



FIFA Women's World Cup 2015

Football turf – Q & A



Football turf at the FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015

Questions and Answers

1) What were the circumstances around the decision to play Canada 2015 on football turf?

The Canadian Soccer Association and its National Organising Committee (NOC) proposed to use football turf for the tournament in accordance with the Laws of the Game (Law 1) and the competition regulations. This was approved by FIFA on the condition that all six venues would feature FIFA 2 Star RECOMMENDED Football Turf – the highest standard of turf which FIFA developed specifically for professional football. Furthermore, the FIFA Executive Committee confirmed at its meeting in March 2013 that the pitches in the stadiums and at the training sites should be of the same quality and meet the necessary FIFA requirements.

It is also important to note that the competition regulations for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2015 and the 2014 FIFA World Cup include the same article which allows for football turf to be used, subject to FIFA's approval:

“Matches shall be played on natural grass or, provided special dispensation is granted by FIFA, on artificial surfaces. Where artificial surfaces are used, the surface must meet the requirements of the FIFA Quality Programme for Football Turf.”

FIFA continues to work closely with the NOC in all aspects of the preparations for the FIFA Women's World Cup to deliver a high-quality competition while leaving a lasting positive legacy for the sport, for women and for Canada. We will continue to communicate with the participating associations, media and relevant stakeholders on the steps that FIFA and the NOC are taking to make that happen.

2) What is FIFA's reaction to the claims that this is gender discrimination?

The FIFA Executive Committee's decision to approve the proposal by the Canadian Soccer Association and its NOC to play the competition on football turf was not based in any way on gender. Rather, it was based on various considerations, most notably the existing infrastructure and the conditions in Canada, and, for the sake of consistency and in line with recommendations from a medical point of view, the need to have the same surfaces of the best possible quality across all venues including stadiums *and* training sites.

Further information is available in an interview with FIFA Secretary General Jérôme Valcke available [here](#).

FIFA's stance against any form of discrimination is unequivocal. This is reflected in the [Resolution on the Fight against Racism and Discrimination](#) and various FIFA regulations (art. 3 of the FIFA Statutes, art. 58 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code, art. 23 of the FIFA Code of Ethics, art. 3.3 of the FIFA Code of Conduct). FIFA advocates the need for strict punishments to send out a strong message that discrimination has no place in the game, and we work closely with our member associations around the world to educate and inspire a message of equality and respect.

3) Can it be changed to grass?

Eric Harrison, an independent football turf consultant who travelled to Canada as part of an inspection visit, outlined the technical considerations related to this question in an interview with FIFA.com. Firstly, he clarified how, following harsh winters in Canada, it is often not until July or August that any natural turf pitch has had time to recover from the lack of sunlight after being covered in snow or from the effects of frost. Secondly, he explained the difficulties of over-laying artificial turf with natural turf – an idea that some have put forward as an alternative. The full interview can be read [here](#).

It is also important to consider the fact that it is not just about preparing six stadium pitches to optimal level; it is also about preparing all of the training sites in each Host City. In accordance with the FIFA Executive Committee decision, the stadium pitches and the training sites should be the same surface and of the same standard so it is fair for all 24 teams.

4) What do you say to those who prefer to play on grass?

FIFA acknowledges that previous generations of turf were universally disliked by the majority of players and coaches. Many of the players who played on those surfaces are the coaches/administrators of today and as such carry with them an understandable distrust of these surfaces. There have, however, been extensive changes and advancements in the industry. The approach taken by FIFA over the past 14 years has been to put football and footballers at the heart of the process in developing a suitable quality programme for football turf.

Player perception is one of the key areas of the FIFA Quality Programme in terms of research and development. FIFA arranges player surveys and commissions studies where players have their senses limited by blindfolds and by sound and smell deprivation when playing on a natural grass pitch and a football turf pitch and then providing feedback. These studies help us to gain greater insight into how perceptions have an impact and how they are evolving. The results are being used to guide future research and development regarding football surfaces.

That said, FIFA also respects the various existing opinions. The debate is interesting and what we're trying to get across are the facts and the realities. FIFA understands that the players want to play in the best conditions for women's football's flagship event. The pitch quality for the FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015 is certainly one of our major priorities and we will ensure that the tournament will be played in the best conditions and facilities available.

5) What will the standard be in Canada?

The competition regulations state that all stadium pitches must meet the highest requirements of the FIFA Quality Programme. The FIFA Quality Programme was introduced in 2001 and has set the standards that the industry must meet if they are to install a FIFA RECOMMENDED field. These standards focus on the well-being of the player and the playing performance of the surfaces used.

The FIFA Executive Committee also confirmed at its meeting in March 2013 that the pitches in the stadiums and at the training sites should be of the same quality and meet the FIFA requirements. All FIFA Women's World Cup matches are to be played on FIFA 2 Star RECOMMENDED Football Turf – the highest standard of turf which FIFA developed specifically for professional football.

6) Is football turf safe?

The health and safety of players is the highest priority for FIFA and therefore significant investment has been made in medical research related to football turf. FIFA's Medical Assessment and Research Centre (F-MARC) has published a number of [studies](#) analysing injuries on artificial turf compared with those on natural grass pitches, with all of those studies concluding that **there is no significant difference in the overall incidence, severity, nature or cause of match or training injuries sustained**. UEFA studies and a number of independent studies have drawn similar conclusions.

Further information is provided in a recent interview with Professor Jan Ekstrand: ["The total risk of injury is the same on football turf as it is on natural grass"](#).

7) Does football turf change the way the game is played?

There are a number of opinions on this key question. Perception plays an important role in shaping these opinions. As mentioned, FIFA continues to conduct studies to gain greater insight into how perceptions have an impact and how they are evolving.

Also, as part of our research and development programme, FIFA commissioned a study by independent UK-company Prozone to focus specifically on whether or not the game is changed on football turf. Prozone used video technology to track every pass and ball movement and analysed 100 matches from the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Cup, Dutch Premier League and FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007. The conclusion of this comprehensive study, published in 2008, was that "there are no significant differences in the objective data from the technical studies to date focusing on football turf versus top-quality natural grass". Football turf consultant Eric Harrison talks about this in more detail [here](#).

Finally, it is worth noting that as part of the FIFA Quality Programme, testing is designed specifically to ensure that the ball reacts on football turf as it would on a grass pitch in good condition in terms of roll and bounce and that players can play on both types of surfaces with the same confidence.

8) What other tournaments have been played on football turf?

The FIFA U-17 World Cup Finland 2003 paved the way for future FIFA events to be played on football turf with ten matches, including the final, played on turf. The subsequent edition in Peru two years later became the first international football tournament to be played entirely on football turf. Examples of other international competitions and leagues using artificial turf include*:

- FIFA World Cup qualifiers and FIFA Women's World Cup qualifiers
- FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015
- FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007
- FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup Costa Rica 2014
- FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup Azerbaijan 2012
- FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Canada 2014
- UEFA EURO qualifiers
- UEFA Champions League (male and female), e.g. 2013/2014 Tyresö FF
- FA Cup and FA Women's Super League, England
- *Ligue 1*, France



- *Eredivisie*, Netherlands
- Major League Soccer and National Women's Soccer League, USA
- *Allsvenskan* and *Damallsvenska*, Sweden
- *Tippeligaen* and *Toppserien*, Norway

**While all of these competitions have featured artificial turf, this does not mean that all of the pitches were FIFA-certified installations. A full list of FIFA-certified pitches worldwide is available [here](#).*

9) What is involved in testing for the pitches in Canada?

The FIFA Quality Programme for Football Turf involves a rigorous testing programme for artificial football surfaces. Only FIFA-accredited test institutes are allowed to execute tests under the FIFA Quality Programme according to the Handbook of Test Methods and Handbook of Requirements. To ensure the consistency of the testing, all FIFA-accredited test institutes are assessed on an annual basis in what is called a "round robin".

The football turf has to be rigorously tested both in the laboratory and in its installed location to ensure that the surface reacts to the ball as it would on a grass pitch in good condition in terms of roll and bounce. Similarly, the tests are designed to ensure that players can play on football turf with the same confidence as they would on a natural grass pitch in good condition. Successfully tested fields are awarded one of the two FIFA RECOMMENDED marks, provided that all the stringent criteria are met during the testing procedure.

In an interview available on FIFA.com, FIFA Secretary General Jérôme Valcke reiterated FIFA's commitment to ensuring that all pitches at the official stadiums and training sites will be of the 2 Star quality.

10) Links

FIFA's official website about football turf:

www.FIFA.com/quality

Interview with FIFA Secretary General Jérôme Valcke:

["FIFA's committed to ensuring top-level conditions"](#)

Interview with Jan Ekstrand, Professor in Sports Medicine:

["The total risk of injury is the same on football turf as it is on natural grass"](#)

Interview with football turf consultant Professor Eric Harrison:

["Football turf is integral to Canada 2015"](#)

FIFA-RECOMMENDED pitches worldwide:

<http://quality.fifa.com/en/Football-Turf/FIFA-recommended-pitches-wordwide/#/index>