



GUIDANCE NOTE 05 Artificial Turf for Cricket

INTRODUCTION

Synthetic turf technology has evolved significantly over the past 10 years and is now commonly used by many major sports throughout the world.

Long pile synthetic turf with performance infill allows synthetic turf to mimic the properties of natural turf, both in terms of player comfort and playability. As a result of these developments the AFL and Cricket Australia have joined together to develop a synthetic turf program to enable the playing of community level Football and Cricket on an approved synthetic product.

In 2007 the AFL, Cricket Australia, Sport & Recreation Victoria and JLT Trustees (the insurer to both the AFL and Cricket Australia), commissioned

the University of Ballarat to determine whether specific criteria could be developed for the use of synthetic grass for Football and Cricket. Following a number of tests on natural turf football and cricket ovals, the University of Ballarat developed a set of criteria that would enable synthetic turf to mimic the performance characteristics of natural turf. The AFL and Cricket Australia subsequently endorsed the playing of community level Football and Cricket on a synthetic surface meeting those criteria.

Why synthetic turf?

Synthetic turf fields have the ability to address a number of issues that can impact on participation. These include:

Weather variability – Australia has been impacted by both drought and significant rain events in recent years which has meant grounds have been closed for training and play. It is predicted that these events will become more common place and as such the ability for synthetic turf to continue to provide a safe and playable surface no matter what the weather brings is a distinct advantage.

Venue supply and participation increases – participation increases in both sports have placed additional demand on grounds already at capacity. From 2008-2012, Football participation has increased by more than 151,000 and 398 new club teams have been formed. Over the same period, outdoor cricket participation increased by over 98,000 players.

Getting more use out of finite open space resources – accessing additional land for new sporting ovals is increasingly difficult. Synthetic surfaces allow up to three times more use than natural turf ovals and can therefore create better usage outcomes out of the existing space available, particularly to accommodate increased training loads.

Water availability – as an added advantage, synthetic turf ovals consume no potable water and provide the ability to harvest water that can be used to irrigate adjacent natural turf ovals or nearby landscaped areas.

Licensing software and approved products

Since the development of the synthetic turf standards, the AFL and Cricket Australia have established a licensing program that ensures the quality of products being manufactured from a performance and longevity perspective and that the products comply with safety and insurance requirements.

The licensing program includes both laboratory tests and field tests to ensure the products meet the AFL/Cricket Australia criteria after manufacturing and once installed. The licensing process is outlined below:

- Step 1** A synthetic Manufacturer enters into a Licence Agreement with the AFL/Cricket Australia
- Step 2** A Licenced Manufacturer submits a product sample to an approved laboratory for testing
- Step 3** The product sample is subjected to the laboratory tests. Subject to the product passing these laboratory tests an "Approved Synthetic Turf Product" Certificate is issued
- Step 4** A surface comprising of the product which has satisfied the laboratory tests is installed
- Step 5** The installed surface undergoes field tests
- Step 6** Subject to passing the field tests, the oval is certified as meeting the AFL/Cricket Australia standards.

Outcomes

With ongoing participation increases in both sports (male and female), the development of emerging forms of the games (AFL 9s, T20 Cricket) and the extremes of the Australian environment, synthetic turf ovals have an important role to play in enabling the sports to continue to play no matter the circumstances. This will ultimately lead to:

- Less maintenance
- Less ground closures
- More play.

Test procedures

The AFL/Cricket Australia 'Approved Synthetic Turf Product' mark is awarded to those products that have been subject to a series of stringent laboratory tests. These tests include those for durability, joint strength, resistance to weathering, ball roll and bounce, hardness, critical fall height, traction and abrasion.

Every oval installed must meet a second stage of testing that occurs on site once the oval has been laid and filled to produce the playing surface and has been allowed to settle and be played on for a period of one month or 160 hours of play. This allows consolidation before testing. Testing is undertaken at a variety of points on the field to ensure compliance across the field. Once an oval has met all the requirements of the field testing it will be issued with official certification that the oval complies with AFL/Cricket Australia Standards. Retesting is required every two years to ensure ongoing accreditation.

The benefits of the testing and certification process are as follows:

- Ensuring surfaces have the same playing characteristics as natural turf
- Ensuring quality and durability of the product
- Maximising playing comfort and safety.



i

A number of Synthetic Turf Manufacturers have been Licenced by the AFL/Cricket Australia to manufacture and install approved AFL/Cricket Australia products. For a list of current Licenced Manufacturers and more information on synthetic turf standards please visit clubassist.cricket.com.au

