Tech Astro Turf Installed

By Bill Mason
Sports Editor

BLACKSBURG — The "rug" is down and in use at Virginia Tech.

Carl Hohman of Sport Install, Inc., supervised installation of the $250,000 Astro Turf football floor at Rector Field House. The job was finished except for final touches to the jogging track on the field's perimeter Monday. The last of the yard markers and numbers were painted on Monday night.

Coach Charlie Coffey's football team worked out on the artificial surface Tuesday and found it to their liking.

The building process started with the natural field house floor of compacted dirt. To this was added four inches of pressed stone topped by two and one-half inches of asphalt. The asphalt was topped with a five-eighths inch polyurethane shock pad, then the Astro Turf itself, about one-half inch thick.

The yard lines and markers were painted on with an exterior latex paint and about three hours were required for drying time for the indoor installation.

Hohman said work was started Tuesday, Aug. 14, at 2 p.m. The surface was ready for finishing touches and painting by Sunday morning. The painting took about seven hours.

The jogging track also is a permanent installation. Harold Meade, resident engineer for VPI & SU, said a pole vault pit will be located at one corner of the field house near its entrance and a jumping pit will be in the other corner, away from the playing surface.

Perhaps the first Tech people to tread the Astro Turf, like the field house itself, a gift to the University from benefactor Charles Rector, were a small group of football coaches who did some running.

The Gobblers face four teams this season who play their home games on artificial turf, starting with West Virginia at Morgantown Sept. 22.

The material for the "rug" was developed by Monsanto about a decade ago under the name Chemstrand. However, following installation in Houston's sports palace, the Astro Dome, it became known as Astro Turf.

Four Sports Install workers and three local men completed the installation. Hohman said he believed the nearest such installation was one he had worked on in Louisville, Ky.

The artificial surface will enable Tech to learn the playing characteristics of the indoor-outdoor sports carpet used by a growing number of teams. Tech encountered an artificial surface in its game against Alabama last year at Tuscaloosa. Among its other characteristics the surface held water like a bucket. Since Tech's installation is indoors, the Astro Turf is expected to last for a long time. Hohman said it would be impossible to predict how long the new surface of Rector Field House will last.