Link between cancer, artificial turf questioned

By Keith Eldridge

TACOMA, Wash. — A high school soccer star's dream of playing college soccer has been blocked by cancer, and his situation has rekindled the debate over whether artificial turf is somehow responsible.

Luke Beademphl was a 4-year letterman on the varsity soccer team at Tacoma's Stadium High School sought after by the likes of Oregon State and the Air Force Academy before settling on the University of Hawaii at Hilo.

"I mean, I thought it would be an awesome place to go to school and to play soccer," he said.

But instead of the islands, Beademphl is heading to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center for treatment of Hodgkin's lymphoma. He was diagnosed last summer.

"I didn't know what to think at the time. I'd never been diagnosed with cancer before," he said.

But Beademphl's parents soon found out that other soccer players had been diagnosed.

"His keeper coach knows eight," said his mother, Stephanie Beademphl, "eight players that he has personally worked with who now have cancer."

They now wonder if it could have something to do with the artificial turf they play on.

The Federal Centers for Disease Control has recommended that some artificial turf athletic fields be tested for lead.

And there's concern about the little granules of ground up tires that contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons that could be getting into the players' systems.

Beademphl says the granules stick to the ball.

"I'll catch it. It'll stop the ball but not the pellets. They'll go into my face, go into my eyes, my mouth," said Luke.

But just this last summer the Consumer Product Safety Commission took a hard look at artificial turf and determined that it was safe.

The makers of FieldTurf say the digestive system is not powerful enough to extract the chemical components from the rubber.

That's little consolation for a young soccer star who'll celebrate Christmas early because he goes in for four months of treatment two days before the holiday.
wondering if the sport he loves so much is doing him harm.

A recent effort to ban the artificial turf at Bainbridge High School failed, and efforts in several other states to ban the turf have also failed.

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hobbes • 63p
This is a sad story but even sadder if it is caused by something that could have been avoided.

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Seriously what doesn't cause cancer.

But, a good number of cancers are caused by things we do or use - and knowing that they do allows us to find safer ways of living. We KNOW that smoking causes lung cancer (among other kinds), and so we can reduce the risk simply by stopping smoking.

That's why this needs to be studied, to see if it really does cause any illnesses. Just giving up and not taking precautions is not a rational act.

When you see a cluster of cancer cases such as this and their connection to playing soccer on a chemical-laden surface, it should be investigated by several different agencies to get a comprehensive determination of possible carcinogens.

Honestly, there are a number of different things that cause cancer. I am a 13 year survivor of childhood Hodgkin's Disease, and I will most likely never know what caused my cancer (environment, genetics, etc.) The good news is Hodgkin's is about the most treatable form of cancer. My advice to this young man and his family is to focus on treating the disease, not what caused it. The reality is you're probably never going to know.
Nowisthetime • 35p

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Rp91 • 48p

Not funny. I highly doubt that of the millions that use artificial turf daily that a few people getting cancer is compelling enough to write an article. That said I feel bad for anyone stricken with cancer regardless. Good luck in your recovery

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Soccermum • 1p

Not funny at all... I know this young man personally... He is a fighter, and if you are so cruel keep your comments to yourself. nowisthetime, I dare you to walk in his shoes for two moons... I would bet your attitude changes..... Fight on Luke. You are in our prayers constantly...

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Cp11 • 1p

My husband was diagnosed with CML Leukemia just 2 weeks ago at age 40. I wouldn't have thought much of this being a link before, but my husband is the third player on our adult rec soccer team to develop some form of Leukemia. Just a strange coincidence? Yeah, probably, but we are certainly starting to wonder. We've all been avid players (2-4 games/week) for years, so as far as we know, that's our only common thread if it could be related to some sort of exposure.

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I was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma (Disease) 8 months ago and have just recently finished treatment. Stay positive you can get through this, my thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. My Oncologist also stated that Hodgkins Disease is one of the most treatable cancers. God Bless...

Chilstone • 59p
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