

SPORTS TURF MANAGER

... for better, safer Sports Turf

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SportGrass™

The New Playing Surface for the Future

As a sportsfield designer for the past 20 years, I am always on the lookout for new products that I can introduce to my clients. I have worked extensively with sand-based athletic fields and their drainage systems and am aware of both the pros and cons of these types of fields. Sand-based fields offer many positive features including better aeration in the root zone and rapid water movement. Unfortunately, all too often these same field types are overused and wear out fairly quickly creating an unsafe playing surface. About five years ago, when people were coming to me with stories of fields that were unsafe after 10-15 games, I investigated SportGrass™. I researched the product, contacted the company representative in Seattle, Washington, and proceeded to educate myself on what SportGrass™ is and how it works.

So, what exactly is SportGrass™? It can be used for most sports. It is the first turf product that has combined the toughness and wear resistance of synthetic turf while still allowing play on a natural grass

field. The SportGrass™ system makes use of a 100% natural grass playing surface on a layer of amended sand. Within that layer are polypropylene grass blades tufted into a woven backing. Because the grass roots grow through both the synthetic blades and the woven backing, the crown and root system of the grass plant are protected. Even if the natural grass is worn away temporarily, stability of the field is retained and play can continue. Tests have shown that SportGrass™ playing fields can withstand more than five times the intensity of play than fields of natural grass. A well maintained SportGrass™ facility will practically eliminate ruts, divots, and bare spots, thus reducing the need not only for costly repairs and renovation, but also the potential for injury to athletes.

There has been a movement in the USA over the last several years at the collegiate and professional level to remove synthetic turf and replace it with natural grass. The overwhelming majority of athletes surveyed prefer a natural grass surface as more forgiving and believe synthetic turf is responsible for causing more injuries. In a recent survey of 935 NFL players, 85% preferred natural grass, and 93% said synthetic turf was a contributor to injuries. In addition, 70% of free agents said grass playing surfaces were an important factor in their choice of the team for whom they would play. Until the introduction of SportGrass™, many grass fields were deficient under adverse weather conditions based on playability, wear resistance, and durability. SportGrass™ improved on all of these factors and when tested, players did not even realize they were playing on a synthetic surface. ♦

— Dan Almond (summarized by M. Bladon)

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For general guidelines on how to install SportsGrass™ and more highlights from the 1999 OTS, please see pages 6-10.

Firming up Your Spring Schedule?

Check out "Coming Events" on page 16 of this issue of Sports Turf Manager.