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AS WE SEE IT

JERRY ROCHE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Players' wish: that the World Series be played on real turf

"They prefer grass."

With that statement, Philadelphia Phillies groundskeeper Ralph Frangipane pretty much sums up the feeling of Major League Baseball players.

What the players *like* and what they *get*, though, don't always agree—witness the 1993 World Series, which was played on two synthetic turf fields.

Frangipane is a turfgrass guy from way back—1951, to be exact. The career of his Toronto Blue Jays' counterpart, Brad Bujold, dates back to Exhibition Stadium, but that also featured synthetic turf.

"I really can't compare one against the other," Bujold tells us. "But we have run into some unique problems with artificial turf.

"For instance, everything shows up. If you watch a game on television, when it rains, you get the water stains; when players spit chewing tobacco, it stains the carpet. Chewing gum gets spit on the field, stepped on, and then you've got to freeze it and try to chip it off."

Frangipane is from the old school.

"On synthetic turf, baseball is a totally different game," he says. "You have a faster infield, the ball moves faster, it's rougher physically on the athletes. When you bunt, the ball moves faster and it gives the infielders an opportunity to get to the ball quicker."

Frangipane hopes he doesn't have to put up with synthetic turf much longer.

"There's definitely talk about going back to grass," he notes. "Lately, the papers have picked up on it. What happens is that—when we convert to football—we have to dig out second and third and put Astroturf on those bases. You're using two different types of Astroturf that have different textures, and the seams in some places are not perfectly even and might have a tendency to trip players. So that's the big beef.

"The Eagles have been complaining about it. They're out there right now lim-

bering up, but they can't have a full practice on Astroturf every day because they get leg splints and all that. They just limber up there, and then they go to a grass field to run their plays."

Bujold has some of the same problems, despite different uses for the Skydome field.

"Here, the stands have to rotate for football. In order to do that, you have to get the turf out of the way so the stands can go over the tracks," Bujold says. "Here, the artificial turf gets rolled up into large rolls (for conventions, etc.). So the seams—the zippers—that join the pieces of turf together get worn out."

Despite the problems inherent in synthetic turf fields, the number one consideration is consistency.

"I haven't had any complaints from the players themselves about the field," Bujold continues. "We try to be consistent so that, when a team *does* go out there, there are no surprises. That will go for the pitcher's mound, dirt areas, batter's boxes—whatever. It has to be consistent."

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT congratulates Frangipane, Bujold and other synthetic turf managers for all the special problems they have. We only wish that more field owners saw things differently. However, natural grass fields are catching on again, just like old times. Royals Stadium and Faurot Field at the University of Missouri, we hear, will become the two newest converts to natural grass (see "LM Grape-vine").

Certainly, if the Phillies and Blue Jays had their way, they would have been playing on real grass, too.

Jerry Roche