

Press release

Heracles Almelo enters league with FIFA-approved artificial turf pitch

FIFA has awarded Heracles Almelo the FIFA (FIFA two-star) certification for the new pitch at its stadium. Heracles Almelo's pitch thus becomes the first FIFA**-approved artificial turf pitch to be used for matches played in the premier league and the first artificial turf pitch in the European competition to meet these stringent requirements. Obtaining this certification is an important achievement, which will allow participation in league and friendly matches at both national and international level.**

Heracles Almelo was designated by UEFA as a pilot project in 2003 in order to test the playing of matches on artificial grass. Experiences have been closely monitored and analysed in the past two years. During this period UEFA and FIFA have started to work together more closely, which has resulted in two new standards for artificial turf pitches: the FIFA* (FIFA one-star) and the FIFA** (FIFA two-star). The strictest criteria for an artificial turf pitch are laid down in the new FIFA** standard. The project partners - Ten Cate Thiolon, ARCADIS and Edel Grass - who have been involved with the UEFA artificial grass pilot project from the very start, have decided, in the light of Heracles Almelo's promotion, to replace the stadium pitch so as to meet the new standard.

'Acceptance of artificial grass at the very highest level is important for the entire sector', said Ralph Jorissen (spokesperson for the project partners). 'As leading companies in the artificial grass industry, we believe it is important to show the technical progress that is being made in this area.'

Comfort and safety are the hallmarks of the artificial turf pitch at Heracles Almelo. It is currently the most user-friendly and safest surface for the footballer. The experiences of players and technical staff in particular have made a contribution to the new pitch on which Heracles Almelo will enter the 2005/2006 league season.

The old artificial turf pitch has been removed and the new pitch installed in record time. The old artificial turf pitch, which is still in excellent condition, has found a new use at various locations.

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