

OVERBROOK'S FIELD OF DREAMS: A Coach's Perspective

By Chuck Marciano



It was 7 AM on a Saturday morning as I pulled into the parking lot. On the baseball field was a group of three men; one with a rake, one with a spreader, and one on a tractor. All were working to put the field in playing condition after a night of rain. It was not raining hard, but it was still raining. My immediate thought was, "No game today," but having these three men on the job gave me hope. A light mist was still falling, but head man, Rich Watson, assured me the game would be played and it was. Hand raking wet areas, adding drying agent and even cutting away wet grass allowed the game to begin five hours later. The pride and diligence of Rich Watson, Bill Loftus, and Carmelo Anguila made this game and a host of others a reality on a day when very few games, if any would take place. This was March 31, 2012, but it could have been any day during the baseball season.

Being able to play on Overbrook High School's baseball field is a privilege any baseball coach or player would be lucky to have. Going on my eighth year as head baseball coach I know our team will practice and play each day on a facility that provides the ultimate in beauty and function. The grass is always green, cut to a perfect length, and dandelion free. Rich and his crew pick them out by hand. The pitcher's mound would make any Major League hurler content as it is free of any cumbersome holes. The home plate area is level and lines from home to the foul poles straight and true without a hint of white peeking out from the corners of first or third base. They also tend to our outdoor batting cages and L-screens.

Perhaps the most important aspect of working with Rich, Bill and Carmelo is their commitment to the safety of the players. Our

infield plays very true. The dirt portion is smooth and free of clumps and clods that might cause bad hops. It is dragged and leveled each day with almost loving care. The infield grass is mowed two or three times a week to insure true bounces. Unlike my lawn at home the turf is carpet like and fast without being dangerous to the fielders. Crabgrass has been eliminated as well.

One of the new problems is geese. They love ball fields and generally evidence of their presence can be found on the field each morning. Our guys work tirelessly to keep the area as free of their mess as possible. There is a realization of the danger to the health of our players, coaches and fans.

Communication between the coaches and grounds crew is essential. Baseball in the Northeast during early spring when the weather is very unpredictable makes interaction between our staff and the grounds crew important. Rich provides hourly updates on the weather, field conditions and progress on any work necessary to make the field playable for that day. Our staff and Rich's staff have great respect for one another. They are well aware of the need for us to have use of the field and we realize his concern for both our players and the field.

We recognize our staff as leaders in their work. The crew at Overbrook has provided seminars in field care and I receive emails from time to time from other coaches asking for contact information for our crew. They have committed to a level of perfection and love their work. No one shirks any task. Anyone who visits the complex can see the pride and effort that has been for all the fields, football,



soccer, and hockey as well as the baseball field. In fact, our field has been a requested facility for The Diamond Classic tournament and the Parochial State Final.

Over the years a partnership has developed between the baseball team and the grounds crew. Rich Watson,

Bill Loftus and Carmelo Anguila are as responsible for any success of the baseball program as the players and coaches. They are as important to our team as any player or coach. As a coach there are so many aspect of the position that causes worry. Knowing that our field is in the hands of individuals who possess tremendous expertise and care has taken a major concern off of me. I feel as if we play on a field that is as good as any in the area, and that includes professional ballparks as well.

Chuck Marciano is an English Teacher, Varsity Baseball Coach, and Varsity Basketball Coach, Overbrook High School, Pine Hill Public Schools, Pine Hill, NJ.