

Field of Work

At Cleveland High School in Clayton, N.C., the lessons learned by the athletes go well beyond the playing field, even when they involve the playing field. Athletic Director and Head Baseball Coach Jamie Lee says his players spend about 20 minutes after each practice working on the diamond. This includes raking the dirt on the mound and around home plate and the bases, blowing loose material from the infield lips back into the dirt, and cleaning the area in front of the dugouts.

“If you do that, it stays nice and it keeps you ahead of the game,” Lee says. “And it teaches kids work ethic. It teaches them to be proud of what they have. Sometimes I think kids don’t get that today.”

Lee gets a lot of help in caring for the facility from his John Deere dealer as well. The school has two John Deere reel mowers, ball field rake, and TX Turf Gator. Just as important as the equipment itself is a service and maintenance agreement to keep it in top shape.

Once a month, Nick Westbrook, a Mobile Technician from Revels Turf and Tractor, a John Deere dealer in nearby Fuquay-Varina, N.C., visits the school to service the equipment. Typically, he’ll back lap the reels, check the blades, grease and lubricate the parts, and check the fluids and belts. And should his inspections find any signs of problems, he’ll address them there, such as the time he replaced a bent axle he noticed on the Gator.

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“Nick is loyal to our school. I don’t have to call him and he doesn’t have to call me. I know he’s going to be here. When Nick comes out here in the spring, he wants to look at our baseball field, and he’ll take pictures. He takes a lot of pride in what he does and we consider him a part of the family.”



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“They take care of their field and I take care of their machines, so it will look really nice,” says Westbrook.

Lee also appreciates that he has someone to turn to in a pinch, such as the time a hydraulic hose burst the day before a home football game. “I called them and said, ‘Hey, we had a line burst and we play tomorrow night and we need to mow. Can you help us?’” Lee explains. “Nick came the next morning and fixed it. That’s not part of the contract, but they do all they can to take care of the customer.”

Lee has shown the same kind of loyalty to the field—and to the school. He’s been a teacher and coach at Cleveland High School since it opened in 2010 and has nurtured both its athletes and the baseball field ever since.

“I think this field should be very thankful that it’s here and that it has Jamie Lee to take care of it,” says Jenna Sauls Hairr, Principal at Cleveland High School.

“If this field could talk,” Lee imagines, “it would probably say, ‘Jamie Lee, go home.’”

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