

SAGE ADVICE ON SOFTBALL INFIELDS

We asked two turf managers who have been recognized for their work on softball fields to share how they care for their infields:

Rick Newville, 2002 High School Softball Field of the Year winner says, "Our infield clay has a 60-15-25 sand, silt, clay consistency. We initially dragged in 3 tons of calcined clay in to a depth of 2 inches 3 years ago, and added 2 tons of vitrified as a topdressing once the skinned area had been rolled with a 1 1/2-ton asphalt roller. We try to incorporate at least 1 ton of each amendment each year.

"During the playing season, the skin is watered three times a day: morning, afternoon, and just before a practice or game," Newville says. "Skin is rolled with roller at least twice a year. And the skin is tooth-dragged after each game or practice and dress-dragged the following morning and then watered."

Editor's note: Rick Newville has been selected as the Head Grounds Superintendent for the Helliniko Olympic Softball Complex in Athens, Greece for the 2004 Olympic Games. He left for Greece January 24 and doesn't return to the States until August 31. Best of luck, Rick, and congratulations!

Robert Trevino is landscape supervisor for Texas Women's University. He's also a 2002 FOY winner. Here's what he had to say:

"To sustain our softball field's prime condition, year round maintenance is necessary. Our staff of 23 spends the majority of the time maintaining our 270 acres. The softball field has two employees who devote their time to maintaining the complex.

"During the growing season, the field is mowed three times each week; during the winter, at least two times each week, depending on the weather. The grass is overseeded with Gulf Coast rye in early September and as needed through winter and early spring," says Trevino.

"Of course the infield is a major part of our maintenance. During the growing season, we drag the infield and water it down daily. A few years ago we installed irrigation in the infield to save on manpower and it has worked well," says Trevino. On an as-needed basis, we spike the infield to loosen up and aerate the soil. During the winter, we drag and water down the infield at least twice a week, depending on the weather.

"When the field first opened, the infield was a continuous major problem for us. Despite limited funding we began working with a rep from Diamond Pro, who recommended some products but also had some helpful suggestions.

"Of course, our biggest advantage is our dedicated employees," Trevino says. **ST**

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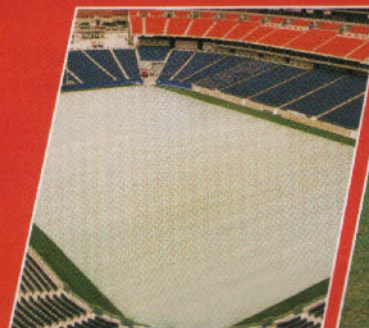
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