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ZANDER SOD SUPPLIES NATURAL TURFGRASS TO BMO

Claus Zander of Zander Sod Co. Limited, provided the turfgrass and assisted with installation when a decision was made to convert BMO Field in Toronto from artificial turf to natural grass. "The players asked for it, the European players demanded it ... and we supplied the turfgrass sod to get the job done.

During a recent interview, Zander recalled how events transpired, "During the winter of 2009, the decision was made to rip out the artificial field and install natural turfgrass and a sub air system. Northgate Farms was the general contractor. They are a long time customer of ours and during the winter we gave them a choice of several Kentucky bluegrass blends that we would have ready for harvest in the spring. After some consideration they chose the 100% Kentucky Bluegrass blend. Which we harvested from a native sand field."

Zander went on to add, "One of the challenges was that they wanted to start installing on the first of April, a full two to three weeks ahead of our 50 year average season start. The schedule was then moved up to March 29. Five days before the target date, a cold front was forecasted for the weekend with overnight temperatures reaching -10c (14F), we proceeded to harvest 4 trailer loads and stored all the trailers in heated shops to keep them from freezing and at 5:00 am on the 29th the loads started moving out.

The turf was mostly dormant, our soil temps in the field were 34 F, and on site they had the soil warmed up to 70 F! One could see the color improvement daily!"

The turfgrass sod was harvested in the Alliston area and transported some 92 km (57 miles). "The turf was an extra thick, single (42") big roll", according to Zander. He added, "We had experimented with a range of thicknesses to find the perfect fit for the balance of all the requirements. The field was 90,000 sq. ft."

"We had to deal with half load limits getting the turf from the field to the city, and ended up using approximately fourteen trailers to deliver the required turf. In addition to supplying the turf, we also provided an array of install equipment to lay on the sand base," said Zander.

When the project was finished, Zander reported that the promoters had done a great job on getting the media to "play it up".

Play it up they did. *The Toronto Sun* reported that TFC Captain Dwayne De Rosario was in a great mood, urging media representatives to take in the smell of the natural grass. "Smells great," he said after practicing on it for the first time. "It's just a different feel. To step on grass in my hometown, I can finally say: Soccer is here. To have a facility here like this, especially with natural grass, is first

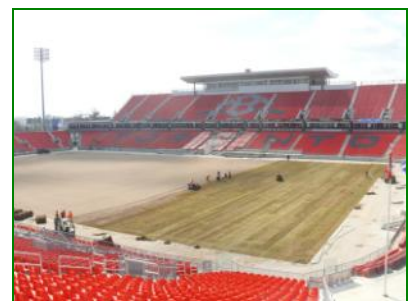
class." It is great. It's natural, the guys enjoy it and I love it. It's nice to know that every week when we have a home game we will have natural grass to play on."



Thick cut large rolls being harvested.



Turfgrass sod arriving at BMO Field.



Installation begins at BMO Field.

Toronto's BMO Field to Natural Turfgrass -Cont'd from page 9

The *Sun* also reported that TFC Director of soccer Mo Johnston and head coach Preki agreed the grass would be great for the franchise both on and off the field. "We all don't like playing on AstroTurf," Johnston said. "In the past, we've had (prospective signings) in (but) once they saw the AstroTurf, they didn't want to play here. Preki also said the grass would help cut down on nagging injuries.

In a related story *The Epoch Times* reported the newly installed system not only includes natural grass but also glycol heating tubes and the subgrade drain lines. The heating tubes are spaced throughout the field six inches apart and 10 inches beneath the grass. A boiler heats up glycol water and runs it through the tubes.



Heating system under BMO Field.



SubAir System controlling air and moisture of turfgrass on BMO Field.

A new aeration system consists of six-inch drain pipes that reside about 15 inches under the grass. They act as an enormous shop vacuum, only they absorb water. The SubAir system attaches to a drainage network located beneath the playing surface and utilizes

the drainage network as a medium to inject air or remove moisture from the soil profile

Together, these two systems will heat up the field and drain excess water to keep the grass in perfect growing conditions. They will ensure that no matter what the weather conditions, Toronto FC will start their season on time and on a fresh new turf. The aeration and drainage systems will enable players to use the field in early winter and during a wet spring. The field is also equipped with 12 GPS sensors that are grouped in four zones.

BMO Field is the first soccer field in the world that has both systems controlled remotely through GPS. The sensors, embedded in the ground, monitor the temperature and the moisture of the soil. This information is sent through a satellite to a monitoring station, which then adjusts the system to stabilize the temperature and the moisture. Word has it that there are already other clubs that asking about playing on the natural turfgrass that was put on BMO Field.

Zander was already familiar with BMO Field, because he was also responsible for providing the turfgrass sod used to line the field for the Real Madrid soccer game back in August of 2009. As part of the conditions of their playing in Toronto, Real Madrid required that the surface of BMO Field be converted from synthetic turf to natural grass.

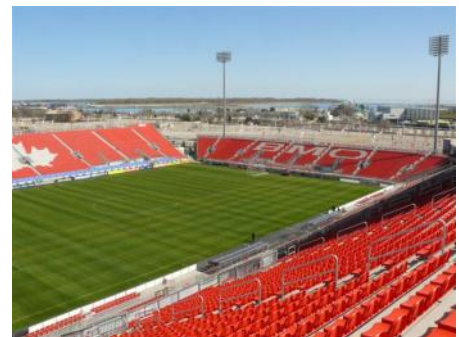
In recalling that challenge Zander said, "During the summer of 2009 we were contracted by Northgate Farms to supply and assist with the installation of natural turf over the artificial field at the BMO soccer field. Having made many friends (sod growers) from around the world over the years at numerous Turfgrass Producers International (TPI) conventions, I was able to discuss the unique complexities that are involved with such a high profile, short deadline/no excuses project. The knowledge learned and shared between growers is of great value...something

one can't put a price tag on. It helps us to improve the professionalism of our industry, provide products and services that go far beyond normal expectations."

Zander said providing a sod overlay suitable for play took several special considerations. "It was of the utmost in quality and it was a thick cut. It took a special kind of harvesting, a big roll which is extra wide - three-and-a-half feet wide." To accomplish that task the sod was laid on top of the existing artificial turf field, with a special liner between the two. Along with the extra width cut, the sod was also about twice as thick as a regular cut, making it especially heavy. The extra weight was needed so the field wouldn't shift or pull up during game play.

Evidently Zander impressed his long time customer and the folks at BMO Field, because when the decision was made to permanently convert BMO Field to natural turfgrass they turned to someone they could rely on, Claus Zander of Zander Sod.

Written by: Jim Novak
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Installation of turfgrass began on March 29th and by April 15th (the first schedule day of play) the field received accolades from players.

Photos courtesy of Claus Zander

To see a time-lapse video of the installation at BMO Field
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