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Dear Paul,

When you talk about pitcher's mounds, you must always remember why mounds were built in the first place. At the time, the lively ball had been introduced, and too many home runs were being hit. Experiments showed that it was harder to hit a homer on a ball pitched below the waist, and that this pitch was easier to pitch fast and low if the pitcher could STEP DOWN AND PULL DOWN. Mounds were not built to stand a pitcher higher than the batter.

You might remember that Red Adams, the pitching coach for the L.A. Dodgers was here some years ago, and he told ^{me} in all Australia, I was the only one who quizzed him about mounds. He said several times, "I wouldn't care if my pitchers had to stand on a box, so long as he could STEP DOWN AND PULL DOWN. At the same time, he saw me slip a sheet of rubber matting under the pitcher's plate, to stop the pitchers digging a hole with the pivot foot. He praised this, and said that at Dodger Stadium, he had two pitcher's plates in the mound, one in front of the legal one, and set down about a half to three quarters of an inch, below the level of the legal plate. I did this at Holloway about ¹⁶ years ago, and since then it has been approved by every pitcher in Claxton Shield and by pitchers from Japan, Korea, U.S.A., and from Guam.

Remember this, that pitchers can not step down the full ten inches of the mound height, and on my mounds they probably step down about six or seven inches, depending on the length of their step forward. If then, they have dug a hole in front of the plate, say three inches deep, then they are only stepping down three or four inches. These idiots like Paul Chartrand who deliberately dug holes in the mound for their pivot foot, were only handicapping themselves. Maintain the STEP DOWN at all times. *KEEP THE BACK FOOT HIGH.*

I see it all the time, that clubs imagine that a sharp pointy mound suits a pitcher. I won't mention clubs, but you will see it. They build mounds above the 10 inch height, and the ground slopes sharply away on all sides from the plate. The pitcher on these mounds, can not take the rocker step, because if he does, he first has to step back, and down, then climb back, up and over the plate, before taking his step forward and down.

Also, whenever a pitcher wants to pick off to any base, he must be sure of his footing, so study the diagram in the rule book. You will find that the LEVEL AREA is 5 feet by 34 inches. Don't skimp on this anywhere. ~~It~~ (Excuse my typing, please.) Where I did depart from the diagram is the slope from the buried front pitcher's plate, is given as 1 inch of slope down, for each foot forward. A lot of pitchers find that they scrape their cleats at this gradual fall away, so I give a little more clearance than that. (See my sketch.)

Do not make your mound larger than the specified 18 feet, diameter, unless you are facing an uphill slope to home plate. You will see that at Holloway, I had a mound that had a point towards home plate, (See sketch). I did this for junior ~~pitchers~~ pitchers, and because, before I built the mound, we had to pitch 3 inches uphill.

This allowed me to have a forward point on the mound and still have the STEP DOWN AND PULL DOWN.

Now, let us talk about material. As I told you on the phone the best and longest lasting material, I saw was in Bundaberg, and made of anthill, and it seemed to need no dressing up between games.

However, anthills may not be available, and deco is the next best. The pros in U.S.A. use raw clay, and Red Adams told me that ~~EMM~~ they roll the raw clay the night before a game, then hose it, then cover it with a sheet. Next morning, they remove the sheet, and he ~~that~~ told me that you could scrape your finger over the clay and get wet slop over it. By match time, this would take a double-header, and not have a hole in the mound.

We can't afford the ground staff, but for Claxton Shield, I used to bury raw bricks in the mound. If you know any body at the brick works, get the bricks from the extruders, not from the presses. They are always stacked to dry, before going to the kilns.

I am putting this bit in, in case you have a long weekend series, or carnival of several games. For ordinary home and away club games, deco is all you will need. The trouble with clay of any sort, is that it won't take the wet, so I used it for special occasions only.

I should have mentioned before, that there is a move overseas to extend the flat area behind the plate, and you will see this at the R.N.A., where visiting pitchers from U.S.A., asked for it.

If you are obliged to remove your mound at the end of each season, then it will pay you to make a steel frame to hold both pitcher's plates. Then at the start of each season, you simply measure out your 60ft 6 inches and nail the frame down, then bring your deco to it. They do this every week at Norwood Oval in Adelaide.

If you are going to build bullpen mounds, then take as much care, in the two plates, and forward ~~EMM~~ slope as you do with your main mound. Pitchers are too valuable to be discomforted.

Paul, I think I have covered it all, but if you have questions, please call me. 359 2210.

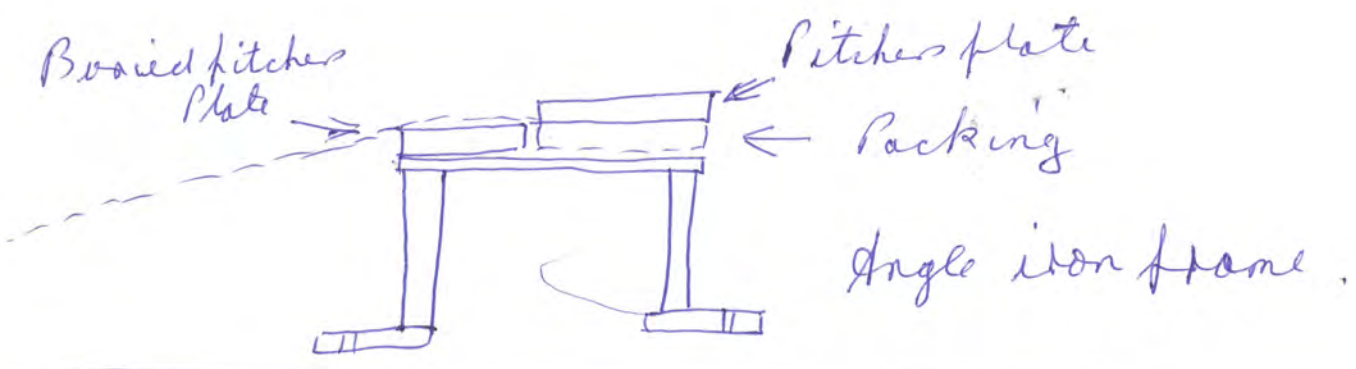
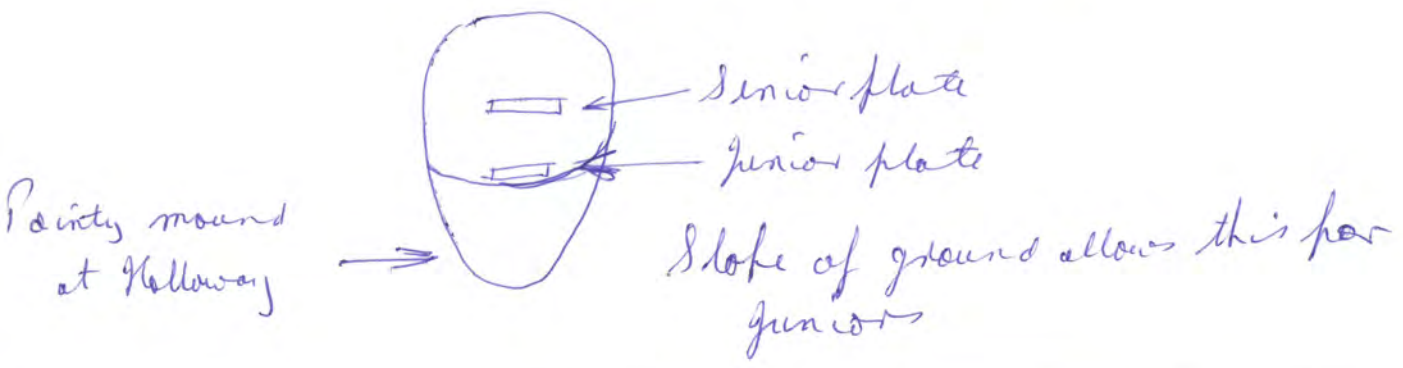
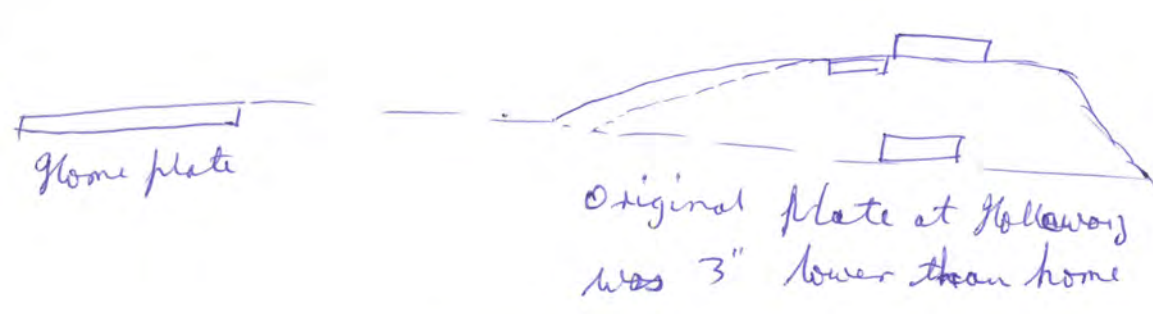
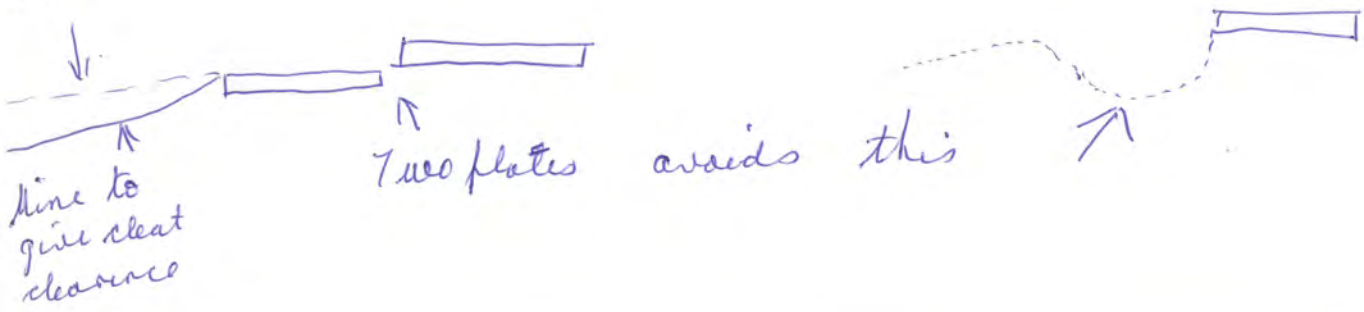
Best of luck,

Des. Knight

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P.S. When building your mound with deco, do it in several layers, wetting and rolling as you go. Don't put the lot down and try to harden the lot in one effort. I had a concrete roller that I tied behind the car. I ran over the lot several times, and it did the job. Of course, a vibrator roller is better if you can afford it.

Slope in Rule Book



Optional

