

2007 World Series at Fenway Park



We asked a few Major League Baseball groundskeepers to give those readers who mow baseball fields some advice. Here's what they said:

Evan M. Johnson, Baltimore Orioles

- Give yourself several days (I like 3 days) to put in a new pattern, or change an existing one.
- Be creative, but always keep it simple.

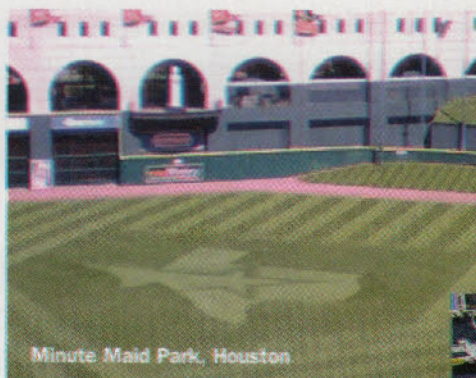
Make sure you have two directions in which you can mow. For example, if you want to have a 2nd base to centerfield pattern, put in a foul line to foul line pattern as well so that you can alternate every few days.

- Check your blades (reels or rotary) often, to make sure they are sharp and do not have anything caught in them.

Dan Bergstrom, Houston Astros

- I plan my patterns on graph paper, then transfer the design to the field by laying out a grid on the field.

- I feel that when the pattern has been mowed/rolled seven times it is ready for the public to see.



Minute Maid Park, Houston

- Plan ahead BEFORE you start mowing/rolling the pattern so that you do not travel the same grass excessively on the return trips.

- Completely ERASE all previous mowing stripes to give your pattern the sharpest look possible.

Luke Yoder, San Diego Padres

- Always get off the beaten path when the team is out of town, i.e., mow only when needed, not every day when the team is out of town. Mow a different pattern, or mow the opposite way of the old pattern when the

team is out of town, and if possible use a mower with offset tires/cutting units.

- Always check reel to bedknife before mowing; you should be able to cut a single piece of notebook paper all the way across. Fix it before mowing if you can't.

- Go with no contact reel to bedknife adjustment and avoid backlapping, you will get many



Petco Park, San Diego

more mow hours with sharp blades.

- Keep an extra set of cutting units dialed in and ready to go; this will allow you to rotate out when one set is being sharpened, for example

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

after topdressing.

- Check blade speed; slow blade speed down for taller turf, speed up for shorter, tighter turf.

A good mowing pattern only looks as good as the quality of cut you are getting!

David Mellor, Boston Red Sox

Safety and playability should be every grounds keeper's first priority. After that is achieved, I think you have one opportunity to make a first impression. Whether it is a basic traditional checker board or a festive pattern like the Red Sox logo, attention to detail is very important. A pattern should never impact playability.

We rotate our patterns approximately every 10-14 days and monitor them throughout the time they are on the field. The pattern should be viewed from all angles of the field to be sure they not only show up nice but that they do not have a negative image from a different view than the main one. Measure twice to be sure before start-



ing. My first book, *Picture Perfect: Mowing Techniques for Lawns, Landscapes and Sports*, has many step by step patterns and helpful nuggets of information.

Scott MacVicar, San Francisco Giants

We don't mow patterns here. We mow all of the grass in the same direction each day, so that there are no stripes. On the infield, we mow each stripe twice with the 26-inch walk behind Toro. You should pick a starting point, mow the

stripe, turn the mower 180 degrees, and go right back down the same stripe. Turn the mower and start the next stripe and repeat.

When we mow the outfield (with a Toro Sidewinder triplex) we mow a stripe then lift the blades up, turn the mower around, drive back to the starting point over the grass that hasn't been mowed and continue that process.

Bill Deacon, New York Mets

As far as mowing goes we have been trying to keep things simple since I took over, therefore we do not really spend time designing or planning patterns, some of my tips would be:

- Check your mower blades daily to make sure they are cutting properly.
- Run a string the first time you mow a pattern to make sure the lines are straight.
- Alternate patterns after each home stand or at least every 10 days, to avoid ballsnake. ■

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