



Press release

corporate communications / investor relations

Heracles Almelo will play its first season in Dutch top league on a new artificial turf pitch

Following the promotion of Heracles Almelo to the premier league of the Dutch soccer competition, the club will get a new synthetic turf pitch based on Ten Cate's recent Thiolon[®]Grass technology. In close cooperation with leading test- and research institutes, Ten Cate Thiolon has developed a new and patented fiber, called Thiolon Xtreme[®]. The new pitch will be installed by a consortium of Ten Cate, Arcadis and Edel Grass.

In May 2005 Heracles Almelo became the first champion in professional football on synthetic grass, introducing synthetic turf at the top league in Dutch football. The current pitch of Heracles Almelo is two years old. Heracles Almelo started playing its matches on synthetic grass, as part of the UEFA pilot program which was carried out during two seasons with several European clubs. This pilot provided a great deal of information for the new developments. The aim for the new pitch is to comply with the highest joint quality standards of FIFA and UEFA, which are important for the introduction of synthetic grass at top level.

As synthetic grass has only recently been discovered for top-football, still mainly for training purposes, a lot of new developments have taken place during the last 2 years. The industry and the football associations have put a lot of effort to develop and certify synthetic turf for competition play. A growing number of national football associations now accept the use of synthetic turf in the top league. Furthermore UEFA and FIFA have recently joined forces in setting the standards for high quality playing surfaces. This has led to the FIFA Recommended 1 STAR- and 2 STAR Concept.

Also Ten Cate is striving for similar conditions for playing on artificial grass at top level, based on high quality, safe and durable sport surfaces. This is of great importance in order to facilitate the process of acceptance. In the past, the experience of players in the top leagues varied highly as a result of different and less sophisticated synthetic (training) surfaces, some of them not even designed for top football. The latest developments concentrate on improved sliding friendliness of both the grass fibers and the infill material. The playing characteristics are determined in

conjunction with a newly developed carpet backing and, if and when needed, by a shock absorption layer in the sub-base. The infill not only provides excellent shock absorption as well, but is also perfectly designed for the use in a professional stadium environment. Furthermore, the newly developed professional surface is tested for its natural appearance on television.

The goal for the coming season is to have at least three comparable synthetic turf pitches of high quality at the start of the new competition in the Netherlands, in order to facilitate training possibilities on this surface.

The new Heracles Almelo pitch is comparable with the field that has been installed in October 2004 at the Amsterdam ArenA, which is used by AFC Ajax for training purposes. In the course of this year also the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) will get a similar football pitch at its training premises in Zeist. These three pitches may serve as “bench-mark” for the experiences of players in the top league in the Netherlands. The goal is that these fields will be able to comply with the standards of both the FIFA Recommended 1 STAR and 2 STAR Concept.

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