

Guest Editorial

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

I always welcome reader feedback. I rely on your calls, letters, and e-mail messages to bring me up to speed on the industry's most current issues.

I recently received an e-mail message from a Canadian reader who wanted to draw attention to facility liability. Stan Szwajkowski writes:

"We all need to do a better job at communicating liability issues, whether it's up here in Canada or in the USA. The latest one that I've heard about is the injury to a football player on a high school site.

It is common practice where I'm from to utilize the football post as soccer nets. Most multi-use posts have tabs or rings welded to the top bar and support posts to tie the soccer nets to.

A football player, after scoring a touchdown, jumped up and attempted to slam-dunk the football over the up-rights on the goal posts. The palm of his hand caught on one of the rings or tabs used to tie down the soccer nets. The result was that he tore off the palm of his hand.

This resulted in a large settlement through the courts. Please advise your readers of this concern. After inspecting our schools and parks, I've found more than 10 sets of posts with this type of hazard present."

Stan Szwajkowski

Supervisor of Sportsfields

City of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

General consensus designates safety and playability of sports facilities as the

first priority of a sports turf manager. Idealistically, this goal would stem exclusively from a desire to protect the health and well-being of field users, but get a couple of lawyers involved and you've got an entirely different scenario.

Apparently, accidents don't happen anymore. The courts seem to have decided that people can no longer be held responsible for their own actions. Somebody else is always to blame, and that somebody is usually the one with the deepest pockets.

You have to cover your back these days. Accidents can happen any time, and you never know when you're going to find yourself staring down the barrel of a pointed finger.

Working in the schools is, by nature, a risky business. Parents trust you to keep their children safe, and you're going to take the heat if something goes wrong.

I'm sure this kid's parents gave him permission to play football, and they probably came to cheer at every game. However, this zeal gets thrown out the window the second their son gets hurt.

It doesn't even matter that the school never intended the goal post be used as a basketball hoop, or that the boy's actions didn't officially have anything to do with the game. A big scar and permanent damage are difficult things to argue against.

— Steve Berens, Editor, Sports Turf

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Female Tiger on the Ground

Grand Rapids, Michigan. Ground-breaking achievement is nothing new for the first woman ever named head groundskeeper for a major league baseball team.

The Detroit Tigers said Tuesday that Heather Nabozny will direct grooming at Tiger Stadium starting March 1, 1999. She replaces Frank Feneck, who is retiring after more than 35 years on the job. At age 28, she's among the youngest head groundskeeper in the majors.

For Nabozny, who spent five years as head groundskeeper for the West Michi-

gan Whitecaps, a minor-league affiliate of the Tigers, the position is a chance to hone what she calls her "passion for perfection." The child of a lawn-care company owner, she fell in love with grass long before she earned a degree in turf management.

— Associated Press, *The Record*,
January 20, 1999

"Nobody can make you feel inferior
without your consent."

— Eleanor Roosevelt

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