Ground Crew Safety
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Scott Maclean is parks supervisor for the Waukegan Park District, Waukegan, IL. He’s a member of the Midwest Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association and the Midwest Institute of Park Executives.

Skin Care

By Steve Wightman

Soil Composition

The ultimate goal of a baseball infield is to provide a true and consistent surface for the roll and bounce of the ball and a firm yet resilient surface for the players. This should be maintained throughout the entire game, even when the players are running, stopping, twisting, turning and sliding.

In order to maintain an acceptable surface under these conditions, it’s important that the soil mix be composed of material strong enough yet flexible enough for both the players and the ball.

For the safety of the players and for a true ball roll and bounce, the mix should not contain any particle size over 1/8 of an inch in diameter. In order to provide the firmness and resiliency necessary for the action of the game, the mix should contain proper amounts of sand, silt and clay. Successful infield skin areas usually contain a clay content of between 15 percent and 30 percent.

The amount of moisture maintained within the soil profile is another key ingredient to a safe and functional infield skin. Too much water obviously takes away from the soil strength necessary for quality play while not enough water yields a surface that is too hard and dusty for quality play.

Mound/Batters Boxes Composition

With these two areas being the most heavily concentrated areas of use on a baseball field, it is necessary that they be composed of a soil that provides for more strength than any other area. Soil strength is achieved by higher amounts of clay content within the soil profile. Successful soils for pitchers mounds and home plate areas normally contain a clay content of more than 30 percent.

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