

# FIELD OF



*In this article,  
Sprinturf exemplifies  
how and why they are  
one of the leaders in  
synthetic turf  
systems.*

**S**printurf is reputed to be the single largest US-based developer and installer of synthetic turf systems and one thing is clear when you meet their experienced team: they all have an exceptional passion for what they do, which is designing and installing what many acknowledge to be amongst the finest synthetic turf systems in the world.

To really understand Sprinturf, you first need to know a little about its history and its founder and CEO, Hank Julicher. Hank has been in the sports surfacing business for over 35 years and was the founder of several specialty sports surfacing companies. If athletes compete on it, one of Hank's companies probably built it. As a former nationally ranked athlete, Hank is passionate about providing competitors with the best and safest surface on which to perform.

Hank started installing the first generation of synthetic turf fields in the late 1960s. These AstroTurf-like products were basically padded carpets on top of pavement. Balls bounced unnaturally and athletes hated the harsh, abrasive surfaces, along with the increased risk of injury. Unfortunately, that was all the industry had to offer at that time.

In the 1970s, the industry moved to the first infill-based systems, which were 100% sand. Whilst an improvement, the surface hardened over time, making the fields similarly difficult, and potentially dangerous to play on.

During the 1980s and most of the '90s, the all-sand infill systems were gradually replaced by a mixture of sand and granulated rubber. Adding granulated rubber gave the surface a more natural feel and there was a renewed belief that synthetic

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*Sprinturf in action at Montana (main photo), Rockhurst University (top) and Catholic Memorial (above).*

climatic conditions, and financial considerations, just to mention a few.

In order to construct the correct turf system for each client, Sprinturf's field consultants are trained to ask the right questions so they understand the exact conditions under which the field will be used, from temperature ranges and rainfall, to sporting event usage and community activities. Only when that has been established, can a recommendation be made relative to the type of base, fibre, face weight, infill material and mix, etc.

## Ultrablade™ — Ultra Resilient

Sprinturf's Ultrablade™ fibre exploded onto the scene just over eighteen months ago, although extensive testing of the fibre had been conducted for several years prior to that. Ultrablade™, a unique monofilament like fibre, looks set to revolutionise the marketplace by being both remarkably soft and pliable, yet amazingly durable, providing a playing surface that holds its integrity longer than most.

To demonstrate to their clients just how durable Ultrablade™ is, Sprinturf simulates years of usage by taking a high-powered drill with a wire brush to the Ultrablade™ fibre. Even after a full minute of brushing, the Ultrablade™ fibre emerges unscathed, looking like new.

## Customer Driven Solutions

Ultrablade™ is only one in a series of recent innovations from Sprinturf. The company is tireless in their quest to improve the safety, appearance and durability of their turf systems through extensive research and development.

Whilst most companies like to talk, Sprinturf consultants are trained to listen. And being good listeners has paid dividends for them. "Virtually all of our innovations came from customers' input," said Julicher. "One of our most significant innovations, in fact, was a result of direct feedback from our clients in hot, arid areas. They wanted to know if we could design a system that could cool down the temperature on the field." Sprinturf's research team consequently developed two solutions to address this problem: CoolFill™ and CoolSpray™.

CoolFill™ reduces the temperature of playing surfaces by up to 30% by using light coloured granulated rubber infill instead of traditional materials.

CoolSpray™ has a specially designed series of water cannons installed along the field's perimeter, which will dramatically cool a football field or soccer pitch in just ten minutes, without compromising Sprinturf's excellent footing. Sprinturf also has a water capture and detention system so the same water used to cool the field can be recycled over and over again.

surfaces could finally become the surface of choice for most athletic programmes.

A breakthrough in synthetic surfaces finally arrived in the late 1990s. Sprinturf designed what was a revolutionary synthetic turf system that totally eliminated sand, and patented their all-rubber infill system. According to Sprinturf, today this design, because of its playability and safety characteristics, is the most imitated in the world.

## A 'Systems' Approach to Field Development

When asked about the turf they sell, Julicher is quick to point out that Sprinturf sells turf 'systems' — not simply turf. "There is much more to a playing field than just the surface," Julicher explained. "In fact, many would argue that the base

is the most important element. It needs the structural integrity to support athletes and vehicles, whilst still offering the porosity to drain over 20" of rainfall per hour, which isn't a simple trick."

However, the field surface and base are not the only factors that Sprinturf considers when designing a field system. "Our systems can include a variety of surface cooling and/or heating components, non-stone base structures and unique infill materials, depending on our customers' specific needs," Julicher continued.

## Custom Design — One Size Does Not Fit All

According to Julicher, not all fields are designed exactly alike, because no two owners have the exact same needs. There are a number of variables that need to be considered, such as playing requirements,



*Sprinturf listen to their clients' needs in order to meet their specific requirements. Pictured here at McEachern (left) and Selinsgrove (below left).*



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### Matching Requirements

Conversely, in other areas, extreme cold conditions can cause snow and ice build up on the field, making playing conditions dangerous or even impossible. In this case, Sprinturf's HeatShield™ system offers owners the option to eliminate these problems before they ever happen.

Another innovation Sprinturf recently introduced is RubbaSand™. Reputed to be the industry's only 100% rubber-coated sand, which provides a viable option to all-rubber systems for those who desire a firmer, faster playing surface, without risking hardening like infill systems using natural sand.

And finally, Sprinturf is undertaking more installations employing a proprietary, non-stone base, called HydroCore™. Customers looking to reduce the cost, installation time, or challenging location of their fields, have been said to have found Sprinturf's HydroCore™ drainage system to be an extremely effective alternative to traditional stone bases.

"R&D is time consuming and expensive, but our corporate mission demands that we continue to improve our products and offer the greatest possible value to our customers," Julicher confirmed. "Being the most recognised brand name isn't as important as being recognised as having the highest quality, and best performing

product. We will be tireless in making the necessary investments to ensure that happens," he concluded.

### Customer Benefits of Vertical Integration

Sprinturf is vertically integrated, which means they design, manufacture, sell, install, warrant and service their artificial turf sports fields, and according to Sprinturf President, Elliot Levine: "Vertical integration offers customers significant advantages over other turf companies."

Levine continued: "First, there is quality control. We need to know that the quality of the installation is the same no matter what part of the world it's done. Here in the US, we are the only company with our own installation supervisors/crews in every region and they are all full time employees. There is a 'right way' to install a field and relying on distributors or third party contractors has been proven to be way too risky for owners."

"Next there is accountability. If a field is ever in need of repair, (and every field is during the warranty period), who will the owner hold accountable to do the warranty repair work? The distributor may no longer have distribution rights and may even be out of business, whilst the third party installer has no incentive to maintain a positive relationship with the field owner."

And Levine went on to conclude: "Being 100% vertically integrated means a field owner is buying factory direct, saving all the costs that would otherwise go to the middle men."

### Earning Approvals and Certifications

Experiencing first hand the safety and performance characteristics of a Sprinturf field has been, by itself, enough for many

field owners to select them. However, they also receive the additional comfort of knowing that the product they are purchasing has been certified by some of the most important and recognised organisations in the world.

The Union of European Football Association (UEFA) has tested and certified Sprinturf's Ultrablade™ product, as has the Federation for International Hockey (FIH), and the Norwegian Building Research Institute (NBI). Sprinturf will also be certified in the new FIFA RECOMMENDED 2-STAR certification programme, which has just been instituted in Q1 of 2005. This is the highest certification a synthetic turf can receive.

### Insured Warranty — Your Financial Safety-Net

Unfortunately, new industries can be volatile — companies can and do go out of business regularly. Owners therefore need to be safe in the knowledge that their warranties are secure.

Sprinturf fields have a warranty valid for a period of up to eight years from the date of completion. And, perhaps more importantly, Sprinturf advised that they believe they are the only US-based company that offers a 'true' third party insured warranty. This means that if Sprinturf did ever go out of business, then an A-rated insurance company would still honour the warranty. This provides an unparalleled level of protection to field owners as they move ahead with this significant investment.

### Comparative Costs & Financing

At first glance, an artificial turf field might seem like an expensive proposition compared to a natural surface. However, when you compare all the costs of a natural grass field with those of a synthetic surface, the latter is the clear winner when viewed over time.

In some instances, where water is in short supply and therefore expensive, a Sprinturf field is actually less expensive than maintaining a natural surface starting from the very first day! In addition, Sprinturf offers leasing programmes for up to ten years, with no money down, and even has grants available.

Natural grass fields require feeding and weeding, watering and grooming, on a regular basis and typically need to be replaced every five to seven years. Even with all that tender care, the field spends much of its life off limits, as routine daily use would destroy the field, especially in inclement weather.

*Colton HS California.*





Left: Sprinturf's fibres contain no colour pigments based on heavy metals, making them more environmentally-friendly. Seen here at University of Pennsylvania's Franklin Field.

Above: Utah State University Stadium has a Sprinturf field installed.

## Environmentally Friendly

With today's focus on the environment, it is particularly important to consider the full life-cycle impact of an artificial turf system.

"The raw materials from which Sprinturf's fibres are made contain no colour pigments based on heavy metals. Sprinturf can be used anywhere, without restrictions in environmentally sensitive areas," says Bruce Cheskin, Sprinturf's Executive Vice President.

Less expensive fibres can contain concentrations of heavy metals, such as zinc and lead. Not only is the use of these heavy metals undesirable during the playable life of a field, but disposing of a field laden with these metals can require special handling and be quite costly.

Sprinturf's resilient infill system uses only recycled, crumb rubber that is triple-washed and screened, making it the cleanest infill on the market. Thirty thousand recycled tyres are used in an average field, which would otherwise go into landfills or be left by the side of the road.

Finally, synthetic surfaces require no harsh chemicals or pesticides to keep them in playing condition.

## Ultrablade™ Technology at Work

The same technology that goes into Sprinturf's athletic products has been adapted and is available through its Specialty Products Division for residential, commercial and municipal use.

For instance, Lawnscape™ is a special Ultrablade™ derivative fibre that mimics the look and feel of natural grass so closely that many people can't tell the difference. As it requires no water, Lawnscape™ is becoming increasingly popular in drought zones throughout the world. Other Lawnscape™ applications include highway median strips, dog runs, corporate landscapes, shopping centres etc.

SafeTurf™ is Sprinturf's safety-impact certified system for playgrounds. This product enhances the appearance of any playground and reduces the risk of serious head injuries. SafeTurf™ is ADA approved and HIC certified.

GolfGrass™ was specially designed and fabricated for use on putting and target greens, T-Lines and cart paths. The evolution of this product has been so advanced that it is difficult for even the professionals to distinguish the difference

between GoldGrass™ and the real thing. Sprinturf's RoofTop™ system is a popular, lightweight, non-infill, cushioned turf, which can be used on decks and atop high-rise buildings. RoofTop's aesthetic and recreational value is further enhanced by its ability to reduce the internal temperature of buildings, and protect the existing roof from UV degradation.

## Making an Informed Decision

"Purchasing a synthetic turf system can be very intimidating — but it doesn't have to be," said Julicher. He advises that: "Prospective customers should do their homework like they would if they were buying a car or a house. Ask lots of questions and most important, check the answers you get. We even provide interested parties with a Buyers' Checklist, which can help them focus on the right questions to ask suppliers so they can make an intelligent decision for their school or community." Julicher concluded: "We're confident that the closer an owner scrutinises their purchase, the more confident and excited they will be with a Sprinturf system." ■

For more information, call:  
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