SEPTEMBER 2025

FIELD NOTES

PITCH READY FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR:

A CHECKLIST FOR FACILITY MANAGERS

SPORTS LABS

TESTING TECHNOLOGY FOR SPORT



This Field notes is relevant for facility managers looking for a starting checklist for the new school year, checking the playing surfaces are safe with no obvious defects and ready for children and users. Note this provides guidance, note not an exhaustive list. You can also engage with us to support in the process.

With the new school year starting there is user safety as an obligation but also it is important to make sure the pitch is ready for high usage, and stands up to the test, maximising the pitches life expectancy. This is mostly focused on artificial sports surfaces but relevant to other facility types.

Artificial surfaces can provide more playing hours than natural surfaces, but they still need ongoing checks, maintenance and care. This can be from wear and tear or in the unfortunate event of vandalism.

CONDITION SURVEY

We refer to them as RAG ratings. Red, Amber, Green checklists where a site walkover identifies what needs attention and what is in order.

When assessing a pitch for a condition survey we are looking at the following categories, summarising key groups.

RAG RATING 'CONDITION'

RED – Defects and immediate repair needed
AMBER - Recommended defect repairs
GREEN – In good condition

CONSTRUCTION	
SURFACE	
DEBRIS / CONTAMINATION	
EQUIPMENT & ANCILLARIES	

SURFACE CONSTRUCTION	OBSERVATION	GOOD	MONITOR	ACTION
	SUB-BASE LEVELS			
	SHOCKPAD			
	SEAMS			
	INLAID LINES			
	CARPET MOVEMENT			
	OTHER:			

SURFACE INFILL & CARPET FIBRES	OBSERVATION	GOOD	MONITOR	ACTION
	INFILL LEVELS			
	INFILL DISTRIBUTION			
	INFILL COMPACTION			
	FIBRE HEIGHT			
	FIBRE WEAR			
	OTHER:			



THE MOST COMMON ISSUE USUALLY FACED IS COMPACTED INFILL ON HIGH WEAR AREAS CAUSING YARN FLATTENING. HOW CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS?

- High wear areas needing top up infill are usually penalty spots, goalbox areas where the keepers can be found, and entrances and exits to the pitches. Preventative action would be rotating pitches used to balance areas on the pitch.
- In addition, where small sided goals have been placed for high intensity games these areas need checked.

MAXIMISING SPORTS ON THE PITCH BUT KEEP AN EYE ON THE SEAMS

- Most facilities are community access facilities, and the primary sport will usually have the dominant white lines but additional line colours can be added. These can be painted on if not tufted or seamed in during construction. The painted lines will need monitored and might need repainted.
- Seams failing is a common issue so keep an eye on open joints and seams, these can be a trip hazard for players and a safety issue. Over time and under stress the joint can fail.



FIELD CERTIFICATION, AND RENEWAL DATE

- Most sports have governing body programs for site testing, assuring safety and performance for users of that sport. In some instances, a multi-use sports certification can be applied such as European standards. If in doubt ask us and we can tell you if you are covered and when the expiry date will arrive.
- Many facilities must have official testing and certification, usually done at installation then on the recertification dates.
- As examplesFIFA Quality Pro is annual, FIFA Quality is every 3 years, World Rugby every 2 years.

KEY ITEMS IN PREPARATION: *A CHECKLIST*

Item - Artificial Pitch	Examples	Answer		Action
Any surface defects?	Open joints, carpet wrinkles, lost fibre etc	Yes	No	Engage contractor for repair, report to manufacturer
Any damaged fencing?	Is the fencing damaged, structurally unsafe or have sharp protruding edges?	Yes	No	Engage contractor for repair
Any accessible maintenance equipment?	Brushes, tractor, drag matt on site and available?	Yes	No	Check condition and stored well to stop unwanted access, vandalism.
Is there a snow clearance / recess area?	Is there a defined area for snow clearance to continue play, where is can melt and rubber redistributed	Yes	No	Identify and make maintenance operators aware
Surface level kerbing 'high' on run off perimeter as a potential impact injury?	Does the perimeter kerbiing sit higher than the infill	Yes	No	Address with rubber top up.
Is there trapped fibre on the pitch under the infill?	Trapped fibre, yarn trapped below the fibre. Commonly dark areas from infill build up.	Yes	No	Schedule corrective maintenace, tines or appropriate for site.
Maintenance equipment working and accessible or sub contract engaged to undertake the works?	Is there a schedule and program being followed in line with usage.	Yes	No	Prepare and create a maintenance work plan in line with the O & M manual.
Maintenance log available?	All maintenance should be logged and kept up to date.	Yes	No	Create a log and keep it up to date
Usage log available?	All usage should be logged and kept up to date.	Yes	No	Create a log and keep it up to date
Operations & Maintenance manual available?	There should be a manufacturers operations and maintenance manual provided on hand over.	Yes	No	Request a copy and make yourself aware of the contents. Do's and Don't's for your product
Top up rubber on site for refill?	Small rubber stores should be kept on site for localised top up, penalty sports etc.	Yes	No	Get some on site and store safely
User signage, is there adequate information on the entrance fence stating allowed footwear? If not you will most likely breach you warranty.	At installation signange should be put on the gate by the contractor with information such as allowed footwear.	Yes	No	Request signange from the installer and put on the entrance gate
Risk Mitigation Measures for microplastics – Is your pitch/s setup properly with RMMs	Risk Mitigation Measures on site should be in place to reduce and prevent microplastic egress	Yes	No	Get in touch to have a desktop or site review carried out.

Risk Mitigation Measure checklist for facility managers to prevent microplastic egress				
RMM's Checklist	Surface level containment boards on the fence	Yes	No	
	Filtration system on open drainage network	Yes	No	
	Boot brushes	Yes	No	
	Snow clearance area	Yes	No	
	Detox grids at exit/entrance	Yes	No	
	Managed access	Yes	No	
	Maintenance equipment egress managed	Yes	No	

GOAL POSTS AND EQUIPMENT

- It is all too common goals are damaged over time, sometimes the metal frame from rusting, or sometimes the nets. These can be hazardous to users. Prevent entrapment issues or contact injuries by inspecting these or have an experience technician do that.



EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- These condition assessments our team can carry out on site. If you would like support to do these, please contact info@sportslabs.co.uk

YOU WILL RECEIVE:

- An official Sports Labs RAG condition report, with Red, Amber, Green categories.
  - No action needed (Green), monitor (Amber), immediately rectify (Red).
- Remote support for interpretation and recommendations.

KEYNOTES:

For artificial 3G pitches regulating and maintaining infill depth is the key action you can take throughout the year. You can use a simple depth probe and infill grid as below. If you would like a sample report to use and guidance, get in touch.

You can also read further on our next Field Notes: Pile Ratio.



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