

of operations, marketing and grounds for the city's sports facilities, which includes the Peoria Sports Complex, a 15-field, 145-acre Major League Baseball spring training facility for two teams, the Seattle Mariners and the San Diego Padres. That 120,000-square-foot facility boasts two 40,000 square foot team clubhouses, an 11,000-seat stadium and 20 hitting cages. Also under his responsibility is the 54-acre Rio Vista Community Sports Park, which Calcaterra says "is built to bring in people from 15 miles out. It's not just a swing set. It's a sports facility as well with seven softball fields, four full-sized soccer fields, a lake, a recreation center, picnic pavilions and a skate park."

He additionally manages a \$5.4 million operating budget, a vehicle maintenance asset budget of \$1 million and such capital improvement projects for the complex as bridge construction and stadium painting. With a staff of 25 full-time employees and 12 full-time equivalent positions, Calcaterra manages four direct reports.

But with all of these responsibilities, he says the biggest challenge of his day-to-day duties is dealing with the sheer breadth of the uses and purposes of the services he oversees.

"It's the multi-faceted user groups we have, and all the different hats we wear," he says. "I could be talking to a team coach one minute and literally get a phone call from a citizen the next. And that's for anyone in our group. It's great because it keeps you focused and active and maintaining your edge. The bottom line is communication. It's more valuable than any turfgrass class I ever had."

His ability to manage multiple groups of users at once helped to prepare Calcaterra for the duties of STMA leadership, says STMA's immediate past president, Abby McNeal, CSFM, the turfgrass manager for Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC.

"Supervising a baseball training facility is not an easy task," says McNeal, who's

known Calcaterra for 8 years through his involvement with the STMA board of directors and committee work. "He has activities at his facility every day, year-round. He's learned to manage through all the activity on a municipal budget and create a great experience for everyone that visits the facility whether as a participant or a fan."

For those skills, Calcaterra thanks his parents, who prepared him for how to and how not to manage certain situations, he says.

He also gives his boss, J.P. de la Montaigne, the city's community services director, credit for taking a chance on a young supervisor years ago with little management experience.

"He brought me into the municipal side and gave me insight on how to survive," he says, adding that he hit the ground running in the Peoria job. "He's been great, very supportive."

With a background in the private side of the business, Calcaterra enjoys the blend of private and public services in his current gig.

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same page,” Heck adds. “He understands what the challenges and what the opportunities are. He’ll be a great president for this organization. He has a varied background and brings some unique perspective to this office.”

Past STMA president Mike Andresen, CSFM, facilities and grounds manager for Iowa State University Athletics, Ames, who knows Calcaterra from their overlapping service on the STMA board of directors, calls him analytical. “He takes a discussion topic and spends the time to understand it completely, and then he comes prepared with a very comprehensive point of view,” Andresen says. “You have to pay attention when Chris speaks because he oftentimes comes at a discussion from a brand new and innovative, and oftentimes spot-on, angle.”

Sports fields and grounds sales manager for Toro, Dale Getz, CSFM, CSE, who’s known Calcaterra for 10 years through service on the STMA board of directors among other industry connections, says he always finishes what he starts.

“Chris is very thorough,” he says. “He makes sure that all the details are finished on a given project and provides input and insight to make sure issues are properly vetted.”

But Calcaterra quickly bounces any accolades onto his colleagues.

“I wouldn’t be where I’m at without the people I’ve got working with me,” he says. “They allow me to do things like this and they recognize the importance of being a team.”

With that support, Calcaterra looks forward to the year ahead with a membership he admires and is “thrilled to death” to represent.

“We don’t see each other that often because we’re regional,” he says. “Most of us go to show, and we can all make phone calls to people we saw 10 months ago and ask a collective question, and we’re going to get a compassionate, practical answer. It’s about sharing and communicating. That’s what we’re good at.” ■

Darcy DeVictor Boyle is a free lance writer based in Lawrence, KS.

“I have toes on both sides,” he says. “I’m working with two pro baseball teams, but I’m also in the municipal side. Everyone has their own needs, and we’re kind of the glue that makes that happen.”

In one of Calcaterra’s proudest accomplishments he collaborated with others in forming a nationally recognized intern program with a local high school. Called School to Work Career Technical Education Program, the initiative involves Calcaterra and others going into the schools, making presentations and selecting sophomores through seniors to participate. The students go through the interview process and are prepared for the workforce. On the practical side, the student interns interact with and learn from the division’s full-time employees. The benefits are beyond the obvious.

“For one thing, we always had a high turnover because we’re seasonal,” he says. “We understood that the high schools could provide an endless supply of kids.”

CALLED TO SERVICE

Contributing back to the community came naturally to Calcaterra, who continuously credits mentor Roy and his parents for giving him the tools he needed to succeed.

So it may come as a surprise that he fell into STMA leadership haphazardly. In 2005, an officer moved from a non-commercial representative position to a commercial job, and gave up his spot on the board. The president at the time contacted Calcaterra and asked whether he was interested in serving. He was appointed treasurer in June of that year.

Nearly 5 years later and Calcaterra is at the helm, and he’s got more than a few items of business to tend to.

“We want to educate our members,” he says. “By educating our members, we’re going to raise the professional level of everyone and our sister associations.”

Calcaterra’s commitment to education is bolstered by his own personal interest and participation in it, says Kim Heck, CEO of the STMA.

“He’s very focused on continual learning, and you can tell that from all of the designations after his name,” she says. “And he’s a very strong supporter of continuing education for our membership. He walks that talk.”

Because 65-70% of STMA membership works for parks and recreation directors, he wants to improve the image of the sports turf maintenance professional to those employers in particular and all employers in general.

“I’m going to help the board and Kim expose what we do well,” he says. “It’s about perception.”

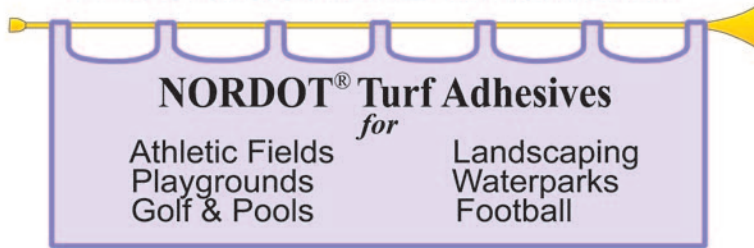
He added that he wants to focus on research efforts, international outreach with chapters in England and Singapore, reinvigorating the conference, creating a more seamless transition and process for one-year leadership terms and increasing student involvement.

It’s a tall order, but one Calcaterra’s colleagues think he’s entirely capable of tackling.

He’s detailed and “provides well thought-out insight to the topics at hand,” says McNeal. “He’s always thinking ahead about how decisions being made today will affect the association and members in the future.”

A big picture kind of a leader, Calcaterra has “an uncanny ability to ask the right questions to make sure everyone’s on the

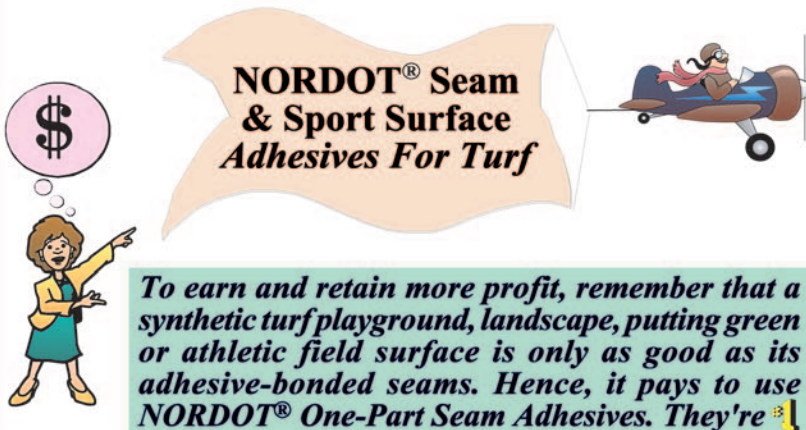
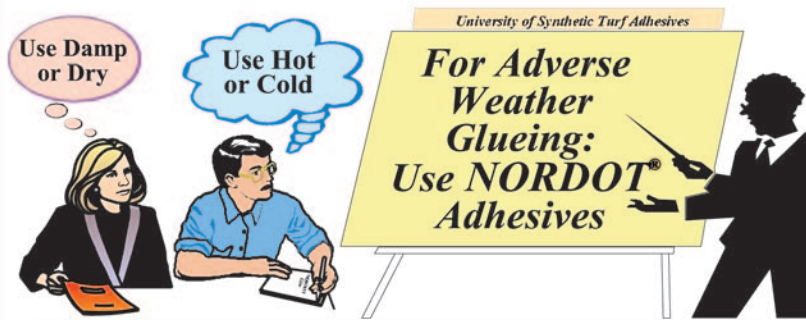
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Getting ahead: education, experience both count a lot

Continuing education has become an essential part of the sports turf industry. As more attention is focused on the safety and playability of athletic fields and job competition increases, it is important that sports turf managers continue to develop professionally to meet their own goals and the standard required at their facility.

Continuing education benefits both the sports turf manager and their employer. Sports turf managers can move up the ladder in the workplace, receive promotions (and salary increases), and become a more valuable employee. In turn, the employer has a highly skilled worker/workforce that can perform a variety of tasks and possesses various skills.

The sports turf industry is constantly evolving

with new research, methodology, field science, and products. Therefore, it is more important than ever for sports turf managers to be at the forefront and take advantage of continuing education opportunities.

Editor's note: Kristen interviewed three veteran STMA members on what qualities they look for when hiring turf managers. Here are the responses:



Jess Evans, Episcopal HS, Alexandria, VA

I feel the value of both education and industry experience as equal measures on the scale, both eventually will add up to a competent, well versed and valued employee. In the past I have hired experienced sports field managers and skilled laborers who can jump right in with very little training which of course is good, as well as recent college graduates with all the current knowledge that comes with our very specific and detailed sports field industry, specifically turfgrass management and how important soil composition is to growing quality sports turf.

The experienced guy was able to draw on the work he had done in the past, offering suggestions and ideas on things that worked for him, while the college grad, not having the hands-on experience offered additional ideas related to the specifics of soils, drainage, design and the always evolving sport grass trials.



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My ideal candidate has have the following, in this order: 1) passion, he or she has to love what they do; 2) commitment, they have committed to the work, the finished product and our industry; 3) personality, I need to see excitement in their work ethic which means they need to constantly bring something to the table, ideas and suggestions to make work better, more productive, more pro-active; and 4) perseverance, they have to work hard, give me 110% everyday. That's all any superintendent can ask for.

My ideal candidate possesses the ability to be a part of a team, share with the team as well as learn from the team.

If I have done my homework there should be no issues with new employees' positive attitude and work productivity. Right now I'm thankfully batting 100%.

The only other criteria I can think of is honesty and dedication; collectively these attributes give me one heck of a sports field manager which I think all of us in the industry would be proud to have on our team.

Abby McNeal, CSFM, Wake Forest University

It is hard to place a value on either education or experience when they both add to the person. I have personally liked a balanced individual who has some education and experience. It allows them to understand turf science basics, answers the whys of certain maintenance tasks and then their experience only helps them put their knowledge to work and expand them professionally.

Having some of both just provides more then just hands-on experience and leaning. A person can take book knowledge and learn how to practically use it as a base to start from and then grow into where their knowledge is used for each situation.

What skills and personality qualities does the ideal candidate possess?

My ideal candidate possesses the ability to be a part of a team, share with the team as well as learn from the team. Create a plan as a group and learn from all situations as to how to be better the next time. Flexibility in our

industry is critical because things are always changing, just like the weather, so you have to be able to adapt and overcome in any situation.

Thinking outside their "turf box" is also important. Too often our turf vision becomes cluttered and we need to "re-look" and that is an important feature or we may miss something that the turf is telling us.

You have to take a chance on a candidate and set goals for them and evaluate in 3-6 month intervals during their first year. If you

as a supervisor do not take some ownership in helping them become the employee that you are looking for then you haven't done your job. You need to provide them with opportunities during this evaluation time period that allows you to see what their true potential is and that will help them become a better turf manager. Just like we strive for value they need to know that they are valued as part of the group.

I always ask them to tell me what they like least about the job, what excites them about the job. This allows me to understand where their strengths and weakness are and how I can best fit them into the maintenance program. This also tells me more then what's on their resume or application. Ross Kurcab, my boss with the Broncos, always said, "Happy cows make better milk" and this is true but you need to know what makes an employee happy so that they will give you more effort when it's needed. Everyone is an individual and you need to remember that so you can try to provide a fun and exciting work environment, its helps a lot during the long days when there is too much to get done.

Jerad Minnick, Maryland Soccer Foundation

The value of education versus experience is the most challenging piece to differentiate between candidates when hiring. There is really no correct answer. Education is extremely important to me, as a lead assistant

needs the turfgrass background and tools to understand the science behind my management plans. But I have had great success with non-science educated managers too, as I have been able to teach and facilitate them learning the science that I use daily.

Experience is just as vital, even if not more though. If a candidate has limited experience operating mowers, tractors, aerators, spraying equipment, etc., then they are not prepared to be an assistant. They need to spend another season or two as a crew member or intern to gain the experience they need to better manage crews and fields.

My ideal candidate will always possess the hunger and desire to learn more each and every day. We work with science and people, and both science and dealing with people is always evolving. So, they will not be successful without an open mind. Also, I look for someone that has a passion for the work they do. Managing high-level fields isn't a job it's a way of life. So the people who catch my attention are ones that truly enjoy sports turf management and enjoy working with people.

I have had no trouble at all recognizing if a candidate will be productive and positive. Productive, "get it done" type of people are always positive. Positive people exude friendliness and generally smile a lot, even when they are nervous in an interview. They make statements from a "glass half full" view of life, using words like "can" and "will", and never use the "can't". They give the positive experiences of their past employments and spend little to no time on the negative aspects.

Generally the positive and productive gauge will separate a majority of candidates for a position. I personally am appreciative of a person who has goals and aspirations of being more than an assistant, as their drive toward those goals will make them much more productive. Yet there is a "happy medium," because the right person will be humble and understand that their learning and maturation process should be based in always having an open mind and respecting all of their peers and managers, whether they agree with the decisions being made or not. ■

Kristen Althouse is education manager for the Sports Turf Managers Association. She can be reached at kalthouse@stma.org.



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John Mascaro is President of Turf-Tec International

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Answer to John Mascaro's Photo Quiz on Page 31

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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

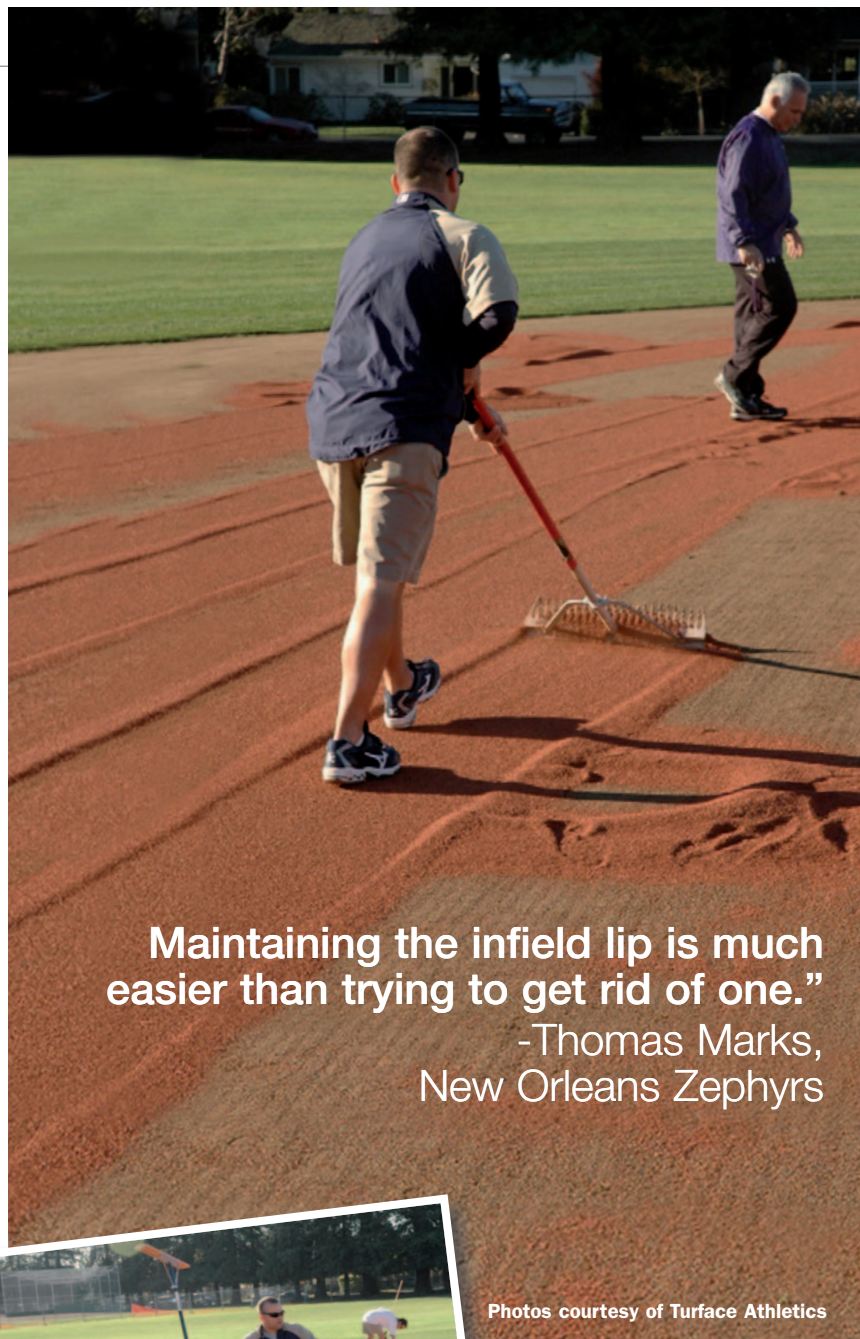
1. Two fields, baseball and softball.
2. 2 hours.
3. Baseball team cares for baseball lips, softball team does not. Grounds staff cares for softball. Softball coach position has been a revolving door and maintenance is not emphasized in the softball culture.
4. Long, orange bristle broom.
5. Work with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



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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.

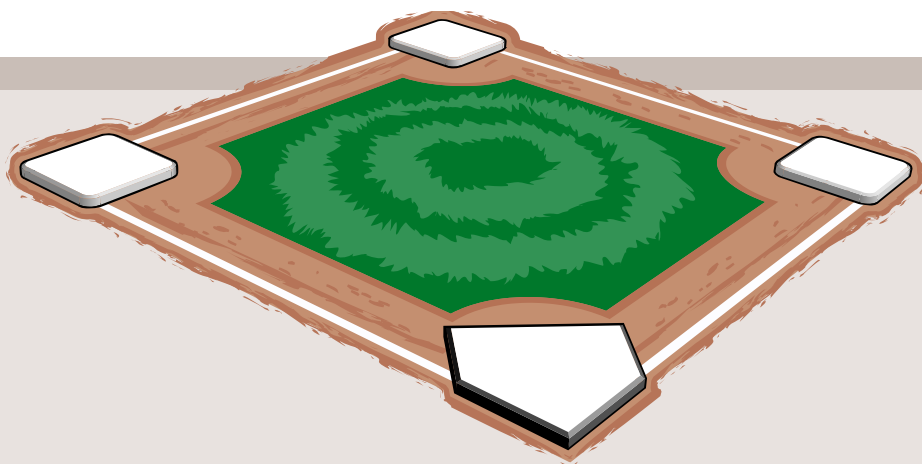
2. On our high school fields, approximately 2.5 hours are spent on each field during each week that the field is in play. The time varies on middle school and elementary fields due to the amount of use, type of play and user groups involved.

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

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. ■



SKINNY ON SKINS

At 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 ¼ 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 ½ to 1%.

Illustration courtesy of istockphoto.com