EXTENDING THE LIFE OF YOUR TRACK SURFACE

1 SPREADING THE WEAR

Experience shows that the inside two lanes of an athletics track suffer the disproportionate levels of wear and tear and, in order to protect the long term life of the track surface and prevent early (costly) remedial work, facility operators should explain this to track users / clubs and actively encourage the use of outer lanes during training/casual sessions.

Effective management of track wear can be achieved by measures including:

- Explaining the cost implications of excessive inner lane wear with clubs/users
- Coning or gating inside lanes so that their use is restricted to competitions
- Spreading training use over both straights so that training for sprints and hurdles is spread evenly between the home and back straights
- Moving the high jump bed to different parts of the fan so that the athletes do not always take off from the same spot. Note: Specialist high jumpers wearing 9mm spikes should, however, only take off from the specially strengthened area of the fan (check with your track installer if you are unsure of where these are located).

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2 SPIKES

The singular most common cause of damage and early disintegration of an athletics track surface is the inappropriate use of spikes. The length of and type of spikes used by athletes should be rigidly controlled and sprinters wearing spikes should always use starting blocks for events up to and including 400m in order to protect the track surface from the torsion/sheer on the track surface caused by sprint starts.

The vast majority of track installers recommend that athletes use pyramid or Christmas tree type spikes of limited length: 6mm maximum for track events and 9mm for Javelin and High Jump as opposed to *needle or *tartan spikes which can damage the track surface and, in many cases, will invalidate the track surface warranty.

Pyramid and Christmas tree spikes provide an ideal athlete <> surface interface that results in less surface damage due to their flatter profile and lower point load. Unlike needle and tartan spikes they are designed to compress the surface rather than dig in to it, providing energy restitution to the athlete, especially for sprinting events.

*Note: It should also be noted that the use of these types of spikes, rather than enhance the performance of the runner can actually produce more drag and could lead to potential runner injury.

The table below is UKAs recommended guidance for spike usage on polymeric track surfaces. **(NB For recommended spike usage on prefabricated surfaces, track operators are advised to contact their track installer)**

Recommended track spike usage

(NB Please check with your track installer as to which type/length of spike they recommend as the use of non-permitted spikes can void the surface warranty).

Type of spike	5mm	6mm	7mm	9mm	12mm	15mm	19mm
Pyramid 	✓	✓	✓	*✓	✗	✗	✗
Xmas tree 	✓	✓	✓	*✓			
Needle 	✗	✗	✗	✗			
Tartan 	✗	✗	✗	✗			

*Javelin and High Jump only

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3 COLD WEATHER

While the most effective periods for use of your track are during the warm summer months (when the rubber and binder are most resilient) synthetic all-weather tracks can and should be used all year round. However, there are several things to consider when using the facility during cold and inclement weather.

During periods of extreme cold/frost it is advisable to limit the use of spikes as both the rubber and the binder in the track surface are more brittle and extensive spike usage could lead to damage to the track surface.

Use of the running track facility during periods of snow cover is not a problem and the best (and easiest) method of clearing snow is to simply walk or run around the track! The process of exposing areas of the track through foot traffic will assist the natural melting and snow removal by the sun.

Under no conditions should scraping, shovelling, sweeping, blowing or other mechanical means of snow removal be used. These processes could inadvertently damage the track surface resulting in costly patching and repairs.

4 WHEELED VEHICLES ON THE TRACK

A synthetic track surface is not designed to support the stresses that are created by tyre friction when driving vehicles on the track and turning the wheels on the surface while stopped or driving can be sufficient to break the bond between the surface and the base. This can lead to early deterioration of the track surface resulting in costly repairs and in some cases major refurbishment. Damage caused by driving on the track surface, except in emergency circumstances, will almost certainly not be covered by a track warranty.

To prevent track damage, access to athletics facilities by any vehicles should be effectively controlled and suitable protective sheeting laid over the track surface before vehicles are permitted to cross the track. Once work has been completed protective sheeting should be moved to prevent moisture becoming trapped beneath the surface as this will ultimately lead to surface breakdown.

5 INFIELD USE BY OTHER SPORTS

Infield use: protecting crossing points

Outside of club training nights the infield areas of athletics facilities tend to be used by a variety of other sports (Football, Rugby, American Football etc). As well as bringing dirt/grass onto the track surface the studded footwear used by these sports creates a "wobble" motion that will ultimately damage the track surface.

The two most critical areas are the entry/exit point of teams to the infield and areas immediately behind the team benches. Crossing mats should be utilised in all crossing areas to minimise damage and if multiple entry points are designed into the facility, then all paths should be protected. Additionally, all coaches and players should be made aware of these areas and instructed to use them.

In all cases, the mats should be put in place when required and removed during periods when not in use. Leaving the mats in place across the track surface will allow moisture to accumulate and remain under the mat. This excessive moisture can, over time, lead to the deterioration of the synthetic track surface.

6 EQUIPMENT

Equipment - preventing damage

Hurdles

Moving hurdles on and off of the track should be done with care. Hurdles should be carried to their event position and set in place. At no time should the hurdles be dragged across the track as this causes unnecessary wear on the surface, and whilst most hurdles will not damage the surface, it only takes one sharp end to require a costly repair. By establishing a consistent practice, the long term integrity of the track surface will be maintained.

Running Sleds

These devices, which are used to help improve the runners 'power' performance, are not designed to be used on the synthetic track surfaces. If using a sled on an infield area it should be carried across the track, or pulled across the track over suitable crossing mats. The sled is designed to be used on a grass surface and not on the running track. As with hurdles, it only takes one sharp corner to cause a significant amount of damage.