

# TurfTalk

GLUED SEAMS VERSUS SEWN SEAMS

vol. I



**Ever since FieldTurf revolutionized the artificial turf industry competitors have been trying to equate their cheaper, lower quality product with that of FieldTurf's.**

The competition has gone to great lengths in its attempt to convince the public that the high levels of quality offered by FieldTurf can not only be found in their product, but at a significant cost reduction. Seam construction is no exception. Competitors have been trying for years to convince the public that glued seams are as durable and safe as sewn seams. Obviously the competition has no problem being deceitful.

The seam is the lifeline of the field. It facilitates the combination of large turf panels which results in one unified field system. With so much riding on the quality of the seam construction job FieldTurf has chosen to invest in sewn seams rather than the cheaper glued alternative. The long term risks associated with glued seams are simply not worth the short term costs. Unfortunately the competition continues to glue their seams in order to keep the overall cost of their fields down.

**Reoccurring problems with glued seams is the number one maintenance issue affecting fields around the globe.**

With glued seams the large turf panels can shift and raise over time. Eventually the glued seam will no longer be able to endure the wear and tear caused by regular playability. As a result the glued seam will literally bust open allowing for the panels to shift.



FieldTurf's Sewn Seams

With the seam compromised displaced infill can lead to two dangerous and detrimental outcomes. Either the loose infill will reposition itself beneath the panels resulting in a mound, or the infill will migrate from beneath a panel leaving a hollow zone in the field. To add to the headache, seam malfunctions can cost over five thousand dollars to repair. Most companies realize this and don't warranty repair work related to seam damage. Some competitors are of the belief that using a wider more expensive seam tape will help resolve the problem of loose seams. Unfortunately, wider taping does more in increasing expenses than it does for seam durability.

With so much relying on the quality of the seam construction job you must be asking yourself why the competition would ever think of gluing their seams? For starters, sewn seams are more expensive than gluing. FieldTurf's competition essentially offers a cheaper lower quality product. Glued seams allow them to keep the overall cost and price of their fields down. Secondly, sewing seams is not a simple process. The first challenge involves securing enough skilled workers who are capable of properly sewing seams. Despite the lack of skilled laborers, FieldTurf settles for nothing less than the best and scours the country for the best people for the job. Once the right workers are secured the process can be time consuming. Where as some competitors pride itself on the speed to which it can complete a job by using glued seams, FieldTurf never compromises its dedication to quality. FieldTurf takes the necessary time in order to ensure that each and every seam is sewn properly so that once completed, your field will last for years and years without any seam complications.

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**Figures 1 and 2** are examples of fields which have been installed with glued seams. The seam in figure 1 has been completely compromised allowing for the entire panel to be easily lifted. This field failure poses as an extreme tripping hazard to the students and athletes who play on this surface.

**Figure 2** is another example of the dangers associated with glued seams. As the seams come loose, part of the turf panels rise up. This panel augmentation not only reduces the consistency of the field, but is an extreme safety hazard.

Most of the competition chooses to install their fields with the use of glued seams. What is especially interesting about their seams is that they are located in-between the white line markers, not on the yard strip as in the case with FieldTurf. This can be seen in **figure 3 and 4**. Their seams are between the yard stripes because they often don't trust the jobber who makes their carpet to keep the turf straight!

If the fabric edge snakes, gluing or sewing the seam becomes very difficult because the white line must be straightened out and therefore gaps can be created between the rolls. In some cases the line can't be pulled straight at all and then must be cut out and somehow put in again. To get around these obvious deficiencies, they just put the line in the middle of the pass or roll and eliminate the challenge. This raises serious quality control issues. It is important to remember that practically all of the competition does not manufacture their own product. They sell a field, place an order for turf with a turf store and hope for the best. That is the extent of their quality control. They don't control their product in the same way as FieldTurf. They don't have inspectors overlooking the coating process. They don't examine each roll of turf before it is shipped to the job site and they don't inspect the perforation process or do spot tests. When it comes to quality control, FieldTurf does it all!

Due to their lack of quality control during the manufacturing process, their product has been known to require a substantial amount of maintenance and seam repair work. But don't take our word for it. A SportsFieldManagement article published in June of 2006 featured Jerry Stratton, maintenance manager for two Union High School District Sprinturf fields located in Salinas, California. The article mentioned that "Jerry has had seam failures on a regular basis with both of his fields. Since each color on this type of field requires a separate piece of carpet there are numerous seams. They require constant watchfulness and re-gluing whenever a seam gives way. He asks all coaches, PE instructors and user groups to use a preprinted grid of the field to mark and report any problems. He cautions others to make sure they look at all the potential maintenance costs when budgeting for natural or synthetic surfaces."



Figure 1

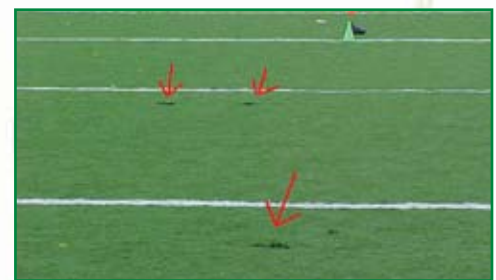


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

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**On a rare occasion a competitor may select to sew their seams in order to honor their client's request. It should be mentioned that the competition's sewing techniques have serious drawbacks.**

FieldTurf's sewn seam method is proven in use on hundreds of fields in every locale possible. The key advantage of FieldTurf's sewn seams technique is that the thread does not go through the pile fibers; rather an extra flap of backing material called the selvedge edging (**figure 5**) acts as the sewing medium, FieldTurf's seams are actually hidden under the pile fabric. The sewing thread is stitched through the fabric pile and traps the fiber itself under the thread. The fiber must then be "picked" or otherwise released. This process damages the fiber if care is not used. The competition's picking procedure (**figure 6**) is often not done thoroughly and as a result the seams are quite visible. The thread in the fiber matrix can pose a threat to players if their cleats come in contact with the thread. Because the thread is sewn through the fabric itself, the process damages the backing. The turf backing is punctured excessively along both sides of the seam, which affects the integrity of the fabric backing, weakening it significantly at the seam.

FieldTurf takes the time to guarantee that seam alignment and installation is done right. In **figure 7a** you can see how the panels are first perfectly aligned in order to prevent gaping and quality reduction. Once the panels are aligned FieldTurf's experienced installation crews carefully supervise each and every stitch that the Cart Sewing Machine makes, as seen in **figures 7b** and **7c**. With so much attention to detail it makes it easy to ensure that the FieldTurf product will last the test of time, providing for consistently safe playability over the years with no seam headaches.

The number one maintenance problem associated with synthetic fields is that of loose unglued turf seams. Although glued seams are less expensive and easier, requiring no special equipment or expertise, sewing seams is the only way to assure a trouble-free seam and a long lasting, safe field. FieldTurf's panel seams are sewn with a double lock stitch and FieldTurf has a proven record for fields without seam problems. When it comes to the quality and safety of your field, you can be certain that FieldTurf settles for nothing less than the best materials and most thorough seam installation around.



Figure 5 - FieldTurf's sewn seams with selvedge edging flap



Figure 6 - The competition's sewn seam



Figure 7a



Figure 7b



Figure 7c

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