

# Award winners share softball field tips

**T**wo turf managers who recently won an award from the National Fastpitch Coaches Association share some tips on maintaining infield skins:

## West Point

Mike Rubbino, athletic facilities manager for the United States Military Academy, says, "Each day starts with a hand watering, amount is condition dependent. We have an automatic system but use it sparingly to avoid over or under watering. It is important to control the moisture level of your entire playing surface, not just the turf areas. It is not uncommon to water the infield as many as four times a day.

"Next up is the hand work. Scrape and fill the wear spots with extra emphasis on the plate and mound, and don't forget the bullpens. If you use the same level of attention in the bullpens, your pitchers and catchers will notice," Rubbino says. "Hand rake a 4-foot circle around all four bases and pitching mound to avoid over dragging these sensitive areas. To avoid lip buildup hand rake three or four feet around the edge of the infield.

"Scarify lightly while dragging. You can get more aggressive with the scarifier when the field has a day off. Water again lightly as needed and finish up with another light drag or a cocoa mat. Paint the pitching rubber and home plate. Install freshly painted bases and touch up the transition areas between the warning track and the infield with a rake.

"Switch the direction that the field is dragged daily to prevent material from building up at the edges. Maintain the field in the off-season at least twice a week until the ground freezes and get back on it as soon as possible in the spring, which is February at West Point," says Rubbino.

## Texas A&M

The Texas A&M softball field was built in 1994 on what was a dairy cow pasture, relates Craig Potts, assistant manager for athletic fields. The heavy clay soil profile does not allow for any internal drainage, which can make things a challenge for the staff during a rain event, says Potts.

The Tifway Bermudagrass turf is over seeded with perennial ryegrass and mowed at 3/4 of an inch every day when possible. Like most baseball and softball fields the main area of concern is the skinned area. The key to having a good skinned area is the right amount of moisture, says Potts. "To get ready for games and practice we will start with a mat drag to smooth out the infield from the practice or game from the day before. After we drag we will sweep out our mound and batter box areas to get ready to clay our holes," he says. "We then start watering the dirt with heavy coats of water until water is standing on the infield.

"We then monitor the skinned area to stay on top of the moisture in the dirt. We will probably water the dirt two more times before lunch," Potts says. "After lunch we will water the dirt again then start applying clay for the mound and plate areas. Once this is finished we will continue to monitor the moisture in the skinned area



Photos courtesy of USMA

and apply water if needed.

"About 30 minutes before the field will be used we nail drag the infield and then apply a finish drag. If more water is needed we will then apply another coat. Our goal is to get as much moisture in the skinned area as possible without allowing the top part of the skinned area to bake up in the sun," Potts says. "We will apply conditioner on an as needed basis; the calcined clay products seem to work best for our skinned area." **ST**



### COMMERCIAL ROTORS

Toro Irrigation's new TR Series rotors enable you to fine-tune spray trajectory, make easy adjustments, and shut off water flow for maintenance. Rotors will cover a 25-77 foot area. The TR50 3/4-in. rotor adjusts in only seconds with a twist of adjustment band. There's no "plus or minus anything" as long as the arrows are aligned to where you want to water, you're done.  
 Toro Irrigation/800-664-4740  
 For information, circle 057 or see <http://www.oners.ims.ca/4570-057>



### ROTATOR SPRINKLER

Walla Walla Sprinkler Company has a new model, the 8-15 ft. MP1000, which increases the product line's performance range to include throw distances of 8-30 ft. The new development is the company's response to market requests for a shorter-throw MP Rotator within a 90-210 degree arc.  
 Walla Walla Sprinkler/509-525-7660  
 For information, circle 059 or see <http://www.oners.ims.ca/4570-059>



### TRAVELING SPRINKLER

Pioneer's Traveling Sprinkler is a self-propelled irrigation unit designed to be an economical alternative to costly in-ground watering systems. Simply plug a hose into the back of the unit, draw out the guide cord to the end of the desired run, and turn on the water. Water pressure from the irrigation supply powers the traveling sprinkler down the field at travel lengths up to 440 ft. The sprinkler automatically shuts off at the end of the pass.  
 Pioneer Manufacturing/800-877-1500  
 For information, circle 054 or see <http://www.oners.ims.ca/4570-054>

QwikDRAIN® Fields deliver Value, Performance & Safety



#### 4 1/2" of rain won't stop the Rugby Tourney

"On May 3,4 of 2003 Stanford University hosted the College National Rugby Championships at Steuber Field. Concerns were high as the fields had been deluged with over 4 1/2" of rain on the two days prior to the match."

*This was the true test for the newly reconstructed field because Stanford University opted to stay with native soil and install a new high performance QwikDRAIN® System.*

"Indeed, the rain continued heavy up until the time of the first match. We then played eight matches over two days. At the completion of the last game the field showed almost no evidence of any wear whatsoever."

"Your field at Stanford exceeds the standards we met at World Cup."

-Douglas Arnot, Pres/CEO, USA Rugby Football Union

"Since the installation of the system, we have not had to replace any turf on the field. The performance has exceeded our expectations."

-Dave Rulli, Manager of Stadium Operations, Jefferson County Schools



- Virtually invisible, permanent aeration & drainage system designed for your native soil profile
- Dramatically reduces downtime renovation and maintenance costs
- Convert your native soil field into a high performance QwikDRAIN® Field in one (1) week for as little as \$.75/sf.
- Turn your existing drain system into a high performance QwikDRAIN® System for as little as \$.35/sf.
- Solves issues related to "Reclaimed Water"



Kelly Walsh High School Stadium, Casper, WY

Toll Free: 866-567-6872

Circle 160 on card or [www.oners.ims.ca/4570-160](http://www.oners.ims.ca/4570-160)

### PORTABLE HOSE REEL

The Hannay GH1100 portable hose reel features a detachable steel handle-bar, a one-piece foot and rubber-tired wheels. A camlock brake device is used to brake the reel, and payout and rewind are made easy with lifetime bearings and an adjustable tension control.  
 Hannay Reels Inc/877-60-REELS  
 For information, circle 055 or see <http://www.oners.ims.ca/4570-055>

