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Committed to enhancing the professionalism of athletic field managers in New Jersey by improving the safety, playability and appearance of athletic fields at all levels through seminars, field days, publications and networking with those in the sports turf industry.

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Looking For an Engineer
Experienced in Building Athletic Fields?

by Eleanor Murfitt

As I began interviewing engineers for designing my township’s 60-acre site, I wondered how many engineers write effective specifications for athletic field construction? How many use broiler plate DOT specifications? How many directors’ like myself know the difference? What are effective specifications? When looking at previous projects the engineer was involved in, would I be able to determine who was
require frequent irrigation to minimize dust and to provide a firm surface.” Whereas, “…the presence of clay is desirable from the standpoint of providing both a firm and stable surface for good footing … top mixes 11 to 20% silt/clay [80-89% sand] will drain more slowly but will retain more water. Frequency of irrigation will be less. These mixes will be more cohesive and will be more difficult to loosen when they compact.”

Sports field managers should consider their budgets, availability of labor, and typical environmental conditions (dry climate vs. moist climate) when choosing an infield mix.

Infield mix maintenance has often been considered as much an “art” as it is a “science.” While the ASTM standards provide a starting point from which to choose a particular mix, and we effectively demonstrated three mixes that are not acceptable (Mix 3, 4, and 5), the quality of an infield playing surface is most significantly affected by the actions and decisions made by the sports field manager.

“It has often been observed that the skills of the grounds manager are a greater contributing factor to high quality skinned areas than the materials used to construct these areas. Successful grounds managers must select management practices that are appropriate for the field at hand, or modify field conditions to match a given maintenance program.” – ASTM Standards F 2107-01

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Literature Cited