

NFL players prefer natural grass



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Every 2 years the National Football League Players Association surveys its members' attitudes regarding the surfaces on which they play. In 2006 approximately 1,500 players responded; here's what they had to say:

First, the numbers most of us are interested in: 72% prefer to play on natural grass; 18% prefer artificial infill; and 9% have no preference.

Another interesting result was that 90% of respondents said NFL turf managers (referred to as "groundskeepers" in the survey) play a "very important" role in the performance of natural grass surfaces, and 9% said they play an "important" role. Thirty-seven percent said their turf managers play a "very important" role in the performance of artificial infilled surfaces, while 43% said they play an "important" role.

Ninety-four percent of players who responded feel the "top-rated" NFL grounds crew should maintain the surface of the Super Bowl. (There was no mention of how a crew might be rated but one can assume that highest-rated field would be maintained by the highest-rated crew. Somewhere, Mr. Toma is shaking his head over that one!)

Sixty-five percent said artificial infilled fields are more likely than grass to contribute to injury, and 74% said infills cause more soreness and fatigue. Sixty-seven percent thought the infill systems are more likely to shorten their careers.

Ninety-one percent said they could tell the difference between a softer or firmer infill surface; 48% said the new infill systems should be softer while 19% said they should be firmer; and 33% had no opinion.

The players were asked for "additional comments" and these were most common: 1. Make all fields grass to prevent injuries; 2. Keep all grass fields well maintained; 3. Do not allow baseball or multi-use fields; 4. Put artificial infill surfaces in inclement weather cities; and 5. Set standards for quality and texture of all fields based on safety, performance and comfort.

Top 5 Grass Fields

1. Tampa Bay Buccaneers
2. Carolina Panthers
3. Arizona Cardinals
4. Jacksonville Jaguars
5. San Diego Chargers

Bottom 5 Grass Fields

1. New England Patriots
(before FieldTurf)
2. Pittsburgh Steelers
3. Oakland Raiders
4. Miami Dolphins
5. Chicago Bears

Top 5 Artificial Fields

1. Seattle Seahawks (FieldTurf)
2. Detroit Lions (FieldTurf)
3. Baltimore Ravens (Momentum)
4. Atlanta Falcons (FieldTurf)
5. Indianapolis Colts (FieldTurf)

Bottom 5 Artificial Fields

1. New York Giants/Jets (FieldTurf)
2. Minnesota Vikings (FieldTurf)
3. Dallas Cowboys (RealGrass)
4. St. Louis Rams (FieldTurf)
5. Buffalo Bills (GameDay)

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