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NFLPA's DeMaurice Smith Calls on NFL to Address Turf Issue, Wants All Grass Fields

By Mike Deprisco • Published October 2, 2020

NFLPA's DeMaurice Smith calls on NFL to address turf issue originally appeared on [NBC Sports Washington](#)

In large part, the NFL has done a solid job of keeping its players and personnel healthy while playing a season during a global pandemic. However, teams are still struggling to field their full rosters on Sundays.

As we wrap up the first month of the 2020 campaign, more and more players are suffering significant leg injuries. Some of that can be attributed to the nature of the game, the fact that there was no preseason and the problems with playing on artificial turf instead of grass.

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Out of 32 NFL teams, 13 NFL use some form of artificial turf. After a slew of 49ers suffered leg injuries during a two-week slate at MetLife stadium and the Jets lost a bunch of players to injury Thursday night, the calls for an all-grass NFL grew louder.

San Francisco cornerback [Ahkello Witherspoon even went on to say](#) MetLife stadium is the worst turf he's ever played on.

In an appearance on The Sports Junkies Friday morning, DeMaurice Smith, the executive director for the NFLPA, talked about his desire for the league to move quicker on this specific issue.

"We're not terribly pleased with the pace at which the league has moved on the field/turf issue," Smith said. "We took a deep dive on artificial turf and playing surfaces I think starting about five or six years ago and it's clear that there's a significant statistical difference between the injuries that are happening on natural grass vs. the injuries that happen on turf."

Smith then went on to explain that because the artificial turf construction is done at such a high level and the turf cleats players wear are so well made, the risk of injury is greater on an artificial surface.

When a player plants on turf, there's no give to the ground or his shoes. The only thing left to bend or flex are the players' ligaments and muscles, causing more strain than normal play after play. On a grass field, the ground is more pliable.

"We want to move to a world where it's natural grass throughout the league," Smith said. "I think it will cut down on injuries, so we want to continue to press that to the NFL with an eye towards just, how do we make the game safer?"

If the science supports playing on grass all the time, then it really isn't much of a decision. The 49ers were a Super Bowl contender heading into the season and have since lost their best defensive player for the year and their quarterback for multiple weeks.

If there's anything that can be done to decrease the risk of injury and keep more star players on the field, any league would have to seriously consider it.

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