Fosse Contracts Limited, 28 Cannock Street, Leicester LE4 9HR
Telephone: (0116) 246 0500 Facsimile: (0116) 246 1561
E-mail: info@fossecontracts.co.uk

MAINTENANCE OF PLACOURT POROUS MACADAM TENNIS COURTS

Introduction

Placourt macadam tennis courts consist of a permeable foundation of broken, graded stone on which is laid the Placourt surface. In certain instances an open-textured macadam basecourse is laid beneath the Placourt for added strength. The surface is then sprayed with a coloured acrylic coating and playing lines painted on.

The resulting tennis surface is fully permeable, hard-wearing, playable throughout the year and requires relatively little maintenance. But however modest this maintenance requirement, it is, nevertheless, of vital importance if the surface is to remain good to look at, good to play on and long-lasting. Indeed, our guarantee is conditional upon the recommended maintenance requirements being carried out with reasonable diligence.

The post construction period

We will have indicated when play can commence on the new surface and our instructions should be followed meticulously. Thereafter, for the first few months the surface will still be slightly "tender" as the bitumen and surface coating achieve their final hardness. Whilst the surface can be kept in full and normal use, as with a new motor car, a little extra care and vigilance will pay dividends. In particular, unsuitable footwear and other bad habits such as "racket abuse" should be prohibited especially in warm weather.

On a very new court water will sometimes stand on the surface after heavy rain. This is a very temporary phenomenon resulting from surface tension and should not cause concern unless it persists.

Play in hot weather

Placourt has been formulated to lift the temperature at which it softens in hot weather significantly above that which renders normal macadams unusable. The surface coating is also beneficial in this respect. Nevertheless, a court may still soften in hot weather especially in the first season after construction. Thereafter the tendency to soften should diminish rapidly.

If the surface does soften, play should be stopped immediately because serious damage can result from continuing to play. The first sign of the problem is usually when black marks begin to appear as a result of the paint being rubbed or scuffed off. It is sometimes possible to cool a hot surface by hosing it down with cold water to allow evening play to take place.

Softening is a phenomenon usually confined to the first season but, even thereafter for a year or two, the surface should be checked if very hot weather is experienced.

What maintenance and why

The maintenance procedures are designed to ensure that:

- the playing surface is kept scrupulously clean
- the free drainage of surface water is maintained throughout the life of the court
- the court looks attractive and well cared for at all times and achieves a reasonable lifespan

These objectives are achieved by:

- sweeping or vacuuming leaves and other detritus from the surface
- occasionally washing the surface
- applying prophylactic treatments of mosskiller

Keeping the surface clean

Leaves, tree flowers, pine needles, fluff from tennis balls and other detritus should not be allowed to remain on the surface for any length of time. If this happens they rapidly rot down and settle into the interstices of the surface impairing drainage and providing a growing medium for algae and moss.

A wide soft broom can be used to sweep the surface but this has a tendency to push small material into the surface. A rubber-tined rake is usually better albeit rather slow and arduous. Best of all is a mechanical garden vacuum cleaner which will greatly speed up the operation and do it more efficiently. Mechanical leaf sweepers can also be good. The equipment should be well maintained and carefully operated to avoid contamination of, or physical damage to, the playing surface.

At least once a year the court surface will benefit from a vigorous wash. This not only has the effect of keeping the surface interstices clean and free-draining but is also essential for maintaining good foothold. Courts near busy roads are particularly susceptible to becoming coated with "traffic-film" whilst those near trees may become coated with "honey-dew" from aphids. The resulting black film from either cause can make courts very slippery after rain.

If the water pressure is reasonably high, washing can be carried out with a domestic hosepipe assisted by a mild cold water detergent. Even more effective are the cold water pressure washers that are available from most equipment hire outlets. These must be used with care to ensure that the process is not dislodging the coloured surface coating or stone chippings. Again mild, non-foaming detergent increases the efficiency of the operation. Steam cleaners should not be used. If the court surface has become very badly sealed and does not respond satisfactorily to the treatment, please contact us.

Bird damage

An unusual nuisance that may sometimes be experienced is damage caused by bird droppings. This is usually only a significant problem during the summer months of the first year or two of the court's life or where branches overhang the court.

The droppings adhere to the surface, dry out in warm weather and shrink. In the process the paint coating and even stone chippings may be pulled off.

The remedy is to cut back overhanging branches. If the droppings are already in situ they should be hosed away. Damaged spots should be carefully firmed with the foot and touched up with surfacing paint.

Worms

Another, albeit rarer, cause of surface damage is that caused by worms. In mild, wet weather they sometimes appear on the court surface, usually in ones or twos but very occasionally in larger numbers. How they get there is something of a mystery but once on the surface they seem unable to get any further and usually die. In warm weather they then adhere to the surface and shrink causing very similar damage to bird droppings.

Worms on the playing surface should be removed as soon as possible. Damaged spots should be carefully firmed with the foot and touched up with surfacing paint.

If the problem persists consideration should be given to applying an appropriate wormkiller. Repeat applications may have to be made, copiously watered in, to ensure that the subsoil beneath the courts is impregnated.

Maintenance schedule

Daily – at the end of the day's play

- make sure the net is slackened and rolled up in the middle
- make sure the gate is shut

Weekly

- clear leaves and rubbish from the court

Monthly

- deal with any weeds, moss or algae

Annually

- wash the court
- apply the mosskiller
- apply grease to the net winding gear

Note:

These are minimum recommendations. Common sense and careful observation should prevail. If any serious doubt exists about the effectiveness of the maintenance regime or the condition of the courts, please contact us. It is better to be safe than sorry.

To be read in conjunction with 'General Court Care Common to all Tennis Surfaces'.