

Experiment at Cantigny

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Cantigny Golf Club

In the March 1991 issue of the Golf Course Management magazine you may have read an article entitled "A Non-traditional Tee" written by Frank Rich. He is the superintendent of the Cato Golf Club. Mr. Rich had a problem tee on the fourth hole of his golf course. He had an extremely shaded site from trees that did not belong to his golf course and could not keep a well established stand of turf there. Mr. Rich decided to try an innovative technique to solve his problem. He installed a "Novatee" on a raised platform deck.

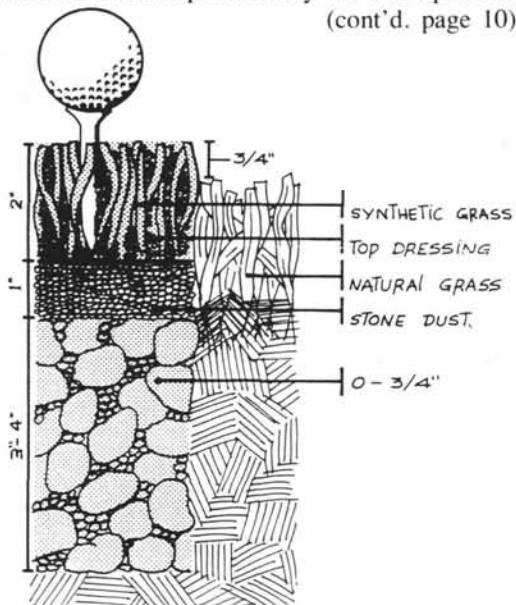
I'm sure many of you saw the Novatee at last winter's convention in Las Vegas. Well, I'm here to report that my boss Mike Nass saw it also. And guess what, Cantigny Golf Club now has a Novatee as well.

When the subject first came to light last winter I was as skeptical as Mr. Rich was. "Novatee"? "Artificial turf on a golf course?" "What a pain in the butt project this is going to be?" "Will it work?" These were my first thoughts and reactions to the whole idea. I tried to put off the installation of the new tee after it arrived from Canada, but soon the higher ups were wondering what happened to our \$900 super tee. So I misgivingly bent to their demands and soon the project was underway.

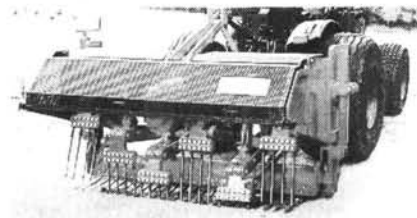
We have some shady tee areas here, but our thoughts were to install the tee experimentally on our semi-private lesson tee of our driving range. We wanted to see how it performed and if it performed as well as the tee at the Cato Golf Club. We have future plans of possibly installing six or more teeing areas on our public use tee. This would give us the potential of having our range facility open year round during mild winters or opening our range earlier at the start of the season and closing it later at the end of the year, if need be.

Our public range tee goes through considerable abuse during the season and has been resodded twice since we opened in 1989! So Novatee has a potential and we had a definite need and opportunity to try it out.

We did not have to be as sophisticated as the Cato Club was in installing their tee. We placed ours right at turf level which is the normal installation technique used. Once the project got started I was amazed at how simple and easy the whole process was.



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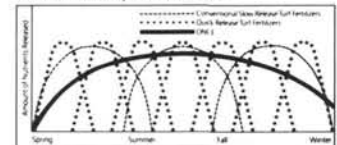
	15-0-30	20-0-20	24-4-12	Granular	15-0-30	20-0-20	24-4-12	Granular
Release Cycle (months)	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Microbial Breakdown	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Microbial Inhibitor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Plant dependent soil-watering	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
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Brian McGuffin

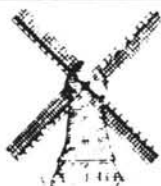
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(Cantigny continued)

The difference between installing the tee at turf level and installing it on a platform is that we had to excavate out four to six inches of soil and fill the hole with aggregate instead of filling a box. Once the gravel was installed and tamped we rolled out the green carpet. That's exactly how it looks; like a plastic, green shag rug. The synthetic grass fibers are actually two inches long. The idea is to "topdress" in the secret materials that the manufacturer sends with the turf and eventually make the rug stand up and behave as natural bluegrass turf does ... to even hold a golf ball on a tee.

As we worked the material into the rug I could begin to see the finished produce develop. It was hotter than hell that day, but we patiently kept on raking in material until the rug looked like bluegrass with soil topdressing on it. I was soon able to put a tee into the turf and I knew that the tee was ready to play. I placed a ball on the tee and let her rip. I couldn't believe it. It worked, and I even hit my ball straight. I hit a few more balls off a tee then decided to try a couple right on the synthetic turf without a tee. It was truly amazing. It feels just like real turf. The footing is soft yet firm and the ball sits up just as if it were on short cropped bluegrass. Amazing. The only complaint that we have about the tee is that sometimes if a non-teed up ball is struck too low, some of the topdress material may get on your arms, but it is very clean and easily wipes off.

The cost of \$900 for the synthetic rug and the topdressing materials and about \$500 more for gravel and labor may sound like a lot of money for 144 square feet of turf. But if you consider the fact that there is not maintenance and that this small piece of turf can generate revenue when your natural turf is unplayable, it may be a wash in the long run. Innovations in the 90's such as these make our work a little easier, interesting, and exciting.

In closing I must say that our experiment at Cantigny was quite successful and that I was very pleased with the performance of our Novatee.

Suburban Extension Office Relocates

The suburban offices of the Cooperative Extension Service in Cook County have relocated to Countryside.

After more than a half a century with offices at both ends of the County, the Extension Service has combined the Tinley Park and the Rolling Meadows offices.

Home gardeners and professional horticulturists will continue to receive the service to which they have been accustomed.

Horticulturist Carol Beatty, James Fizzell and Gregory Stack may be reached at:

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