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***BASEBALL / SOFTBALL
FIELD MAINTENANCE DO'S AND DON'TS***

**Grounds Crew Training
Desert Diamonds @ Mountain's Edge Regional Park
7929 W. Mountains Edge Parkway
Las Vegas, Nevada
March 4, 2019**



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**BASEBALL / SOFTBALL
FIELD MAINTENANCE DO'S AND DON'TS**

1. Grooming the Infield

- **NEVER drag an infield with the bases in. Remove the base, place in the grass, and put a plug in or over the anchor.**
- **DO NOT overgroom. Grooming after play simply means simply filling cleat marks and depressions caused created during a game or practice by redistributing the conditioner and top ¼-1/2" of infield mix that was dislodged.**
- Pull in the Direction of the Base Paths: NEVER drag towards a Grass Edge. If you drag to a Grass Edge, you will create 'elevated lips' as infield mix will become trapped in the grass. This will prevent surface water from efficiently draining off the skinned surface. Always stay at least 'Two Feet' away from the Grass when dragging the infield.
- Vary the Method: Do not always drag in the same pattern – Vary the Pattern.
- Spike Drag: Damp Field
 - a. **If your foot makes an impression on the infield skin surface, do not take a vehicle on the field.**
 - b. A Spike or Nail Drag should only be used in to "Open Up" or 'Loosen' the infield skin surface to let the sun and winds dry the surface. Never go down deeper than ½" or displace the infield mix. Infields cannot be regraded with a Spike or Nail Drag.
- Screen Drag: Use on a Dry Field to loosen the top layer of the infield.
- Cocoa Mat Drag: Use on a Dry Field to create a finished surface. NEVER USE ON A WET INFIELD
- Matt Drag / Broom Drag: Use on a Dry Field for "Gametime" appearance.
- Watering an infield requires the entire profile be moist. Watering only the top 1/2" while the rest of the profile is dry will cause the wet material to get stuck in cleats. **DO NOT** attempt to water a dry infield right before a game or practice if the rest of the profile is not wet. If the field hasn't been used in a while and hasn't been watered, start getting moisture onto the field several days before the next game or practice.

2. Grading the Infield

- Grading or re-grading an infield is different from grooming.
- Proper grading cannot be accomplished with grooming equipment, a laser and experience.
- The average infield should be laser graded no less than every two seasons.
- Repairing normal wear areas near each base and the 4 player positions should be done by hand on a regular basis. If after a rainfall these areas begin to hold water, fix them.
- A properly graded infield will shed water evenly throughout the infield skin and towards the outfield or foul areas. Preventing lip build up along the grass edges will allow water to drain off the skin surface as intended.



3. Infield Conditioner

- Conditioning Agent – Used to insulate and protect the clay, help retain moisture, provide a light layer of material to groom, absorb some moisture from rain just before or during a game, provide a smooth playing surface and minimize erosion of the infield mix into grass edges. In addition, it will add color and contrast for fielding ground balls
- Application procedure for Conditioning Agent
 - a. Review weather forecast – need dry condition for 48 hours.
 - b. Spread Conditioning Agent using a spreader evenly on the infield. This typically can be accomplished with 2-3 tons of conditioner.
 - c. Screen drag the infield to evenly distribute.

4. Water Removal

- **A properly graded and maintained infield will not have low areas or lips that collect water.**
- Prior to a rain event, make sure any low areas are re-graded to prevent water from collecting. Areas of normal wear that will develop depressions include where runners lead off 1st base, slide into 2nd and 3rd base, plus the 4 player position locations. Normally, the material to fix them has been dislodged and is collected outside the wear area. Scarify to loosen, moisten the base, rake the dislodged material back in the low area, screed with the back of a 48” rake and tamp to compact.
- ONLY IF NECESSARY -Utilize “Puddle Pillows” to remove all standing water
 - a. Place pillow in puddle – allow pillow to absorb water.
 - b. Remove pillow and take it to a grass area – step on pillow to squeeze out the water.
 - c. Repeat the procedure until standing water is removed.
- ***Never sweep water or wet infield mix from a depression into the grass.**
- After removing Standing Water hand rake former puddle area to let Sun and Wind dry the area.
- Allow entire field to dry naturally through Sun and Wind until the field can support a Spike or Nail Drag.
- Calcined Clay can be used in High Traffic Areas (around bases) to assist in drying the surface. Rule: If you need more than 4 bags to get a field ready, cancel the game! Do not use fine Quick Dry, Rapid Dry or Oil Dry. Use coarser material such as Pro’s Choice Select or Turface MVP.

5. Pitcher’s Mound / Batter’s Boxes and Catcher’s Box

- Scrape out and dispose of all loose material (clay, infield mix and conditioner) from worn area to properly clean out the hole or depression at Pitcher’s Mound and Batter’s Box.
- Excavate depression to depth of no less than 1” and cut the sides of the excavation at a 90-degree angle so the area is square and not concave. Remove and dispose of all loose material.
- Lightly scratch and moisten the bottom of the excavation. Wet clay does not stick to dry sand or infield mix.
- Add DuraPitch Professional Mound Clay to the depression and tamp fully in one-inch lifts. Scarify the previous lift with a rake or knife to assist bonding. Fully compact the clay to fill the hole and check grade with the flat back of an infield rake or level board.
- Apply light dressing of infield mix and conditioner over the clay area.
- **Immediately cover the Home Plate area and Pitcher’s Mound with a tarp to keep the moisture in the clay. These areas should be covered anytime the field is not in use. DO NOT drag the tarps off the field when removing. Continue folding in half until small enough to be lifted into a wheelbarrow or carried.**



6. Grass Cutting

- Depending on the time of year, grass infields should be cut to a standard height at least two times each week or every 2-3 days.
- Grass infields should be bagged. Do not use a zero-turn mower that is turned around on the infield skin.
- Grass outfields should also be cut two times each week during the growing season.
- Plan ahead to avoid grass cutting immediately after rain or right before a game. Cutting after rain when the ground is soft will leave ruts and damage the field.
- Avoid cutting grass under 1 ½ inches in height at any time, and do not cut grass in high temperatures as burning may occur.
- Never cut more than 1/3 of the top growth off during any one time cutting the grass.
- Blow grass away from Skinned portion of Infield

POST GAME

7. Grooming and Leveling

- Rake and Fill in Low Spots at:
 - a. Home Plate / Batter's Box with Clay Material.
 - b. Pitcher's Mound with Clay Material.
 - c. Around All Bases
 - Focus on Sliding areas and areas where runners take their lead.
 - Pull excess material from behind the base (high spots) to in front of the base (low spots).
 - Remove and Plug all Bases. **Never drag a field with the bases in**
 - Clear Dirt from Around Base Plugs so that Bases lie Flat on the Field.
 - Use Rakes to Smooth areas around Bases.
 - Brush or Blow Infield Mix off grass / turf areas around field and back onto the Skinned portion of the infield to prevent lips.
- Follow above grooming instructions above for filling cleat marks



DON'T'S

1. Do Not Sweep or Rake water or wet infield mix from infield into the grass. Remove all brooms from your ball field complex and preferably break them!
2. Do Not Drive a Groomer/Utility Cart or other heavy vehicle on the infield after a rain.
3. Do Not Drag the infield from the inside (pitcher's mound) to the outside (towards the grass) on a consistent basis. This will create a lip on your field and a "bowl effect" on your infield. Change directions and patterns.
4. Do Not Drag the infield without removing the bases.
5. Do Not over-groom the infield. Just fill cleat marks and depressions.
6. Do Not Rake across baselines – rake the baseline lengthwise to prevent lip build up.
7. Do Not water a dry field immediately before a game or practice. The entire profile must be kept moist.
8. Do Not allow players or coaches to drag their wheeled bags across the field before a game or practice.
9. Do Not forget to blow conditioner and infield mix out of the grass edges at least once a week during the season.
10. Do Not hit baseballs (soft toss) into fences anywhere in the park.
11. Do Not Dump bags of Drying Agents in anticipation of immediately playing a game. These materials take time to absorb water and will not absorb standing water. If it takes more than 4 bags to get a field ready, cancel the game!
12. Do Not allow people on the field unrestricted when games are not being played – all your hard work will be ruined!
13. Do Not Apply Clay without first cleaning out the affected area and applying water to moisten. Dry doesn't stick to Dry, Wet doesn't stick to Dry. Only Wet sticks to Wet.
14. Do Not allow coaches to hit infield practice or throw batting practice without using mats to protect the infield surface, pitcher's mound, or home plate area.
15. Do Not leave the field without covering home plate, pitcher's mound and hand raking to fill predictable wear areas.
16. Do Not drag tarps off the field. Fold and carry them off.
17. Do Not drag tarps on the field. Carry, place and unfold them.
18. Do Not forget to properly maintain the batting cages. Always have at least 12 inches of slack from the netting to the support poles, inspect the L-Screens for holes and make sure the ground is graded before use.