



### Determining field playability

The decision to play on fields that are too wet is the #1 cause of damage to ball fields and the top reason for player injury. And often, techniques used to make a wet field “playable” cause additional damage.

Making the tough call to postpone a game due to wet conditions is the best decision for player safety and to preserve season-long playability of the ball fields.



**If there's standing water on 5% of the infield, it's TOO WET for play!**



**If your shoe leaves an impression like these, it's TOO WET for play!**



### Water removal techniques for skinned infields

The most important mistake to avoid is the removal or movement of infield mix. A level field will drain better and have fewer puddles. Low spots or depressions catch and hold water EVERY TIME!

**DO NOT use these methods on wet fields:**

**DO NOT** use brooms to disperse puddles.

**DO NOT** sweep a puddle into the grass.

**DO NOT** remove muddy infield mix from the field.

All of these incorrect techniques move infield material and leave a depression or low spot that will hold water **every time it rains.**



### Water removal techniques, continued

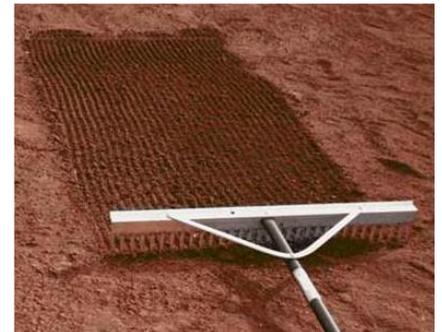
**For small or shallow puddles, use a water absorbent pillow.**

1. Allow the absorbent material to soak up the water.
2. Have a bucket nearby to wring out the pillow or sponge.
3. Empty the bucket of water off the field of play.



**After the standing water has been removed:**

- Use a rake or nail drag to loosen the infield mix so it will dry more quickly.
- Allow time to air dry.



### Use of field drying agents

Calcined and vitrified clay (marketed under the brand names Turface, Pro's Choice, Diamond Pro, Rapid Dry, and Profile) are the most common products used to assist with wet infield conditions. These products should be used judiciously for two reasons: they are an expense to the program and they change the properties of the infield mix when used abundantly.

**Steps for applying a drying agent:**

1. Remove as much water as possible using the pillows.
2. Use a spreader, shovel, or hand to evenly apply a thin layer of the drying agent.
3. The material may be lightly incorporated using a rake or left on top of the infield mix.

**NEVER use more than 2 bags of drying agent to make a field playable!**





### Skinned infield leveling

Baseball fields are designed with a specific slope to drain water from their surface. Underground drain pipes are virtually useless and rarely installed on ball fields. Keeping the infield slope correct will prevent puddling and therefore field closures. Players sliding, mechanical field groomers, and other factors contribute to un-level skinned infields. **A diligent approach to correcting high or low spots is critical to maintaining a playable field condition.**

#### For small areas, use a leveling rake.

1. Pull the material from a high spot and deposit it in a low area.
2. If the infield mix is dry, wet the leveled area and compact it with a tamper or the grooming machine tires. Otherwise, it will not stay in place.



### Infield grooming techniques

1. Remove the bases and plug the base anchor sleeve before beginning any operations.
2. **Vary the dragging pattern every time the field is groomed.**
3. Scarify the field with a nail drag or by pulverizing if needed (see "Use of the pulverizer").
4. Finish groom the field with a drag mat or broom. Go slowly!
5. When finished dragging, stop 5 to 6 feet before the edge of the skin and lift the drag. Shake any excess field mix off before exiting the field.
6. Exit the field in a different location each time to prevent build-up of infield mix in one location.
7. Hand rake out the pile left from the field drag.
8. Hand rake: base paths end-to-end, home plate, and the back radius of the infield.





### Infield grooming techniques, continued

**DO NOT** pull the nail drag or mat into the grass for any reason.

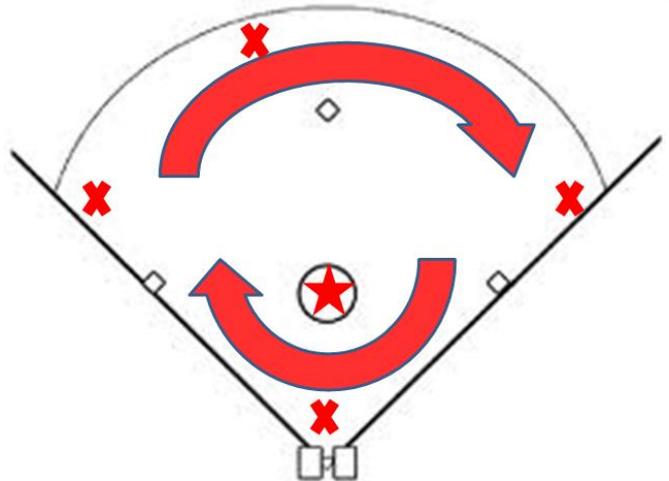
**DO NOT** take a nail drag or mat within 24" of the grass edge. Only hand rake edges to prevent lips from forming.

**DO NOT** take a nail drag over home plate.

**DO NOT** drive the nail drag or mat down base paths or around home plate on baseball diamonds with a grass infield.

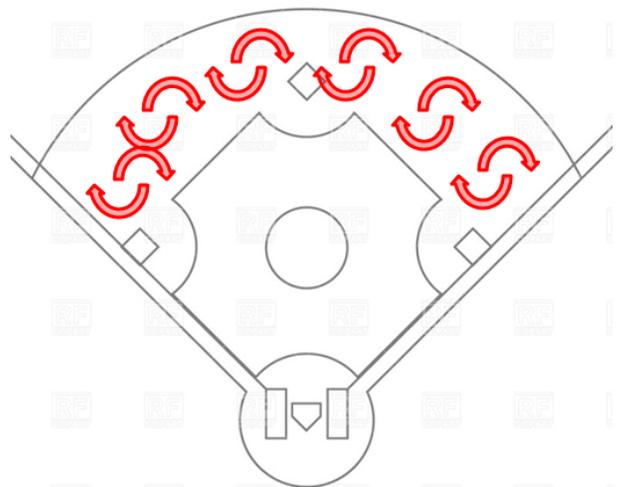
### Infield dragging techniques

1. Start at the outer portion ( any X ) of the infield and work inwards, finishing at the pitcher's mound (★). Vary your drag patterns each time to avoid dirt migration.
2. If the drag fills with dirt, stop and shake out the dirt so you do not remove it from the area.
3. Do not take the drag into the grass.
4. Do not put blocks or weights on the drag.



### Use of the pulverizer

1. Use only when infield is too hard for drag to be effective OR when re-leveling is necessary in a larger area.
2. Use tight turns in an area to break up dirt. This keeps the dirt in the area. Use alternate turn directions on successive treatments to prevent dirt migration.
3. Maintain a distance of at least 1 foot from the grass edges of the infield or outfield. This will prevent a lip from forming.
4. After dirt is worked with pulverizer, finish with an infield drag. Hand level any small



# Saxonburg Area Baseball Association

## Baseball Field Maintenance



areas or as required.

### Grass edge maintenance

Regular maintenance where the skinned infield meets the grass edge will prevent the formation of a lip. After wet playing conditions, the most common player injury occurs from bad ball bounces. Lips are a major contributor to this type of player injury. Lips at the grass edge are also the primary barrier to water exiting the skinned part of the field. Water trapped on the skin will force cancellations and field closures.

#### Weekly maintenance to prevent lips:

Use a leaf blower or broom to push displaced material back into the skinned infield. This method works best when the infield mix is dry.

Use a spring-tine leaf rake or broom and move the material back into the skinned infield. Use a leveling rake to distribute the material when edge maintenance is complete.



### Field lining techniques

Only use “Athletic Field Marker” for foul lines and batter’s boxes on skinned infields. DO NOT substitute lime or other white materials because they may be less expensive.

Only use marking paint that is specifically manufactured for turf.

Always use a string as a guide line.



**Remember, the entire infield foul line should be UNDER first and third base.**



### Clay repairs

Clay surfaces provide very solid, firm footing and better wear characteristics than regular infield mix for high wear areas like the pitching mound and batter's box. Making a clay repair is similar to making a repair with regular infield mix. The biggest difference with clay is that it must NOT be contaminated with any regular infield mix. **Pitching mounds and batter's boxes should be repaired every time they are used.**

#### Techniques for Clay Repairs

1. Dig out and discard all loose material including infield mix, clay chunks, and field conditioners in and around the area to be repaired.
2. Sweep the area free of all minor bits of loose debris and place to the side.
3. Wet the existing clay with a flower watering can, hand held sprayer, or hose nozzle with a fine spray pattern.
4. Add new clay and compact in 2" layers. Working with clay can be tricky so follow these pointers:
  - The new clay must have enough moisture content to stick to the underlying clay base that has been moistened. Otherwise, the new clay will pop out of place and create a hazard.
  - If the clay is too sticky, wrap the tamper plate in a garbage bag to alleviate the problem.
  - Shredded, bagged clay is very easy to work with and store. It is excellent for small daily repairs.
  - Add approximately ½" of new field conditioner over the repaired clay area.

