

Synthetic turf systems: Pride and practicality

BY **RON VANGELDEREN**

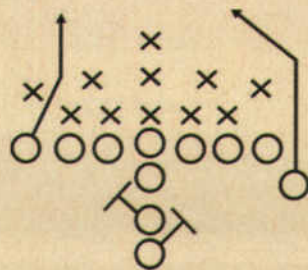
Today all turf surfaces can be state of the art and cost effective. There is no shortage of systems, products, or services. The challenge lies in the process of matching the needs of the customer with the proper system and its provider.

Synthetic turf system providers are able to meet those challenges with a myriad of products that fulfill the specifics of most every end use. Synthetic products/systems now available are significantly better because product development and innovation has resulted in a new generation of systems that are softer, more naturalistic and player friendly. All of the performance characteristics have been addressed such as traction, rotational and slip resistance, impact absorption, surface abrasiveness, and surface stability. Ball bounce and ball roll meet all the sport specific requirements and, of course, appearance and appearance retention is second to none.

Materials used in synthetic systems today are environmentally responsible both in application and use as well as disposal and sustainability. Maintenance tech-



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niques require no regular chemical treatment that makes ground water pollution and human point of contact exposure a non-issue.

In addition to the product evolution are the unique advantages of synthetic applications in terms of water conservation and the reduction of intense maintenance while having an "always ready" playing field.

Life cycle costing and reduced replacement costs have been enhanced while realistic longevity is providing tremendous budget saving opportunities. Of course, great care must be exercised in the process of selecting these systems with the knowledge that the lowest price offered may not always be the most economical or the best performing in the long run. Yet, the savings of synthetics are a given.

It is the process of selection and use of synthetic systems that is critical. In addition to the recommended use of independent professionals, there are now reliable tools, unbiased standards and non-proprietary guidelines available. When used in the selection process, the customer will know what questions to ask and need not be left holding the bag.

Raison d'être

The Synthetic Turf Council (STC) was formed to provide reliable selection and use guidelines. The industry recognized the need for an unbiased body that could help the industry rally around good practices in serving the needs of the customer and ultimate user. Now for the first time the industry has a platform comprised of the design community, builders, manufacturers, suppliers, and service entities that are striving to avoid duplication of effort, prevent misunderstandings and attain a better more efficient approach. The STC has become the source for all parties to synthetic turf process and represents more than 80% of the synthetic industries' volume. This is only the beginning. Working groups within the STC are focusing on developing programs that will achieve a better understanding of objective end user selection needs.

A code of ethics adopted by the STC membership and our "Guidelines to the Essential Elements of Synthetic Turf Systems" (available free of charge by logging on to www.syntheticurf.org) have become the basis of a certification program that identify firms who voluntarily adhere to those standards and good industry practices. It is acknowledged that doing what is right for the customer is good for business. The Council slogan says it all: "A Promise to Deliver the Promise," which is supported by a voluntary company-by-company STC Certification Program that backs that promise.

The bottom line is that synthetic systems offer outstanding and highly desirable attributes that make us all proud whether we look at televised activities or in our own neighborhoods knowing that we have made the right decision. **ST**

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