

To: MVS
From: Donald Herman
Ref: Turf vs Grass
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Up until this last weekend, March 27th, my team had played on four turf fields: Randolph (almost 10 years old), Falmouth (brand new), Sandwich, and Monomoy (both 6 years old). Not once was I concerned about the field conditions. All of my athletes and coaches were excited to be playing on these surfaces.

But, on Tuesday afternoon, March 23, I walked onto our game field around 5:15 pm, just to take a look at the condition of the field ahead of our first home game.

I was appalled, horrified, and disgusted. Walking and seeing our field and reflecting back on what we had played on so far this season almost brought me to tears from anger and frustration. I immediately called Caleb Nicholson, owner of Contemporary Landscape, and he met me at the field around 5:30. With administrative permission, Caleb had a crew on the field Wednesday morning leaf blowing off the many thousands of piles of goose poop on the field, filling in holes, and tamping down above ground ruts that boles had created on the field. It was so bad that I considered calling my AD and cancelling the home game and moving it back to playing at Sandwich. I was not going to put my team, or the visiting team, on that surface in its current state. Even though the field was done Wednesday, it was once again saturated with crap for our game on Saturday.

I was also having a conversation with myself as I walked the field. I was thinking that if I were offered a job at MV and another school, with all things being equal except for the athletic facilities, I would not accept the Vineyard job due to its facilities.

I will admit that I have not listened to any MVC meetings since the first one. I know there have been passionate presentations from both sides over various concerns, one of which is environmental. I, once again, give three examples that I have played on or visited: 1. Mass Maritime, with their turf field within 50 yards of the Bourne Canal, 2. Hull High School, with their turf field within 50 yards of the Atlantic Ocean, and, 3. The Naval Academy with their turf field within 100 yards of the Chesapeake Bay. Two of these schools are known for their engineering and science. If there were environmental concerns over water contamination, these field locations should quiet those concerns.

The second major concern and thought is that grass can be sustained here. Sorry, but we could have the Boston Red Sox grounds crew work here year round and nothing would change. Grass cannot support the workload our game fields are asked to handle.

Turf fields, numbering in the 1000's, have been around for decades. If there were any issues to the environment, to player health and safety, this would have been well documented and well publicized. But still, these new and improved turf fields continue to be installed all across our country and around the world. Some of these turf surfaces are even installed on peoples properties here on MV.

On a personal note concerning turf vs grass fields and injuries. One of my sons, playing soccer his junior year on our field, tore his meniscus. After graduating from

MVRHS, while playing in the mens summer soccer league here on MV, tore his ACL while playing on grass. Both required surgery. Injuries are a part of sports. His injuries occurred with no contact, just with him planting his foot to kick the ball.

Huntress is one of two firms that have researched field conditions and made recommendations. They install both grass and turf fields. If they are able to install either and would get paid for either, why is it they are strongly recommending a turf field for us?

I leave you with this. Since Covid started, the hot phrase has been, "listen to the experts and follow the science." If you can take the emotions out of this, follow the science and listen to the experts, turf will be the solution.

Thank you.
Donald Herman

PS - During our first home football game this weekend, the field conditions were directly related to an injury. My safety, attempting to stop and jump to make a play on a pass, was in position for making an interception. But, before he could jump, his right foot landed in a hole and he sprained his ankle. The full extent of his injury is unknown at this time. The trainer believes he may have torn a ligament in his ankle. This injury would not have happened on turf.