

VANCOUVER MAINLAND FOOTBALL LEAGUE

This man built it, the teams came

DEDICATION: Thanks to 14 years of hard work from Yeera Sami and others, Cloverdale is a football hotbed

STORIES BY KEN HENRY
SPORTS REPORTER

To measure the drive and downright stubbornness of Cloverdale Community Football Association president Yeera Sami, consider this.

In the spring of 2003, Surrey City

Council decided to replace a football field at Cloverdale Athletic Park with synthetic turf. Problem was, the field was only going to be available to soccer teams because a consultant told city councillors a \$300,000 underlay was needed to make the surface usable for football.

That extra money, councillors said, was not in the budget.

When Sami caught wind of the news, he went into overdrive.

Sixty days later — after dozens of calls to synthetic turf manufacturers across North America and managers of the NFL's Seattle Seahawks to

verify that the \$300,000 underlay was not needed — Sami convinced council to overturn its original decision and build a multipurpose field.

Today, Sami says Cloverdale is still the only city in B.C. with synthetic turf for its minor football teams.

"I could not buy that it would cost that much [\$300,000] — that didn't make sense to me," Sami says. "That really forced me to do some research on the fly. When I found all this information, the councillors were fully convinced if the Seattle Seahawks can put up field turf [without underlay], there's no reason why the City of Surrey couldn't."

This persistence has helped Sami, with parents and coaches, build Cloverdale into one of the most successful associations in the Vancouver Mainland Football League.

Starting with nothing in 1992 — "we couldn't afford one five-cent mouth guard," Sami says — Cloverdale's

home field has an announcing tower, practice lights, \$20,000 scoreboard, clubhouse and the same type of synthetic turf as the Seahawks.

It's a good feeling for a man who used to rent scaffolding and use it as a makeshift announcer's booth, and rented lights those first few years so the players could practise at night.

"Now look what we have," says Sami. "It's a special feeling for me."

It took two years to convince city councillors to install lights at the park.

"There were roadblocks on everything. That didn't discourage me," says Sami, who was named Surrey's youth volunteer of the year by a local newspaper in 2005.

Says Joyce Soul, the football club's treasurer since it was formed: "Yeera is the best." A blushing Sami shoots back: "She's lying!"

"No, I have so much faith in him," continues Soul. "You look what we have and it's all because of him."



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Yeera Sami formed the association in 1992. RIC ERNST — THE PROVINCE

**MIDGET
CLOVERDALE 35
LANGLEY 0**

Tylor Kutny and Jesse Deildale scored two touchdowns each in Cloverdale's victory over Langley on Sunday. Marcus Montanari added another major, while Kyle Marcotte kicked for five points. On defence, Matt Paulicelli had two interceptions and Brennan Geach had two sacks.

**BANTAM
NORTH SURREY 28
RICHMOND 0**

Jerry Sidhu scored two majors and added a two-point convert to pace the Tigers to a victory over the Raiders on Sunday. Derrek Halicki and Bibake Uppal also reached the end zone for North Surrey, which got two interceptions from Johnny Evans on defence.