

From the Sidelines



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Plain, muddy, beautiful uniforms

Much has been written and said about Orlando's Citrus Bowl field during this past bowl season. My 10-year-old and I sat down to watch our Penn State side play LSU on New Year's Day and he was stunned by the field's state. "Dad, what happened?" he asked, as he'd never seen a game played in such "old, really old, school" conditions.

While folks are using the unfortunate situation for their own purposes, e.g., calling for the immediate installation of synthetic turf, etc., there are two points of which everyone needs to be reminded: 1) Rain destroyed a field that probably had experienced way too much traffic on it to begin with, including Florida's high school state finals less than 2 weeks earlier and another bowl game just 3 days before the game January 1. And 2) conditions were the same for both teams and no players were injured.

Another note regarding playing surfaces and injuries: It was irritating to read that Patriots coach Bill Belichick blamed the turf in Houston's Reliant Stadium for receiver Wes Welker's season-ending leg injury. Hey Bill, you are nothing but a grumpy multi-millionaire who acts like he's in charge of a Marine battalion or something really important—just shut up.

Observations from STMA Conference

- Love the price of Disney's free "Magical Express" airport bus service but the marketing video they subject riders to is extremely annoying.
- Funny how often the Conference locale has weird weather. This year in Orlando the SAFE golf tournament was held up 90 minutes by frost; 3 years ago a freak ice storm in San Antonio cancelled the whole shebang. Perhaps Mother Nature enjoys tweaking a gathering of professionals who regularly have to deal with her capriciousness?
- Memo to LSU Athletics: Eric Fasbender needs a raise so he can replace his Walter Hagen-era golf clubs. I kept expecting my SAFE tournament partner to pull a gutta percha ball out of his bag.
- Warning: if Mike Schiller asks if you want to see his back surgery scar, say no. I said yes and yuck, it looks like the largest zipper you've ever seen and it runs all the way down to his . . . like I said, yuck.
- Finally, a shout out to Tanner Delvalle, Penn State turf grad student, who is worried his future job prospects are slim after former prof Dr. Andy McNitt asked him what the porosity of gravel was in front of 150 or so attendees and Tanner couldn't answer. Don't worry, TD, with the Nittany Lions' recent successes in the Student Collegiate Challenge the value of your education won't be undervalued.

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