

3G Football Turf Pitch information

Following the changes to the Standard Code of Rules, you will be aware the use of 3G pitches is permitted subject to the pitch meeting the required performance standards and appearing on the FA register. The use of 3G pitches has been included in the rules following successful implementation in FA competitions, the National League System and Women's Super League.

FIFA have provided clear guidelines and rules around the design, use and testing of these pitches and the pitches continue to play as close to natural turf as possible providing they are used and maintained correctly. There has been considerable investment throughout the Country over the last 10 years resulting in greater availability of these pitches for football clubs.

There are still a number of sand based pitches that are in use especially for training purposes. These pitches are not a suitable surface for football and have not been included in the change of rules that applies to affiliated football but may still be used for training, adult 5 a side leagues and informal games.

We have also produced a list of frequently asked questions to help with any enquiries that may be made during this period of formal introduction and use:

- **Why do I need to test the pitch?** – The FA has changed the standard code of rules regarding the use of 3G Football Turf Pitches (FTP) that will now allow more clubs and teams to use these types of pitches. The rules will become effective from 2014/15 season and provided a FTP has been tested and appears on The FA Register it will be allowed to be used for affiliated match play in all competitions outside the National League System (NLS) i.e. Step 7 and below including Women's and Youth Football. There is already clear guidance for use of these pitches in FA competitions and also in the NLS and Women's Super League.

The cost of a 3G FTP is considerable (£550K for a full size pitch) and the FA has made a significant investment over the last 12 years gaining a vast amount of knowledge around design, construction, installation, management and maintenance requirements. In the last 4 years we have refined our investment to work with a select group of companies to ensure that the pitches are constructed to the best possible standards and will provide a quality surface to play on. However, we cannot give that assurance to those pitches that we have not invested in or that have not been maintained to the correct requirements. To protect the players and to provide a pitch that is going to replicate natural turf we need to know that the pitch passes a performance test. We do not want matches on these surfaces to provide a negative experience for both players and spectators or to put the players at risk or harm.

- **What is the test for?** – The reason for testing the performance of the pitch is to protect both the operator and the players from injury in an age of litigation. Whilst the pitches are state of the art, they do need to be maintained and tested to continue to meet the required performance standards. We want to protect the players as much as possible and to provide a pitch that is going to replicate natural turf when the ball bounces or rolls. A test will need to be carried out in order to ensure the pitch is performing well and more importantly there are no health & safety issues.
- **Why all this fuss about 3G when natural turf has no testing requirements?** – A typical 3G FTP construction is on stone and tar macadam base with the football turf (3G) installed on top. This means the surface can affect how the game is played, making it very hard and dangerous if not managed and maintained properly. Any imperfections will not necessarily be visible to the eye and will not repair themselves naturally. Issues with natural turf pitches are usually visible and can repair themselves over time. The FA is in the process of introducing revised pitch performance standards for natural turf and a process of self testing to ensure that these pitches meet minimum requirements.

- **What happens if the operator does not want to test the pitch?** – if the pitch was funded through the Football Foundation then the operator will be required to carry out the test to meet the terms and conditions of grant. Letters have been sent to these sites to remind them of their obligations and requirements when the grant was awarded.

If a pitch is privately operated then it is worth reminding them of the new rules and also the insurance risks they leave themselves exposed to. The pitch test fee has been negotiated at a special rate and is a small amount compared to the income that is generated annually. The operator's income could also be adversely affected if they were **not** permitted to host affiliated football matches from 2014/15.
- **My pitch has already been tested** – if you think a pitch has already been tested then please send the certificate or test information to the FA (facilitiesinfo@thefa.com) and if approved the pitch will be added to the register. We will remind operators of the need to re test approximately 6 months before the due date.
- **How often does the pitch need testing?** – the requirements for testing are **annually** for clubs playing at **steps 3 to 6** in the football pyramid, **Women's Super League and FA competitions**. The test is required every **three years** for **all other affiliated football**. A pitch will remain on the register for the requisite period (1 or 3 years) with the season starting on 1st June and finishing on the 31st May the following year. There is already clear guidance for use of these pitches in FA competitions and also in the NLS and Women's Super League but for other affiliated football if a pitch is tested and passes mid season then it will remain on the register for the additional period of time between the test and the season end – e.g. If you were to re-test the pitch during 2014 (October) and it passes then it would remain on the register until 31st May 2018.
- **What happens if my FTP fails the test?** – You should seek urgent professional advice on how to improve the condition of the carpet and The FA can provide advice as to how best to do this and who to approach. A common reason for failing is due to inadequate maintenance, the volume of use and type of footwear used. This could be rectified in a reasonably cost effective way. If, following professional advice the carpet is considered past its usable life, then a re-surface may be required. In this circumstance the pitch should not be used for match play until it passes the performance test and appears on the FA register.
- **How can we check if our maintenance programme is sufficient to ensure we continue to meet the performance test?** – You should seek the advice of a number of accredited maintenance companies with professional qualified technicians on what is best for your situation and attend a training course. You can then amend your current maintenance programme or enter into a contract with one of a number of maintenance contractors to suit the programme of use and available budget.
- **How do we get a pitch tested?** – there is a list of testing companies and prices that we have agreed for this season, this list is available from the County FA or on the FA website.
- **My certificate states that I already have FIFA certification** – FIFA approve a pitch for 4 years from the construction date of completion and the FA will accept this certificate for a 3 year period from the date of issue. If the pitch is to be used at steps 3 to 6, the FA Women's Super League or in FA competitions the pitch will need to be tested annually as per the competition rules.
- **How can I find out more on 3G pitches and usage?** – you can check with your County FA, the FA Regional Facility and Investment Manager or through the FA website or send an email to - facilitiesinfo@thefa.com
- **What if we play on a pitch that is not on the register?** – if you play a match on a pitch that has not been tested and approved you run the risk of the league or competition imposing sanctions which could be a points deduction, a fine or both