



SPORTS & FITNESS

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The Benefits of Synthetic Turf Over Grass Fields for Multiple Sports

BY A-TURF

Athletes have been playing games on natural grass since the beginning of man, making the use of synthetic sporting surfaces a recent concept by comparison. According to the National Library of Medicine, “the first synthetic turf at a major sporting event occurred in Houston, Texas, at the Astrodome in 1966.”

That’s when “ChemGrass (developed by Monsanto), a short-fiber, dense nylon carpet, was installed over a compacted soil base in the stadium.”

Synthetic turf has continued to evolve over the past 60 years. Coaches and players have also discovered how critically important playing surfaces are because of how they impact athletes’ performance and safety.

With so much money being invested into sports on the collegiate level, it makes sense to specify a synthetic surface that is designed for multiple sports in order to maximize a university’s return on investment (ROI). In addition to reducing long-term costs, there are four benefits of installing one well-designed synthetic turf surface for multiple athletic programs, such as football, soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey, at the collegiate level.

Shared Capital & Maintenance Costs

Chances are, your university has multiple sports teams, and each team requires a different practice and/or playing field. The first benefit of installing one well-designed synthetic turf

surface for multiple athletic programs like football, soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey is that all four teams can share the capital and maintenance costs of the field. When one field serves multiple teams, the university’s resources can be more judiciously allocated.

One turf field also simplifies long-term replacement planning, since a school only has one field to plan, budget, and fundraise for. Predictable replacement timelines help facility departments prepare for future capital expenditures, and it’s easier to justify a future field upgrade when multiple sports programs are benefitting.

After a synthetic turf field is installed, ongoing maintenance costs such as grooming, infill management, and field repairs will be reduced, since these expenses will be consolidated into one budget that four sports teams contribute to. One field type also requires fewer specialized maintenance tools and staff training requirements.

When multiple sports share one field, the surface can be customized with multi-sport

line markings. Permanent and removable line systems allow for many sports layouts. Permanent line systems also eliminate the need for repainting or re-sodding a field for seasonal sport changes.

Consistent Playing Surface & Safety

The second benefit of installing one well-designed synthetic turf surface for multiple athletic programs is that it creates a consistent playing surface that is safe. Due to the advances in synthetic systems, modern turf fields offer shock absorption and traction profiles that are suitable for multiple sports.

When it comes to consistency, athletes will benefit from uniform footing, which reduces adaptation time. Fewer field condition variables also improve training quality and athlete confidence. Because synthetic turf permits year-round, all-weather use, athletes can play in rain, heat, and cold, minimizing cancellations. Reduced wear from weather also extends usability compared to natural grass.

Increased Event & Revenue Opportunities

The third benefit of installing one well-designed synthetic turf surface for multiple athletic programs is that it will increase a university’s event and revenue opportunities. When a field isn’t comprised of real grass, you don’t have to worry about harming the blades or overuse issues, which can create wear patterns and mud. As a result, a field can be used for other events as well.

A synthetic turf field can host tournaments, camps, clinics, or be rented out to local high schools or the community to generate additional revenue. An artificial turf field also offers the opportunity to support special events like alumni games, physical education classes, and campus celebrations. All of these activities can take place in the evening, on weekends, or during the off-season so as not to disrupt university athletes' training or playing time.

Recruiting & Campus Appeal

The final benefit of installing one well-designed synthetic turf surface for multiple athletic programs is that it can help with student recruitment and campus appeal. One high-quality, multi-use field demonstrates an institutional investment in its athletics and student life, versus having several grass fields that aren't well maintained or attractive.

By having one custom-made, beautiful synthetic turf field, prospective students see a modern, accessible facility used by many programs. This will enhance a university's overall campus image and athletic competitiveness.

Many students today are also concerned with sustainability. By installing a synthetic turf system, a university will reduce its water

usage and the need for fertilizers and chemical treatments compared to multiple grass fields. A one-field footprint serving many programs also minimizes land disturbance. All of these benefits support universities' sustainability goals and reporting.

Having one synthetic turf field that can host multiple types of play also sets a university up for future program growth and flexibility, since schools can add emerging or club sports without having to build new fields.

Best Turf System for Multi-Sports Use

Once a university realizes the benefits of installing one well-designed synthetic turf surface for multiple athletic programs at the collegiate level, what type or system should be specified? Before this can be decided, there are several factors that need to be considered.

It's advantageous to select a supplier like A-Turf®, a premier field builder that has been providing athletic fields across the U.S. for more than 20 years and has sales offices and installation crews located throughout the country. The company you select should also have experience with different sports and venues and the capability to work through all phases of a project from bidding to field design and construction.

Other Factors to Consider

Materials. Since athletes will spend many hours on the turf system selected, it should be safe. When you partner with a company like A-Turf, you know all its materials are made and assembled in the U.S. When coupled with a ShockPad, the field will be just as safe as grass.

Warranty. Make sure your synthetic surface has a warranty. A-Turf fields consistently outperform other brands because every component is driven by quality. This unwavering commitment results in unique durability, which A-Turf backs up with a 12-year warranty.

Environmental Impact. Most universities are concerned with how the materials it specifies impact the environment. A-Turf surfaces have a positive environmental impact. Both the ShockPad and rubber infill are made from shredded and cleaned scrap-tire rubber, which is 100 percent post-consumer waste.

Before installing a new turf system, a university should research the company, materials, warranty, and environmental impact of the products. Based on this information, they can the field builder they believe is best.

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Titan DiamondBlade

Because A-Turf consistently outperforms other brands and provides the greatest value, they are an ideal partner to choose when creating a multi-use synthetic turf field. More specifically, A-Turf Titan DiamondBlade offers the best synthetic system solution for multiple athletic programs, such as football, soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey. Titan DiamondBlade represents a revolutionary advancement in synthetic turf technology because it contains the industry's highest-grade dual fiber system. As a result, this innovative turf solution offers reinforced strength, unparalleled durability, and exceptional performance.

By adding a ShockPad underneath DiamondBlade, a university will receive a 12-year warranty on the system. By reducing friction and wear, ShockPad also increases the life expectancy of a synthetic turf system by at least 25 years, while also giving athletes the best protection and the greatest ability to perform.

Project Spotlight: Erie Community College

Erie Community College (ECC), which is part of the State University of New York, has three locations and more than 7,000 students. ECC also has a unique relationship

with Erie County, since the county assumed sponsorship of the college in 1953. When it was time for the college to replace the existing grass NCAA field at its North Campus, which is used by four sports teams, ECC specified A-Turf Titan DiamondBlade with an Ecore ShockPad.

The 133,451-square-foot field used by ECC's softball, football, and soccer teams now features 50-ounce Titan DiamondBlade with a 2.25-inch finished pile height and sand infill over 10mm Ecore ShockPad, which gives this system the best possible safety rating. When combined with Titan DiamondBlade, ShockPad provides the most natural and playable shock absorption in the industry over the life of the surface. By reducing friction and wear, ShockPad increases the life expectancy of a synthetic turf system by at least 25 years, while also giving athletes the best protection and the greatest ability to perform.

In addition to these benefits, A-Turf was specified for this project, because of their substantial portfolio, good relationship with Erie County, and for providing the industry's best 12-year warranty. Although the schedule was tight and there were some delays due to

unexpected site conditions, A-Turf brought in a second crew and worked with PM Pavement, Wendel Architects, and new site contractors to get this new field installation completed on time.

Bottom Line

A single, well-designed multi-sport synthetic field is preferable to multiple natural grass fields. An A-Turf Titan DiamondBlade system will provide maximum utility, improve campus appeal, and reduce costs, while providing a consistent and safe playing surface that offers increased flexibility. As such, Titan DiamondBlade is a smart investment for colleges and universities focused on long-term campus ROI. To learn more about A-Turf Titan DiamondBlade, visit ATurf.com.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: A-Turf, an Ecore company, builds premier athletic fields nationwide, delivering stable, sustainable surfacing solutions for youth, schools, colleges, professionals, and municipalities, backed by experience, U.S. manufacturing, and recycled rubber innovation.

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