

# Painting a masterpiece

## How to turn your football field into a work of art

BY JOHN KMITTA, SENIOR EDITOR

**T**he surface is many times larger than a standard 18- by 24-inch artist's canvas; it is green instead of white; and it is destined to get wet, dirty, and trampled. Despite these challenges, a football field is the turf manager's blank slate. Each week, that slate is filled with the precise white lines, colorful end zones, and specialty logos that become a masterpiece of functionality.

When painting a field, several factors must come together to determine whether the end result will be a masterwork—set up steps, tools, application methods, the climate and, of course, the paint.

According to Carbit Paint Company, a Chicago-based manufacturer of natural turf marking paint, users should prepare natural turf surfaces by removing old paint with sweep brooms and high-pressure water. If the application is seasonal, no preparation is typically required.

According to Abby McNeal, CSFM, assistant turfgrass manager at Invesco Field at Mile High, you must determine the dimensions that you will be painting before setting up to paint.

"You need to first make a plan as to how you are going to paint the field," said McNeal. "It is important to take the time to think about it so that you do not track back across painted lines. Gather all of your painting strings, check all of your equipment, and finalize the method of painting with the crew."

McNeal also recommends having towels on hand in case a spill or mistake happens. A cart with paint (for refilling the machines) should also have a bucket of water and a toolbox with extra tips, nozzles, and miscellaneous tools.

### Tools, paint and application

"Tools that we use to paint a football field include strings that are approximately 170 feet long and strings that are 370 feet long," said McNeal. "We use an 8-inch wide piece of cardboard to make sure we get the gap between the end of the yard line and the sideline. A Graco 3900 Line Lazer is the painting machine that we use. We have it set up so that we can use up to three 150-foot hoses. We are fortunate to use line stencils that are exactly 4 inches wide and 15 feet long, creating a stencil effect when we paint our yard lines. We also have an 8-inch wide stencil to create the goal line."

Kevin Dawkins, senior crew leader of Raymond James Stadium, said he typically mixes paint with water at a 1-to-1 ratio.

McNeal uses World Class paint diluted at a ratio of one part paint to one part water.



Precise field lines are created by running string from end zone to end zone.

- Photo courtesy of Suntec Paint, Inc.



"The amount of paint used on a particular day is determined by the event for which we are painting," said McNeal. "We stretch painting out over three days for football. So the day depends on how much paint we use. By the time the field is game day ready, we have used about 25 five-gallon buckets of paint (at the one to one ratio). We want the brightness for television, and this is how we get it."

Dawkins recommends putting down a white background before painting over it with color to provide enhanced brightness.

According to Carbit, when using a compressed air sprayer, adjust reduction with water to obtain a uniform pattern. Use a tank pressure of 100 psi and a fluid pressure of 30 psi. Reduce with water for desired consistency. For a heavy line, reduce with 1 1/2 parts water to one part paint. For remarking, reduce with 2 1/2 parts water to one part paint. When using a gas-operated piston pump sprayer, reduce seven parts water to three parts paint. When using airless spray, reduce 10 percent with water and apply at tip pressure of 2,000-2,500 psi with orifice tip size of .018 inch to .021 inch.

### Time to paint

"We start on a Wednesday and finish on a Saturday, and that is two coats of everything," said Dawkins. "If there is a call for rain, we like to find out how much is being called for before it does rain. The paint is dry within an hour and fifteen minutes, so if we get a window like that, we will go ahead and paint, even if it is calling for rain. Rain doesn't damage it too much, unless you put it down right before it rains. Most of the time it leaves some of it there. That way we don't have



Paint should be applied at a recommended spread rate by spray, brush or roller.

- Photo courtesy of Suntec Paint, Inc.

to go over the whole routine again, we just brighten up what washed off."

For a Sunday NFL game, McNeal also starts on Wednesday with the framing of the field and the outside media lines. Thursdays are for end zones, logos, and the first coat of the 6-foot border. Friday is used to finish the field, yard lines, numbers, hash marks, and another coat on the border. Saturday is used to paint in case weather impacted the painting schedule earlier in the week. Saturday's can also be used to paint one more coat on the border.

"We are always looking at the weather during a game week," said McNeal. "It dictates so much, from tarping to painting, that we must always keep updated as the week progresses."

Carbit recommends applying field paint when air, product and surface temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit and at least 5 degrees Fahrenheit above the dew point. In average weather—77 degrees Fahrenheit, and 50 percent relative humidity—Carbit's paint dries to the touch in 30 minutes, and is hard in one to two hours.

### Quality results

"Don't be afraid to experiment with different methods and ways of doing things," said McNeal. "Make your ultimate goal to frame the turf that you spend so much time working on look even better with a great paint job. Use the best paint that you can afford. The cheapest isn't always the best for your turf, so remember to test the paint before you go for the gusto."

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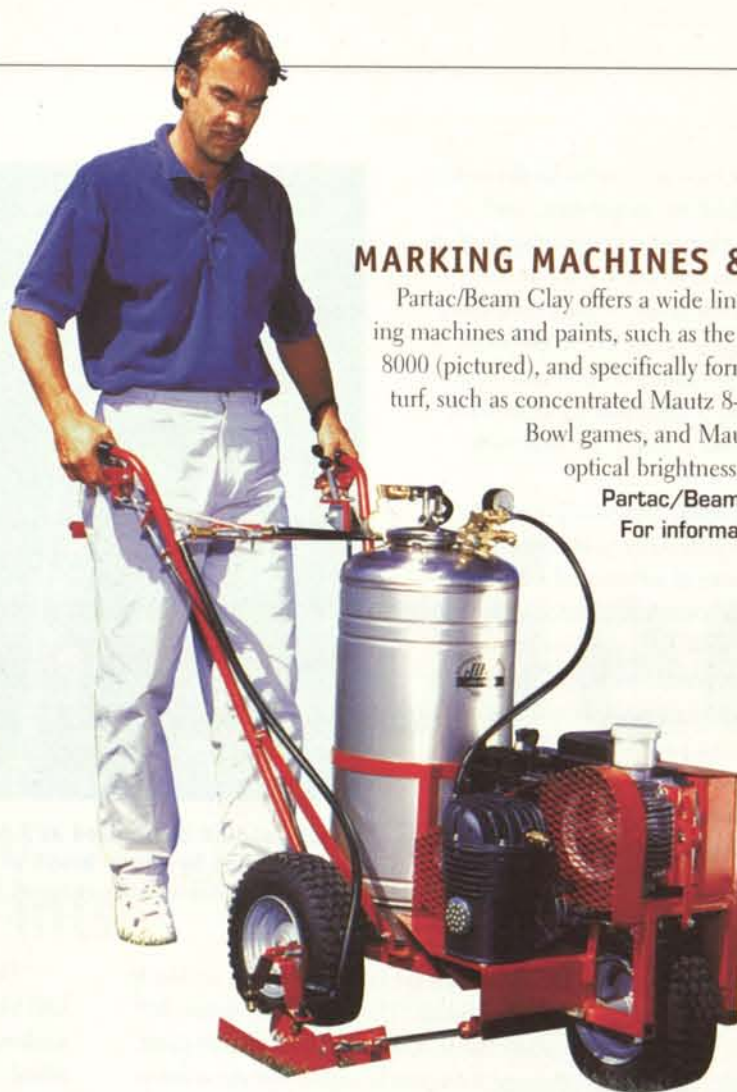




**FIELD MARKING PAINT**

Zeke's Athletic Paint has taken another step up with ZAP Chiefs Red and ZAP Yellow. Both colors have been reformulated to be brighter and better, says Zeke's. These new colors join an extensive list of stock colors and three levels of ZAP white field marking paint: ZAP Super White, ZAP Pro White and ZAP-1. Zeke's ships all over the country.

Zeke's Athletic Paint/888-430-4076  
For information, circle 060



**MARKING MACHINES & PAINT**

Partac/Beam Clay offers a wide line of athletic field marking machines and paints, such as the self-propelled Jiffy 8000 (pictured), and specifically formulated latex paints for turf, such as concentrated Mautz 8-30 used on 32 Super Bowl games, and Mautz Bright White with optical brightness.

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**PAINT STRIPERS**

Newstripe's Fielder paint stripers can save you money with their first use by replacing expensive aerosol cans with bulk paint, says the manufacturer. Both models are available as basic units or can be upgraded with power packs to handle the largest fields. Both are backed by 18-month warranty.

Features include: 7- or 12-gal. stainless steel tank; dual handle with control lever; turf specific spray head with 2 to 6 in. adjustable line widths; and optional air, CO2 or engine power packs to eliminate hand-pumping.

Newstripe/800-624-6706  
For information, circle 166



## "PAINT MULE"

Randy Dvorak, manager of the Cedar Rapids (IA) Tuma Soccer Complex, says, "I used to spend on the average 35 hours using our old walk-behind sprayer to line our 30-field complex. Using the RS-500 'Paint Mule' I'm able to line the same fields in 12 hours. We're very pleased with its efficiency and performance."

Randy is now spraying lines at more than 250 ft. per minute, says manufacturer TruMark. The RS-500's spray shoe allows a high ground speed while laying down a straight line. The 20-ft. hose & wand facilitates stenciling, hash marks, and other applications.

TruMark/800-553-6275  
For information, circle 163



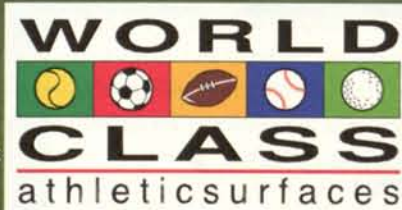
## RESOURCE CENTER

World Class Athletic Surfaces has built its reputation as the reliable manufacturer of premium quality bulk and aerosol paints and custom stencils. Made of 100% acrylic, World Class super concentrate paints are guaranteed to be brighter, last longer and are kinder to turf. After all, the last thing a groundskeeper needs is field paint that kills or damages the playing surface.

For athletic programs that cannot find specific colors, World Class can create custom colors. The company supplies custom color paints and coatings for field marking, traffic, goal posts, non-slip floors and artificial turf surfaces.

The company also provides the means to apply its premium paints. In addition to standard kits for field marking, the production department can supply high quality, affordable custom-made field stencils.

World Class Athletic Surfaces/800-748-9649  
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## ONE-STEP IRRIGATION CEMENT

"Pro-Green" One Step irrigation cement is a fast set, low V.O.C., medium bodied solvent weld cement specifically formulated for the irrigation and sprinkler maintenance. Pro-Green works on wet or dry pipe and requires no primer before assembly of pipe and fittings. Because of its bonding strength, the product is excellent for "pulling" PVC pipe and allowing for immediate pressure testing of the system. "Pro-Green" is recommended for all classes of

PVC pressure pipe and fittings through 3 in. and PVC non-pressure solvent weld pipe and fittings through 6 in.

Whitlam Paint Co./800-321-8358  
For information, circle 159

## BRIGHT WHITE

Pioneer's BRITE STRIPE athletic field marking paint produces lines up to 400 percent brighter than standard paints under UV lights for night games, thanks to its exclusive formulation of Halogen 2000 and OPTIWITE optical brighteners. The extra bright look not only ensures compliments but results in more accurate spotting of field positions for all, says Pioneer.

BRITE STRIPE can be applied with any bulk paint striper and dries ready to play in less than 1 hour. Custom color blending is available in addition to 16 standard colors, to make team logos pop off the field.

Pioneer Manufacturing/800-877-1500  
For information, circle 167



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### PAINT STAYS SUSPENDED FOR 14 DAYS

The Fastliner Super Concentrate Paint, with its 5 to 1 dilution, can stay in suspension for up to 14 days. This means you can leave it in the application tank until you need to use it again; and when you do, simply agitate and resume painting.

Sold in 4 gal. containers for clean, easy handling, Fastliner can be combined with color additives to create yellow, red, blue, and green lines. It resists rain while ensuring brilliant white lines, even on poor surfaces.

Broyhill/800-228-1003 ext. 34

For information, circle 161

### MANAGING BERMUDAGRASS BOOK

Co-authored by SPORTSTURF magazine's "Q&A" columnist Dr. Grady Miller, *Managing Bermudagrass Turf: Selection, Construction, Cultural Practices, and Pest Management Strategies* is now available from Ann Arbor Press. This complete reference guide provides a broad introduction to types and characteristics of bermudagrasses, gives fundamental guidelines for green construction and growing-in processes, shows step-by-step cultural practices, and covers critical techniques for controlling weeds, insects, diseases, and nematodes.

Ann Arbor Press/800-487-2323

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## ATHLETIC FIELD MARKING PAINT

Game Day 8050 Super White Athletic Field Marking Paint is a new product by Suntec Paint that is specifically developed with the needs of the sports turf professional in mind. Game Day 8050 is highly pigmented with concentrated amounts of titanium dioxide and optical brighteners to give an extremely brilliant white finish. The

pigment loading contains no calcium carbonate, eliminating a limestone buildup on the field and drastically reducing settling after mixing.

Game Day 8050 also contains more latex resin, which gives added durability for a longer lasting job. This environmentally friendly product contains no harmful ingredients, allowing grass to grow back vibrantly and healthy. Its highly concentrated formula allows the user to dilute two to three parts water to one part paint to achieve the desired level of brightness. It stays in suspension longer after mixing, with no hard settling. It is easy to mix and clean up is with soap and water.

Suntec Paint/800-333-1104

For information, circle 171



## EASY STRIPING

PVIP aerosol athletic field marking paint from Pioneer has unique 24-oz. cans that are a value because they save money by holding 22% more paint than ordinary cans, which means fewer changes are needed to stripe a field. PVIP contains Halogen 2000 and Optiwite optical brighteners for lines that are brighter and whiter under natural light or stadium floodlights.

The product comes ready to use and won't wash away in rain or harm turf. Arctic White, Yellow-Gold, Red, Blue, Black and Fluorescent Orange colors are available.

Pioneer Manufacturing/800-877-1500

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TrueLeaf Technologies/800-438-4328

For information, circle 170





## WHEN IT HAS TO BE PERFECT

For grounds maintenance professionals, Becker Underwood's Green Lawngr turf paint provides an effective, environmentally friendly, proven alternative to the problem of discoloration of worn, overplayed, or otherwise stressed turf.

Green Lawngr isn't a dye; rather, it is a permanent green pigment, containing no hazardous chemicals, heavy metals, or any other inert ingredients harmful to turf. Formulated for a rich, natural green color, Green Lawngr keeps turf looking fresh and resists wear brilliantly for 10-14 weeks, or until mowing removes the treated surfaces. It can be applied with a variety of different types of sprayers and is available as a liquid concentrate. Depending on the particular ratio of Green Lawngr to water, the intensity of color will vary, so color depth and coverage is always within the applicator's control.

Grounds maintenance professionals in the athletic community also appreciate Green Lawngr's versatility and ease of application. Whether blending in worn areas of stadium turf, brightening stressed or overplayed fields, or keeping dormant grass vivid all season, Green Lawngr is part of many sports turf maintenance regimens, and is key in preparing surfaces for major events.

Becker-Underwood/800-232-5907  
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## SAVE MARBLE DUST REFILLING TIME

The Starliner line marking system by Broyhill uses a large poly hopper to save marble dust refilling time. The system also features a snap-on wind skirt and slanted handlebar design that allows a full stride operation. These characteristics help make this one of the ultimate machines for dry marking base lines and infield surfaces.

With its stainless steel frame, 4-wheel construction and accurate swing-down sighter guide, the Starliner system allows for more even lines and no gate operation. Also fitted with a brush auger and ground driven internal hopper brush, the product feeds evenly every time.

Broyhill/800-228-1003 ext. 34  
For information, circle 162



## LINE MARKER

The Bannerman Wet Line marker is a simple, practical tool for line marking on grass surfaces using low-cost latex paint. The machine is sturdy and well-balanced, with tires at the base of the handle that create a comfortable fulcrum for raising the marking belt off the ground for easy turning. Positive alignment for easy turning on straight lines or curves. Use a stake and tether line to produce perfect circles.

Bannerman/800-665-2696  
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Independence Creeping Bentgrass will be available September 1 exclusively from select Lebanon Turf Products distributors.  
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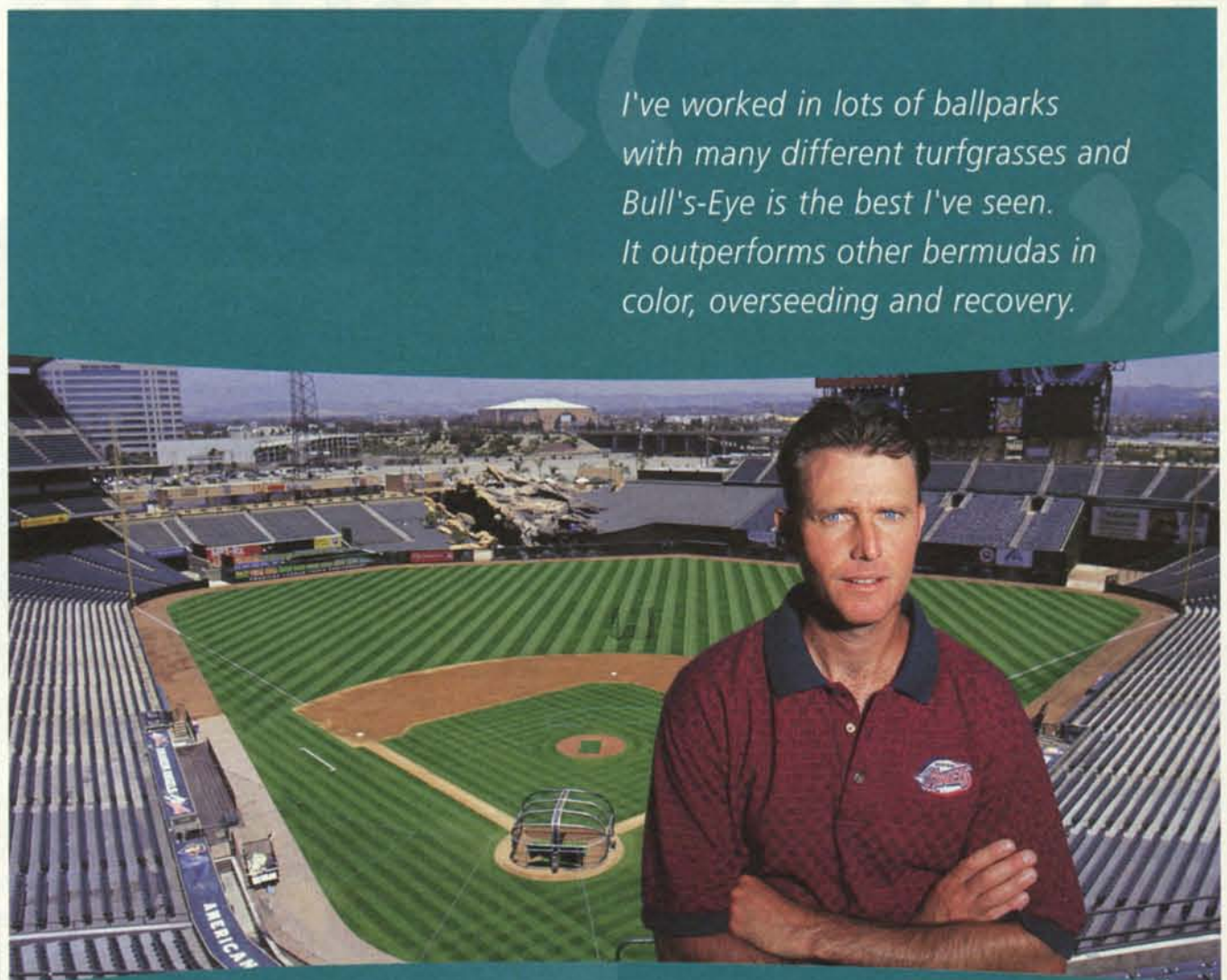
Beacon Ballfields/800-747-5985  
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## MARKING FLAGS

Both custom printed and plain marking flags are available from Blackburn in weather-resistant, 4-mil. plastic. Choose from traditional style, bent staff banner flags and rigid markers. Sizes include 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 in., 4 x 5 in., 5 x 6 in., and 5 x 8 in. Staff lengths range from 15 to 36 in. wire, plastic, or fiberglass. The 14 colors available include all standard APWA colors for marking underground utility lines and four fluorescent colors. No screen charge for industry messages already in stock.

Blackburn Manufacturing/  
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Field Manager  
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home of the Anaheim Angels  
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# Creating safe, playable infield surfaces

BY RENE ASPRION

**G**roundskeeping is an art and groundskeepers around the world take different approaches to building and maintaining baseball or softball infields. However, the overall goal should be the same: To create a safe, playable surface day and night, rain or shine.

There are two basic ways to topdress infields, also known as the skinned area, the playing surface or the dirt portion, including the pitching mound, baselines and homeplate. The first method is to simply topdress the playing surface with a quality infield conditioner by creating a thin top layer that acts as a blanket over the dirt. The second is to work an infield conditioner into the skinned area, followed by a topdressing application. This procedure is usually recommended for poorly graded or slow-draining infields and hard, over-compacted playing surfaces. The work requires more time and is typically performed during the off-season.

To properly topdress an infield using either of these methods, refer to the following application instructions and remember that these techniques may not fit every situation. It's best to work with an experienced, professional groundskeeper for the best application techniques for your particular field(s).

## First steps in topdressing

The first step in planning any infield work is to know your infield(s). A regulation baseball (Major/Minor League, Collegiate, High School) infield, with an infield arc of 95 feet will have approximately 11,500 square feet of skinned area, which includes the baselines, mound, and homeplate. A regulation softball (Professional, Collegiate, High School) field with a 60-foot arc will have approximately 8,300 square feet of skinned area. Once you know how much surface you're working, follow these basic instructions:

1. **Do preliminary work on the infield.** Lightly water the skinned area and allow some drying time so the water will soak into the dirt. Next, nail drag the infield arc (no deeper than 1/2 inch) to provide some pre-leveling and give the skinned surface a good blend when the infield conditioner is added.
2. **Apply a thin layer of infield conditioner.** Use approximately 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch of conditioner and place on all infield dirt areas, including baselines, mound, and home plate. How you apply the material is determined by how you purchased it (either bags or bulk—bulk is usually cheaper and saves money over time), as well as the equipment and manpower available. The most common application methods include: a topdressing machine, a front-end loader, wheelbarrows, and by hand from bags.
3. **Level the conditioner.** Use a flat board (a nail drag turned over on its flat side), a screen drag with a leveling bar, or with good old-fashioned rakes.
4. **Finish drag the infield.** Use a screen or mat drag, and then lightly water again. The infield should now be ready for safe play.

## Pre-Season infield renovation

For poorly-graded or slow-draining infields and hard, over-compacted playing surfaces, use the following application techniques to renovate your infield(s) before a season begins:

1. **Prepare the field.** Lightly water the skinned area and allow the water to soak into the dirt.
2. **Till infield conditioner into the infield arc.** Some groundskeepers will nail drag or roto-till the infield before placing the conditioner to re-mix or re-level the infield mix (the dirt portion of the infield that is made up of a combination of sand, silt, and clay). Be advised that tilling the infield too deep, or overworking it with a nail drag, makes it more difficult to apply the conditioner because the



Top-dressing infields can be done fairly quickly and easy with bulk infield conditioners, saving time and money.

skinned area will be too loose. (Note: An overworked infield, or one that is tilled too deep, will take more time and effort to make level and compact.)

3. **Apply 1/4 inch to 1 inch of infield conditioner.** Cover all skinned areas as evenly as possible, using the topdressing procedure described earlier. The depth of conditioner will depend on how deep you roto-till or nail drag the infield. For example, if the manufacturer's instructions recommend an application of 1/4 inch of conditioner per 1 inch of tilled infield dirt, and you roto-till 2 inches deep, apply 1/2 inch of conditioner.
4. **Roto-till or nail drag the infield.** This helps incorporate the conditioner with the existing infield mix.
5. **Level the conditioner.** Use a box blade, a flat board (a nail drag turned over on its flat side), or good leveling rakes. After leveling, your field should have a fairly loose surface that needs to be compacted and leveled again.
6. **Compact and level the infield to your players' preferences.** This can be achieved using a small roller or a compacting/leveling machine. Some coaches and players prefer a fast, firm surface, while others prefer a slower, looser playing surface. Ideally, your players should be able to play on the infield without slipping or cutting, thus creating ruts, or sliding and creating deep holes. The real test, of course, is when a ball is thrown or hit. The infield should provide a true and even hop or roll. Bad hops are everybody's nightmare.
7. **Apply a topdressing application.** Follow the steps outlined for the topdressing procedure.

In summary, use good, clean, quality materials for both your infield mix and infield conditioner. Don't be afraid to experiment and make mistakes, and ask questions along the way. Remember groundskeeping is an art, not a science. Play ball on a safe infield!

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*Rene Asprion is sales and marketing coordinator for Diamond Pro Professional Groundskeeping Products, a division of TXI-ESC, and is past president of the North Texas Sports Turf Managers Association. For more information about Diamond Pro, call 800-228-2987.*



## Tips for maintaining skinned infields

**A**bout 90 percent of the game is played on the infield dirt. With 7 of the 10 players (including the batter, but not the 3 potential base runners) occupying the skinned area, it takes a pounding and can develop problems without regular maintenance.

### After every game or practice:

1. Remove the bases to avoid creating any low or high areas.
2. Screen drag the infield level, keeping at least 1 foot from the edge of the grass to avoid build-up or "lips" on the edge.
3. Retaining moisture and regular watering are key to healthy infields. During dry spells, water the skinned area to allow it to retain some moisture, thus improving the workability and playability. Always keep the dirt underneath your top layer moist and do not allow it to dry out, crack and become too hard.
4. If your infield is too firm, use water and/or a nail drag to loosen up the playing surface. Nail dragging should be done at least once a week, sometimes more, depending on the weather and condition of your infield.
5. Apply infield mix and infield conditioner as soon as needed. Avoid letting problem spots grow larger and possibly becoming a safety issue.

### Pitcher's mound, homeplate, & baselines

1. Top-dress these areas with 1/4 inch of infield conditioner.
2. Use a good mound clay to fill any holes in the pitching/batter's boxes, as needed.
3. *Do not* till unless you are adding clay and building up the area. These areas should be firm with a natural slope, allowing excess rainwater to run off.
4. Water these areas after games and practices to keep them moist.
5. Use tarps on your pitcher's mound, homeplate and even bullpens, whenever not in use. This will keep the moisture in the clay to allow for better play, wear and tear.

### Excess rain

Infield conditioners eliminate much of the maintenance that would be required on the infield, so be sure the conditioners are



in place *before* the rain comes. After a heavy or long rain, it is important to:

1. Stay off the infield. Let the conditioner and Mother Nature do the work for you. More damage is usually done to an infield by walking/working on it too soon after a rain.
2. Take a good look at your infield to see whether you have high and low areas that need to be leveled. Depending on the area and the depth of a problem spot, a deeper, larger area usually requires adding infield mix, or if the area is not too deep (less than 1/4 inch), simply add some more conditioner.
3. In good weather conditions, if the sun is out and/or the wind is blowing and it's before a game or practice, let the field dry naturally for as long as possible. When the field is dry enough to work on it without causing damage (such as, rutting or clay balls forming when using a nail drag), nail drag the infield to allow the air to permeate into the dirt.
4. In poor weather conditions, do not nail drag, if there is still a chance of rain, you will make matters worse. If you cannot nail drag, but can walk on the infield, lightly rake open the surface.
5. Let it dry naturally. Allow the infield to sit as long as possible before a game or practice.
6. Add infield conditioner. Give yourself just enough time before the game or practice to topdress the field or, if needed, add drying agents (specialized products for faster drying, compared to normal infield conditioners).
7. Finish drag (screen or mat) the infield. Play ball!—Rene Asprien