

Infield practices



Here are some tips from the trenches

SPORTSTURF recently asked several turf managers the following question: What does your infield maintenance plan/schedule consist of?

Mike Boekholder, Indianapolis Indians

Our daily infield maintenance schedule is quite routine. We begin our maintenance by watering the infield quite heavily, almost to the point of puddling, after a game (unless weather dictates otherwise). That way, by morning, the moisture has soaked into the profile deeply and gives us a base of moisture to begin the day with.

First thing in the morning the moisture level of the skin is checked and more water applied if needed. We then roll the sliding pits around the bags as well as the position spots on the infield to firm them up a bit more. The infield is then worked up in two different directions using a 3-foot by 3-foot homemade nail board. After the infield has been spiked, it is mat dragged with a handmade mat drag and the edges are broomed to provide a smooth transition between the infield skin and the turf. We add vitrified or calcined clay every 7-10 days to the infield skin with a drop spreader to keep our 1/4 cushion of conditioner consistent. After games, the entire infield is raked with an infield/bunker rake and then rolled for the evening, after which we apply the post-game water.

Craig Potts, Texas A&M

For our softball field I water the dirt then put a nail drag on the skinned area. After the nail drag I clay the mound and plate area and then tamp those areas. Once I finish the plate and mound areas I level those two

places and then pack them with my drag tractor. After this is finished I use my steel mat drag to put the finish drag on the infield. I then water the dirt several more times until right before the game or practice. I then go out and put one more finish drag on the infield to help fluff the calcined clay back to the top. Then I apply one more coat of water. I like to try to keep the infield as moist as possible. We perform daily maintenance on the lips with a broom and wash the lips approximately five times per year so we don't get any build-up of dirt in this area.

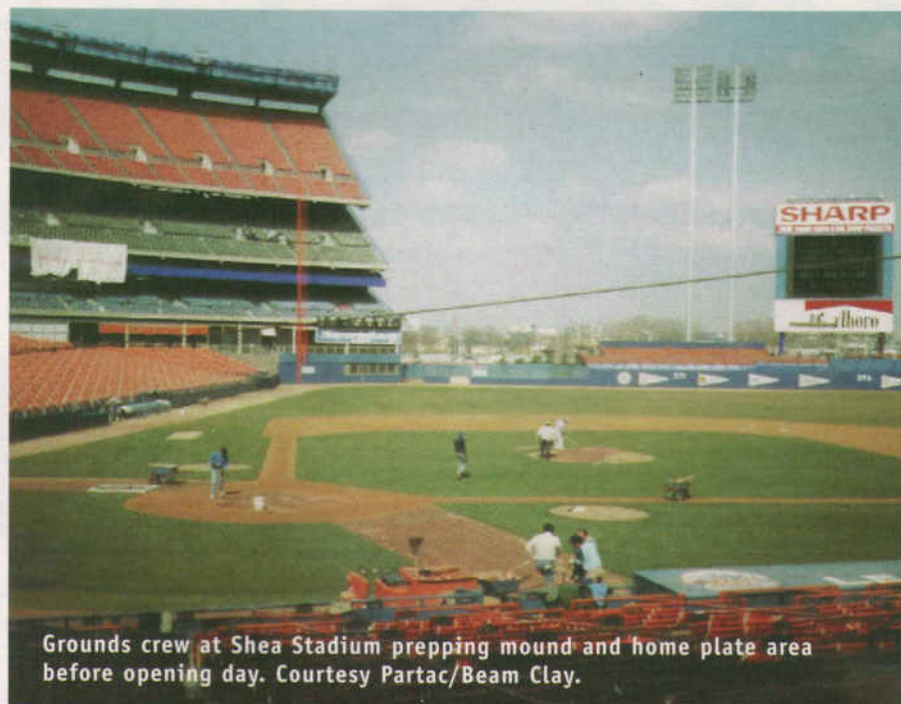
Ryan Nieuwsma, Kane County Cougars

My infield schedule starts right after the game. I usually give it a light nail drag then drag it smooth. The first thing I do the next day is water it: a lot of water if it will be sunny all day, a little bit of water if it is cloudy. Then I monitor the water content, keep it wet until the team comes out for batting practice. I give it a watering right before batting practice starts. After both teams take bat-

ting practice I drag it smooth again and give it the final watering for the game. Depending on the weather, I could water up to five times a day or as few as twice. I always keep a layer of approximately a half-inch of infield conditioner on top. It is very important to keep that layer on there.

Mike McDonald CSFM, University of Minnesota

We broom all our edges, mow the grass every other day, and clean up any mess. We water any drier or high spots more than the rest of the skinned area. We then hand rake and fill in low areas, then we scarify the skinned area with a machine. We fix the mound and home plate clay areas, drag the skinned area, and then re-water everything as needed.



Grounds crew at Shea Stadium prepping mound and home plate area before opening day. Courtesy Partac/Beam Clay.