Turf manager’s research pays off

Tomm Peterson is sports turf manager for the Arizona Cardinals. You may have heard about the new stadium they are building in Phoenix for the NFL franchise (hey at least Bill Bidwell’s putting up $104 million of the $370+ million cost, that’s better than nothing, Arizona taxpayer!). Peterson had already been researching and studying what type of field would work best in his situation for 2 years before the actual decision was made to build one and 4 more years after that. He made his findings known to the engineers who won the job.

Of course those engineers wanted to explore options. After all, as Peterson says, it was their butts on the line, not his. He calls the deal he and CMX Sports Engineers finally struck a “collaboration,” although “I influenced them more than they influenced me,” he says.

And the result is America’s first removable natural grass field. The turf, grown from stolons that were tilled in the first week of May, is Tifway 419 bermuda from Evergreen Turf, and it sits on a 12-million-pound, 234 feet wide by 400 feet long aboveground tray. The tray rests on a $2 million-+-worth of turf and that he’d been cutting back on the water in favor of more oxygen. “The rhizomes get stronger then and dig through the soil, which creates a stable structure with wear tolerance,” he says.

The field will be rolled inside the stadium only for game days; otherwise it will be outside. Workers will have access to the wheels and the underside of the tray for maintenance and repair from a special work trench.

Peterson says he’s only looking at 10 NFL games this first season, one high school playoff and then the final one, the Fiesta Bowl, one of the BCS games. “There shouldn’t be a need to replace the grass” this season, he says.

Editor

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From the Sidelines

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