

ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (AGPs)

There continues to be significant interest in the use of artificial grass pitches for clubs in the National League System and below. Part of this interest has been driven by the successful installations in England at Woodley Sports FC and Durham City FC both of whom play in the Unibond League.

Much of this interest, both from leagues and clubs within the non-league pyramid, seeks to understand The FA's position regarding the sanction of these pitches, particularly in FA Competitions.

Following the introduction of artificial grass pitches into some FA competitions last season, the various FA Committees have again approved the use of such pitches in their respective competitions from season 2009/10:

- FA Trophy
- FA Vase
- FA Youth Cup (qualifying rounds only)
- FA Women's Premier League and Cup
- FA Sunday Cup
- FA County Youth Cup

The use of such pitches is however dependent on compliance with conditions of use, which has been viewed by each Committee too – a copy of these is available for download and should be read in association with these notes.

It has been agreed therefore that matches from season may be played on artificial grass pitches that conform to the FIFA 1 star standard, or the equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (IATS) in all FA Competitions, **except** the FA Cup (all rounds) and FA Youth Cup (Rounds proper).

To qualify for use, the pitch must be certified by The FA as meeting the FIFA 1 Star standard or the equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard. The relevant certificate must be supplied to the FA and relevant competition before play is allowed.

Clubs should make their own risk assessment of whether such an installation is plausible or not given their individual circumstances. There is a risk that pitches may deteriorate over time and may not achieve the required standards at each period of retesting.

It is suggested that clubs negotiate suitable longevity warranties from the carpet manufacturers to ensure that the pitch will last in line with the Club's business plan and intended usage levels. A sinking fund should be established too to ensure sufficient funds are available when the carpet needs replacing.

Clubs are encouraged to understand the full maintenance required, which may be necessary to validate any warranty.

Steve Williams
National Facilities Manager
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