

SPORTS TURF

by Ron Hall, assistant editor

Grass safer again

"It's almost as good as..."

Carol Ann Comly, an ambitious young athletic trainer, put that phrase to the test in a recent study of grass and artificial turf football fields and discovered that "almost" isn't good enough. Not when it comes to the safety of athletes anyway.

"Artificial turf contributes an additional risk of injury," Comly, now working as a therapist at the Coatesville Veteran's Hospital near Philadelphia, writes in a comprehensive comparison of football injuries in two Eastern universities, Temple and West Chester. Temple plays on an artificial surface, West Chester on grass. Since there were 148 members on each of the two teams, Comly feels her comparison is valid.

She used data reported from the 1982 season to the National Athletic Injury/Illness Recording Service (NAIRS) at Penn State University in her 47-page study. NAIRS is a computerized surveillance system designed to help school policy makers make meaningful sports safety decisions. Team trainers of member schools supply weekly injury reports to NAIRS during the season.

Her findings?

There were more injuries on the synthetic surface than on grass, 110-50. The number of minor injuries was greater by a 72-27 margin on the artificial field, "significant" injuries by a 38-23 gap.

Proponents of synthetic turf point to the intensive use their fields can support. They claim annual maintenance costs are lower, and artificial turf requires a less technically trained management team. These points are arguable.

Grass fields have the benefits of being less expensive to build and less expensive to repair. In the long run, a quality grass athletic field is more economical than an artificial surface because of the need to periodically replace worn synthetic surfaces. Turf is also measurably cooler during warm-weather sporting events.

Comly, who has coached and officiated grade school field hockey, and lacrosse, writes the controversy is "open to further investigation." Her open-minded approach is sensible. It might be that blanket condemnations of synthetic are short-sighted. Even in the turf industry. The use of synthetic grass can probably be justified in areas where the likelihood of establishing quality turf is questionable, perhaps even in conjunction with turf, such as along the sidelines of a turf football field.

The question of player safety, however, remains the first consideration.

The wonder is that field managers, particularly those with the grass-or-synthetic decisions, slide so easily to the debatable convenience of synthetic even in the face of studies like Ms. Comly's.

Olathe AWESOME POWER yet QUIET

CHIPPERS



Model 984

Circle No. 146 on
Reader Inquiry Card

OLATHE MANUFACTURING, INC.
100 INDUSTRIAL PARKWAY, INDUSTRIAL AIRPORT, KS 66031 800-255-6438
913-782-4396

ESTATE TURF GROOM

Model
CM136

\$429.00

Freight Included



SUPER DUTY LAWN SWEEPER

- High speed brush for sweeping at slow mowing speeds.
- Big 16" OD pneumatic tires.
- Heavy structural steel chassis with 14 cubic foot bag.
- The only sweeper with a clutch for towing without sweeper action.

ESTATE TURF SPREADER

Model 800

\$625.00

Freight Included



- Spread seed, fertilizer, lime, sand or deicers.
- Big 800 lb. capacity.
- Ground driven.
- Rugged Steel chassis with polyethylene hopper.
- Unique double-action drag chain prevents clogging while calibration is provided by 0 to 10" sq. in opening.

ESTATE "VERSATILITY" WAGON Model 300

\$479.00

(5 ft. bed)



(Add **\$72.00** for dump option)
Freight Included

- 1-ton hauling capacity with hand operated hydraulic dump system.
- Heavy structural steel frame.
- Removable Side Racks.
- High Flotation Tires.
- 5 ft., 6 ft. & 7 ft. beds available.
- Also, single axle and tandem axle trailers available.

VISA & MC Accepted.

Country Manufacturing, Inc.

P.O. Box 104 K-3
Fredericktown, Ohio 43019
(614) 694-9926

Look for Our Special Athletic Field
Management Issue Coming in June