Maintenance Tips

*The information written in this document is provided as a reference and should be used only as a guideline for the skinned infield areas. These listed infield maintenance techniques follow similar infield maintenance techniques used by professional, collegiate and league organizations; the information represented here is by no means the only methods and practices used for baseball field maintenance.*



Enough emphasis cannot be placed on proper water moisture required to maintain the skinned areas of a baseball diamond. A 4" profile of a 'sandy clay loam' infield dirt can require as much as 1" of water to thoroughly saturate to its full depth. The amount of water required to maintain moisture on a daily basis is dependent on many variables, i.e. soil type, wind, rain, heat, irrigation equipment, and climate to name a few.

### **Don't let your infield dirt dry out!**

A simple test to conduct is the "key test"; use a spare key, insert it into the infield dirt. The key should go through the infield dirt with relative ease and when pulled out should not break apart, this will make for a clean spike mark as well. Moisture management is key! Repeat this method randomly throughout the skinned area in order to gauge proper moisture.

### **Maintenance Methods**

- ✓ Remove debris such as rocks, grass clippings, trash, weeds, etc.
- ✓ Remove chalk down the base paths and around home plate with a flat square shovel. This helps prevent a 'build-up' or hump that can occur down the middle of the baseline and around the home plate area
- ✓ Inspect for clay or conditioner in lips (where grass meets dirt) of the skinned area where dirt can accumulate. If there is a build-up present, use a plastic fan rake, pine broom and/or blast the dirt back with a water hose onto the infield when really bad
- ✓ Water the infield to the proper moisture so it can be nail dragged. Sometimes allow to soak overnight then nail drag in the morning
- ✓ Nail drag the infield, drag in different directions to avoid waves or ruts. Ensure the nail drag stays a minimum of 6" away from any point of the lipped areas in the skinned area
- ✓ Roll positional areas and base paths/lines with a filled sod roller to re-compact Infield Mix
- ✓ Add Red Diamond™ CC Premium Professional Grade Conditioner as needed
- ✓ Mat drag the infield using 9'-10' circular patterns, starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> base foul line across the skinned area to the 1<sup>st</sup> base foul line. Randomly change the direction you drag
- ✓ Mat drag the base paths by hand always taking care to drag down the middle and never across the base paths
- ✓ Make sure the mat drag does not overlap the grass area. **ALWAYS PICK UP YOUR MATS WHEN TAKING THEM OFF THE FIELD!**
- ✓ Start and stop in different spot each time
- ✓ If need be use a cocoa mat/drag broom to finish the infield area, giving it a uniform, clean look

If your field does not have an irrigation system specifically designed to irrigate the infield dirt, consider this priority #1 to correct. Don't be afraid to flood your field! Regularly!! This is best done the night before or in the early morning hours to allow for drainage. It's not uncommon to water multiple times throughout the day in order to maintain the proper moisture. Edging the field should be done twice a month to reduce build-up of dirt on the lipped areas and to keep a well groomed appearance (always use a straight line). Stay away from using 'bolt' drags for daily infield maintenance; these should only be used for aggressive renovation. Laser grade annually. Most important, maintain infield areas **only** when the infield mix is properly moist!

*If your field dries out and gets hard, remember that it's only dirt, you can always re-wet it!*

**GAIL MATERIALS**

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