



# INFIELD SKIN MAINTANCE TABOOS

1. **Infield Skin Layering** – This is simply the layering of infield mix and it is probably the most damaging thing you can do to an infield skin. It commonly occurs during field renovation when fresh infield mix is placed on top of the existing mix and it is not thoroughly incorporated by tilling or equal means. Companies that laser grade are often to blame whereas they simply scarify or rip the existing material before the new material is added. In certain cases aggressive ripping or scarifying with proper moisture can do the trick but it takes great skill and practice. The biggest issues from layering are the peeling of the surface soil most often in big flat sheets of soil and the layering that adversely affects the movement of water from one layer to the next. Often water applied will sit in the top layer to the depth of which it was placed and will never drain into the soil below. This phenomenon, in the soil world, is called "soil interfacing". Remember that any time you add fresh infield mix, please take the time to till it in. If your contractor tells you that it is not a necessary step, then find a new contractor.
2. **Nail Dragging a Dry Infield** – As a rule of thumb; you should never nail drag on a dry infield skin. If you see dust coming off the field when you are nail dragging then STOP! You are doing more harm than good. Nail dragging a dry skin creates a surface layer of loose soil that is dusty, difficult to wet and very difficult to reincorporate back into the skin. In fact, most often the only way to get that loose surface "fluff" back into the skin is by tilling. It's best to avoid these issues in the first place. The depth of nail penetration when nail dragging should only be slight, approximately 1/8 inch depth. Ideally, the nail drag should dance on the surface. The purpose of nail dragging is to fill in cleat marks and to make a uniform surface. It does not soften a hard infield, water does that.
3. **Dry Infield Skins** – If you can learn how to water an infield skin then most of your problems with that skin may go away. It takes dedication and timing to do it correctly. If you want to learn how, the information is out there. Our website [www.gailmaterials.net](http://www.gailmaterials.net) has an informative article on Maintaining Infield Moisture. We also have a DVD on Infield Skin Care with a dedicated section to watering an infield skin. Remember, the only way to soften a hard infield skin is to water it correctly. You have to apply enough water in order to get penetration to the fullest or almost full depth in regard to infield mix placement. Notice that infield skins typically play best a few days after a period of rain. The reason behind that is that an otherwise dry infield skin finally got enough water on it to make to make a difference. Use the example above of the approximate level of water after a rain storm as your target when watering your skins. The bottom line is if you cannot get this volume of water on your skins then don't expect it to play great. However, hard compacted skins are to be expected. Infield mix is made to compact. A hard dry skin is still safer than a loose shifty skin. A great tool to use to help with applying vast amounts of water as well as controlling soil moisture is CALCINED CLAY. There are many brand names such as Red Diamond, Pro's Choice, Diamond Pro, Mule Mix and Turface. If you do not have time during the day to water then after the last game flood your field for work in the morning. Of course working with anything less than a 1 inch quick coupler with a 1 inch hose is not going to cut the mustard. Trying to water a skin with a 1/2 hose is a losing battle.

**Having a good infield skin is not easy. It takes knowledge, work, and patience. If it was easy then every field would be great.**

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