

## ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELDS

Hi ABSC parents,

Wondering about the field closures and the artificial turf fields? An inquiry came in about the slipperiness of the artificial turf.

About the safety of the players:

Part of the referee's job is to look out for dangerous conditions and cancel any game that s/he deems dangerous. Just like they make judgments on the safety of a player with, say, a bandaged wrist, and may have that player sit out the game, they also cancel a game if the playing conditions are too dangerous. Goals not anchored to the ground? Motorcycles riding across the field (that really happened!)? Players missing player passes so their ages cannot be confirmed (question of fairness to the opponent)? Plastic turf too slippery to play on? The game is canceled. I have not heard that the artificial turf at Gilman will become too slippery when wet. But I don't know!

About the care of the fields:

Don't take this wrong, but when a field is closed due to rain (rainout), this is done to protect the fields, not the players. Some teams would love to slop around on a wet field! But the grass fields get torn up badly by cleats when the field is wet. It's really tough to repair a grass field after that DURING the season. It just gets torn up worse and worse, making big dirt patches and mud holes and indented spots.

In the off-season, the fields maintenance crews from each city do regular maintenance (re-seeding, fertilizing, filling of potholes, fixing sprinklers, etc). If they are clever enough (and some are) they can time it JUST right so the fields are playable on time for the next soccer/softball/lacrosse/rugby/etc season with the new crop of grass ready to handle the cleats. But all of that is during the regular cycle of field maintenance in a year.

Back to the issue of fields being temporarily closed DURING the season, consider that the Berkeley/Albany area is short by about 9 sports fields for our population size. The precious fields that we do have get way overused and get torn up worse than they should in a normal season, which makes all this TLC and maintenance of the fields all the more important. This is why our league is serious about teams staying OFF a grass field that is temporarily closed due to rain. (And we pay for all this maintenance, so we don't want to shoot ourselves in the foot that way either.)

So one of the benefits of the artificial turf fields now at Gilman is that games/prax there do not get cancelled in wet weather or right after a rain. There may be other reasons not to play on the artificials in wet weather, but we won't have rainouts there like we will on the grass fields. (Further note: due to varying drainage dynamics on the grass fields, some re-open sooner than others.)

I hope this information helps!

-Julie Anderson

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10-3-08