

The Thornton Sports Guide To Artificial Grass Rugby Pitches



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Artificial Grass Rugby Pitches

Identifying what type of sports pitch would be best for your club, school or university can be difficult. There are a number of factors to consider, all of which will determine the quality and playability of the pitch. Our below guide outlines what to look out for and recommends how to make your facility ideal for Rugby.

Why Go Artificial?

There are many benefits of playing Rugby on an artificial grass surface. Weather conditions often make natural grass pitches unplayable, however artificial grass pitches can be accessed all year round. Artificial surfaces that are well maintained can also accommodate longer playing hours, whilst remaining in optimum condition.

Training is also often improved on artificial grass pitches, as the surface provides a stable, reliable footing for players, allowing them to concentrate on ball skills, scrums and technique.

In addition to playability and availability, the commercial benefits of an artificial grass pitch are undeniable, as good facilities can attract impressive revenues when hired out.

And that's not all. From a maintenance point of view an artificial grass pitch is considerably easier and more cost effective to maintain than a high quality natural grass pitch.

What Surface Type Is Best For Rugby?

3G (3rd generation) artificial grass surfaces are in-filled with both sand and rubber granules. The long pile height of the artificial grass gives a look and feel like natural grass.

Our Rugby Pro 60 & Rugby Pro M surfaces have been designed specifically for full-contact Rugby, whilst also being suitable for touch Rugby and Football.

Are There Set Standards For The Pitch To Meet?

Surfaces suitable for Rugby will meet the performance requirements of either/both of:

- IRB Regulation 22 (March 2011) – IRB Artificial Rugby Turf Performance Specification
- Rugby Football League Performance and Construction Standards for Synthetic Turf Pitches (2011 edition)

If football will also be played on the new facility the surface will need to meet the requirements of the new International Match Standard (IMS), formerly the International Artificial Turf Standard (IATS).

Typical pitch dimensions

The Rugby Football Union currently recommend a full-size artificial grass rugby pitch should be **120m x 75m** fence to fence. Similarly the Rugby Football League recommend pitch dimensions of **116m x 74m** fence to fence.

What do the shockpad and macadam layers do?

Many pitches include shockpads and/or macadam layers within the sub-base of the pitch underneath the artificial grass.

Shockpads soften the surface and provide improved play quality for the players. Macadam layers increase the surface stability and extend the life of the facility.



Other Factors To Consider

Fencing

Rigid panel weldmesh fencing is most ideal due to its durability. Gates should always open outwards, so that play is not interrupted and open gates don't cause a health & safety risk.

Floodlighting

In terms of floodlighting a minimum level of lighting of 100lux is recommended for training, 120lux for recreational play and 200lux for community level competition.

Line Markings

Line markings are often manufactured into the artificial grass surface rather than painted on. Painted lines soon fade and the cost of having to regularly re-apply markings over the life of a pitch is likely to be more expensive than having them built in from the start.

Cost Indications

The cost of constructing a new facility depends upon the site conditions and the features of the pitch selected. However typically, a new full-size pitch will cost in the region of £500k. Resurfacing of an existing full-size artificial grass facility would be in the region of £150k. Smaller training facilities are obviously likely to cost less.

Aftercare Is Important

It's a common misconception that artificial grass surfaces don't require maintenance. Regular maintenance operations for a 3G surface include brushing the surface ideally each week to decompact the rubber infill, lift the artificial grass fibres and redistribute the infill.

Maintenance not only ensures surfaces continue to perform as required, but it also extends the expected life of a facility and hence return on investment. A lack of maintenance could also invalidate the surface manufacturer's warranty!

Thornton Sports provide guidance on surface maintenance and offer free basic training for grounds staff as part of all our major projects. These in-house maintenance procedures can then be complemented by less frequent, specialist procedures undertaken by a surface maintenance company such as our Protech AllWeather division.

Generally, for a facility used intensively, a 10 year lifespan can easily be achieved with a SoccerTurf 3G surface if recommended maintenance is carried out.

Case Study - Ravens Wood School, Bromley



Ravens Wood School in Bromley required a new full-size sports pitch, mainly for Rugby use, whilst also being suitable for Football. Thornton Sports installed a 3G SoccerTurf Rugby Pro M pitch to meet the performance requirements of both IRB regulation 22 and IATS.

Rhys Spiers at Ravens Wood School comments:

“The new 3G all weather pitch from Thornton Sports has made a hugely positive impact on the experience that our students gain through physical education at the school. We have found the quality of the surface to be excellent and well suited to a number of physical activities including football and full contact Rugby Union.”



Our Expertise

Thornton Sports have over 35 years experience in sports surfacing. We are very proud to research, develop and manufacture our own artificial grass surfaces in-house, within the UK. As a result our facilities are renowned for their performance and longevity and our team can provide a complete service from design, through to installation and maintenance.

To find out more about how we can improve your sports facilities, call us today on **01282 777 345** or email **info@thorntonsports.uk**

Please note that sports pitch design is dependent upon site conditions and performance requirements. Whilst our guide outlines the most common forms of artificial pitch design for Rugby, you are recommended to contact a specialist sports surfacing consultant or contractor, such as ourselves, to discuss your specific project requirements.



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Rugby Pitches

