

Introduction

Acrylic coated tennis court surfaces are popular in Australia. They are suited to all levels of coaching, training and play. Many tournament venues around the world use acrylic coated tennis court surfaces. There is a variety of proprietary acrylic surface systems available in Australia from the tennis court builders. Acrylic surface systems are available as either a cushioned or non-cushioned surface.

What is it made of?

An acrylic surfaced tennis court is basically an application of multiple layers of acrylic materials (e.g. resin, paint, etc) on a base surface, commonly concrete or asphalt. In very basic terms an acrylic surface is composed of a filler / levelling coat(s) on a base surface which is then covered by a coloured finishing surface. These finishing layers comprise of additional layers of acrylic material, which may incorporate matting depending on whether a cushioned or noncushioned is selected.

The composition and application method of the acrylic material have a direct influence on the playing characteristics of the court. The acrylic surface is impervious, necessitating that the base is constructed with a gradient to facilitate surface water drainage.

How does it perform?

The exact performance of the proprietary acrylic surfaces differ slightly from product to product, and the subsequent usage of the surface, but they can generally be described as being medium-paced with an extremely true ball bounce of medium height. Playing characteristics vary according to type of product, its age and condition.

Indicative playing characteristics are:

- Medium slow to fast ball speed,
- Medium height ball bounce,
- Uniform trueness of bounce,
- Ball top spin and slice,
- Firm footing with non-slip traction,
- Shock absorption qualities are hard to moderate dependent on cushioning.

Over the years, as the surface is used, it will become smoother and more polished, this may result in a faster game and colour change within the court.

How is it looked after?

All courts, including acrylic surfaced ones, require maintenance, which is of vital importance if the surface is to remain aesthetically pleasing, consistent in play and long lasting. Maintenance procedures are designed to ensure that:

- The playing surface is kept clean,
- The playing surface preserves its playing characteristics,
- Looks attractive and well kept at all times,
- It achieves a reasonable life span.

These objectives are achieved by:

- Removal of dirt and debris, etc,
- Washing the court to keep it clean,

The single most important factor in prolonging the useful life of a tennis court surface is keeping it clean. It is also essential to monitor the condition of the base for any defects, e.g. cracking. In the event of significant cracking affecting the surface the installer or an experienced repairer should be consulted. Significant damage to the base caused by shifting foundations may possibly be repaired. It could involve removing and relaying sections of the base and possibly the foundation, and reapplying the acrylic resin surface. Once again either the installer or an experienced repairer should be consulted. Inadequate maintenance can reduce the life of an acrylic coated tennis court surface.

Lines

Lines may require repainting every few years using an appropriate paint compatible with the surface coating.

Surface rejuvenation

If the court is in good structural condition the existing surface is prepared (cleaning and/or surface abrading), surface imperfections treated and new acrylic applications are applied to the surface. This would generally be done in the range of 5 to 10 years after installation of an acrylic surface. Providing the tennis court base is in satisfactory condition the acrylic surface can be rejuvenated a number of times

Method of replacement

The replacement method for applying a new or different acrylic surface is as described above under 'rejuvenation'.

Lifecycle costs

Court owners need to be aware that acrylic surfaces, as with any surface, do not last forever. They do have a finite life, which is dependent, in part, on their frequency of use and on how well they are maintained. The cost of installing an acrylic surface is dependent on many factors, none the least the surface system selected. There is annual maintenance costs, some of these cost can be reduced by volunteer assistance. Also there is periodic maintenance and possible repair costs. Eventually there is the cost of resurfacing the playing surface and it is essential that court owners understand they need to make provision not only for ongoing maintenance but eventual replacement of their court surface.

FAQs

What is the lifespan of an acrylic surface?

The life is dependent on a number of factors including, but not limited to, the maintenance regime and the usage of the court. Current generations are expected to last for 7 to 15.

How do they handle after rain?

One of the advantages of acrylic surfaces is their ability to allow play shortly after rain. The inbuilt gradient facilitates drainage but some manual assistance in removal of surface water helps reduce the delay.

Is acrylic a good surface for player development?

Yes, acrylic surfaces are recognised by Tennis Australia as being ideal for player development and strongly encourage its use for this area.

What colour should I choose for my tennis court surface?

Not an easy question to answer. Personal preferences, surface type selected, other local courts and aesthetics all have an influence to a greater or lesser extent. The USTA have conducted tests that show the best colour is that which gives the greatest contrast to the ball.

Information Sheet

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