

Machinery for the World of Sport

The artificial turf market and technical developments of SMG Sportplatzmaschinenbau

Gerhard Reiter

Today, the company SMG Sportplatzmaschinenbau is one of the few enterprises in Europe that has had success with special machines for installing and cleaning synthetic sports surfaces and artificial turf playing fields. Development of the company's innovations has taken many years of work, and its products are now in use around the globe, including Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, North and South America. The results of the process are homogeneous playing surfaces of high quality and with a long useful life. *Stadia* spoke to Johann and Tobias Owegeser of SMG's management.

Stadia: How would you describe the artificial turf market today?

Johann Owegeser: From our point of view, we are glad to say that artificial playing fields are becoming much more popular year by year. There are many reasons for this. Since artificial turf can be used more intensively, less area is required and the clubs often only need one pitch instead of several playing fields. The great advantage of artificial turf surfaces is that they can also be installed in topographically difficult terrains, for example in mountainous regions.

Tobias Owegeser: You must not forget that in our part of the world it is also possible to play in winter and, furthermore, the players find the same playing conditions indoors and outdoors.

Stadia: How can you explain the worldwide success of the SMG cleaning machines?

Johann: We were the first to point out the importance of maintaining artificial turf playing fields 15 years ago, at a time when nobody else was talking about it. And we were the first to put a special machine on the market that was capable of best meeting all of the requirements for artificial turf and athletics tracks with and without infilling granulate due to its variable extension modules.

Since artificial turf systems are constantly being further developed, we are also always confronted with new requirements for laying and maintenance.

Tobias: The special feature of our solutions is that they separate the infilling material from the dirt, clean it and scatter it in exact measures. This principle applies not only to our top model SportChamp, but also to CareMax and TurfSoft. They all also work with suction for small particles and fine dust and in addition have a concept that prevents damage to the turf, as they work with very little surface pressure. With these specifications, our machines are also suitable for the latest generation of artificial turf filled with a mixture of sand and rubber granulate. The artificial turf that is certified by FIFA requires such professional maintenance, as not only is the quality directly after laying important, but also the quality and playability throughout the product's entire useful life.

We developed TurfSoft as a low-price solution especially for cleaning small artificial turf surfaces with sand or sand and rubber infilling. We can in particular recommend this compact and agile machine when there is limited space or when steps, stairs and similar obstacles make it difficult to gain access to the artificial turf. TurfSoft has, for example, turned out to be the perfect solution for mini pitches in Scandinavia and padel tennis courts in Spain.

Stadia: What is the latest on the SMG paver units?

Johann: Upon request, we now supply our installing machine PlanoMatic P 928 also with an integrated generator, which means the user is not dependent on the mains socket. It can not only be used for athletics tracks, but also for laying elastic sub-base constructions to provide a level surface below the artificial turf playing fields. The automatic levelling unit with height control ensures accuracy. Our new GranuMatic makes the arduous task of scattering EPDM granulate by hand on solid PUR coating layers unnecessary.

Tobias: SandMatic B1505 is the most important SMG development in the area of artificial turf. It is a fully automatic machine for scattering infilling material in exact measures on modern artificial turf systems filled with sand or with sand and rubber granulate. The machine measures, scatters and brushes the infilling material in one working cycle and the performance can be defined in kilograms per square metre. Our new SandMatic, with a larger material container, oil cooling and more powerful engine, has just become ready for serial production and is already being sold extremely successfully. The B1505 achieves the highest quality with long-pile, monofilament artificial turf and also with fibrillated systems.

Stadia: What other new paver products will SMG be presenting at the VenueExpo in Munich?

Johann: Our LineStar L15, a newly conceived spraying machine for marking lines on synthetic playing surfaces and artificial turf. The technology is now so highly developed that national and international standards requiring high precision can be met. The user has a machine that is very easy to operate and is extremely flexible. The variable widths of the line (between four and 15 cm) can be set precisely, as required in the regulations of the testing institutes. In contrast to previous models, the LS15 now works with a compressor. All functions are controlled pneumatically, even the contact pressure for the limiter discs. This guarantees exact lines.

Tobias: Last year in Cologne, we also presented RauMatic R251 for the first time. This is a special machine for milling off the coating from elastic PU sports surfaces. Therefore we have taken into account a development that is becoming more and more important as an alternative to completely replacing playing surfaces.

These renovation measures considerably save costs and material by means of removing the upper layer and then recoating the surface. The pleasant effect is that the



SandMatic machines – used for scattering artificial turf infilling material – in the assembly hall

thickness and the technical properties of the surface either remain unchanged after the new coating or are even improved.

Stadia: How does SMG manage to achieve such a high speed of innovation?

Johann: SMG developed over 30 years ago from its workshop origins. Today, we are recognized experts for installation and cleaning machines for playing surfaces, also outside of Germany, following many years of experience in the special areas of 'synthetic playing surfaces and artificial turf'. This is

why customers contact us from all over the world if they have problems or need new solutions – that is if we do not ourselves take the initiative as we constantly monitor installations at the site. This continually results in the development of practical and economical machines that are tailor-made for the user and can perform the tasks set.

We can only perform these services because we continually invest in our machinery, effective methods for quality assurance and training courses for our staff.

We do not question this approach either as a result of any price pressure from Eastern countries because, as a well-known national team football manager likes to say, 'the truth is on the pitch'. It is precisely here that our machines achieve what you expect them to.

Stadia: Can you tell us anything about the fundamental technical development philosophy of SMG?

Johann: With SportChamp, we have realized for the first time a modular concept in the area of cleaning and developed this systematically. Our motto was: a machine and as many extension modules as possible for different functions. This means, due to the SportChamp, we can offer sports clubs a complete solution for maintaining and cleaning for all the seasons. The range extends up to removing snow. This means the multifunctional focus is not restricted to the basic machine itself, but also includes all the additional features. We also want to pursue this approach in the area of paver units wherever this is possible.

Stadia: What does SMG expect of this year's VenueExpo in Munich?

Tobias: First of all, we would like to thank *Stadia* for once again holding this event. It has now become an important platform for presenting our products. We expect to make new contacts, as was the case in Amsterdam and Berlin, and wish the participants every success. ■

SMG-machines best for

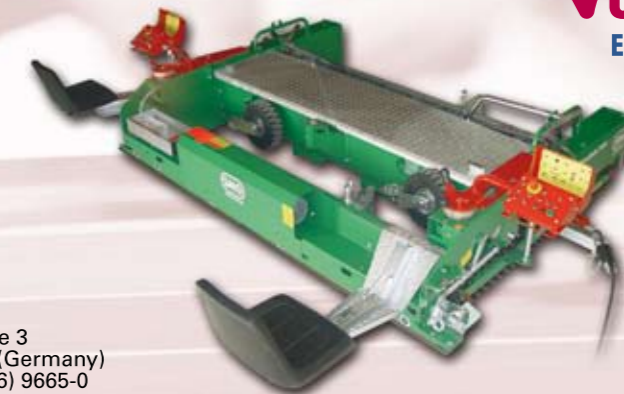


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