

It's only a game

Excuse me for preaching to the choir but many times we Americans take our games too seriously. Though we've all often heard and perhaps said, "It's only a game," a lot of us make a big deal out of the local high school football game or our favorite pro team's fortunes. And now, as many readers know first-hand, this obsession has made its way literally to the roots of these games, the playing surfaces themselves.

Common sense once reigned when it came to fans (and players too) regarding the grass on which their teams play. You didn't hear much griping about the turf in mid-November because good reasoning allowed that grass doesn't grow as well that time of year. Add Mother Nature's whims to the beating turf takes for 3+ months from the athletes and it should be end of story.

Instead today it's becoming a weekly event for a field to get trashed somehow in the media. New York Jet players and coaches blamed a loss at Giants Stadium on turf conditions when their kicker missed a potential game-tying field goal. I was watching a nationally televised college game when an announcer, talking about less-than-ideal turf conditions, said "Someone get the golf course superintendent over here!" And Heinz Field in Pittsburgh has taken some shots, from what I've read mostly related to the Steelers not playing well.

I guess not enough fans saw the newsreel clips this fall after Johnny Unitas' passing of the NFL's "Greatest Game Ever Played." Did it matter that the turf that day was more dirt than grass? Or was it just a tremendous football GAME.

The bottom line for fans should be that even in mediocre conditions, the turf is the same for both teams.

SAFE Ground Level campaign underway

As noted above, the demands on athletic fields and their managers have never been greater. A good playing field is in everyone's best interest, and you can help the effort by responding to the challenge of the SAFE Foundation.

You have witnessed the punishment your fields endure and you do everything in your control to prepare the fields for play. SAFE would like to make your efforts more productive with solid research on which to base decisions. The research efforts of SAFE will initially be based on the results of a survey of sports turf managers conducted at the 2002 STMA Annual Conference.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." —Margaret Mead

SAFE thanks John Deere for creative development, production and printing of the SAFE Brochure, and The Toro Company and Textron Golf, Turf and Specialty Products for co-sponsoring the mailing of the Ground Level Campaign materials.

Act now, your donation will make a difference. The SAFE Foundation, 1027 South 3rd St., Council Bluffs, IA 51503, 800-323-3875, SAFE@st.omhcoxmail.com.



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