

Novatee Synthetic Turf Installed In Minnesota

The Minnesota golfer fights winterbound cabin fever by “snowbirding” to Florida or tracking the tour on TV over ever-lush courses in places like Honolulu.

Here in Frostbite Falls, even on the first day of spring, huge rafts of gray snow can lay anchor on our fairways, tees and driving ranges. Waiting for them to melt away is about as productive as watching paint dry. With luck, our courses open in late April or early May, after the paint has dried and a lot of revenue has flown off to the Sunbelt.

But not at Wedgewood or Cuyuna Country Clubs; their driving range tees will be green, dry and crowded with golfers up to three weeks earlier than those at neighboring clubs. Their secret: a high tech carpet of synthetic turf called Novatee that plays exactly like real grass, requires little maintenance and lasts from eight to 12 years.

Novatee’s lush 2½” layer of grass is top dressed on site with a non-compactable, quick-draining mixture of sand and rubber granules. The patented system keeps the blades standing up, allowing golfers to tee up with woods or hit down on the ball with irons — as on real grass.

Cuyuna Country Club manager Dale Lundgren heard about Novatee from Club President Danno Mahoney who had played off it at one of the Ruttgers Bay Lake Lodge courses east of Brainerd. Mahoney suggested that Lundgren test it out for himself.

“We were building a new driving range,” Lundgren explains, “and were anxious to get our golfers swinging away before the natural tee boxes were ready and to provide them with a longer season.”

While hitting ball after ball from Ruttgers’ Novatee installation at the 18th tee of its new championship Lake Course, Lundgren became a fan. “Novatee was very forgiving on my clubs. It looked and felt like real grass and let me use real tees.”

Cuyuna’s new driving range, which was installed last November, sports a two-tiered tee. One is natural grass and

the other is a 160 by 10 foot tier of Novatee. Lundgren said that the Deerwood, Minnesota range will open sooner and close later than other north country ranges. With Novatee, Cuyuna golfers will also be able to tee up minutes after the heaviest rain and anytime that the natural grass tee boxes are roped off for repair.

Ruttgers’ Novatee installation was recommended by links designer Joel Goldstrand to comply with DNR regulations. The tee boxes of its par-3, 18th hole on the Lake Course were placed right on water’s edge. Because of the environmental concerns and the tight space, a 10 by 30 foot Novatee box was constructed.

Ruttgers Director of Golf Operations, Perry Platisha, says that Novatee has worked wonderfully. “We get more golfers on a smaller tee box with no wear and tear,” added Platisha. “We’ll be converting another 18th tee box to Novatee and putting in a 100 foot long swath of it at our practice range this coming season.”

Wedgewood Country Club in the St. Paul suburb of Oakdale installed a 15 by 150 foot strip of Novatee on its driving range four years ago.

“We use it primarily as a starter tee in early spring,” said Course Manager Jerry Webb, “when members can’t wait to get the season going. This is just when I need to protect dormant grass.”

There is less demand to practice in late fall, but over all Webb estimates that Wedgewood stays open a month longer than it would with out Novatee and that this also translates into more revenue for the pro shop and snack bar.

Dan Gabler, President of Superior Tech Products of Chanhassen, the regional distributor of Novatee, says that Novatee has really proven effective for layouts with soil and shade problems. He cites the success at Ruttgers, as an example.

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MGCSA Family Outing At Camp Snoopy

The November MGCSA Family Outing at Camp Snoopy was very well received. There were 170 people signed up for the event and zero no shows.

The Mall of America put on a nice lunch and supplied many enjoyable rides. Golf Mountain had its course in fine shape for the superintendent families.

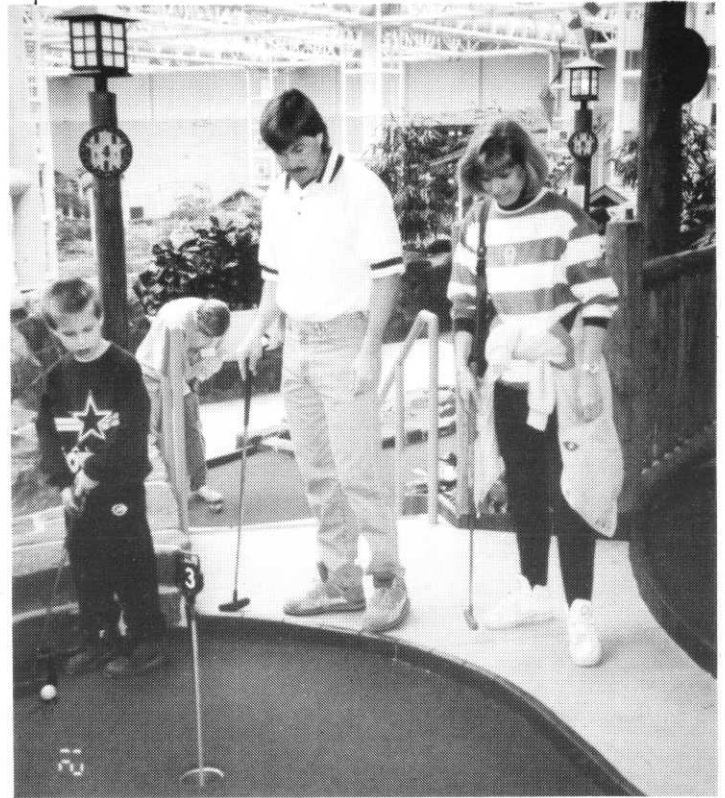
Thanks go out to Past President Joe Moris and Dale Wysocki for their help in organizing this event.



MGCSA EX-OFFICIO JOE MORIS, Tartan Park spends some time with host Snoopy.



MIKE LEITNER AND FAMILY on Golf Mountain.



JERRY WEBB AND FAMILY enjoying a round of golf on Golf Mountain.

Novatee—

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Because of its durability and real feel, a number of teaching pros, especially in Canada, have found Novatee to be an excellent surface for young and novice golfers to learn on.

“When my seven iron cuts through the Novatee topping,” says Gabler, “it feels like I’ve sliced a divot at Augusta National; smooth and wonderful. Beginners can do no harm to it.”

Novatee and its companion systems, NovaGreen and FIELDTURF, are manufactured and installed by SynTennico, Inc. of Montreal. Installation, however, is uncomplicated (a “how-to” video is available) and many clubs do it themselves. The Novatee carpet is spread out over a layer of stone dust and a base of concrete, asphalt or crushed stone. Next, Novatee’s special topping is raked over and into the blades, keeping them erect. That’s all . . . it’s tee time.

Gabler says that Novatee helps cut overhead by greatly reducing maintenance hours and eliminating the chemicals and irrigation that natural turf grasses require. “And Novatee can stay out all winter without protection,” he added. “That’s a plus in a place like Minnesota.”

Dan Gabler can be contacted at Superior Tech Products by calling (612) 934-1205 or (800) 825-8827 and by writing to 80 West 78th Street, Chanhassen, MN 55315.

— Jeff Strate