

How to put mowing patterns on infield skins

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT A SKINNED SOFTBALL INFIELD WAS A LITTLE DRAB LOOKING when it can to watching it on TV. After high-lighting the mound circle and batter's box with Pro League Red or Heritage Red, the thought came to me—what about drop spreading the product in a square overlapping pattern much like mowing grass?

First I tried using Emerald Field and Fairway, a green colored topdressing calcined clay that has the same particle size as sand. After a couple of test areas it was deemed to be too light of a contrast to make an impression (is this still red or green?). I originally did this for the opening ceremony and

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—Mike Hebrard

mentioned to the Tournament Director Bob Hudlow that I would like to do this for the Championship game on ESPN 2. He took a picture and sent it to the ESPN crew and they replied they wanted to know what it looked like after the 4th inning. After a couple of games ESPN 2 had no problem with it so the Green Light to do it was on!

I decided to use Turface's Heritage Red which is actually has more of a brownish tone to it. For a pattern style I chose the conventional checkerboard for the ease, quickness and contrast. I started by inserting a tape measure at the apex of 2nd base and home plate and by laying them out in the same direction. If you are using a 2-foot wide spreader, scribe a mark every 4 feet in the dirt. You will go on opposite side of



the string with each pass. In order to come out evenly with your spacing, use a string down each chalk line and 2 inches in from the outside of the base to complete the square; that way you will know when to stop.

Use a sharp spike or screwdriver with premeasured strings, (I like to have two that way you always have one line ready to go while the next one is being moved) angle them back a bit and even use a hammer and pound them in, that way the string doesn't come out at an inopportune time. Set the spreader wide open and go backward, running the wheel near the string line and stopping (at the premarked edge. You can fill in the mound circle with the same color or another contrasting one for more visual effect.

The mound needs to have a white circle around it to indicate when the ball is back in the pitcher's possession. Do a pass around the circle on your last straight line near the mound. Repeat the process going in the opposite direction. Little League softball for the 11-13-year old girls is 6 innings and the patterns easily last the entire game. I had one of my assistants comment that he didn't care for the different surfaces; I quickly responded "Oh, like

grass and dirt?!"-Mike Hebrard

Insert tapes at the apex of home-plate and 2nd base

If using a 2-foot wide drop spreader scribe mark every 4' in the dirt

Use the drop spreader backwards and complete the square

You might have to make a couple of attempts to come out even

Continue the process stopping at the end and going the opposite direction

Do a finish pass around the mound circle

You can either fill in the mound with the same color or use a contrasting one.

Softball requires an 8-foot white circle be marked around the pitchers rubber so even with same color you will still have a break in the pattern.

We usually used three bags of Heritage Red per application

We had the best results wetting the infield in advance and letting it air dry and after infield warm-ups just wetting the unmarked portion of the infield to get the best results.

We added a little spice to the process and actually had four of the same Scotts spreaders and did a quick remark just before the game ■