

ARTIFICIAL TURF UPDATE



March 18, 2011

With the Game experiencing growth across every continent and reaching out to more men, women and children than ever before, artificial turf presents a solution for Rugby to be enjoyed all year round where the climate makes it difficult to organise matches on natural turf.

The innovative IRB *One Turf* Programme, which was launched earlier this year, means that Member Unions, Clubs and Sports Organisations around the world can for the first time rely on an IRB endorsement when considering the option of artificial turf.

Through industry-leading IRB Preferred Turf Producers and IRB Accredited Test Institutes, it is now possible to regulate and standardise the development, performance and maintenance of artificial turf worldwide, while promoting the highest possible player welfare and performance standards.

The programme has been launched following an extensive research and testing process and is underpinned by an amendment to IRB Regulation 22 governing artificial surfaces. The newly amended Regulation removes the right of the player to refuse to play on a Regulation 22 compliant artificial pitch.

The Performance Specification has also been removed from the Regulation. This has been done to facilitate quick and easy modification should future research and development necessitate it. The Performance Specification is currently being divided into a technical and non-technical document to serve as criteria for the industry and Member Unions alike.

The Regulation can therefore be modified and updated to ensure best practice and the highest possible player welfare and performance standards are maintained globally.

It is the responsibility of each Member Union to ensure that the quality levels required through Regulation 22 are met and upheld over the lifespan of artificial pitches in their jurisdiction. Below are the steps that must be followed in order to have an artificial pitch installed.

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- Step 1** Bodies seeking to install or use an artificial turf playing surface must comply with the IRB requirements for the use of artificial playing surfaces (see Regulation 22 Additional Requirements for Installation)
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- Step 2** Manufacturer submits a product to Accredited Test Institute
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- Step 3** Product is tested. If it passes then it goes to Step 4
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- Step 4** A pitch is installed with the laboratory approved system
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- Step 5** The installed pitch undergoes field testing
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- Step 6** If the system meets all the requirements then it is granted the Approved Status by the National Member Union

As of August 2010 the Head Impact Criteria contained in the Performance Specification has changed from 1m to 1.3m on installation of a pitch and 1m over the manufacturer's warranty.

IRB Accredited Test Institutes

Test Institutes that meet the criteria set out by FIFA/IRB and pass an annual testing regime are eligible to perform tests in accordance with IRB Regulation 22.

IRB Accredited Test Institutes

Acousto-Scan Pty Ltd *

Contact: Grant Humphreys

Email: admin@acoustoscan.com.au

ISA Sport

Contact: René van Bremen

Email: Rene.vanBremen@isa-sport.com

Labosport

Contact: Eric Faivre D'Arcier

Tel: contact@labosport.com

Sportslabs Ltd

Contact: Eric O'Donnell

Email: eric@sportslabs.co.uk

University of Ghent*

Contact: Stijn Rambour

Email: stijn.rambour@ugent.be

* Test Institute is eligible to perform field tests only

IRB Preferred Turf Producers

Player welfare is the paramount consideration and the highest performance and durability standards must be met. The IRB launched its Preferred Turf Producer scheme to ensure that installed pitches are safe to play on and can evolve with the changing needs of Rugby via continued research and development.

Limonta S.P.A

Contact: info@limontasport.com

Tel: +39 0354812111

Greenfields B.V.

Contact: rugby@greenfields.eu

Tel: +44 1204 699 930

Mondo S.P.A.

Contact: bgenta@mondoita.com

Tel: + 39 (0) 173 232 181

SIS (Support In Sport)

Contact: george@supportinsport.com

Tel: + 44 1900 817 837

FieldTurf Tarkett SAS

Contact: tarkettsports@tarkett.com

Tel: +33 (0) 1 41 20 40 40

ADVANTAGES OF INSTALLING ARTIFICIAL TURF SURFACES

PLAYING TIME

A typical pitch can yield up to thirty hours playing time per week if correctly maintained. However, a strict maintenance process is necessary in order to achieve this yield week-in week-out. The number of playing hours is significantly increased in comparison to natural turf, particularly in areas where natural turf is difficult to grow or maintain.

FINANCIAL

Over the lifespan of an artificial surface it is possible for revenues generated to cover the initial installation costs which are in region of GBP 500,000. Aside from being cheaper to maintain and yielding greater playing time than natural turf, the surface can also be used to generate commercial revenue streams through a multisport, community and cultural event capacity. The artificial surface usually only requires the standard maintenance regime after staging events.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Artificial turf is sustainable. It requires little or no water which is an advantage for countries where water is in short supply. Using artificial turf as a multi-purpose surface can be a more eco-friendly alternative to natural turf where the surface often needs to be replaced after heavy event use.

CLIMATIC

Artificial turf can be a more practical solution for countries where extreme weather conditions, both hot and cold, prevail. It is more resistant to changing climates than natural turf and varies little in both extremes of weather. It also provides a more consistent surface in climates with seasonal variations particularly for elite tournaments.

IRB CONTACT:

Member Unions are asked to contact Leanne Walsh on leanne.walsh@irb.com with any queries relating to Artificial Turf.

For further information on how to become an IRB Preferred Turf Producer or an Accredited Test Institute please email Leanne Walsh on leanne.walsh@irb.com

Visit the IRB Player Welfare website:
www.irbplayerwelfare.com