

sports

Artificial turf

It gives better traction, but athletes don't like it

By RICK STOLLE
Sports Reporter

NOTE: This is the concluding article of a two-part series.

The general opinion of trainers and coaches from around the country on artificial turf is that it has much better traction and consistency.

"The consistency of the surface is the main asset," said Danny Poole, trainer for Memphis State University.

Many trainers and coaches also feel that there are no more or less injuries on artificial turf as there are on natural. They say that injuries will happen regardless of the surface; it is the contact on the surface that produces the injuries, not the surface itself.

Yet, different trainers and coaches around the nation have different feelings about artificial surfaces. In all cases, their veils are reflected by the turf their teams play on.

Poole said artificial turf speeds up play but football is more enjoyable on natural turf. "A plush natural turf is the finest surface to play football on," he said. MSU has a natural turf field.

Dean Weber of the University of Arkansas said artificial turf is safer than natural because it can be controlled as an environment. It can be improved upon in the future, he said, through technology and experimentation. Arkansas was one of

the first Southwest Conference schools to have artificial turf.

"Our kids got shin splints when we played on grass," said Spanky Stephens, University of Texas trainer. "We don't have them when we play at home." UT's Memorial Stadium was the first in the conference to have artificial turf.

"It's hard," said Cash Birdwell, trainer for SMU, "and I wouldn't want to fall on it." Yet, he said it is an asset to schools that would use it a great deal, because it is a constant, year-round surface. SMU plays on the Tartanurf at Texas Stadium.

Jim Hochberg, coordinator of health services at Penn State University, said players have better body

creates more problems than it solves. Penn State has natural turf.

There are less major injuries on artificial turf, said Skip Cox, trainer for Baylor University. It produces a few more minor injuries, like scrapes and the like, he said, but they are easier to handle than a major injury. He said it takes only some bandages and disinfectant to take care of the minor ones. It may take surgery, a hospital and a long time to heal a serious knee or ankle injury.

He said the only problems come with the players adjusting to the turf. "They have to get used to it and learn how to fall," he said. Also, the surface's age is a factor to consider. He said the older a surface is the harder it is. "Have you ever fallen on a sidewalk?" he asked. "It's kind of like that when you fall on an old artificial surface."

Cox said he prefers natural turf only if it is perfect.

"With proper grooming, time and a lot of money, a natural turf surface is the best kind to play on," he said, "but Baylor just doesn't have that kind of money." He said it is not worth it to Baylor to spend large amounts of money and time when artificial turf is available at a much cheaper overall cost.

"This turf we had was eight years old and we are in the process of replacing it now," he said, "but we feel like we have gotten our money's worth."

Cox said the players did not like the natural turf they played on in the

Jim Hochberg, coordinator of health services at Penn State University, said players have better body control on artificial surfaces due to the better traction.

Peach Bowl last year. "It was at the end of the year and the surface was really worn down," he said.

He said the professional players he has talked to do not like the artificial surfaces because they feel it cuts their longevity. They believe it brings on an arthritic-type of condition, he said.

Baylor will keep artificial turf, he said, because they feel it is the best for all involved. It is less expensive, easier to take care of and the players like it better.

"An older artificial surface will have a sandpaper feel to it," said Mark Stephens, trainer at Mississippi State University. "The yardlines will feel like concrete because they have been painted so much."

He said artificial turf brings on tendonitis, or inflammation of the tendons, in his players because it takes a different style of running and body control on it. It does have an advantage as far as consistency and convenience go, he said.

They very rarely treat a player for an abrasion except when they play on

artificial turf, he said. "And our players simply enjoy natural turf more." Mississippi State has one of the finest natural turf stadiums in the nation. The prescription turf can drain up to four inches of water an hour from the surface.

Ken Murray of Texas Tech said the footing is treacherous on natural turf. "We have a lot of slippage and often more abrasions on grass," he said. The Tech players are more comfortable on the artificial turf of Jones Stadium due to better traction and body control, he said.

Most of the injuries on artificial turf are during the transition phase, he said. Players are learning how to control their bodies on the surface, he said, and sometimes get hurt. All the professional players who have played for Texas A&M and have gotten hurt in the pros, were hurt during the transition back to grass, he said.

There is apparently no difference in the numbers of injuries on the different surfaces in football in America today. The debate of the safety of artificial turf will likely continue well into the future. Yet, until there is some concrete proof one way or the other, trainers and coaches will only be able to rely on their gut feelings and instincts to choose between artificial and natural surfaces.

Studies will continue and probably never reach a conclusion because of the great diversity of opinion between people on the merits of artificial turf. It is up to the individual teams to decide what they would rather play on and what is the best surface for them.

Oilers to let Stabler keep his familiar jersey — No. 12

United Press International
HOUSTON — Recently acquired quarterback Kenny Stabler is being afforded a favor which Earl Campbell wasn't when he joined the Houston Oilers.

Stabler will keep his old familiar jersey No. 12 for his first season as an Oiler this fall in keeping with his college days at Alabama and pro career with the Oakland Raiders, an Oilers spokesman said Thursday.

The club's decision to give Stabler that number meant that 2-year Oiler veteran Guido Merkins had to give

up No. 12. He will wear No. 19 next season.

Before the 1978 NFL season, rookie Campbell was given No. 34 by the Oilers after he had worn No. 20 at the University of Texas. Defensive back Bill Currier was wearing No. 20 at the time.

The decision may be more superstition than favoritism. Ten of the 14 Super Bowls have been won by teams with starting quarterbacks wearing No. 12.

Stabler, Roger Staubach, Bob Griese, Joe Namath and Terry Bradshaw all wear or wore No. 12.

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Ruiz fights to keep 1st place

United Press International
NEW YORK — Wearing her Boston Marathon medal and sobbing frequently, runner Rosie Ruiz told reporters Thursday she intends to fight for her tainted prize.

Ruiz' finish in Monday's Boston Marathon has been heavily criticized by other runners, including second-place women's finisher Jacqueline Gareau and men's winner Bill Rodgers.

Boston Marathon director Will Cloney said he met Thursday with Gareau, a resident of Montreal, who told him "she didn't want to pressure us into a fast decision."

Cloney's Boston Athletic Association, which sponsors the annual race, is looking into reports from spectators that Ruiz did not run the entire 26.2-mile course. They are reviewing videotapes, photographs and talking to runners and checkpoint officials.

Earlier in the day, Ruiz denied at a

New York news conference she had cheated in winning the women's division.

Ruiz is accused of jumping into the race 2 miles before the finish line. In addition, a Manhattan photographer has charged Ruiz did not finish last October's New York Marathon.

"If I thought this would have happened, I certainly would have known who was running next to me and have them vouch for me," she declared.

Ruiz rejected an offer of \$1,000 from the New York Daily News to run another marathon within a half hour of her Boston time. She said it was too soon after the race to make such an attempt.

Boston Celts look forward to Game 4

United Press International
Bill Fitch says his Boston Celtics have already gotten over Wednesday night's cliffhanging defeat to the 76ers and are looking forward to Game 4 in Philadelphia tonight.

And, the Celtics' coach emphasized, the team will be more than prepared.

"Game 4 is the key, and our team is going to be higher than ever," Fitch said after the 76ers scored a 99-97 triumph to take a 2-1 lead in the Eastern Conference championship series. "The pressure's not there when it's 3-1."

The Celtics could easily have been demoralized when they blew a chance to tie Game 3 in the final 16 seconds. M.L. Carr attempted to pass inside to Dave Cowens, but Caldwell Jones deflected the ball away with six seconds left. Maurice Cheeks retrieved it for Philadelphia.

"Our mistakes last night were mental as well as physical," Fitch said. "We had our soup and we were trying to eat it with a fork."

Julius Erving scored 22 of his 28 points in the second half to lead the 76ers. Philadelphia led, 90-76, with 6:10 left, but a Boston comeback was then orchestrated by Larry Bird, Erving's defensive assignment, who paced the Celtics with 22 points and 21 rebounds.

Bird hit a 3-pointer with 39 seconds left to bring the Celtics within 2 points. Carr then misfired with his pass inside.

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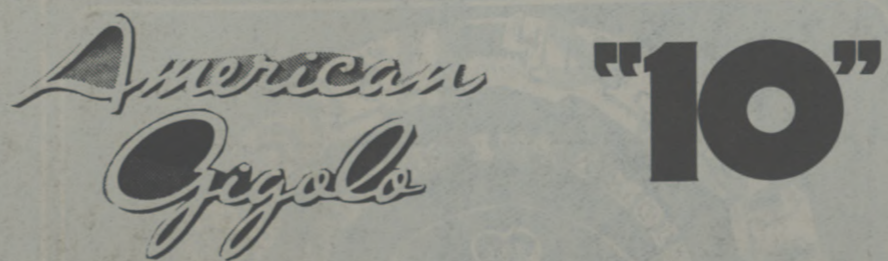
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