

FAIR HAVEN RECREATION



ATHLETIC FIELD MAINTENANCE MANUAL



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Section 1

Baseball and Softball Field Maintenance

A. Determining Field Playability

The decision to play on fields that are too wet is the number one cause of damage to ball fields and a contributing factor for player injury. 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!**



B. 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 unfortunate techniques move infield material and leave a depression or low spot that will hold water every time it rains.



C. Infield Grooming Techniques

1. Remove the bases before beginning any operations.
2. **Vary the dragging pattern every time the field is groomed.**
3. Scarify the field with a nail drag or needle tines (Done by DPW only).
4. Finish grooming the field with a drag mat. 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.
9. **Pitching mounds and batter's boxes should be groomed before and after each time they are used.**
10. **Always rake TOWARDS the base, mound, and plate. This helps fill in low spots created during play.**
11. **Please rake the bases, mound, and plate after each field use.**



- **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.
- **DO NOT** remove base supports from the mounts, otherwise the bases will wear out prematurely.

D. Skinned Infield Leveling

Baseball and Softball fields are designed with a specific slope to drain water from their surface. 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 the most important task of a field manager.**

E. 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.

Techniques for Maintaining the Grass-to-Skin Edge

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



F. Field Lining Techniques

- Only use approved “Athletic Field Marker” for foul lines and batter’s boxes on skinned infields. DO NOT substitute lime or other white materials.
- Overuse without removal will contaminate the infield mix and cause undesirable results.
- Remember, the entire infield foul line should be UNDER first and third base



Section 2

Grass Field Maintenance

(Soccer, Football, Lacrosse, other)

A. Determining Field Playability

The decision to play on fields that are too wet is the number one cause of damage to grass fields and a contributing factor for player injury. 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 1% of the
field, it's TOO
WET for play!**



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





You can prevent this!

B. Water Removal Techniques for Grass Fields

The most important mistake to avoid is the removal or movement of soil from the field. Fields are designed with a specific slope to drain water from their surface and 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** remove muddy soil or turf from the field.

All of these unfortunate techniques leave a depression or low spot that will hold water every time it rains. Leveling a low spot is the best method to prevent puddling. Fair Haven DPW is responsible for field leveling.

C. Portable Goals

Soccer and Lacrosse fields would be incomplete without the portable goals that provide the target for scoring! The primary concern with moveable goals is their ability to tip over and cause an injury. Hardware or weight bags can be used to secure the bottom crossbars to prevent tip-overs but must be done safely and correctly. Each soccer goal is equipped with bag weights. If a goal must be moved, ensure the bag weight is put back in place. **Bag weights are required to prevent soccer goal tip-overs!**



You can prevent this!

Move the goals for all non-game events when possible. This significantly reduces wear at the goal mouth.



Section 3

Group/Coach Responsibilities

A. Field Accountability/Player Safety

The use of fields in the Borough of Fair haven is permitted through the Recreation Department. This permitted use is based on priority status of seasonal sport, school, town rec and town travel. Beyond this would be paid permits for outside clubs, organizations, events, etc.

Each of these groups has a designated league administrator or responsible adult in charge of following the guidelines in this manual. Not only do these guidelines describe the best practices for field playability but also the basis for determining a safe playing surface for the athletes.

The use of fields in and during unsafe conditions not only puts stress on our fields for future use but also puts the athletes' health at risk. Our priority is to have a safe and fun atmosphere for the participants. When the safety is compromised so is the fun.

Typically any weekday event will be cancelled by the Recreation Dept. prior to 3pm the day of due to weather related fields closures. The weekends fall on the responsibility of the group/responsible adult to determine the playability and safety of the playing surfaces of the athletic fields. Please follow your best judgement in determining field playability. When in doubt err on the side of caution and cancel/postpone your event.

