Infield Skin Maintenance from Little League to the Pros

Bill Deacon
NY Mets

What is an Infield Skin

- Sand
- Silt
- Clay

- Simple right?
- Why do we have so many problems with bad infields?

What Defines a Good Infield Skin?

- Playability
- "cleat in, cleat out"
- Ability to handle weather

- How do we get here?
- Quality material, good maintenance practices

Lets go back to Sand, Silt and Clay

- This is where you must start
- Identify what kind of field you are and install a mix that fits you or amend your mix to suit you
- Look at the Ratios

- SCR-Silt to Clay Ratio
- Ideal 0.5-1

Testing

- Know what you are getting
- Inexpensive
- SCR, without a test you won't know
- How do you know what to do if you don't know what you have?
- Be consistent, use someone you trust

Testing

HUMMEL & CO., INC.

TESTING #0775-01

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BALL DIAMOND MIX TEST REPORT FOR
NY Mets/Citi Field

REPORT TO: Bill Deacon
Sterling Mets, LP
123-01 Roosevelt Avenue
Flushing, NY 11368

DATE RECEIVED: October 13, 2010
TEST DATE: October 13 - 18
REPORT DATE: October 18, 2010
CONDITION OF SAMPLE: Normal

PARTICLE SIZE ANALYSIS (ASTM F1632)

		Gravel		Soil Separate %			Sieve Size/Sand Fraction Sand Particle Diameter % Retained				
Lab ID No.	Sample	No. 5 4 mm	No. 10 2 mm	Sand	Silt	Clay	No. 18 V. coarse 1 mm	No. 35 Coarse 0.5 mm	No. 60 Medium 0.25 mm	No. 140 Fine 0.10 mm	No. 270 V. fine 0.05 mm
28239-1	Infield Mix	0.0	4.1	56.8	20.5	22.7	8.7	14.5	21.5	9.7	2.4
Hummel & Co, Guidelines[1]		**≤ 3%**		**65 - 75**		**≥ 10%**					

1 In addition, a silt to clay ratio of less than 1.

PARTICLE SHAPE/TEXTURAL CLASS /COLOR

Lab ID No.	Sample	Color	Textural Class (USDA)
28239-1	Infield Mix	7.5YR 4/4 Brown	Sandy clay loam

Inspect your mix

Why is Maintenance Important

- #1 complaint I hear from coaches who switch to artificial "can't find anyone to maintain the infield dirt"
- A well balanced infield soil that suits your specific needs is easier to maintain
- You still need to know what to do with a good infield soil

Start of the Season

- We have a good infield, what now?

- Rototill
- Lasergrade
- Start the season off right

Can’t Rototill?

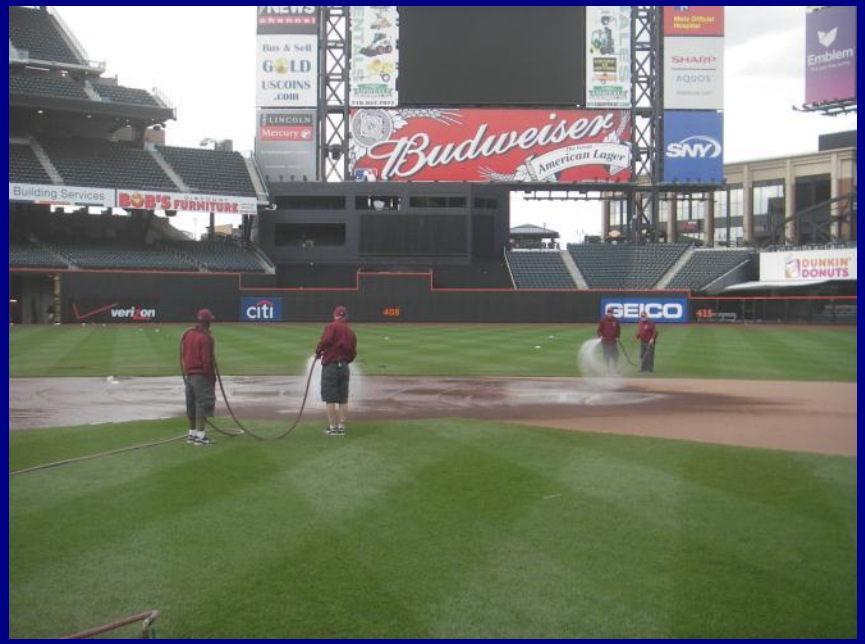
- Get moisture into the dirt if the rototiller isn't working properly
- Try different things, talk to people

Different Skin, Different Maintenance?

- Yes
- Identify your situation
- Some basic practices that I believe should always happen

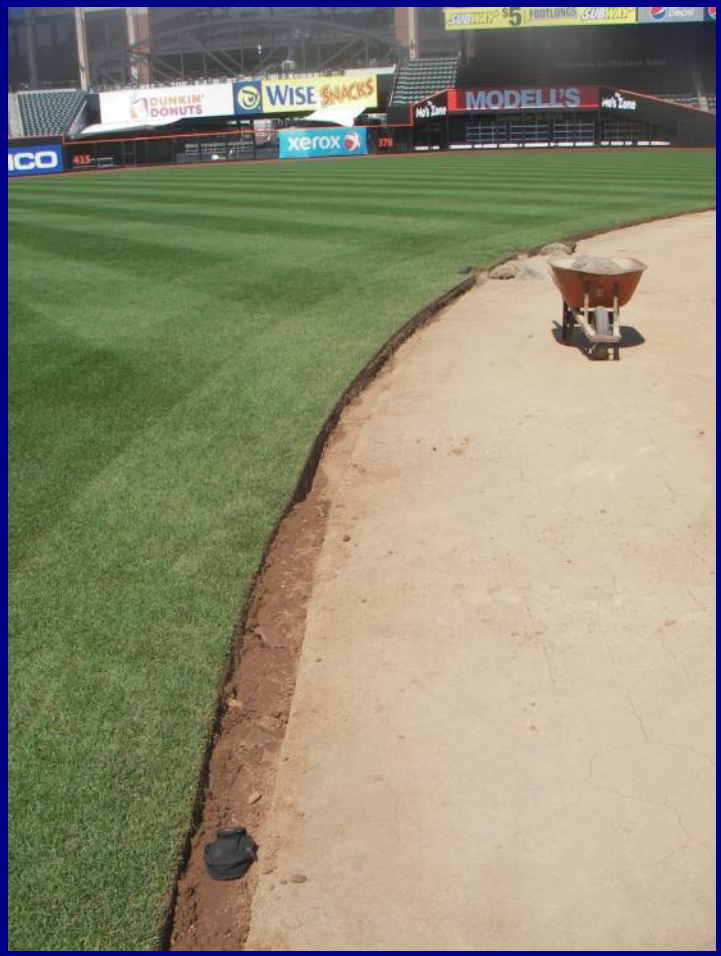
Daily Maintenance

- Water, Water, Water
- Adjust the type of infield skin you have to how much water you can put on it
- Remember you can always amend your skin



Adjust Skin to your Maintenance Level

- Goes back to knowing who you are and what you need
- My infield is like concrete if you can't water



Nail Drag

- Moisture in the skin
- Just deep enough to get rid of cleat marks
- Build it yourself
- Everyday?
- As often as you feel you need to or have time to

Finish Drag

- Machine
- Steel Drag
- Cocoa Mat
- Broom

- What I am looking for: smooth finish
- Stay away from the Edges

Why are Edges Important?

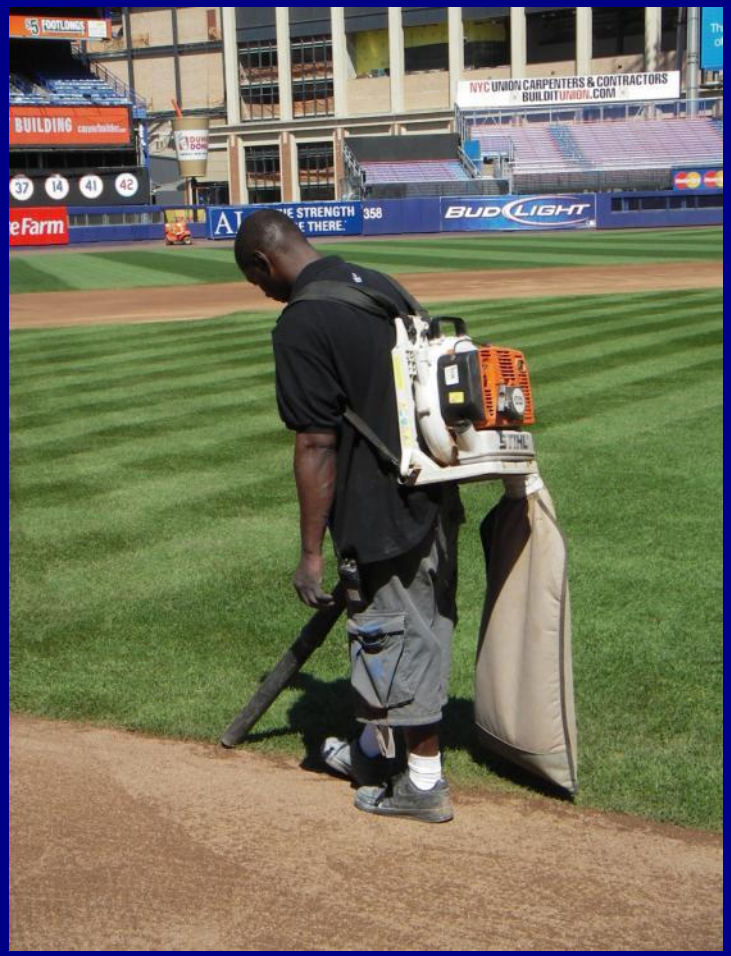
- First off, is it an Edge or Lip?
- Lips cause bad hops and injuries
- Edges are where the grass and dirt meet

- Confidence in approaching the ball
- Most difficult spot to maintain on a baseball field

Edges

- Vacuum
- Broom
- Rake

- Who?
- Teams?

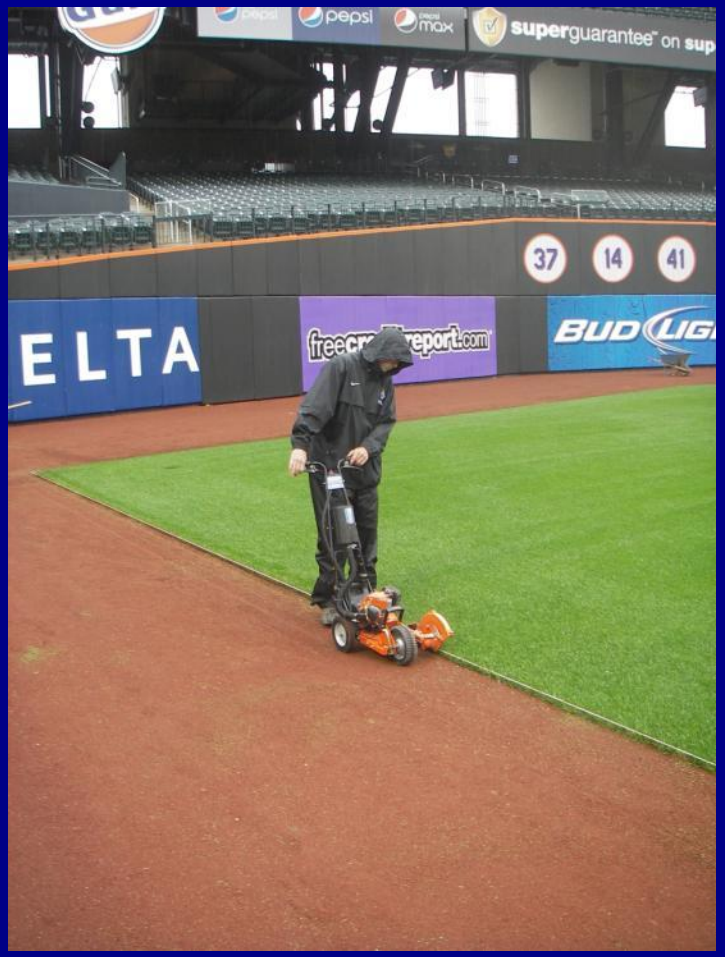


Rototilling Edges

- Beginning of the year
- Adding a lot of material
- This is after a soccer game

Trimming Edges

- How often
- We do it before every homestand
- As often as you can



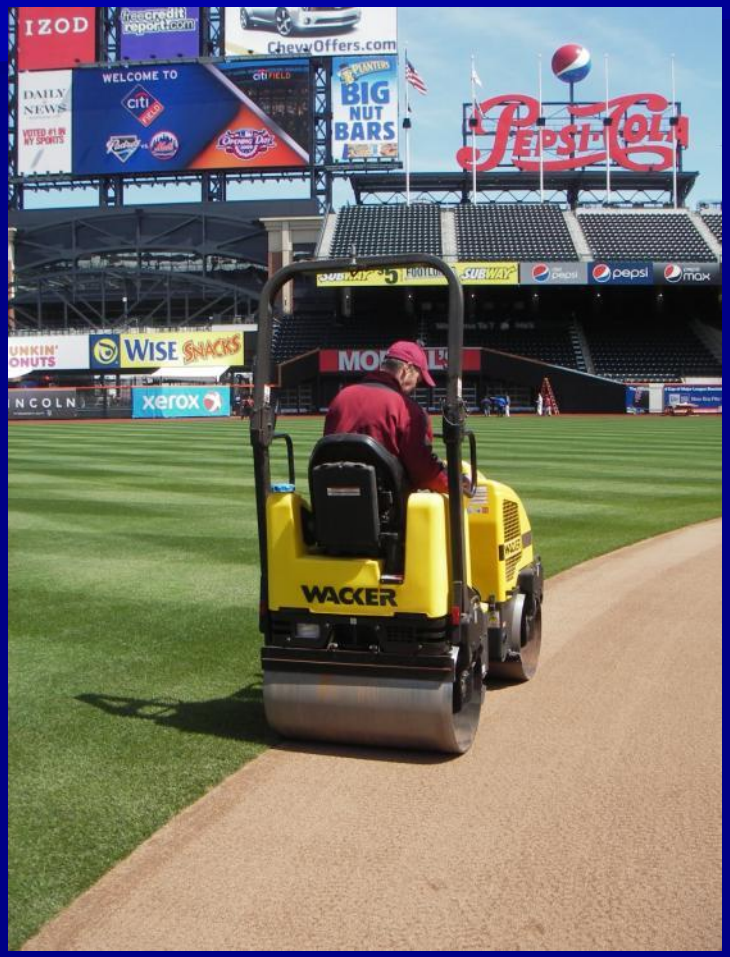
Edges

- After trimming edges
- Rake to help material bond together
- Rake and use material to fill

Filling Edges

- Moisture just right
- Keep infield mix out of grass
- Use a rake or board to get them level

Rolling Edges



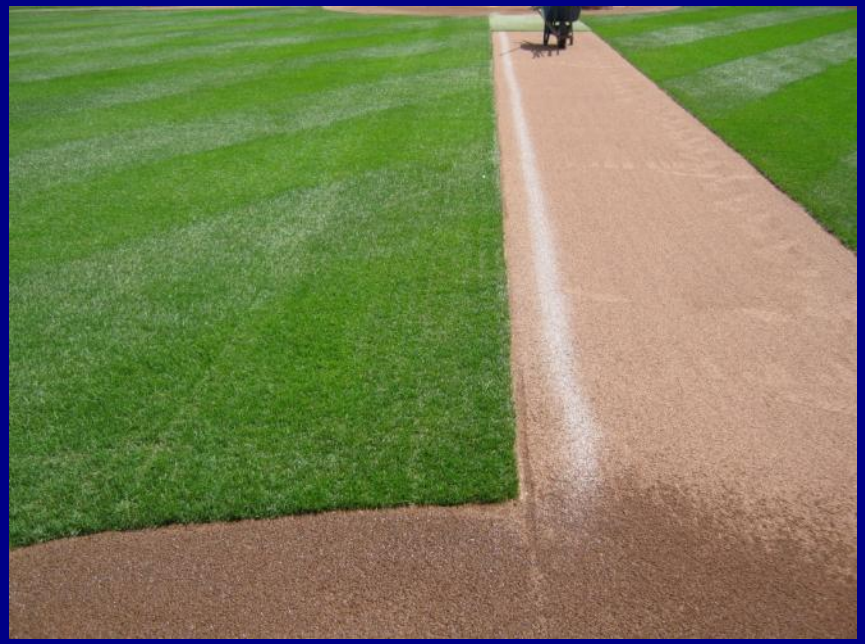
Fixing Edges

- String out area
- Get rid of lips
- Reuse Sod?
- Around infield with a 4’ roll of sod $400 in materials

Conditioner

- How much?
- Just enough to cover the infield skin

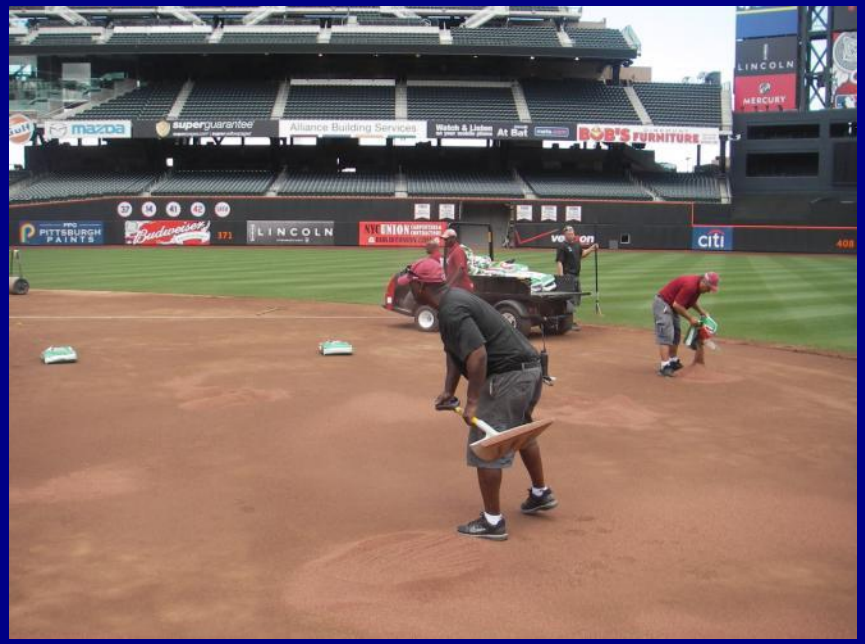
- Why?
- Help keep moisture in the top
- Moisture management tool
- Mulching on day games



How to Apply Conditioner

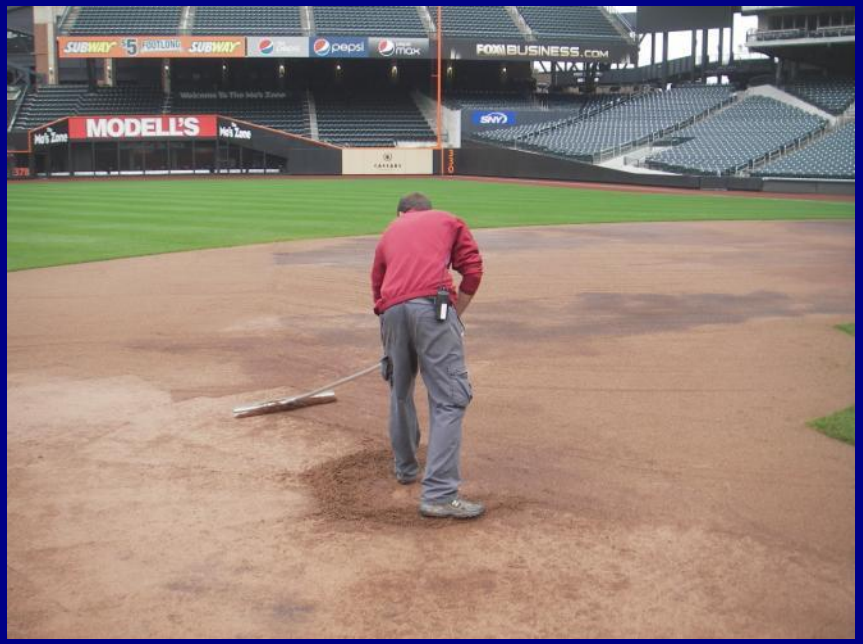
- Spreader
- Shovels
- Topdresser

- Just as long as it is even



Conditioner

- Rain situations
- Good infield skin will take water
- Conditioner is there to absorb the puddles in a rain situation
- Strip excess off



How Does your Skin Handle Weather

- Game ready it takes rain better than if it is dry and cracking

What is Game Ready Moisture?

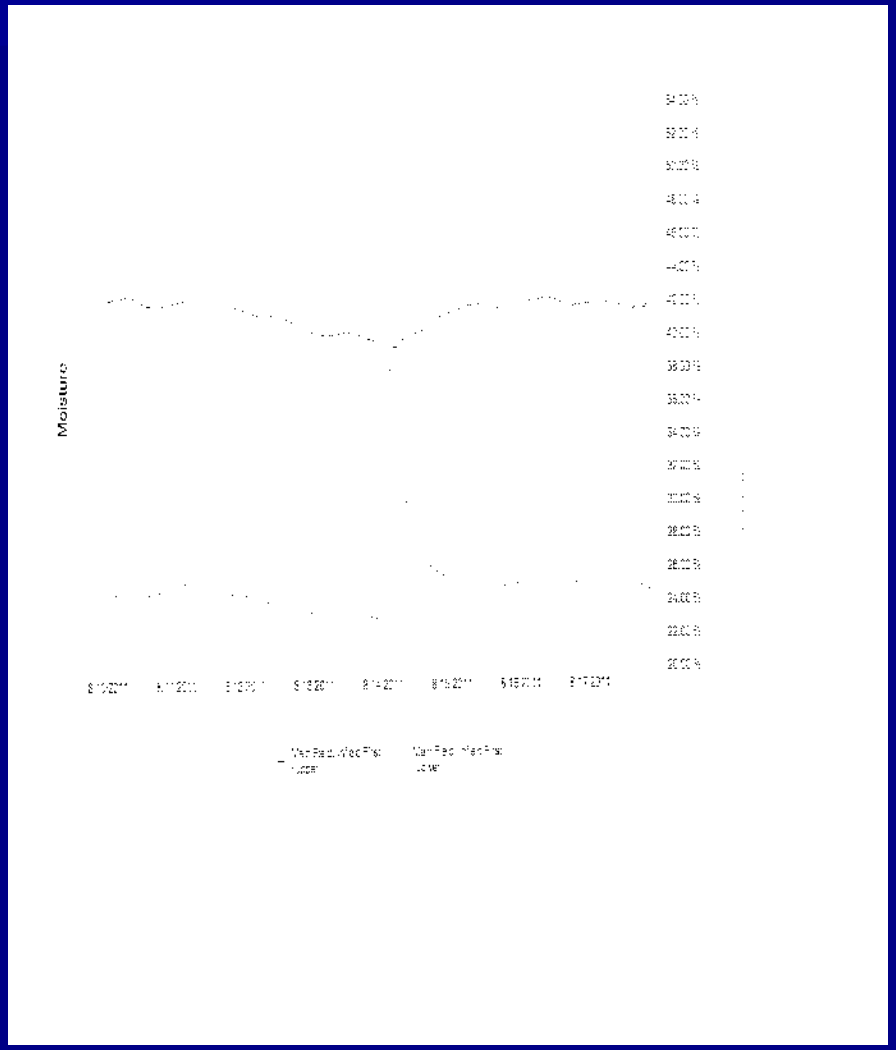
- Moisture meter
- Trying to quantify this with numbers
- Cork board, push into it but not soft
- How do we get to Game Ready
- We go through the daily maintenance and final touch is the water

Last Year's Hurricane

- Walked on the skin less than 5 hrs after it passed through
- We elected not to tarp the field
- Played a DH on Monday

Moisture Management

- How much water
- Hard to explain without doing it
- Moisture meter readings
- Drainage under infield skin



Moisture Management

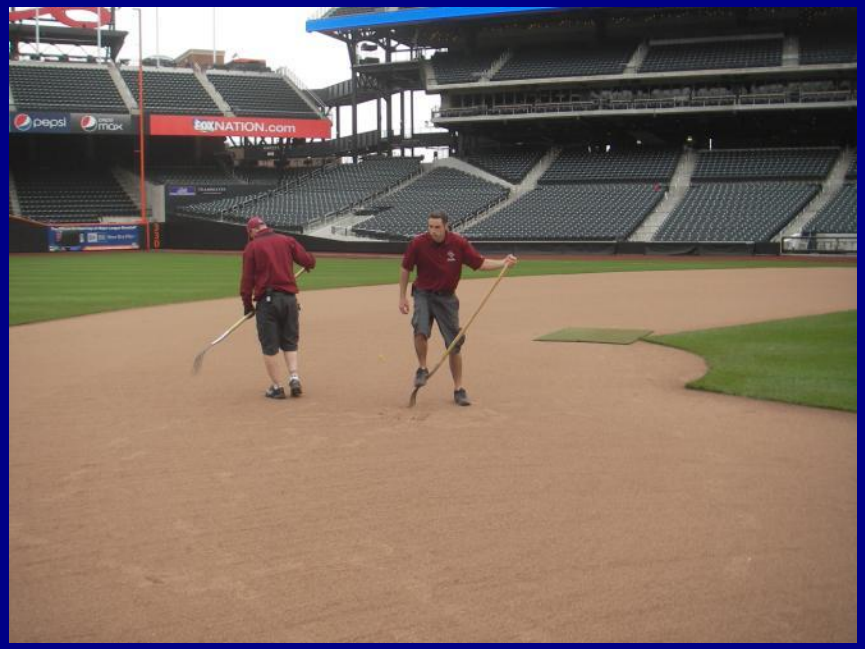
- Moisture readings
- I have been using two different instruments and both give very different readings
- I started doing it to explain it to someone with an Engineering background
- Very little change in my skin once I have the moisture in it

Moisture Management

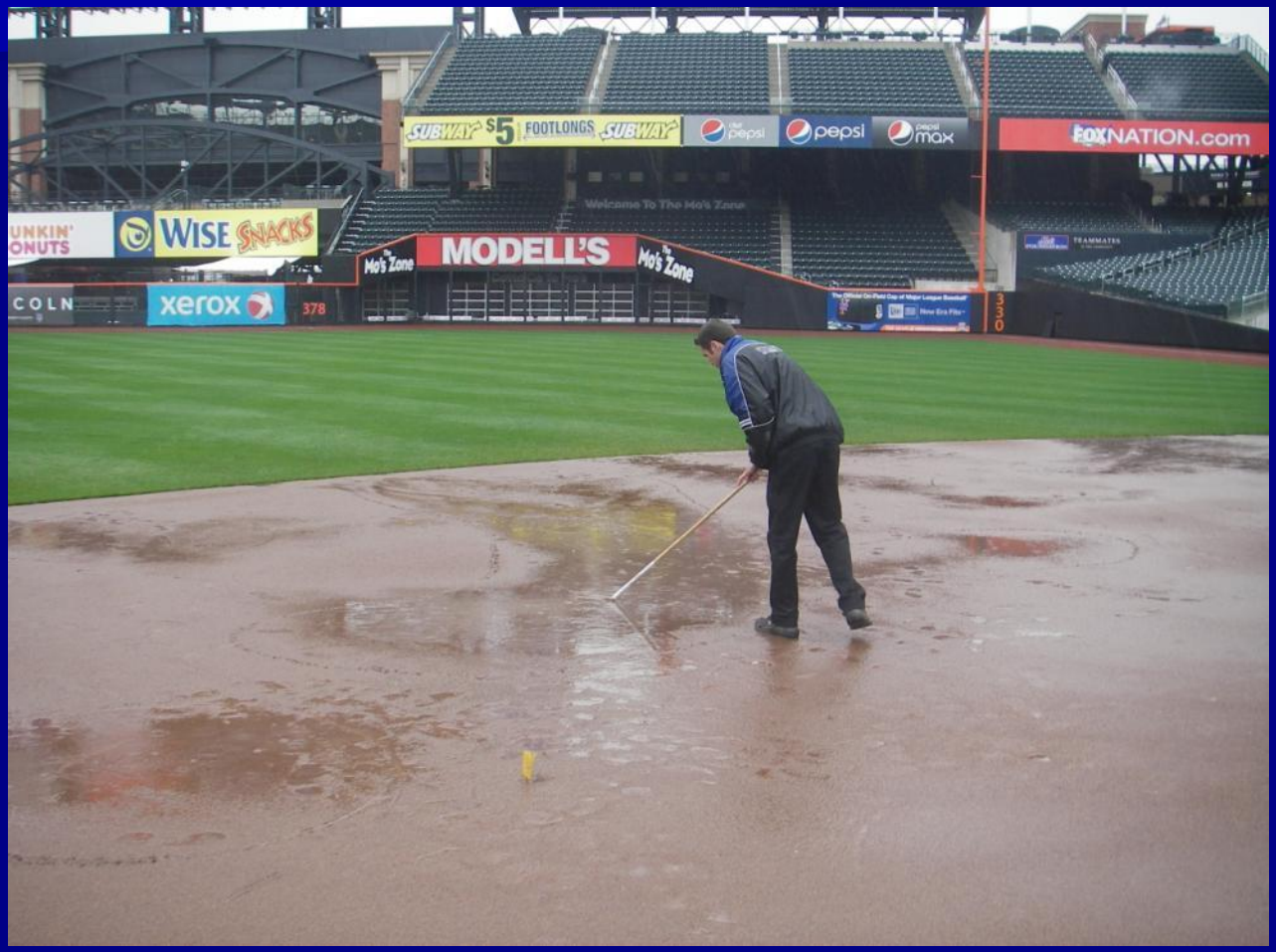
- Took readings at 9:30AM and 4:30PM
- May 29th 1:10 start time
- At 9:30 temperature was 72 at 4:30 it was 80
- 20-25 mph winds
- Moisture at 2” on average went from 24% to 23% on handheld sensor

Soft Spots in your Skin

- Happens to all of us
- Pumping
- Dig it out and put in drier material
- Get air into the skin
- Pitchfork, Nail
- Usually happens with a new skin



Low Spots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Fixing Low Spots

- We check the position areas
- After we play in the rain
- Run a string from front to back
- Mostly hand work
- Remove conditioner, rake, add material, roll

Fixing Low Spots

Problem Solving

- Poorly graded material
- Entire infield is low
- Mix with high SCR
- No stability in this material

Problem Solving

- Mound and homeplate are low
- Why? Not using mound clay
- Infield mix is low

Problem Solving

- No defined edge
- Grass growing problems
- This is actually a high clay infield but it gets no water
- They gave up on the mound

Problem Solving

Problem Solving

Problem Solving

- One artificial field
- Very well graded
- Conditioner everywhere
- No maintenance?

Problem Solving

- Entire infield is low
- High SCR
- Layers

Problem Solving

High School NJ

- This infield was amended
- SCR between 0.5-1
- Sand just over 60%
- Groundskeeper does an outstanding job
- Edges were perfect

Questions?

The End