Lafarge Aggregates

Free draining Axosport – fit for all weather

Extreme weather is no hindrance to sports played on Axosport and Axosport Multi-Use – specialist asphalts developed by Lafarge Aggregates to provide free draining hard court surfaces.

This summer's high rainfall rendered many outdoor sports surfaces unplayable as pools of standing water put paid to countless games of tennis, basketball and five-a-side football. Authorities and sports clubs keen to keep hard court facilities open during such weather can specify one of Lafarge Aggregates' free draining asphalts, Axosport and Axosport Multi-Use.

Lafarge has developed both products to provide durable and porous alternatives to conventional sport hardstandings. Demand for Axosport surfaces has been consistent over the last couple of years, but will increase if inclement weather continues to hamper summer sporting activities.

Temporary closure of sports surfaces is of particular concern with the London Olympic Games less than five years away and competition coaches encouraging the next generation of athletes to train hard and improve their game. Lafarge's National Value Added Products Manager Phil Battle says: "Tennis courts are perfectly flat and have no crossfalls, so it can be very difficult to get rid of standing water on conventional asphalt surfaces. Free draining Axosport materials, on the other hand, allow water to pass through the surface course quickly."

Lafarge's sports surface materials have been designed to ensure balls bounce as expected and meet stringent specifications set down by the Sports & Play Construction Association. Axosport has an open graded texture suitable for use on tennis courts and Axosport Multi-Use has a closer texture designed to reduce wear and tear, making it suitable for team games.

Both materials contain a high content of voids to aid the passage of rain water, with Multi-Use containing slightly fewer voids to increase resistance to scuffing during team play. The asphalt mixes contain 6mm single sized aggregate of a sharp, angular shape selected to produce the required void content and a strong interlock in the mix, bonded with a carefully selected bitumen binder. Great care is also taken at the batching plant to ensure the high quality aggregate is not contaminated with other grades of stone and delivery vehicles are thoroughly cleaned before use.

"Free draining Axosport materials allow water to pass through the surface course quickly." Phil Battle

Either surfacing material is usually laid over a special 40mm to 80mm thick Axosport binder course, which also contains a high void content to promote free draining of the surface. The dual macadam layers can either be overlaid on an existing surface, or constructed over a porous base of 20mm crushed stone for a more comprehensive specification. Perforated land drains leading to a soak away can also be installed beside new-build playing areas to aid dispersal of water.

Maintaining material temperature between the asphalt batching plant and site is crucial for Axosport mixes to remain workable for the duration of the surfacing operation. The asphalt is prepared at 160°C

Axosport Multi-Use has a close texture restistant to scuffing and is suitable for areas used for team games such as basketball and five a side football

Lafarge's Axosport materials prevent build up of standing water on tennis courts and multi-use surfaces and meet stringent specifications of the SAPCA

and delivered to site in insulated wagons before being transferred to the courts in dumpers or wheelbarrows. Axosport used for tennis courts tends to be screeded between steel rails using hand tools and compacted with a small roller, whereas Multi-Use – specified for larger areas – is commonly laid and compacted using full paving plant. Both surface course materials are usually laid in 30mm layers.

"Successful laying of asphalt for sports venues can be more difficult than highways work," says Battle. "Many tennis courts are on the far side of playing fields, some distance from the nearest road. Contractors sometimes use powered wheelbarrows or small dumpers to transfer material to site quickly, but have to be careful not to overly disrupt the material otherwise temperature will be lost rapidly, leading to increased wastage. We are looking into ways of improving the workability of the asphalt to give contractors a longer window of working time in which the material can be laid."

Axosport and Axosport Multi-Use surfaces are usually laid in 30mm layers over a 40mm to 80mm Axosport binder course

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AXOSPORT SURFACES CHAMPIONSHIP COURTS

Championship standard tennis courts were surfaced this summer at Colchester Garrison using Lafarge Aggregate's Axosport materials, in line with strict regulations set by the Sports & Play Construction Association (SAPCA). Specialist contractor Tennis 2000 surfaced 12 new courts with Axosport and a trio of five-a-side football pitches with Axosport Multi-Use on behalf of Sir Robert McAlpine, which is building new facilities at the army base.

Lafarge supplied the sports development with a total of 800t of material, that was delivered to site in 20t loads. Eight workmen equipped with hand tools screeded each load of material flat within 90 minutes.

Tennis 2000 owner John Pearce says it is absolutely vital that the asphalt mix arriving on site is of a consistent high quality. "Guidelines set by SAPCA dictate that the finished surface is clear of water puddles within 15 minutes following rain and the Axosport material helps us to achieve that target. Our operatives also have to apply great skill in finishing off the surface within a level tolerance of plus or minus 8mm over a 3m straight edge."

Laying of Axosport was followed by three passes of a roller in each direction to aid compaction. "Lafarge mixes the material to the correct temperature, delivers it to site quickly and uses clean lorries to avoid contaminating the batch. We can then lay it swiftly and to the correct specification," Pearce adds.