The Kentucky bluegrass sod at Soldier Field looked as healthy as grass can look when the Chicago Bears walked onto the field for their exhibition game with the Miami Dolphins early last month. It was a feat for the sod just to have survived the relentless heat since its installation just seven weeks before. But the cleats of the players quickly found the turf's weakness as the whistles blew and the game began.

The turf tore so badly that the National Football League stepped in to recommend ways to salvage the field for the remainder of the season. The Dolphins were especially concerned since they were to play their season opener against the Bears on the same field five weeks later. In a series of emergency meetings, the NFL, Chicago Park District, Turfgrass Services, Inc., and Huber Ranch Sod Nursery worked out a "temporary solution."

The problem with the turf was linked to many things, starting with the intense heat and the extremely short period of time the sod had to root. The same sod and root zoneency meetings, the NFL, Chicago Park District, Turfgrass Services, Inc., and Huber Ranch Sod Nursery worked out a "temporary solution."

The problem with the turf was linked to many things, starting with the intense heat and the extremely short period of time the sod had to root. The same sod and root zone of the center of the field from goal post to goal post was installed. Then it was topline the silt interface between the sod and the sand to let the roots through," Toma added. "The situation reminded me of Candlestick Park in San Francisco in 1981," says Toma. "The sod just wasn't rooting fast enough."

Huber cut sod from the same field as before, but this time it was 2½ inches thick in 18 by 36 inch sections. "Huber really went the extra mile to help," Toma said. "Each piece of sod weighed more than 90 pounds. We started laying sod on Thursday and finished noon on Saturday." An 80-foot-wide section of the center of the field from goal post to goal post was installed. Then it was topdressed with a mixture of sand and calcined clay, fertilized and treated with Bovamura and Ferromec.

The sidelines were heavily aerified with solid tines 3/4 inch deep and overseeded with perennial ryegrass. "We had to break through the silt interface between the sod and the sand to let the roots through," Toma stated.

The park district crew worked two 12-hour shifts for more than five days to complete the repairs. "The center of the field will have to be irrigated separately from the sidelines since the sod is thicker there," Toma added. "I still believe that natural turf is the right turf for professional sports."

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