



Essential Technical Guide to Artificial Grass Pitches for Rugby Union

This essential guide is designed to briefly highlight some of the key technical issues relating to Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) for Rugby Union.

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 change to the specification and selling it as 4G or even 5G. The pitch at Saracens is a 3G pitch.

Suitable for Rugby?

A 3G pitch is not necessarily appropriate for contact rugby union. 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 IRB Regulation 22. This test must be carried out by an IRB accredited test institute. IRB 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 the RFU Club Facilities Technical Manager, Ted Mitchell so a formal 'permission to use' letter can be issued from the RFU. The IRB Regulation 22 test must be renewed every 2 years.

There is no way to tell if an AGP is suitable for contact rugby union by simply looking at it but a list all IRB compliant AGPs in England is on rfu.com along with their test status.

Rugby and other sports

AGP systems can be manufactured and installed so that they meet all the requirements of the IRB, the RFL and FIFA, BUT if a pitch is certified by RFL/FIFA this does not necessarily mean it meets IRB regulations. There are currently no systems available that meet the requirements of the IRB 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 (IE a hard/dry natural turf pitch or an indoor sports hall) so activity undertaken should be risk assessed by the person in charge of the session (ie coach/teacher) as normal based on all contributing factors.

Footwear

All AGP site operators will be able to advise you on what footwear is suitable on their particular facility, but as a general rule, rugby boots with moulded or screw in studs are suitable for artificial turf pitches but trainers and blades are not.

For more information please visit
www.rfu.com/managingrugby/clubdevelopment/facilitiesandequipment/ or contact RFU Club
Facilities Technical Manager, Ted Mitchell on 07738 029212 or tedmitchell@rfu.com