

How do bunker liners save labor dollars and improve playing conditions?

The use of bunker liners has increased for two main reasons. Bunker liners save money by reducing the daily cost of bunker maintenance and they improve playing conditions by keeping bunker sand more consistent and contamination free.

Labor Savings

Maintaining bunkers can sometimes be 15-20 percent of the daily labor costs on a golf course. This number can increase after rain events due to the need to repair washouts, pump water from bunkers due to clogged drain lines, and to eliminate silt contamination.

Additionally, the playing conditions in the bunkers following a rain event may not return to normal for several days until the sand dries out.

Generally, washouts occur in bunkers when sand is displaced by the water flowing along the floor of the bunker as it travels to the drain lines. When a bunker liner is installed, it creates a separation layer between the bunker subgrade and the bunker sand.

During rain events, water passes through the sand and flows into the bunker liner where it can travel into the drainage system. This keeps the sand protected from washouts, free from subgrade contamination and reduces or eliminates the need to pump bunkers. As a result, valuable labor dollars can be focused on other areas of the golf course.

By using a product like SandMat, it's not uncommon to save enough money in labor to actually

pay for the cost of the liner within three years. That's a very good return on the investment.

Improved Playing Conditions

When the bunker sand stays clean and drain lines are free of subgrade contamination, the consistency of the sand remains the same for a long time. Even after rain events, the sand remains playable without the need to cultivate the sand. Simply grooming the bunkers is all that is required to maintain ideal playing conditions.

Product and Installation Considerations

There are various types of bunker liners on the market but the most cost effective product for sand stabilization, drainage flow and contamination prevention is a high lofted geotextile liner like SandMat. Several grades of products are available to meet site slope and design considerations. These geotextile products can be installed easily without the need for specialized equipment and can be installed at any time of the year without weather limitations.

When considering the use of a geotextile bunker liner, look for a few key things:

1. Roll width of the product.

A wider roll will install faster and have fewer seams, require fewer staples and have less waste.

2. Staple or fastener options-consider using a high quality fastener to secure your liner to the subgrade. Galvanized staples are going to last much longer than

ordinary sod staples.

3. Edge detail-what is the final look of the bunker edge and how will you be maintaining it? Is the lip grassed over or is there an exposed soil edge? Terminating your liner so it works with the edge design is an important consideration. Ask the product manager for ideas on edge details.

4. Machine raking vs. hand raking? It's important to realize that the sand condition in newly lined bunkers is going to be significantly different than before. Maintenance practices should be different as well. The use of a geotextile bunker liner will help eliminate the need to cultivate the sand to keep it playing consistently. Since the sand doesn't move after rain events, the need to rake as often is reduced. Most would agree that hand raking is the preferred method of maintaining a bunker, but as long as the cultivation teeth are removed from mechanical rakes and the sand depths are monitored regularly, mechanical raking is a fast and safe option.

5. Ask questions. Call the product manager and talk about your current challenges, maintenance practices and project consideration requirements. When installed and maintained properly, bunker liners will be a good investment for both labor savings and improved sand conditions for a long time.

Bunker sand and the cost to get it to your course is expensive. Protect your investment, maintain ideal conditions and save labor with a bunker liner like SandMat.