NATURAL GRASS WILL BE A PERMANENT FEATURE IN TORONTO’S BMO FIELD

Latest News. The proposal to replace BMO Field’s artificial turf with natural grass received overwhelming support and approval from the Board of Governors of Exhibition Place on September 11 and again by Toronto City Council on September 30. Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment will shoulder the $5.5 million dollar price tag which includes $3.5 million for the natural grass conversion at BMO Field, 1.2 million for the relocation of its bubble to Lamport Stadium and $800,000 for a new artificial field in the community. STA Member Claus Zander of Zander Sod Co. Limited will be speaking at the 2010 Ontario Turfgrass Symposium about the project’s sod production and specifications, and the challenges of installation and removal. The following article from thestar.com provides an interesting overview of the situation.

Real Madrid gets the grass that Toronto FC can only hope for... August 6, Daniel Girard, Sports Reporter

It’s the field of TFC’s dreams. The much-maligned artificial turf of BMO Field gave way to the real thing yesterday as a crew of 18 finished laying the grass ahead of the arrival of European soccer giant Real Madrid for an international friendly against Toronto FC.

“This is a 10-day solution,” Bob Hunter, executive vice-president of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, said of the lifespan of the four-inch thick sod being put down.

“It’s a temporary solution to reflect the quality of the team that we’re playing Friday night,” he said.

Trucked in from Alliston by NGF Golf of Campbellville, which spends most of its time laying fairways not soccer fields, the 24-hour installation was completed last night in time for Real Madrid’s practice before thousands tonight.

The company consulted with crews in the New Jersey Meadowlands who laid turf down for US national team games.

For purists of the beautiful game, the sight of the sun glistening off the sprinkler-soaked grass on a spectacular summer day was no doubt a treat. It will be fleeting, however, as the sod – double the thick-
ness of what typically gets put down as a lawn – is to be torn up Sunday and thrown away.

But more than just a move to make the visitors feel welcome, Hunter said the $250,000 outlay for temporary grass was “a key condition” to getting the winners of a record 31 Spanish titles and nine European Cups to bring their high-priced lineup to Toronto as part of a two-game tour of North America.

“They have obviously two or three of the world’s best players on their squad,” he said of newly acquired talent headlined by Cristiano Ronaldo, Kaka and Karim Benzema, who are part of about $385 million in off-season signings by the club.

Until MLSE comes up with a plan to accommodate that public use elsewhere, it will be difficult to get political approval to convert the stadium playing surface to grass.

“It’s very popular with the community and it’s the only real bubble in the downtown core,” said Dianne Young, chief executive officer at Exhibition Place, which manages the site, including BMO Field.

Noting the whole purpose of the funding arrangement was to “promote local sports,” Young said there have been talks with MLSE but no formal proposal has come forward to make the conversion to grass.

“Numbers Game

$250,000 Cost to install real grass at BMO Field
10 Days the grass will last
24 Hours to install the field
18 People to put in the field
10 Tractor-trailer loads of sod
3x100 Feet, size of the sod rolls
4 Thickness of sod in inches
24 Hours to take the field out when it’s all over

The Real Deal

Here’s a list of significant team moments unrelated to its numerous championship titles that made the Real Madrid one of the most famous teams in the world:

1902
Madrid Club de Fútbol founded.
1920
Real, meaning royal, added to team name after endorsement by Spain’s King Alfonso XIII.
1931
Real title dropped and crown removed from team crest after downfall of the monarchy.
1941
Real name and crown restored two years after the end of the Spanish Civil War.
1947
First Spanish team to add numbers to its jerseys.
2001
Team crest updated by changing traditionally coloured mulberry stripe to blue.
2006

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