

## MAINTAINING THE FIELD

### **Home Plate Area:**

After every baseball game lightly moisten (don't get it too wet, or it will be too muddy to compact) the entire skinned home plate area. Rake the soil that has been displaced by the batter and the catcher back into the divots that were made during the game. If the divots are deeper than 1" use the 8" x 8" soil tamper to compact the material, making it flush with the surrounding soil.

Important Note on Divot Repair: If it is necessary to use the tamper to repair divots in the soil you will have to be careful not to get the soil too wet. Only **MOIST** soil will compact successfully when using the tamper. If the soil is "mud-like" it will just crack when it dries out. Obviously, if it is dry and "powder-like" it will not compact at all. A little water goes a long way when tamping. I suggest that you first clean all the dust out of the divot and place it to the side. Spray a fine mist of water into the cleaned area --the moist substrate soil will act as a binder. Spray a fine mist of water on the dry soil that has been placed aside. Run the rake through it a few times and get all the soil moist. Rake it in the divot then tamp it flush. If the moist soil "sticks" to the tamper there is a bit too much water in the mixture. Rake just a little more "dry" soil or clay in the divot and tamp again.

Once the soil has been rendered smooth, by raking the soil from the outside toward the home plate, it is ready to be dragged with the small screen drag. Using the small screen drag start from the outer edge of the home plate area and work clock-wise to the home plate. The next time the area is dragged, start from the outer edge and work counter clock-wise. (M-W-F could be clock-wise and T- Th.- Sat could be counter clock-wise.) Dragging in opposite directions eliminates small swales that develop from constantly dragging in one direction.

Rubber Mats: Replace the rubber mats over each of the batters boxes after the area has been soaked with water. The object of the mats is to keep the area moist at all times and to protect it from abuse.

Important: Roll the drag up from the trailing edge to the front of the screen, where the rope is attached. It is important that the drag be rolled that way. It protects the trailing edge of the drag. You can also keep rocks and loose dirt out of the grass by using a rake. Rake the dirt towards the plate.

### **Pitcher's Mound:**

After every baseball game moisten the entire mound. Rake the soil that was displaced by the pitcher back into the divots that were made during the game. If the divots are deeper than 1" use the 8" x 8" soil tamper to compact the material making it flush with the surrounding soil. (See the above information in divot repair.)

Once the soil has been rendered smooth by raking the soil from the outside toward the pitchers plate, it's ready to be dragged with the small screen drag. Using the small screen drag, start from the outer edge of the pitchers mound and work clockwise to the pitchers plate. The next time the area is dragged, start from the outer edge and work counter clockwise. (M-W-F could be

clockwise and T-Th-Sat could be counter clockwise.) Dragging in opposite directions eliminates small swales that develop from constantly dragging in one direction.

**Rubber Mats:** Replace the rubber mats over the pitching mound. Place one mat over the pitchers rubber, the other mat in the "foot strike" area. The object of the mats is to keep the area moist at all times and protect the area from abuse.

**Important:** Do not pull the screen drag over the grass area. Roll the drag up from the trailing edge to the front of the screen, where the rope is attached. It is important that the drag be rolled that way. It protects the trailing edge of the drag. You can also keep rocks and loose dirt out of the grass by using a rake. Rake the dirt towards the pitchers plate.

### **Base Paths:**

Do not rake across the base path. Rake in the same direction as the baseball player runs. We don't need a groove in the center of the base path. We want it flat -flat -flat! We also want to keep the rocks out of the grass! The narrow screen drag is preferred. The narrow drag is stored in the Major League equipment room.

Use the narrow screen drag on the base paths. Make sure the screen drag does not overlap in the grass on either side of the path. Overlapping the screen on the grass will cause a rough lip to form in the grass. Rakes can also be used on the base paths, but do not rake across the base path, drag the rake parallel to the foul line in the same manner as the drag screen.

### **Infield (Skinned Area):**

Use the screen drag to smooth the large skinned area of the infield. The large screen drag can be pulled by hand or by a lightweight tractor. Start on the 3rd- base side of the outfield grass line. Pull the drag parallel to the grass line toward the first base foul line. As the drag approaches the foul line make a gradual right turn until the drag is being pulled along the infield grass line. Lap the infield by making gradual turns at each foul line. Reverse the pattern on the next day.

**Important:** Do not pull the screen drag over the grass area. Remember - we want to keep all stones and rocks out of the grass. Roll the drag up from the trailing edge to the front of the screen, where the rope is attached. It is important that the drag be rolled that way as it protects the trailing edge of the drag. You can remove rocks and loose dirt from the grass by using a pressure nozzle on the water hose.

### **Watering the Infield, Home Plate Area and Pitching Mound:**

Watering the skinned infield area cannot be overemphasized. It is usually the case that after a game everyone is in a hurry to get out of the yard. So a thorough watering is not likely. The entire skinned area, home plate area and pitchers mound must be heavily watered if we expect the field to remain in top shape. The lack of water allows the infield to dry and bake. The resulting surface is not a pleasure to play on. Spray water, in small droplets and multiple passes, to the point where the water is standing on the surface. Avoid a full stream of water on the infield as the result is similar to water erosion. The infield will absorb a substantial amount of water before saturation. It will drain quickly as long as it does not get packed and hard.