

SIGN IN



This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our

[Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.

**Accept and Close**

# Only Natural Grass Can Level The NFL's Playing Field

## AUTHOR

JC TRETTER

## TOPICS

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## SHARE

As a rookie learning the ins and outs of being a professional football player, I remember the collective groan that my older teammates made whenever it was announced that we'd be practicing indoors on artificial turf instead of the usual outdoor grass field. I played almost exclusively on synthetic turf in college. Once I started experiencing both surfaces interchangeably, I began to understand exactly why

We use cookies to enhance your browsing experience, to analyze site usage, and to assist in our marketing efforts. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our [Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.

**Accept and Close**

my teammates disliked the practices on turf.

Whenever I practiced on an artificial field surface, my joints felt noticeably stiffer the next day. The unforgiving nature of artificial turf compounds the grind on the body we already bear from playing a contact sport.

First, a bit of physics: Professional football players put extremely high levels of force and rotation onto the playing surface. Grass will eventually give, which often releases the cleat prior to reaching an injurious load. On synthetic surfaces, there is less give, meaning our feet, ankles and knees absorb the force, which makes injury more likely to follow.

The data supports the anecdotes you'll hear from me

**and other players: artificial turf is significantly harder on the body than grass.** Based on NFL injury data collected from 2012 to 2018, not only was the

This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our

[Privacy Policy](#) for more information or [do not use them](#).

Accept and Close

contact injury rate for lower extremities higher during practices and games held on artificial turf, NFL players consistently experienced a much higher rate of non-contact lower extremity injuries on turf compared to natural surfaces. Specifically, players have a 28% higher rate of non-contact lower extremity injuries when playing on artificial turf. Of those non-contact injuries, players have a 32% higher rate of non-contact knee injuries on turf and a staggering 69% higher rate of non-contact foot/ankle injuries on turf compared to grass.

Earlier this year, the NFL and NFLPA tasked artificial turf manufacturers with developing a surface like natural grass that meets the specifications developed

by our respective engineering experts. We also

This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our

[Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.

challenged cleat manufacturers to design innovative footwear that is safer and tailored to both players'

needs and to specific surfaces. [Accept and Close](#) There is no guarantee

that artificial turf manufacturers will be able to create a product that provides as safe of a surface as natural grass, so we should not sit around hoping that happens. Until a product is developed that satisfies engineering specifications, we must take steps to protect players from unsafe field surfaces. In short, **NFL clubs should proactively change all field surfaces to natural grass.**

This data is clear, so everyone involved with our sport should be similarly motivated to make this switch. For players, we can be stronger advocates for ourselves by continuing to demand safer standards. For coaches and general managers, building a successful team is much easier with a healthy roster. For NFL owners, any decision shown to protect their most important investments - the players - should be a no-brainer.

This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our

[Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.

**Accept and Close**

Climate and weather are not barriers to natural grass practice or game fields. Cold-climate teams like the Packers, Steelers and Browns successfully maintain natural grass fields. Indoor stadiums shouldn't be a barrier for grass fields, either. The Cardinals and Raiders have figured out how to provide a natural grass playing surface indoors. Agronomically, **natural grass field surfaces are possible everywhere.**

You might be thinking, “*But I thought all fields are inspected?*” It's true that NFL-NFLPA inspectors evaluate practice and game fields through the Clegg test, which measures the hardness of the surface. The Clegg test, however, is extremely limited in its ability to tell us about the performance or safety of a field and is not nearly as comprehensive for what the modern game requires. Our union has raised this concern repeatedly over the past few years, and we believe it is now time for a complete overhaul.

This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our [Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.

[Accept and Close](#)

Our occupation is dangerous enough, and the increased rate of lower extremity injuries linked to the field surface we are forced to play on is unacceptable.

**The NFLPA is advocating for teams to convert artificial practice and game fields to natural grass fields.** In the meantime, we're fighting on behalf of our players to develop better safety standards and testing methods for artificial turf. There is room for innovation by artificial turf manufacturers, but until the risk of injury on turf mirrors the risk on grass, playing on turf is not in the best interest of our players.

And finally, a quick note about our fight against the ongoing pandemic. As we unfortunately saw in recent days, the virus is still very much present in our

communities. We know that there is fatigue by many

This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our

[Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.

following protocols implemented to stop the

transmission of the virus. If we needed a reminder

about the vigilance required by everyone to do their part, we certainly got it. The playbook to playing a full season is very clear, and we cannot allow complacency to derail the progress we have made to date.



**- JC Treter**

NFLPA President

This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our [Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.



Accept and Close



**SHARE**

**HELPFUL LINKS**

**Press Releases**

**Internships**

**Partnership & Endorsement  
Policy**

**Job Opportunities**

**Drug Policy**

**Public Salary Cap Report**

**AFFILIATES & PARTNERS**

**NFL Players Inc.**

**NFLPA Collegiate Bowl**

**NFL Player Benefits**

**Hall of Fame**

**The Trust**

**Professional Athletes  
Foundation**

**NFL.com**

**NFL Auction**

**Privacy Policy** **Terms of Service**

©2020 NFL Players Photos courtesy of AP Photos, Getty Images, Kevin A. Koski/NFLPA and NFL Photos

This website uses cookies to give you the best experience and personalized service. By using this site, you agree to our use of cookies. Please read our [Privacy Policy](#) for more information on how we use them.

**Accept and Close**