

Cricket Nets (Stage 3)

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Another update on the Tungstens Northern Nets - since the last update I have laid the artificial turf (had to wait most of December due to rain), painted in the creases, removed the existing turf, increased dirt levels around pitch with a gentle slope to the pitch edge, re-laid the removed turf, and today placed the posts and crossbars into position.

After weeks of rain and courier stupidity I finally get the synthetic turf to the pitch

Synthetic Turf has a nap, where the blades of grass slope slightly towards one end. It's important to lay it with this nap pointing away from the bowler so the ball doesn't dig in and bounce dangerously. Although I could have laid the synthetic turf in one go - as only one end has a bowlers runup - I elected to cut and lay 2 pieces from the centre out towards ends, as all pitches are done, so I can use the normal bowling end to face spinners operating at the usual batting end, or perhaps a bowling machine, to even out the wear and tear in the grass. I cleaned the pitch using a blower before glueing.

The glueing is done with a notched trowel to spread a contact adhesive on the concrete before rolling the turf on top of it and then spreading with a broom. I used a gal pole as a roller to get rid of air pockets which worked beautifully. You do 2 to 3 metres at a time, ensuring the turf runs straight (even overlap of side edges) and best to work in the cool of the morning to eliminate fast evaporation and drying out of the glue. I have a pic of the technique below when doing the bowler wings, but I was working too fast with Mark Harvey to take pics for the main run. Here is the finished strip:

I actually used up all 20 litres of Everstick Adhesive doing the main strip, so whilst waiting to get a small 5 litre can to finish the edges down the sides (you rolled it over about 50mm - it prevents grass growing under the synthetic turf and lifting it off) I measured and marked in my creases. As every Tungsten will attest the stumps are exactly 20.12m (22 yards) apart with the popping crease 1.22m inside or in front of the stumps (4 feet in the old scale).

I started with a brush but wasn't happy with the straightness of line - the edge was a bit wobbly - plus the thickness of paint made the synthetic grass too stiff.

So I marked out the next creases with tape and spraypainted instead. This made a better line but did give off some overspray, despite having 2 pieces of timber vertically along the tape to prevent overspray.

I suspect marking out the creaselines will be a regular job but for now it's schmick :)

When I got my extra glue it was time to glue down the edges - in 2 days some spider friends had moved in under the side flaps already :)

You can see the spread of glue with the notched trowel here, plus the gal pole I used to roll out the turf after stickdown.

I wanted to completely cover the whole pitch but I got the last roll of synthetic turf from the main supplier in the country, and it was a few metres short. I can always get some more later and finish the extreme edges and behind the batsman but it's good enough for now.

As Mark Harvey will attest the final result is beautifully flat and smooth - no air pockets or bumps anywhere. Perfect!

The next stage was to bring dirt and turf up to the level of the pitch, with a slight slope away from the pitch. This makes the runups and net area level with a slight fall to take away water from rain. The pitch itself has a slight crossfall of 15mm across 1.73m (slightly less than 1 in 100) which is not noticeable from a playing perspective but allows water to drain quickly from the pitch for fast resumption of net sessions after rain - unlike our local nets which can stay unplayable for 2 days after heavy rain as they were laid dead flat and the synthetic turf holds the water instead of allowing (through

capillary action) a wick draining effect.

As it would cost a few thousand dollars to truck in topsoil, level it and lay turf, I worked out a cheaper method. My existing grass was a terrific native buffalo and in good condition, so I hired a turf cutter (\$140 for 24 hours) and cut the grass around the pitch.

I then rolled over 250 rolls of turf and removed most of them out of the way. I had worked out a cutting method where I could cut perpendicular to the pitch and roll the turf away from the pitch a few metres, enough to allow dirt to be filled in and levelled by bobcat, then unrolled back into position. This allowed me to keep one end of turf attached and not have to lift the rolls and carry them, but the turf rolls I did that way did get large and awkward to manage. Usually turf rolls are about 0.5m by 2m long but I was doing 8m and even 10 metres in some places. All the turf rolls on the other side of the new hedge are standard rolls, able to be lifted by one person and carried around.

Once the dirt was cut and filled from the higher area behind the pitch, to the sides and bowlers runup, we were still short, so I grabbed some from my dam (unlimited supply onsite) but it was a bit clayey. The final step was to screed and rake by hand to get the level and slope perfect to the pitch.

I ordered in a few ton of topsoil to spread on the clayey ex-dam soil by bobcat, before unrolling the turf back into position.

The bobcat is finished - a solid day and a half's work - which meant the next 10 hours would be back breaking manual labour, moving and unrolling the turf.

I was stuffed at the end of these 3 days, I'd had food poisoning the a few days before which didn't help, my body doesn't recover like it used to!

<-- The next step was to insert the gal posts into the pitch. The first one dropped into place beautifully. The other 3 needed some gentle persuasion, which was a challenge, as the end to be hammered was 4.2m high. I needed a long extension ladder, a big sledgehammer, and someone brave or dumb enough to ignore the danger of holding the ladder whilst I sledge hammered away, as well as strong enough and keen enough to want to help. Chris Hogbin was the obvious choice! :)

After lunch he went home . . . so I precariously put the crossbar into place, balancing a stepladder against the post and extension ladder with one hand, whilst using the other hand to hold the crossbar balanced on the opposite pole as I climbed up and attached it. Then I repeated the process on the other pole. Dodgy as but I was keen to finish and couldn't be stuffed getting a cherry picker or erecting scaffolding for a 10 minute job. No OH & S inspectors around here! -->

All that is left to do now is run cable between the posts and hang netting from the cable. Then I'll be open for business!! The re-laid turfs recovering nicely but I might need to roll it with a heavy roller to flatten it properly so it's smooth and even underfoot.

Thanks to all this rain (stopping us playing cricket) the turf around the pitch is recovering quickly. Once it stops raining I'll roll it flat with a 1 ton petrol roller, then hang the nets :)