

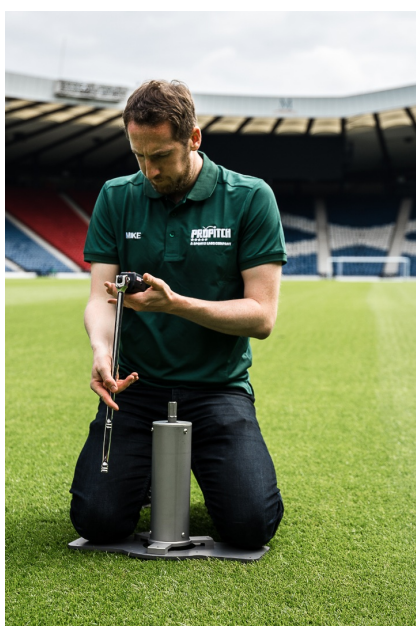


## PITCH MATTERS NEWSLETTER



### Launch of the new FIFA Natural Pitch System

**FIFA Natural-Pitch Rating System, Natural Playing  
Surfaces Quality Programme May 2022, version 1.0**



‘If you can measure it you can manage it.’ This has been the ProPitch motto from day one. Since it was conceived for the many reasons mentioned in this article the International Governing Body of football - FIFA have now provided a monitoring and assessment platform, endorsed by IFAB into the rules of the game. This will allow ground staff around the world, of all surface conditions, all geographical locations to benchmark their pitch against an international standard.

For those of you who have been working with ProPitch you will see

distinct similarities in the methods, tolerances and set up and this is testament to the hard work our consultants, along with other industry experts contributed to the natural surfaces working group that has been meeting for over 24 months to develop this standard. This included participating in a FIFA round robin for applicant test institutes at St Georges Park in England. The purpose of the round robin was to monitor accuracy and consistency between application test institutes, equipment and technicians.

From ground persons testing, commonly known as self-assessment to the use of test institute performing assessments in an independent capacity this programme allows all to get involved. There is a 'lite' assessment for ground staff, quicker, easier and with less capital investment in equipment to the comprehensive test institute assessment.

Fundamentally FIFA can now implement this in their own competitions and set expectations of pitch performance in a more objective manner. This will help leave a legacy after the delivery of a tournament.



## **Why?**

If we improve pitches, we can improve the game. This has to be the aspiration to teams whom want to play total football and keep the ball on the playing surface. FIFA also have a quality program for Balls, Artificial Turf, Goals, VAR, GLT, EPTS Player Tracking devices but this is the first time a testing manual and scoring matrix has been released for public consumption for natural pitches. FIFA also run many international competitions from Club to Country and they provide guidance and support to member associations around the world, so a benchmark has to be set.

## **One Route Forward**

Football pitches are constantly developing, from techniques employed for construction, to maintenance and product application such as sustainable fertiliser programmes. To know these more sustainable practices can meet or eclipse the pitch performance of the past we need historical data, like a pitch passport. What is essential in comparing data is collecting the data in a repeatable and accurate fashion, step forward ISO 17025 quality control audits. For many years accredited test institutes have carried out annual calibrations and

external audits by ISO 17025 accreditation bodies in their respective countries. In the UK this is UKAS. FIFA will have a select few test institutes in the programme launch of companies who can demonstrate these credentials, of which ProPitch are very proud to be one, a true reflection on our people and quality system.

Official FIFA reports can only be generated using the test results uploaded to the FIFA quality programme database by FIFA-accredited test institutes

## Types of Surfaces

With innovation there are different construction types and these are covered in the programme.

For the Natural Playing Surfaces Quality Programme, the different systems are categorised as follows:

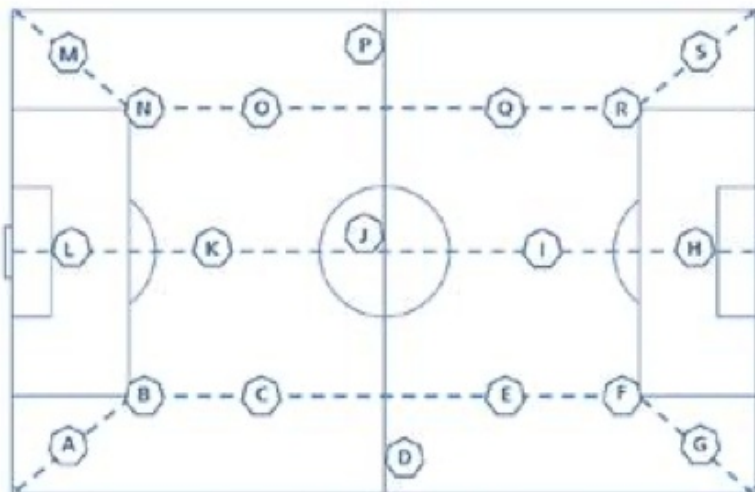
Natural playing surfaces			
Fully natural	Natural reinforced root zone	Natural in-situ stitched fibres	Natural synthetic carpet based
Traditional construction for natural turf using only natural materials, including sand.	Synthetic elements added to the root-zone profile of the natural turf to provide reinforcement.	Synthetic fibres stitched into the natural surface with natural turf growing within the fibres.	Synthetic carpet laid in the surface with natural turf growing within the carpet.

## Types of Assessments

**(FIFA Accredited independent test institute / Ground staff self-assessment)**

The full assessment is designed to be performed by a FIFA-accredited test institute to assess the performance of a new or existing pitch, or the performance of a surface prior to a tournament. The reduced assessment is designed to be regularly performed by the ground staff in charge of monitoring the preparation of a pitch for a tournament or as part of a regular quality control process.

The pitch test locations can be seen below. It varies dependent on tests however with increased locations it provides a truer reflection of overall pitch quality.



**Figure 1: Field test positions**

The tests are simply split into performance and agronomy, similar to ProPitch's existing approach.

The inclusion of ball surface interaction testing, player surface interaction tests and construction complete the performance section and gives a full bodied pitch assessment. There are 6 different tests in the section from rotational resistance to shock absorption and ball roll.

For the agronomic assessment there is a series of 13 different tests, some examples being soil moisture, thatch, grass coverage, disease, sward height mass root depth to name a few.

The scoring system is setup to score warm or cool season grass species differently and fairly.

## Rating system

The rating system uses the following point system:

Unacceptable quality	Poor quality	Satisfactory quality	Good quality	Excellent quality
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- Unacceptable quality – 1 point
- Poor quality – 3 points
- Satisfactory quality – 5 points
- Good quality – 7 points
- Excellent quality – 10 points

## Consistency

When the characteristics can be evaluated for consistency, the following is used:

Highly variable	Variable	Normal variability	Consistent	Very consistent
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- Highly variable – 1 point
- Variable – 3 points
- Normal variability – 5 points
- Consistent – 7 points
- Very consistent – 10 points

## Equipment

ProPitch for many years have provided self assessment test equipment in the form of a 'lite' briefcase and then a full Pro test kit. If you wish to carry out ground persons testing, be trained by our staff on how to carry them out, as well as have regular validation against our execution get in touch.



## How can you get involved?

Our team can help you get set up for self assessment or independent assessments where you can have a pitch listed on the FIFA website.

This can be executed for an individual venue or as a programme through out the whole league. We have offices around the world so get in touch to find your local ProPitch expert.

Get in Touch



## ProPitch

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