



CONTENTS AND PROSPECTS OF THE NEW REGULATIONS

The new Regulations for artificial turf football fields which have recently been published by FIGC/LND, build on the technical and legal experience developed in the past eight years by the National Amateurs' League, under the able leadership of Mr. Carlo Tavecchio. LND's management has rapidly understood the importance of the development of new technologies in the construction of football fields, and led their evolution to innovative systems by implementing a courageous and transparent approach.

The Commission for Sports Facilities in Artificial Turf was set up in the middle of 2000 and is led with reliability and competence by Mr. Antonio Armeni, mainly assisted by a first-class technical staff and supported by an office which was recently transformed into a Department within FIGC/LND. In 2001 the first guidelines were issued, taking into consideration factors already existing in continental Europe, as well as UEFA's and FIFA's guidelines.

Ever since the first regulatory approaches were issued, LND has shown its will to promote the basic aspects of user's health and environmental protection. Any other requirement was to be harmonized to these aspects, or even all technical and administrative processes related to the project development, materials, ways of implementation of the "Artificial Turf System" as a whole, were to be grounded on such aspects, considered as essential elements of a proper construction. Some of the technical and administrative features in question are: rules governing the ageing and wear tests on the materials, toxicology tests on the various components, a prior biomechanics study



followed by a second biomechanics study - related to the results of several tests and verifications of the interaction between player and artificial grass system - experiments on the degree of abrasion of the materials and the possible generation of dust and fumes, to bring the results within the limits set by national regulations on the subject.. This way a system of actions, controls and rules was gradually created, which was eventually brought together into the sport's regulatory system to put an end to the temporary status typical of ongoing processes, to move towards new and somewhat unknown prospects.

At the same time, other bodies were also set up, such as the Federal Commission for Artificial Turf, set up and directed by LND's President, Mr. Carlo Tavecchio, and the Commission of the Health Ministry for Artificial Turf, chaired by Prof. Roberto Verna, whose precious indications and valuable directions go beyond his term. The creation of these bodies has allowed a welcome and productive top-level cooperation between the world of football and the scientific world. This allows the regulatory process to lay down in full knowledge and with great clarity a series of regulatory proposals, gradually detaching from the original experimental approach, reaching so far unknown, yet certain processes, institutionalizing its contents and creating a legal framework.

These Regulations for Artificial Turf Football Fields have taken on the role of providing the operators with a reliable tool, resulting from the experience gained in the control of the construction of several facilities and from the scientific cooperation of those involved, and aim at fostering a better, healthy and controlled growth of the game of football.

The creation, within FIGC/LND, of work groups representing all areas involved in LND and businesses is intended to promote dialogue between the parties, allowing the



immediate assessment of any request or proposal and aiming at improving quality and fostering the development of the services. The ultimate purpose is to contribute to achieve solutions consistent with the state of the art, as regards materials and their application, within the limits set by current scientific research and prescribed by existing national and European regulations.

The whole structure of the regulations rests upon these elements, and is based on the pivotal principle included in the Introduction, leading the way to the procedural part: the protection of the health of the athletes, to be achieved through the promotion of a healthy sport activity on fully suitable football fields, built according to strict criteria of environmental compatibility.

FIGC/LND have carefully and thoroughly processed the technical data and the regulatory section, in a way unequalled in other countries. This result has been achieved by FIGC/LND autonomously, although in cooperation with other FIFA bodies; this cooperation was made possible by the brilliant work of Mr. Antonio Armeni – President of the Artificial Turf Department – by delegation of President Tavecchio. They will always be given the credit for holding firm to the above mentioned fundamental aspects, also towards other countries' Federations. Some of them, which have not yet developed any Regulations, are now facing a significant growth of transformation programs of traditional football fields into artificial turf ones, and refer to FIGC/LND for advice and support, to better understand and regulate this rapid development.

Another peculiarity of the new Regulations concerns the opportunity, offered to Public and Private bodies planning to build artificial turf fields, to ask the appropriate FIGC/LND Department for indications and advice, as well as for evaluations of the project proposals and of the technical and economic specifications and for the proper



procedures to be applied as regards the work contracts. Such an important service, which is clearly a service of Public Interest, is available to all those requiring it. This service is particularly useful when applied to during the planning phase of the project, and will provide with every element required for a rapid, punctual and proper implementation of the program.

Efforts were then made to create a system out of the varied procedural phase, extending from the development of project proposals for the new field, to the execution and the completion of the works and finally to the validation of their compliance to the regulatory provisions. The validation process aims at the acquisition of the Type-Approval Certificate, which allows the field to be used in FIGC/LND's professional tournaments and for the activity of the Youth and Scholastic Sector.

As can be understood by simply reading the sections regarding the process to be followed, the timeline is given for the submission of the project and of the individually indicated related acts. FIGC/LND will then verify their compliance to the regulatory provisions and in case of compliance a formal certification will be issued, which will later provide access to the different trial processes and, at last, to the acquisition of the Type-Approval. Such process is of utmost importance and revolutionizes the approach applied so far (and still being applied in other countries). According to this approach only technical validations on the field should be performed, and only then, if considered necessary, the implemented works may be compared to the project. This may lead to serious implications, in case any irregularity is found between the completed works or the works being completed and the project.

FIGC/LND, through their 'Process required for the acquisition of the Type-Approval', make the whole Artificial Turf Department's structure available to all those concerned.



The Department provides support and advice even before the project is implemented, providing a unique support and information activity. On the other hand, it requires project proposals to be submitted before the works are contracted. This way, the correctness of the future construction of the facility can be evaluated promptly, and a 'Prior Positive Opinion' can be issued; this assures the applicant that the project design is performed in line with the regulatory provisions, and that they are entitled to be entrusted the construction works for the structural part of the field.

Only in case the concerned party does not resort to the services offered by FIGC/LND, the process may have economic and organizational implications. For instance, as they apply for the validation of the project and related documents after the works have been contracted or after the contracted works have been performed, the subbase has been partially or totally constructed, or even after the field has been finished and the grass carpet has been laid.

For each different process, the Regulations provide for the intervention of FIGC/LND, in terms of inspections and validations, to be applied for by means of the proper forms, each corresponding to the relevant case; more expensive processes are implied, whose extent depends on the complexity of the interventions and on the extraordinary commitment required on part of the Artificial Turf Department.

The Regulations do not intentionally prevent access to the process to 'late' applications, as at late controls - whose performance is a responsibility of the concerned party - the built structure and the materials used may anyway result compliant and suitable. Consequently, the late application might be accepted, even in case the work has been completed, but a 'backward approach' is applied; first the project proposals are examined for the first time, then the control and validation process is carried out. Finally, at the



implementation phase when the works turn out to be already performed, the applicant shall explicitly indicate such works by means of the relevant form, attached for clarity to the Regulations.

It is clear that the reasons for this procedure are to be found in the current stage of the construction techniques of artificial turf football fields and of the systems related to the employed products. They have undoubtedly achieved a good level of quality and safety, but they are bound to be further developed and improved in the future, in combination with the increase in market demand.

Accordingly, it is necessary for the rules, set to reach a settlement of different interests, to abide by the ordinary and organizational principle, in order for them to be enforced and observed, not just passively, but so that they can be acknowledged as a highly necessary tool to fulfill one's own interest and the general interest alike. To this end, the periodic consultation system, consisting of the audience of all parties concerned making up different workgroups, allows for the direct knowledge of each and every issue, and allows for proper and timely shared solutions to be found and implemented.

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