

# Tips on the lip:

## maintaining a safe infield-to-outfield transition area

How many fields with infields/skinned areas/lips do you maintain?

In season, about how many hours a week are spent maintaining the infield lip(s)?

Who actually does this task at your organization?

What is your most indispensable tool for maintaining good lip areas?

What's your #1 tip for anyone seeking to improve their infield lips this season?

**MARK FREVER, CSFM, Albion College, Albion, MI**

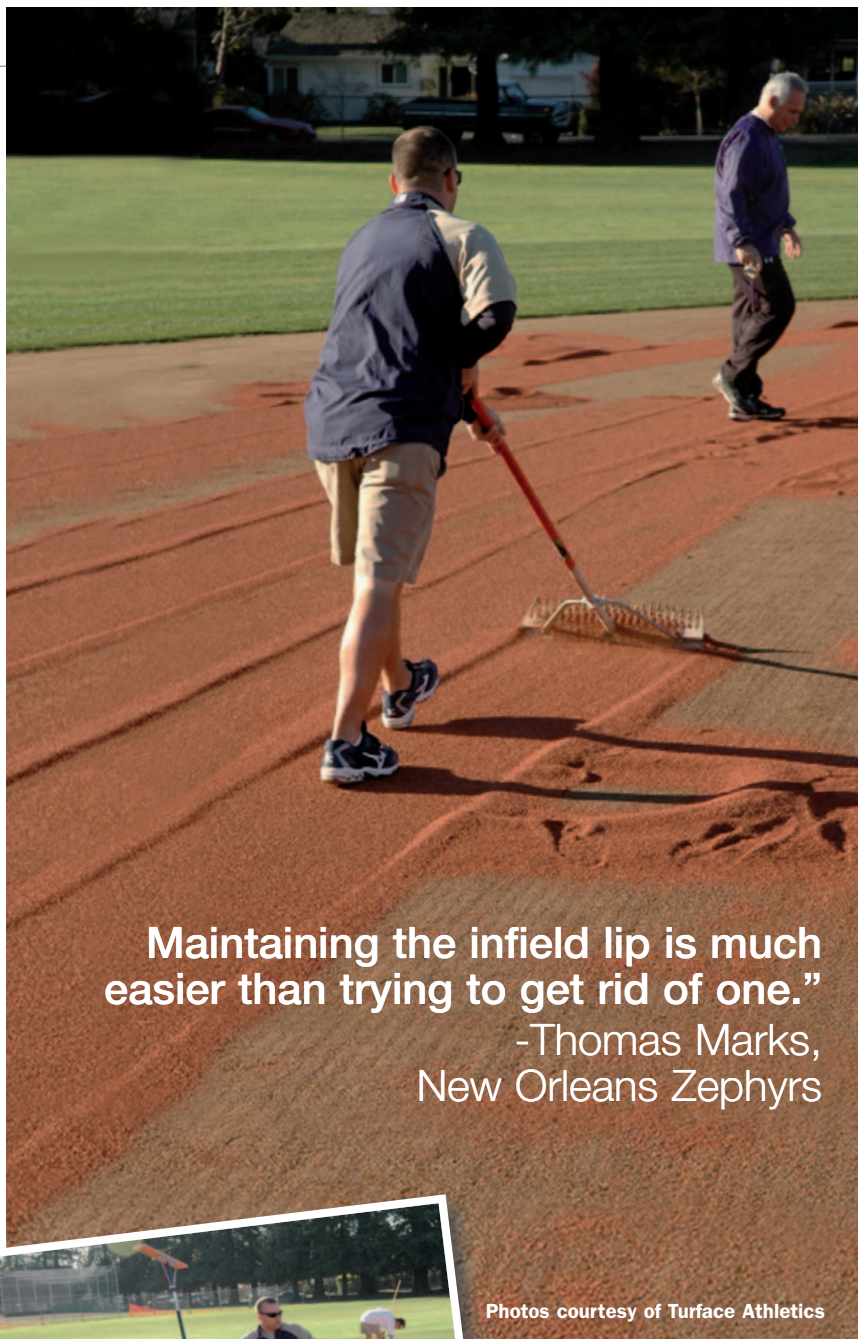
1. Two fields, baseball and softball.
2. 2 hours.
3. Baseball team cares for baseball lips, softball team does not. Grounds staff cares for softball. Softball coach position has been a revolving door and maintenance is not emphasized in the softball culture.
4. Long, orange bristle broom.
5. Work with the coach and players, so team takes ownership of lips.

**MARTIN KAUFMAN, CSFM, Ensworth Schools, Nashville, TN**

1. Three fields
2. 5 hours for infield, 1 hour for lip.
3. Grounds staff.
4. Huley hoe.
5. Weekly maintenance/attention.

**JOSH KLUTE, Haymarket Park, Lincoln, NE**

1. One baseball and softball infield along with warning track edges/lips.
2. 15-20+ hours per field, but actually any maintenance practice we do somehow ends up having an influence on our lips.



Maintaining the infield lip is much easier than trying to get rid of one.”  
-Thomas Marks,  
New Orleans Zephyrs



Photos courtesy of Turface Athletics

## RIDGE REMOVER

Kromer's Ridge Remover removes the buildup that occurs when the infield ends and the outfield begins. The attachment grooms the infield lip allowing ground balls to bounce fairly and players to remain safe. The rotation of the Ridge Remover brushes the buildup into the infield where it can be removed or groomed into the field. Available on all Kromer riding units.

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3. During the season my two assistants, two interns and myself spend a lot of time on the edges of the infield. After games everyone on game day staff is trained to maintain the edges if need be.

4. Field type push brooms, to remove any conditioner/infield material out of every edge after games or practices.

5. Spend the extra time each day after practice or game and get any excess conditioner and infield material out of your grass edges. It could be with anything like a rake, broom, blower, a water hose or even your hand if you don't have anything else. It's a little extra work each day but in the long run it will save time and prevent unwanted lips over time.

#### **RON HOSTICK, CSFM, San Diego State**

1. Three.
2. 30 minutes per practice/game.
3. Both players and grounds staff.
4. A good hose end nozzle for occasional lip cleaning.
5. Don't drag too fast anywhere on the field and don't drag closer than 12 inches from the lip.

#### **THOMAS MARKS, New Orleans Zephyrs**

1. One infield for a professional baseball team.
2. During the season, I spend approximately 30 minutes or 3-4 hours per week on the infield lip.
3. I do the work.
4. The two best tools for controlling the infield lip are a backpack blower and hose. After every game, we use a backpack blower at low rpm to blow any infield materials back into the dirt from the grass. The wetter the conditions, the more aggressive we have to be with the blower. Then once a month, I use the infield hose at full stream to blow dirt from the edges back into the infield.
5. Maintaining the infield lip is much easier than trying to get rid of one.

#### **ANDREW GOSSEL, Covenant Christian HS, Indianapolis, IN**

1. We have one diamond on campus.
2. We spend about 1.5 hours/week in season on our edges. The field gets edged about every 2-3 weeks depending on weather and game schedule.
3. I am the one that does all of the edging. We will also have ballplayers rake topdressing out of all of the edges after each home game, and depending on the game schedule, we may also have them do it after some practices (if we have a longer layoff in between home games; in all, they are probably raked at least 3-4 times/week). I will also wash the edges out with a high-pressure nozzle 2-3 times/year.
4. The most indispensable tool for edges is probably the leaf rakes we use to limit the amount of topdressing and infield mix that gets in the edges and creates lips. We obviously need a good edger to keep the edges neat and trim, but even if they are edged neatly, there can still be a build-up of material in the edge that

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will affect ball roll.

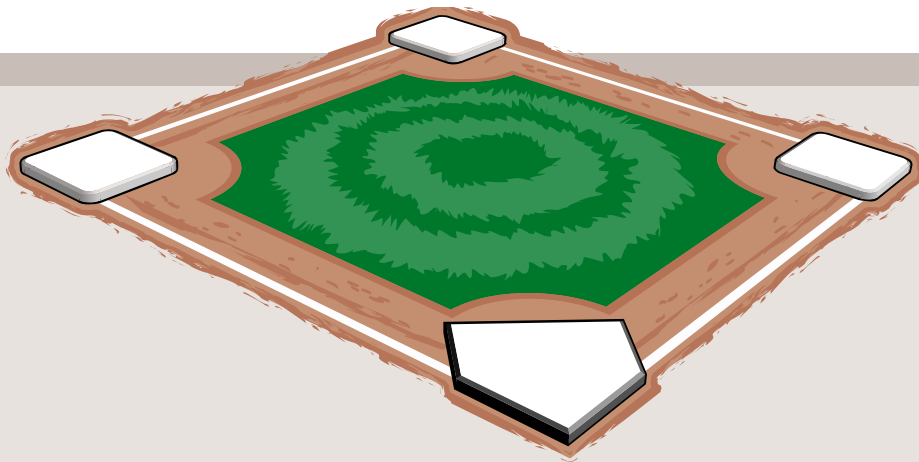
5. My #1 tip to improve the lips would be to get them in proper shape in the off-season, and then work at them routinely to keep them in good shape. It's a lot easier to rake them out and edge regularly than to do it once a year.

## **KENNY NICHOLS, Westerville City Schools, Westerville, OH**

1. We have 26 baseball and softball fields in our school district, 11 at high schools, five at middle schools, and the other ten are at elementary schools and are used for gym classes and by local Little Leagues.

2. On our high school fields, approximately 2.5 hours are spent on each field during each week that the field is in play. The time varies on middle school and elementary fields due to the amount of use, type of play and user groups involved.

3. Coaches, players, athletic directors, volunteers and contractors.



## SKINNY ON SKINS

**A**t last month's STMA Conference, Paul Zwaska of Beacon Athletic, the former Baltimore Orioles head groundskeeper, gave a presentation entitled, "The Skinny on Skins." Here are some of the most relevant points he made. *Editor's note: Zwaska made it clear his talk did not include taking "stabilizing" amendments into account but rather Mother Nature alone:*

While some folks refer to taking care of infield skins as an "art," Zwaska said soils are all about science. "A good infield skin is the result of applying principles of soil science," he said. There are two components of skins: the base soil, which should be 3-6 inches deep, is usually imported to the site, crowned to facilitate surface drainage, and is firmly compacted. The

other is the topdressing, which should be 1/4 to 1/2-inch thick to act like mulch and control moisture. Anything over an inch Zwaska described as a "beach."

Zwaska said good infield skins have:

- Traction
- Playability (ball bounce affected by too loose or too tight skin)
- Resiliency
- Drainage (you want water to run over the skin rather than percolate through it)
- Contrast or color (darker is better for both players and fans)
- Consistency (not day to day but rather from location to location on same infield—the toughest to achieve)

Infield skins are composed of (or should be) sand, silt and clay; your ideal percent of sand depends on your specific situation. Sand provides the skin's structural integrity, like a human skeleton Zwaska said, and should be between 58-75% of your overall mix. Of this, he said, 40-50% should be retained on medium sieve.

Silt has particle sizes between sand and clay, and acts as a bridge between those

Of four options for providing drainage for your base soil, Zwaska said there is only one way to go: grading the surface 1/2 to 1%.

## We consider our most essential tool to be knowledge

4. We consider our most essential tool to be knowledge—knowing what to do and how to do it. Tools that we use to keep lips from building up include landscape, leaf and tine rakes, stiff bristle brooms, and to remove lips that have formed we use a sod cutter.

5. Learn and practice good field grooming techniques to keep infield mix out of the grass. If it does get in, get it out as soon as possible. Preventive maintenance along the way can definitely save much time correcting lip problems after they form, but more importantly, it helps provide consistently safe playing fields for the athletes that use them. ■