

New infield skin products help manage moisture

CALDER HENDRICKSON exhibited at this year's Sports Turf Managers Association Conference for the first time with his new company, Ready Play Sports (www.readyplaysports.com). His product caught our eye because several MLB groundskeepers had signed on to endorse the product. Recently we exchanged emails with Calder on how his company got started and what products they are offering. Here is his response:

Ready Play conceptually began in May 2010 when I became close friends with the inventor of the technology, a 74-year old gentleman from Lubbock, TX who prefers to remain anonymous. He believes water will be in greater demand than oil in the near future, and he showed me the technology he created that vastly increased the amount of time soil retained moisture. His original purpose was to reduce the water needs in the agriculture and horticulture industries.

I was amazed to find that this granule product was capable of absorbing 8-15 times its weight in water. I knew right away there were endless applications for the technology in sports, especially baseball. Having played baseball through college, I was all too familiar with the moisture issues plaguing playing surfaces. I tested this technology against calcined clays and found that 25 pounds of Ready Play Surface Dry was equivalent to roughly 200 pounds of some calcined clay products on the market. A residual benefit was this product did not need to be removed from the field; the absorbing properties are ready to take on the next rain event.

So I took the product to local coaches and municipalities. In just a few weeks, I had a small client

» **CLAY WOOD**, left, head groundskeeper for the Oakland Athletics, talks with Ready Play's Calder Hendrickson.



MLB groundskeepers are believers

CLAY WOOD, Oakland A's

"Being in the groundskeeping industry for 21 years I have seen numerous products come and go. In my opinion, until I saw Ready Play, I had never seen anything truly cutting edge that could change the way infield dirt holds moisture.

"There are a lot of different ways to change the profile or make up of an infield mix and you have always been able to tighten or loosen a mix with clay or sand, but never effectively change the way an infield holds moisture for an extended period of time.

"When I saw Ready Play, its moisture retention capabilities, the simplicity of incorporating Field Magic into existing infield mixes, and the way it becomes part of the dirt; I knew I wanted to be involved with the company and their product development group.

"I honestly believe Ready Play has the potential to improve the quality of any natural dirt infield/warning track surface in the world and could revolutionize the way infield dirt is maintained, saving an immense amount of water in the process.

"For me, I think Field Magic will retain more moisture closer to the surface, for a longer period of time, only enhancing my use of traditional calcined clay infield conditioners. This will allow the calcined clay to work more effectively giving our players a more consistent surface into the later innings."

DAN CUNNINGHAM, New York Yankees

"I got involved with Ready Play because I've been dealing with different ratios of clays, silts, and sands for years. I honestly believe it's going to take a synthetic product like Ready Play's technology to take our industry to the next level."

MARK RAZUM, Colorado Rockies

"Being responsible for the playability and safety of a baseball field, [I believe] Ready Play gives me another tool that I can utilize to get the best performance from my infield. The uniqueness of this product allows me to incorporate it into the infield profile at a regulated rate, due to the technology's ability to attach to a sand particle.

"The biggest challenge for a groundskeeper is being able to retain moisture within the infield profile throughout the course of a game or practice, and Ready Play allows me to hold that much needed moisture for a longer period of time. Also, its unique ability to retain and absorb that moisture allows me to take away some of the surface moisture during a rain situation. I feel very fortunate to be asked to consult with Ready Play. I have never seen a product like this that has so much potential in being a positive contribution in athletic field maintenance." ■

As a company we are focused on moisture management. If you have too much, we can reduce it, if you don't have enough, we can help you hold onto more. The goal of our products is to intensify the effects of calcined clays, vitrified clays, etc.; we just want to make them better.

base in West Texas. At that time, we were developing another product called Ready Play Dry Mats to remove standing water from skinned areas, or even turf. These Dry Mats are infused with our patented technology and absorb 2 gallons of standing water off any surface. The reusable Dry Mats immediately drew the interest of multiple industries. I knew I had something pretty cool when a friend's basement flooded, and we used our Dry Mats to help clean it up.

While creating the "drying" agents, we altered the technology a little bit, and created a third product, Field Magic, a complement to the Surface Dry product. Where the latter takes your field from soaked and muddy to playable, the former keeps your field from becoming dry and dusty. Field Magic is incorporated into the existing soil, and holds moisture in the soil profile for an extended period of time.

This all transpired in only 3 months! I took the products to two friends, Andy Larned and Todd Naff, both of whom had played professional baseball. They agreed we had to get these products in front of an industry expert. The three of us knew what a baseball field was supposed to feel like, but we had no idea how to create that feel.

Clay Wood, head groundskeeper of the Oakland A's, and I both grew up in Boulder, CO and he was a good friend of my cousin. So Andy and I arranged to meet with Clay in late October, in Oakland, and he was intrigued with what the products could do. He called Mark Razum, head groundskeeper for the Colorado Rockies, and they agreed the best way to evaluate their performance was to incorporate some product into one of the spring training fields at Papago Park in Phoenix. After we incorporated Field Magic into the playing surface, Razum put out the equivalent of a 2-inch



>> **CHAD HUSS**, the Oakland A's spring training groundskeeper, put Ready Play technology on top of overseeding on a field in Phoenix, which is shown on the right side of this photo, taken 11 days after the overseeding. He said he was able to get a stronger, denser grass with less water on the treated area.

rain on the field. Someone said that there was no way we would get on the field for at least a day. We went to lunch, and upon our return the field was ready for play. At that point, Clay and Mark became believers in this technology.

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you hold onto more. The goal of our products is to intensify the effects of calcined clays, vitrified clays, etc.; we just want to make them better.

Our products are available nationally through Ewing Irrigation, BWI, Hisco Companies, Fairmount Minerals, Pro Chem Sales, G & S Solutions, Cisco Companies, Trupoint, and Gail Materials. ■

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