

SEWING SYNTHETIC FIELDS V. GLUING

Editor's note: The author is CEO of Turf Sewing Machines.

I know what you're all thinking: here comes the most biased article I've ever read. As much as I'd like to put on my sewing pompoms, I'll go against my better judgment and remain mostly unbiased. For years I have heard the questions about sewing vs. gluing—which is better? Which lasts longer? Which is easier? Which is more cost effective? The fact is both are effective and both have their advantages.

WHY ARE GLUED SEAMS BETTER?

- Gluing is widely considered easier and I surely agree. See that, glue guys? I'm not so bad.
- The need for skilled, technically proficient labor is not required. This is an enormous advantage for crews that travel state-to-state or nationwide. Why? You can easily pickup unskilled labor anywhere you land. Finding and affording skilled labor is often an arduous task. Not to mention, you have to pay for their hotel, airfare, food, and expenses. Hey, that adds up.
- Glue doesn't need a technician or service station. By employing glue you don't have to contend with a sewing machine malfunction half way down a seam.

WHY ARE SEWN SEAMS BETTER?

Sewn fields cost exponentially less. Let's compare apples to apples in a cost analysis. Say Crew A, which sews, and Crew B, which glues, both install 10 full fields a year for 10 years. Crew A will make an initial \$20,000 investment for two cart-style sewing machines; including repair maintenance and supplies, two cart sewing machines will cost you roughly \$40-50,000 over the course of 10 years. Crew B will purchase glue for every field they sew. To glue a full field (with quality glue) it will cost approximately \$15-20,000 per field. Let's go on the low side



and call it \$15,000 per field. A gluing operation over 10 years will therefore cost \$1,500,000. Crew A will have spent \$50,000. Double-check me, because I almost don't believe it. Tack another \$300,000 in skilled labor for the sewing crew and sewing still saves you well over a million dollars.

Sewing fields can be performed year round; you don't have to worry about glue expanding/contracting in extreme temperatures. In addition, you don't have to waste a full day waiting for a field to cure. Crews can immediately work/walk/drive over a sewn seam.

If you are waiting for that biased "sewn seams last longer" comment, I won't go there. I'm just going with facts here.

Just to further prove I'm an equal opportunity, non-biased guy, my advice is, if you're going to glue go with the best product. ■

One installer's perspective

"Like everyone we glue and we sew. We've glued entire fields in the past, and we have also sewn entire fields and all combinations in between (inlays). From a skill set, we believe it is easier to glue full panels vs. sew. There are pros and cons to both but if you truly look at the bottom line over time, the sewn seam has proven to us to be a better product. Classic example is an all-green field with sewn seams from sideline curb to sideline curb; we have had almost no call backs to repair a seam. We've kept track of almost

every repair from the fields we've installed since 2000 (about 45 million sq/ft) and about 95% of redo's and repairs are of glued seams.

Gluing full panels is surely trending up which may be a reaction to the tighter stitch gauges, underlayments and lighter infill weights being used. From our experience, the sewn seam has lasted longer than the average glued seam and has less call backs for post install care."-John Huard Jr., vice president, Northeast Turf