



Quick Reference Guide to Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)

As the number of AGPs constructed continues to increase, I thought it would be useful to clarify a number of issues that keep cropping up in the field.

3G/4G/5G

There is no such thing as a 4G/5G pitch as recognised by the AGP industry. 3rd Generation or '3G' pitches use the most up to date technology available. The term 3G relates to systems that use a long pile carpet with sand and rubber infill. Any use of the term 4G or 5G is **incorrect**. You may hear it from company reps who are trying to gain an edge on competitors by making a very minor (inconsequential) change to the specification and selling it as 4G or even 5G. The pitch at Saracens is a 3G pitch, despite what you might read in the press!

Suitable for Rugby?

A 3G pitch is not necessarily appropriate for contact rugby union and there is no way to tell if an AGP is suitable for contact rugby union by simply looking at it. However, whether or not a surface is suitable for contact rugby union (matches or training) is extremely straightforward. The pitch simply has to have an up to date test certificate that demonstrates compliance to World Rugby Regulation 22. This test must be carried out by a World Rugby accredited test institute. World Rugby regulation 22 relates to the performance standard of the pitch and measures criteria such as head impact, ball bounce, joint strength and energy restitution. These tests reflect the characteristics of a good quality natural turf pitch. Test certificates should be forwarded to Ted Mitchell so a formal 'permission to use' letter can be issued from the RFU. The World Rugby Regulation 22 test must be renewed every two years.

Rugby and other sports

AGP systems can be manufactured and installed so that they meet all the requirements of the World Rugby, the RFL and FIFA, **BUT** if a pitch is certified by RFL/FIFA, this does not necessarily mean it meets World Rugby regulations. There are currently no systems available that meet the requirements of the World Rugby and FIH (for competition level hockey).

Insurance

A statement is on rfu.com from the RFU Insurance Broker, Marsh, which states that an AGP that has been tested and subsequently signed off by the RFU is treated in the same way as a natural turf pitch for insurance purposes. Pitches that do not have an up to date test certificate may not have appropriate insurance.

Non-contact

Non-contact activity should be managed in the same way as it would be on any other surface (i.e. a hard/dry natural turf pitch or an indoor sports hall) with a risk assessment carried out by the person in charge of the session (i.e coach/teacher), as normal, based on all contributing factors.

For any further information on World Rugby compliant 3G pitches please contact me at tedmitchell@rfu.com

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