

Comments to BOR and BOF regarding artificial turf athletic fields
March 16, 2009

Maureen Carson
1335 Shippan Ave.
Stamford 06902

Good Evening,

I am here tonight to ask that you remove funding for artificial turf products from all City of Stamford budgets until the material in the fields is proven to be safe for our children and the environment. This year, there are three fields in the 2009-10 budget: two baseball fields in the Parks and Recreation budget and Boyle Stadium in the Board of Education budget. For budget year 2010-11, more fields are requested for Rippowam Middle School and field renovations continue in the following years.

I first became aware of this product upon learning the city intended to replace two soccer fields at West Beach Park, the first artificial turf in a park, rather than at a school. My children participate in non-turf athletics, so I knew nothing about the components of the fields. When learning that the ground up used tires would go on top of the fake grass carpet, my initial concern was that they would simply wash off the fields, which are prone to flooding, and go directly into Long Island Sound. But as I investigated more about the fields, I discovered that many concerned parents across the country were questioning the health risk for their children when playing on recycled ground up tires. Then lead was found in the nylon/polyethylene blades, adding to the controversy. The Centers for Disease Control states that children under 6 should not play on the fields and that athletes should wash any exposed area vigorously for 20 seconds or more after play. Also, clothing should be turned inside out so as not to track the dust to other locations. Westport has installed warning signs at all their artificial turf fields. Larchmont I believe has done the same. Greenwich is questioning future installations and warning signs. Currently, Connecticut Bill 924 asks for a moratorium on funding for the installation of artificial turf fields, and that warning signs be mandatory at all existing fields.

The bottom line is that we just don't know if the fields are safe or not. There are volumes on both the pros and cons of fake grass and rubber crumbs. It has been suggested that the data is sometimes contradictory because no two fields are exactly alike due to the source of the used tires, often from China or Korea. Perhaps the \$200,000 study currently being conducted in Connecticut thanks to Attorney General Blumenthal will shed some light. The study is testing the field materials for three different human exposures: dermal (skin), ingested (digestive exposure) and inhaled (breathing in fumes) as well as the content of storm water runoff. I hope they are also investigating the heat island effect as 6 high school or college athletes died last year due to heat stroke. There is no federal regulation of this industry and until such time as we know the field components are absolutely safe for our children and the environment, we should discontinue installing them, just like New York City has done. Just because we can, doesn't mean we should. Please, take artificial turf out of the budget.

Thank you.



Town of Westport
Parks & Recreation

THE TOWN OF WESTPORT ENCOURAGES ALL
THOSE USING ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELDS TO
OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. WASH HANDS AND EXPOSED BODY AGGRESSIVELY
AFTER PLAYING ON FIELDS
2. TURN CLOTHES INSIDE OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
TO AVOID TRACKING DUST TO OTHER LOCATIONS
3. KEEP BEVERAGES CLOSED AND IN BAGS/COOLERS
WHEN NOT DRINKING TO AVOID EXCESS DUST AND
FIBERS FROM GETTING IN THE BEVERAGE
4. EATING ON THE FIELDS IS PROHIBITED

From: maurencarson@aol.com
To: maurencarson@aol.com
Subject: Fwd: death in hs/college age range
Date: Mon, 16 Mar 2009 1:09 pm

http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/sports/highschool/s_612037.html

Coach's homicide charges grab attention

By Rick Starr TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Tuesday, February 17, 2009

Hempfield football coach Greg Meisner sometimes wonders why he survived severe heat stroke as a high school player, while others weren't as fortunate.

"I guess I had an angel looking over me," Meisner said. "It's always in the back of my mind."

The issue of heat-related injury and death has grabbed the attention of football coaches across the WPIAL following the death of a Kentucky player and the indictment of his high school coach on reckless homicide charges.

David Stinson, coach at Pleasure Ridge Park High School in Louisville, Ky., was indicted last month in the death of Max Gilpin, a 6-foot-2, 220-pound player who died Aug. 23 — three days after he collapsed while running sprints at practice.

Stinson pleaded not guilty Jan. 26 and was released without bond by a Jefferson County, Ky., judge. Reckless homicide is a felony in the state.

The case marks the first time a criminal charge has been filed over the practice-related death of a player involving a high school or college coach in the United States, the Louisville Courier-Journal reported.

"It's shocking," Highlands football coach Sam Albert said. "It's tragic any time a young man dies, and probably nobody feels worse than his coach. It's sad."

Added Thomas Jefferson coach Bill Cherpak: "It's definitely scary."

Gilpin, who was 15, was one of six football players who died due to heat-related injury in high school and college last year. A total of 39 players have died from heat-related causes over the past 13 years, including 29 who were in high school, according to a University of North Carolina study.

"I think coaches are aware of the problem," Aliquippa coach Mike Zmijanac said. "It's not just football; it's all sports. It's a complex issue, but the important thing is to use common sense."

The Associated Press reported Gilpin, a sophomore offensive lineman, died of septic shock, multiple organ failure and complications from heat stroke, according to the death certificate. He participated in a practice that lasted between two to three hours in temperatures in the mid-90s, according to the indictment. No autopsy was conducted.

"I'm sure every high school football coach will follow the details of this case," Albert said. "This will shoot right to the top of everybody's list of things to be aware of going into (summer football) camp."

Meisner said he learned valuable lessons the day he collapsed from apparent heat stroke in 1975 during a Valley summer football practice.

Meisner said he fell down several times during practice and blacked out for 45 minutes. He said his kidneys failed, and he lost 22 pounds during the next week, while struggling for his life at Citizens Hospital in New Kensington.

"They put me in an iceasket," Meisner said. "They packed my body in ice to lower my body temperature from 107 degrees."

Gilpin's body temperature reached 107 degrees when he arrived at the hospital, according to Jefferson County authorities. He died three days later.

Meisner admits he was lucky, despite doing "everything wrong" on the day he collapsed.

"I was in phenomenal shape for football that season. But I weighed only 195 pounds with 5 percent body fat, and that didn't help my chances," he said. "I was drinking salt Coke (Coca-Cola with salt tablets). I didn't drink any water before or during practice. When I got dizzy and fell down, I just ignored it. I can only blame myself."

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"I think about two things when I look back on it. One, I was blessed that I survived. Two, maybe it was meant to be, so I could get the message out about preventing heat stroke. Maybe I'll help save someone else's life."

Meisner, who also serves as Hempfield athletic director, says he relies on trainer Lisa Brose to help him monitor players, who are weighed before and after every training camp practice. Ice towels, a sprinkler system and water bottles are available throughout practices, Meisner said.

"The lesson is that you have to be very pro-active when it comes to the hydration and nutrition of your players," Meisner said. "I know who my in-shape athletes are, and you watch them. You can read body language when a player is struggling with the heat."

Said Zmijanac, "It's not a matter of being tough. The days of denying water to football players are gone. Kids need to be hydrated. Athletes need water to perform."

WPIAL executive director Tim O'Malley said every high school athlete must accept the "inherent risk" of participating in sports.

"Unfortunately, we live in a society where somebody gets blamed," he said. "Somebody has to be the blame guy."

O'Malley said the Kentucky case should help raise awareness of heat-related injury. He said WPIAL has no rules limiting or canceling practices due to heat.

Albert said attitudes about football and heat stroke have changed during the past several decades.

"When I played, it was a sign of weakness to get a drink of water," Albert said. "As coaches, we've all become more aware of the risks — and the advantages of keeping players hydrated. But there still are so many variables we can't control."

Albert said heat builds up on artificial turf, adding another risk factor.

"There are days when I can see the steam rising off our rubber surface," he said. "It can be 20 degrees hotter on the artificial turf."

Cherpak, who has led Thomas Jefferson to four WPIAL Class AAA football titles the past five seasons, said there's a line between pushing players to be their best and going too far.

"Part of being successful in sports is having someone push you beyond where you think you can go," Cherpak said. "As a coach, you want your kids to go beyond where they think they can go."

Coaches are concerned, Cherpak said, that running tough conditioning drills could lead to criminal charges if a player has serious physical issues.

"We take pride in outworking our opponents," he said. "But at the same time, you have to monitor it and keep your players safe."

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