

Mabhida Stadium on the roll

By Barbara Cole

The latest milestone development at the showcase Moses Mabhida Stadium has been literally rolled out as the first giant pieces of turf were laid.

It was expected that the job will be finished by the weekend, said Len Ludick, the divisional manager of Turftek, the specialist turf company contracted for the preparation of the pitch by the city

The vivid green turf is the most technologically advanced in the world and Durban will be the only stadium in the country to have it.

"It is the Rolls Royce of turf," said Fanus Cloete, the chief executive of Evergreen Turf, which has the licence for the "super sod" imported from America.

Adapted especially for Durban's heat and humidity, it has been grown near Ballito for the past seven months, to be harvested and transplanted to the stadium.

Invisible to soccer players and fans is a special tough, synthetic fibre binding into the thick roots of the grass.

This stabilises the turf, protecting it from kicks, slides and the toughest of tackles.

Lasers determine the precise levels of the turf - with the "turtle-back"-shaped field sloping down a fraction on the eastern and western side to allow for drainage.

The turf was lifted from the ground, then rolled into 20m² pieces and ferried to Durban.

The first piece, weighing about a ton, arrived early yesterday morning and about 1 000m² had been meticulously laid out by the end of the day. And there were no joins visible.

Warren Barker, one of Ever-green's two Australian specialists advising the operation, said he had worked on stadiums all over the world, but not one as spectacular as Durban's.

The turf that will go in around the perimeter is a different type of grass. It has been grown in Gauteng and can be removed to make way for an athletics track.

The goalposts and marker lines are expected to go in this month.

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