

Fresh, green Duler artificial turf awaits official nod

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Panaji: Almost all of a sudden, the cynosure of all football enthusiasts' eyes in North Goa is now Duler.

Starved of football action for close to a year, North Goa fans will finally have something to cheer as the laying of an artificial turf at the Duler stadium in Mapusa is now complete, and it's only a matter of a few days, even less, before the Goa Football Association gets back possession of the ground from Fifa.

"We are all waiting to occupy one of those seats and watch football here, again," GFA executive committee member and zonal secretary Babli Mandrekar told TOI on Monday.

Those in the know said the ground could be handed over to GFA on Thursday.

At first glance and from the outside, the artificial turf looks as good as natural. It's lush green, fresh and an open invitation for teams to give it their best shot. Turn around, though, and the rickety stands coupled with the old



The freshly laid artificial turf at the Duler stadium, Mapusa, looks inviting for some football action

paint, sticks out like a sore thumb. Not to mention the toilets.

"We understand that there is a need to complete other works here as well. The GFA president (Shrinivas

Dempo) has had a look at the stadium for himself and has already set aside a budget for the work to be completed as soon as possible. Duler will have a different look now," said Mandrekar.

According to Mandrekar, the stadium will have a new coat, the staircase leading to the dressing will be in place and the VIP gallery on the Carvalho stand will be clearly demarcated.

"These works will be taken up on a priority basis," he said.

Dipak Khanolkar of Greenfields, responsible for laying of the artificial turf, said Grant Humphries of the

Australian company, Acous-ta Scan, a Fifa approved lab testing company, was pleased with the condition and quality of work. The ground will officially be handed over to GFA as soon as the lab report is sent to Fifa. In the meanwhile GFA will need to use the turf to test it," said Khanolkar.

Once the stadium is handed over by Fifa, and these works completed, Duler will once again be the hub of all football activities in North Goa. The Kingfisher Goa Pro League matches, for a start, will be relocated at Duler while come January and a majority of First Division League matches will be slotted here.

"We have had an amazing number of inquiries. Clubs want to train here, many want to hold tournaments. I think Duler will be kept busy all through the year," said Mandrekar.

Like Mandrekar said, it's going to be a busy year ahead, both for Duler and the football enthusiasts in this part of the world.

Certification Dec 4, 2012