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Establishing a Golf Facility: Turfgrass Sod vs. Seeding—Financial Benefits (Part III of III)

In a three-part series, Manderley has been examining the advantage of using turfgrass sod to establish golf courses. In the first article, we discussed the evolution of the industry, bursting many of the myths against using turfgrass sod. In fact, many exemplary courses have been established entirely with turfgrass sod. In the second installment we looked at the technical benefits of using turfgrass sod such as erosion control (to get a copy of the articles, visit www.manderley.com/golf_and_sport/resources.asp). In this final piece we will discuss the financial benefits.

A guaranteed opening date

Without question, a key benefit of establishing golf courses with turfgrass sod is the immediacy of the establishment. Once turfgrass sod is installed, the surface is finished. A brief period to allow adequate rooting to occur is all that is needed before play can begin. It is truly a “just add water” product.

This instant cover allows superintendents to confidently set a date for the course to be opened for full play. Contrast this with using seed, where it is practically impossible to set a date because of the affect of weather and soil conditions. With a seeded course, it's not uncommon for an opening date to become a moving target, subject to opinions as to whether the newly seeded course can take the wear.

When you plan to build a course entirely with turfgrass sod, the opening date can be set far in advance because turfgrass sod can handle full play from day one.

Cash flow analysis

When comparing turfgrass sod and seed, it often surprises people to learn that if you take into account revenues from the first year of the club's operation, a sodded course will cost less.

The immediate opening of a club to full play capacity has a significant effect on income in the initial years of a club. By using turfgrass sod, a course is able to perform at its full capacity with no refunds for poor conditions and playing restrictions due to an immature turf stand.

When the revenue generation from a known opening date with full play, undiscounted rounds and the ancillary services provided by the club are taken into account, turfgrass sod essentially pays for itself. In fact in regions that experience high volumes of play, turfgrass sod actually nets the club more money in the first two years than the original investment in the turf itself. And, the added benefits of happy owners, bankers and investors are often priceless.

Value

In considering turfgrass sodding, one factor that cannot be overlooked is the value it gives to the overall project. When evaluators and financing institutions assess projects, a valuation is not complete until the installation is ready to generate revenue. Simply put, a golf course without grass is not considered a golf course, but simply an incomplete project.

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Towards the end of a project, when budgets are exceeded and the ability to attract players is in question, both financiers and investors become nervous. Turfgrass sod eliminates this uncertainty by giving an immediate finish and a guarantee to start play on time. It is this finishing touch of turfgrass sod that finally makes the golf course a reality.

We hope that this three-part series *Turfgrass Sod vs. Seeding to Establish a Golf Facility* has enhanced your understanding of the advantages of fully sodding your course. In the first installment we showed how with the evolution of turfgrass sod production we are better able to meet the specific needs of the golf course industry. The second article described the technical benefits of using turfgrass sod, including agronomic advantages, elimination of risk and safeguarding of the environment. And finally we have looked at the financial benefits of guaranteed opening dates, true costs and cash flows as well as providing true value.

As the game of golf continues to evolve, we're confident turfgrass sod will become the standard to meet clients' and stakeholders' growing expectations. As many of those who have established their entire course with turfgrass sod have said, "using turfgrass sod really is the only way to go."



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