

Sneak preview of the Olympics

In September, all eyes will turn to Sydney, Australia for the Olympic Games. Keystone of this Olympiad is Stadium Australia, a state-of-the-art facility seating 110,000 spectators.

The Legend Couch turf, grown at Windsor Turf Farms in Windsor, Australia, already has had several tryouts. One of the toughest was hosting the "State of Origin" rugby tournament.

Before Opening Ceremonies on Sept. 15, there will be a total of 28 events – several drawing more than 100,000 spectators — at the Stadium. The grass came through with flying colors. The turf was brought to the Stadium in 1.5-sq. meter blocks (about five-foot square) and installed over several day's time. Should it be necessary to replace every part of the playing surface, the job can be done and the field made ready in four days.

I wandered around in the stadium in mid-May and the grass was in great shape. The playing field is basically the equivalent of the world's largest putting green and is built along the lines of many other premium athletic facilities. Drain tile runs



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through a clay base. Above that sits a consolidated stone layer, then gravel, then sand. The turf sits on top of the sand.

While there will be much ado about the turf, here are some other fascinating facts about the stadium. Stadium Australia will be able to serve 63,000 schooners of beer per hour. Gotta love those Aussies.

The stadium cost \$650 million to build, but the job came in roughly on budget and was completed three months

early. Construction finished last March.

When the Games are over, it will be down-sized to 85,000 capacity. The stands in the North and South ends are the only seats not protected from rain and sun. Following the Olympics they will be removed.

The track, which cost \$20 million to build, will be rolled up and used at another stadium as a practice track. The existing turf area in Stadium Australia then will be expanded to cover the entire surface of the stadium floor. That will make the stadium available for cricket or Aussie Rules football.

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