

Norway Football Association – Grass “Turf” Roots Football

FIFA have worked closely with the Norway Football Association to analyse their artificial turf facilities and development strategy. The aim was to see how a positive approach to artificial turf has enabled them to develop football at all levels. Norway Football Association has a thriving grassroots programme for both boys and girls. But to continually be on top and to always ensure opportunities, accessibility and “Football for All” they have to ensure the right environment and have facilities throughout the country. This case study will highlight the positive ways and strategies artificial turf has enabled the Norway Football Association to become leaders in the development of children’s, women’s and club football at all levels. Furthermore it will examine how a comprehensive artificial turf facility infrastructure strategy has been a core driver to ensure “Football for All” and more opportunities, more participation for more people and more often. The case study aims to provide what can be achieved “Football Development” with artificial turf surfaces at a local and a national level.

Artificial Turf Guarantees maximum Fun and Participation

One can always view that for a child to play in the mud can be “fun” but to really maximize fun football is to create the right environment for the child to experience football. The Coach/Teacher is obviously the role model and facilitator but the environment must be safe, secure and fun to play on. A FIFA RECOMMENDED football turf provides the correct environment. A FIFA RECOMMENDED football turf guarantees the opportunity to play football 365 days a year whilst also guaranteeing the best possible playing conditions 365 days a year.

Artificial Turf equals opportunity, accessibility, year round environment that equals **TOTAL FUN!**

A very high participation rate

1. **1822 Clubs**
2. **Number of players 375 431**
3. **Players/Population 8.4%**

Developing Facilities - Strategy

The Goal of the Norwegian Football Association is to increase the number of facilities for daily local activity.

Priorities – goals:

1. Minimum 300 mini pitches per year
2. Minimum 100 artificial turf fields per year

A facilities (artificial turf) strategy for the Norwegian FA is essential in sustaining the interest generated at community level and in raising the standards of performance at all levels. Ensuring the appropriate facilities are of the right standard are available is an essential requisite in the realisation of the strategy “Football for All” of the Norwegian FA.

A Strong Partnership approach

Norwegian Football Association works closely with Government and local authorities to increase artificial turf pitches in ones local neighbourhood.

The best Environment = Total Fun Football

Ask any child which environment he/she would like to play and most of the time the FIFA RECOMMENDED field will always be the chosen one.

What makes them cross?



What makes them tick?



What is Norwegian Football?

Boys/men	no of Players
Children under 6	2 168
Children (6-12 years)	110 399
Youth (13-19 years)	74 424
Adult (20-25 years)	21 770
Adult (26+)	71 778
Total	280 539

Girsl/women	no of Players
Children under 6	1 143
Children (6-12 years)	38 500
Youth (13-19 years)	31 895
Adult (20-25 years)	6 305
Adult (26+)	17 049
Total	94 892

TOTAL	375 431
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Why

- The children need somewhere to play, organised in clubs and spontaneously.
- The children need these possibilities in their neighbourhood, walking distance from home.
- Mini artificial turf pitches close to schools and in housing areas that makes accessibility to football easier.
- Mini pitches creates friendly and lively environments as children have more fun in compact football surroundings.
- Extremely important in rural areas as this widens the opportunity for everyone to participate.
- Artificial turf can be used 8 times more than grass!
- In the period September to May the days in Norway are short. In order to optimize the use of the artificial pitches, it is mandatory to have floodlight on the pitches.
- Climatic conditions in parts of Norway demands underground heating in order to have good conditions during the winter. It is therefore, in understanding with the Government, established separate economical support for this purpose.

The knock on effect from installing artificial turf pitches and maximising participation.

1. Many players increase the opportunity for more players to develop as elite players thus developing club football and national football. “More players to choose from”.
2. Many players gives the Norwegian Football Association more coaches, referees and volunteers.

3. Many active players gives loyal attendance at professional matches.
4. Artificial turf creates a platform to keep more people involved in the game such as media interest and greater parental involvement.
5. Sponsors are increasingly interested commercially in grassroots thus more money going back into the development of football.

Club Culture –The heart of the success

Norway has a very strong football club culture. A club where on average there are 18 teams attached to a club. This highlights the importance of the “community” at the heart of the football development in Norway. The club culture embodies an extended family and has parallels to English Football in the early 20th Century, where football clubs were formed as part of a social club/community such as churches and breweries. The 21st Century, Norway has taken the lead on a strong club and community culture, where many teams are part of the “Club”. Therefore given that weather conditions and the intensive usage of the fields with many teams would be an issue, artificial turf has strengthened the club culture as more usage and matches can be played and this all helps forward planning.

In order to enforce the football club culture, it is of great importance to have the artificial turf pitches located next to the club houses. This makes the club house the natural “home” for players, parents and leaders, where they can relax after training or matches, and meet other club members.

Ostfoldhallen

Ostfoldhallen has an indoor FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR Football Turf. It is also a base for one of Norway FA’s 18 district football associations. Notably the FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR football turf is within the local shopping centre. Having this football turf within the shopping centres is an added benefit and adds to the family atmosphere of football in Norway. For instance parents can go shopping whilst their children partake in after school activities. This kind of facility strategy enables more children to partake in football as the football turf is an excellent, safe, secure and suitable environment. The Ostfoldhallen football turf is heavily used throughout the year for a range of football activities. The Football turf really attracts all sectors of the community. In addition to the benefit of a football turf (year round usage), the football turf being indoors means it is also warm and therefore conducive to learning. For example it has been used on several occasions for the Level 2 coaching course. The indoor Football Turf field is popular on Saturday’s where approximately 500 children experience fun football, whilst parents naturally go shopping. Family – allocation of resources!



The Indoor FIFA RECOMMENDED football turf is also popular with girls, with 3 teams part of the club, a district schools football competition – where every girl plays and where also the Girls U-17 National Team train. The feedback has also indicated that the ‘environment’ of the football turf is aesthetically pleasing. The excellent usage possibility of a FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR football turf highlights some excellent participant figures: a) 40 people on the turf every hour, b) 2400 people a week thus 9600 per month. The excellent condition of the football turf and its year round availability has enabled midnight tournaments to take place for children aged 13-15, a 40year plus tournament involving 32 teams over 3 weeks, a pub tournament and 25 teams regularly using the football turf. The location, accessibility, “warm indoor climate” has certainly increased football participation at all levels within the community.



Alesund

Alesund will soon be kicking off the 2007 season in Norway’s top league. Due to the success of the current artificial turf, the following season 2006/2007 they will probably now install the state of the art FIFA RECOMMENDED 2 STAR football turf. The Football club is successful and is sold out every match day. The club is very open to positive change and see the installation of artificial turf as strengthening the club culture. For example young players could not use the old football field “grass”, but the club is happy for them to use the main field. The club has an open door policy and see children very much part of Alesund Football Club. Having an artificial turf in the stadium, the professional players also have their daily work and matches in the same arena, which makes them more comfortable with the stadium and its surroundings.

Stranda

“Family Club with football being the focus”.

Stranda is a perfect example for a community club. The club is solely run by volunteers (mainly parents) with nearly all parents involved. The installation of a FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR field has been core to the success and development of the club. Stranda has 35 teams. This includes 15 girls teams, 15 boys teams and 5 senior teams. The FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR field has really meant that the club can grow due to increased playability (usage). There are 360 playing members and 450 members of Stranda Football Club. The club spokesperson said “ Artificial Turf is a new world, where everybody can train and play as much as possible”. The installation of a FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR field has opened the doors for increased participation and teams joined to the club. The club has certainly seen that the FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR field has meant



that girls and women have stayed longer in the game because the focus has been on fun whilst having suitable facilities (artificial turf).

(Note: At time of publishing, the Artificial turf at Standa is going through the testing to be awarded the FIFA RECOMMENDED 1 STAR certificate)

Conclusion

A proactive artificial turf facilities strategy by the Norway FA has certainly increased and sustained football participation at all levels of the game. The growth in number of players, especially children of both sexes, makes it necessary to build artificial turf pitches. The growth from 2004 to 2005 demanded approximately 80 new, full size artificial turf pitches. For the next 4 years the goals have therefore been enlarged from 50 to 100 new pitches per year.

The football season, both domestic and internationally, is growing. In order to participate in the international competitions with good conditions at any time, and in order to beat the climatic conditions, artificial turf will be the solution, as the improvement of the artificial turf is getting more and more close to the standard of top natural grass. This will also be the future for the professional part of the game and for the next season at least 3 clubs in the men’s first division will play regularly on artificial turf. For training all parts of the professional game are of course totally dependent on artificial turf through a long winter period.

