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## When to Play & When to Fold

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By Karl Danneberger, The Ohio State University

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Editors note from Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association : I ran across an appropriate article, for this time of year, on the Ohio State University's sports turf website-<http://bcs.osu.edu/sportsturf>. The article is being reprinted with permission from Pam Sherratt, website editor and sports turf extension specialist, OSU.

The weather the last few weeks has been like a yo-yo. For example, this past Sunday (November 23<sup>rd</sup>) temperatures were in the 60's and people were wearing shorts. Conversely, on Monday (November 24<sup>th</sup>), the high temperature was in the 30's with snow showers. The up and down weather pattern can cause problems if people are continuing to play on green or athletic fields. At the moment, conditions have been OK to

have play on golf greens and athletic fields if they are well drained. This time of the year and through winter, questions always arise about when to allow play, and when to use temporary greens or limit use of fields.

I have ranked the various winter situations from least to worst damage. I would say that any play on frozen turf (leaf blades, plants) should be avoided. Immediate damage will occur to the plant similar to playing on a frosted turf. A problem with winter play is that in areas of concentrated traffic, wear is a potential problem, with recovery slow due to lack of growth. If possible, use temporary greens and prevent play on athletic fields to protect them from wear injury, and compaction.

**Possible Scenarios: (Ranked least to worst damage)**

1) *Play on dry unfrozen soil* – Although wear injury is always a potential problem, this situation will result in the least damage.

2) *Play on frozen soil* – Most likely will result in wear injury to the turf but little soil compaction.

3) *Play on wet, unfrozen soil* – The potential damage under this scenario is soil compaction, but less wear injury. At the moment, this has been the most common situation.

4) *Play on a thawing soil (unfrozen-wet on the surface), that is frozen below* – This is the worst situation to have play, because both wear injury and soil compaction can occur.

**Note from this editor:** Number 4 only reaffirms my belief that soccer and lacrosse should not play on the athletic fields until after April 15. Lets all get together, from central jersey to the north, to put a ban on playing on athletic fields until April 15 (of course this can only stand for grade schools and municipalities). My town and surrounding towns have. ♦

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