



Perry's Perspective

One of the prerogatives of being *sportsTURF's* Manager of the Year is an opportunity to editorialize in "The Front Office." Never lacking for ideas, Floyd Perry, this year's Manager of the Year, came up with the following irony about the turf adults play on and what they afford their children.

Where's the Greens Committee?

At every private golf course, there's a group of playing members who take on the task of making decisions about the conditions of the turf, especially on greens. Most of the data that leads to changes and repairs generally comes from members that play the course and have complaints about the surface, usually after missed putts.

Golf is a game where no one falls, is tackled, slides or sprints upon the surface. Golfers just strike or roll a ball.

Isn't it interesting that many of those same men and women have children playing on some of the worst athletic turf and ignore the well being of their children's knees, elbows and ankles? Are those parents thinking that no one will get hurt on a wet, slippery, unplayable field? Are they thinking that the turf will just bounce back on its own for the next game, practice or sport?

I wonder what the golf pro and greens committee would do if golf carts and foot traffic ruined the playing surface of the course for the next week, month or season!

A common reason for the disparity between golf turf and children's athletic fields is that, at private golf courses, greens committees are formed because members pay dues. But don't those same dues-paying members pay local taxes, and shouldn't they take enough of an interest in their children's athletic turf to direct some of those funds?

It would make a difference. In 1996, one local school board asked me to evaluate all of their high schools' football game and practice facilities. Of the fourteen high schools, two were excellent, seven were good, three were fair, and two were unplayable. The nine that were excellent or good had improved the turf's quality by spending booster club monies over the school board's minimum funding. The five fields with below average turf and uneven surfaces spent their extra funds in other areas and didn't place stock in the suggestions of those who cared about the turf.

Where is the greens committee for high schools and recreation fields? They are sitting in the stands paying taxes and witnessing their sons and daughters playing on uneven, non-turfed surfaces. When is that greens committee going to react to this kind of abuse? Maybe never or maybe after a crippling injury to one of the playing members, their children.

What do you know that can be baked, frozen, trampled, starved, overfed, dehydrated, saturated, compacted, cut too short, not cut at all, sliced, probed, smothered, painted and kicked, but still survive? It's athletic turf. But it can't take too much of any of those conditions without some help from a greens committee.

February

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24-25 Turf and Grounds Exposition II. Holiday Inn, Suffern, NY. Contact: NYSTA. Phone: (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229. Fax: (518) 783-1258.

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25-28 Twenty-eighth Annual International Erosion Control Association Conference and Trade Exposition. Nashville, TN. Contact: International Erosion Control Association. Phone: (970) 879-3010. Fax: (970) 879-8563. E-mail, ecinfo@ieca.org. Web site: <http://www.ieca.org>.