



BAKU OLYMPIC STADIUM

Olympic Stadium
 capacity: 68,000 spectators
 surface: 204,000 m²
 inauguration: March 6, 2015
 Project cost: \$ 640,500,000

European Games
 when: from 12 to 18 June 2015
 participating countries: 49
 athletes: 6,076
 disciplines: 20

Sport Architecture
 (Azerbaijan)

IN PREPARATION FOR HOSTING THE FIRST EUROPEAN GAMES IN HISTORY, THE CITY OF BAKU IN AZERBAIJAN BUILT A SERIES OF LATEST-GENERATION SPORTS FACILITIES. THE OLYMPIC STADIUM IS AMONG THESE, WITH AN ATHLETICS TRACK FEATURING A [MONDOTRACK](#) SURFACE INSIDE.

INVESTING IN SPORT

With the goal of hosting the Olympic Games one day in the future, the capital city of Azerbaijan enthusiastically welcomed the first edition of the European Games, the biggest sporting event ever held in the country. The Games were the first in a series of events, followed by the Formula One Grand Prix in 2016 and the Islamic Games in 2017, demonstrating the strength of the local government's commitment to promoting sport, viewed not only as an excellent means of raising the profile of the country internationally, but also of encouraging the population to lead a more active, healthy lifestyle. In order to be awarded the honour of organising the European Games, the government of Azerbaijan dedicated itself to constructing a series of sports facilities of the very highest level, a task that needed to be completed in a very short time, and in compliance with the strict rules imposed by the various sport governing bodies. The result was spectacular, with the creation of awe-inspiring, state-of-the-art sports facilities, boasting striking design features and high-quality materials. The most important structure built for the European Games was the Olympic Stadium in Baku, with an athletics track featuring a [Mondotrack](#) surface inside.

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

The Baku Olympic Stadium, which can seat up to 68,000 people, was designed to meet the highest international standards, as stipulated by FIFA, UEFA and IAAF. With its imposing 60 m height distributed over six floors, the stadium sets an example to be followed, both in terms of the high levels of safety it offers and the degree of innovation achieved. These are the features that have led to the stadium winning important international awards, such as the ENR (Engineering News-Record) prize, which recognises the best projects worldwide, and the teams behind their design and creation.



DESIGNING AND BUILDING SIMULTANEOUSLY

The Olympic Stadium, which is accompanied by a warm-up facility with stands for 1800 spectators, hosted the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as the athletics events. The facility embodies the original ideas behind the project: economic efficiency, modernity, functionality, and a final result in harmony with the architectural style of the rest of the city. On 6 June 2011, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of Azerbaijani football, a ceremony was organised to lay the foundation stone of the Olympic Stadium. The city was awarded the European Games in 2012, following which the first decontamination works were carried out on the site, before the construction of the structure itself began in 2013. In order to meet the deadlines stipulated when the Games were awarded to the city, Tefken Construction, the Turkish company responsible for the design and construction of the stadium, implemented a particularly intensive working strategy, with a schedule that saw the design of the stadium proceeding in parallel to its construction. This solution, together with the use of working methods similar to those employed in the construction of skyscrapers, made it possible to complete the stadium in March 2015, less than 24 months after the work began!

SYMBOLS AND DESIGN

A number of symbols of Azerbaijani culture were incorporated into the design and construction of the Baku Olympic Stadium; indeed, it comprises five structures inspired by the cylindrical shape of the Torre della Vergine monument, which dates back to the 12th century, and has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Fire - the symbol of the city of Baku - takes a central role in the design of the building façade, but this is just one of the elements with strong links to local tradition: water, a rug and a pomegranate also feature in the logo created for the sports event. Further aspects of the design include the original shape of the stadium: instead of the classic elliptical form, which is usually used for facilities containing a 400 m athletics track, a perfectly circular shape was selected for the Baku stadium, a decision that enabled curvilinear communal spaces to be created inside the structure.

AN OLYMPIC-LEVEL TRACK

A state-of-the-art facility such as the new Olympic stadium in Baku needed an athletics track of the very highest level, with an "Olympic" surface. For this reason, a 13.5 mm [Mondotrack](#) was chosen - red in the competition areas and grey in the other zones. "We also installed a Mondotrack surface on the outdoor warm-up track, and in all the connecting areas," explains Andrea Vallauri, Head of International Relations for Mondo. "Essentially, all of the areas that can be walked on inside the facility are covered with a Mondo surface."

A SOLUTION AGAINST THE RAIN

During the installation of the track, which took place alongside the construction of the stadium, Mondo technicians were faced with a very challenging situation due to bad weather conditions. The cold and the rain in particular threatened to slow down the installation process, but a solution - one that had already been trialled in the past in other areas of the world - enabled work to continue uninterrupted. "We had four large tents erected, 10.80 m wide and 25 m long, in order to protect ourselves from the weather without having to stop work. This allowed the installation to continue: having installed the first 25 m of track and before moving on to the next stage, a team from the local area moved the first tent to the bottom of the row of four tents. We continued like this along the entire track, 25 m at a time", remembers Lorenzo Perona, Track & Field Project Manager. This type of solution is usually avoided where possible, both because it increases costs and because it is a laborious and inconvenient process. However, in Baku, there was no way around it. "Delays in construction forced us to lay the track in the winter of 2014, instead of earlier that summer. This is why we had no choice but to opt for the mobile tent solution," adds Andrea Vallauri.

MAKING WAY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The first European Games in history were held from 12 to 18 June 2015. Russia triumphed overall (79 gold medals), ahead of Azerbaijan (21 gold medals) and Great Britain (18 gold medals). Athletics played a major role in the awarding of medals, despite the fact that this discipline was initially excluded from the list of those allowed in the competition. In order to avoid conflict with other long-running athletics events, such as the European Championships, the decision was made to focus primarily on youth teams. In the end, the title of best team went to Slovakia, which took home 458.5 points, pipping Austria to the post by just half a point. The country owed its success to the victories of Tomas Benko in the 100 m (10.60), Jan Volko in the 200 m (21.08), Martin Kucera in the 400 m hurdles (50.70), Iveta Putalova in the 400 m (53.07), the 4x100 m relay, and 4x400 m women's relay.





