



Baseball Field Care & Prep Instructions

11th January 2023

SUMMARY

- Proper field preparation and maintenance has a positive impact on player safety and it takes time; please plan accordingly.
- Both Home and Away team coaches are responsible for field preparation before and after each practice and game, without exception, at all playing levels other than Majors. The Away team shoulders this responsibility at the Majors level.
- Always hand rake base paths up and down the base path, not towards the grass.
- Hand rake under and around bases and base anchors.
- Remove and store bases every night and plug anchors with provided rubber caps.
- Rake the mound up towards the pitching rubber, not down towards the edge of the grass.
- Always re-cover mounds with field tarps at fields where tarps are provided, after raking.
- Never push standing water from the infield clay into the grass.
- Nashua Cal Ripken is prohibited from mowing the grass at all city fields, with the exception of Dube Field on Harris Road.

PURPOSE

Youth baseball players play ball on a youth field, but that doesn't mean we can't give them a great ball-playing experience. Remember, a well-kept youth baseball field doesn't just look great, it also allows for safer gameplay. A safe, enjoyable experience should be the No. 1 goal.

Our volunteers are critical to the success of Nashua Cal Ripken baseball and equally as important is our relationship with the city's Parks and Recreation department when it comes to our playing fields. In order to maintain an exceptional relationship with Parks and Rec, it is important that our volunteers thoroughly understand the full contents of this manual and employ their greater efforts to support the best practices covered herein.

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Each of our playing fields is accompanied by at least one storage shed. A variety of field equipment is available. Please leave the sheds more organized than you found them. Equipment will vary from field to field, but a list of possible items is below. If unsure of what tool is best for a particular purpose or how to use one in particular, please contact the league's Fields Director as found on the Board of Directors list.

Possible equipment; Steel Mesh Mat (Drag), Leveling Rake, Yard Rake, Broom, Line Chalker, Lime/Chalk, Alignment String, Batter's Box Guide, Hand Tamp, Garden Hose, Powered Water Pump, Roller Squeegee, Scarifier Drag, Nail Drag.

PITCHER'S MOUND

The Pitching Mound must be maintained daily, before and after play. Care should be taken to fill any depth irregularities to ensure our pitchers have safe footing. Using a larger rake, rake the mound up towards the pitching rubber, not down towards the edge of the grass. Once the mound is raked, a hand tamp can be used to pack the dirt in the high-use areas. It may be necessary to repeat raking and tamping in severe cases. Following play and resurfacing, it is important that the mound be covered with the mound tarp at fields where one exists. Tarps should cover the dirt area but should not cover the grass outside the dirt area.

INFIELD DIRT AND BASEPATHS

The more the field is played on, the more the infield dirt is due to be jostled. Daily, the basepaths should be raked and dragged (where available).

Hand rake base paths up and down the base path (directionally, from one base to the next), not towards the grass. Raking the clay towards the edge of the grass will create dangerous 'lips' over time. Hand rake under and around bases and base anchors to pull loose material back into the low-lying wear-areas (sliding areas). After hand-raking has been performed, drag the field with a steel mesh mat clockwise from outer to inner edge of the arc. When dragging, it is important to keep the drag a minimum of 6 inches from grass edges to avoid creating 'lips'.

After play and resurfacing, please store all bases in the storage sheds and use the rubber base-plugs to protect the anchor hole. This will prevent the bases from sticking in the anchors and/or getting pulled out during play.

In addition to daily maintenance, weekly maintenance tasks go a long way in keeping our fields in the best condition possible. Weekly tasks include 'lip' maintenance in the form of sweeping and

using the heavier duty drags (scarifier or nail drag) to loosen basepath dirt/clay. Use a corn broom on the edges of the grass multiple times per week and sweep from the grass back into the basepaths. This helps pull the clay from the grass and back into the field with the intention of preventing 'lips' from forming.

HOME PLATE AND BATTERS BOXES

Home plate maintenance is a hybrid of the techniques used for the pitching mound and base paths. Hand raking should be performed to level the surface and loosen the dirt. Care should be taken again to never rake towards the grass. After raking, the hand tamp can be used to compact the batter's and catcher's boxes after filling indentations and divots. These areas should always then be left with a smooth layer of loose dirt on top. Avoid leaving home plate covered in dirt after play.

INFIELD AND OUTFIELD GRASS

Nashua Cal Ripken is prohibited from mowing the grass by contractual agreement with the city. While it may feel as though you are doing a favor by mowing the grass, volunteers must not do this. If a field is found to be in need of mowing, please contact the league's Fields Director as found on the Board of Directors list. During play, players should be corrected when found to be engaging in behaviors that damage grass such as kicking/digging holes with their cleats. In addition, coaches and players should avoid engaging in activities that will damage the grass when done routinely, such as pitching batting practice from the grass in front of the mound.

PLAYING LINES

On game days, fields used for Majors and AAA games should have foul lines and batters boxes designated by chalked lines. Chalking should be done following any raking or dragging of the field that is planned. Applicable fields will have a batters box template that should be used to mark the dirt where the line chalker should be used to apply chalk. Foul lines should be created by using string to guide a path from the rear point of home plate to either the outfield foul pole or the existing outfield foul chalk line (when applicable). Alignment of playing lines can be found in this online resource using diagrams #2 and #3: [HOW TO STRIPE A BASEBALL FIELD](#)

HANDLING WATER AND INCLEMENT WEATHER

Sometimes a field is very obviously unplayable, such as when there are puddles, soft muddy areas, etc. At other times, however, a field may appear deceptively dry because the topdressing material used on the surface dries more quickly than the soil beneath it. At the Majors level, all weather cancellations are communicated only by the league's Board of Directors. At the AAA

and lower levels, the league's Board of Directors will communicate weather cancellations (ideally by 3:00pm via Social Media and InApp messaging). In addition, coaches are empowered to make at-field decisions in the best interest of player safety. The infield soil can be dry enough to walk on, but if the lateral movement of the footing sheers easily (when planting to make a throw, pushing off to run, etc.), then the field is not ready. Allowing kids to play on fields with poor lateral stability is not safe as cleats provide little help under these conditions.

When repairing a wet field is possible, proper technique is critical to ensure both same-day safety and also long-term maintainability. Never move water from the dirt areas to the grass with a rake, shovel or any other method. Despite your best intentions, this will move dirt from the base paths and add it to the grass areas creating both a lip at the grass edge and a low area in the dirt that will collect even more water next time. Using rakes and/or rollers, it may be possible to slowly disperse some puddled water across nearby dirt areas. The more time we can allow a field to dry between this process and the time of play, the better our chances are in holding a safe game or practice that day.

In extreme circumstances and at specific fields, a sump pump, extension cords and garden hoses are in the equipment sheds to be used to move excessive puddled water off the field of play. If necessary, please connect with the league's Fields Director, as found on the Board of Directors list, for complete instructions.

REFERENCES

Portions of this text have been copied, in whole or in part, from the following sources:

- Teamsnap.com - [Baseball Field Maintenance for Safety: What Volunteer Caretakers Need To Know](#)
- West Madison Little League - [Learn how WMLL determines field conditions & deals with rain before game time](#)
- Fox Valley Paint - [How to Strip a Baseball Field](#)