

# Product Review

## Ground Floor Packaging Anti-Fatigue Mats

by Kurt Hertzog



Fig. 1

**The mat arrives packaged as a loosely coiled roll that is based on its construction.**

Over the years, I think I've tried just about every anti-fatigue mat there is. I've bought some from various woodturning retailers along with the more industrial mats available through machine tool suppliers. They all seem to feel nice and comfortable when I try them out. Once I get them in the shop, use them for an extended period of time, and often, it is a different story. I liken it to comfort time available. If you are turning or working at another workstation for any period of time, you should include an anti-fatigue mat as a matter of course. Concrete flooring, which most of us have in our shop (oops, studio) or basement, is not only hard, but cold, and anything you can do to make your time more comfortable standing there is a wise investment.

Most recently, I have been using the food service style mats. These are the ones with the holes in them, so that you can sanitize the kitchen using a garden hose and chlorine. I had arrived at them over the years as being the best for my needs. Anywhere from a few minutes to ten or twelve hours in front of the lathe can be any given day's need. I have had one of these mats in front of each lathe, the drill presses, the table saw, the workbench, and the

spray booth. For awhile, these food service mats had given me the best support and the most comfort I could find for my back problems. Sure, I still might have a long day with the aches and pains to go with it, but they have been the best so far in the way of helping.

At the AAW Symposium in St. Paul, there was a booth occupied by only one gentleman with a few floor mats on the floor—just mats. His pitch was low key and quiet, and he had an easy-going manner. I stopped in and tried

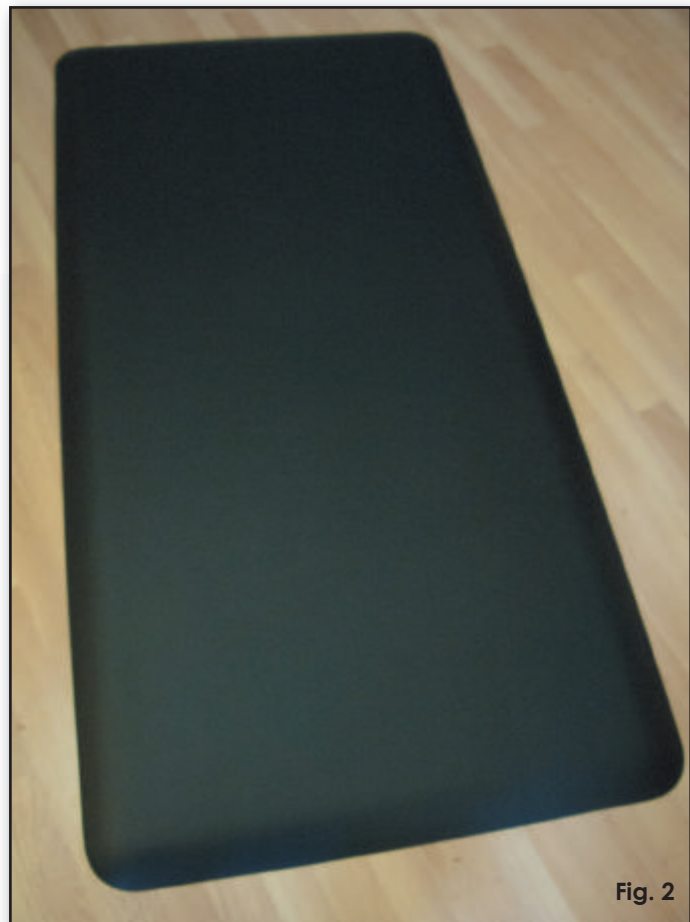


Fig. 2

**The top surface is nicely finished and the edges are beveled all the way around to eliminate tripping hazards.**

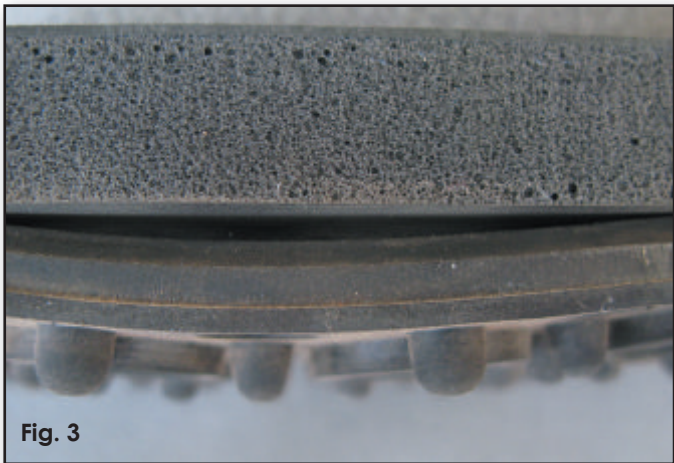


Fig. 3

Compared to my old mat with its nubbins and big through-holes, the new one has skinned, closed cell foam; however, both mat thicknesses are about the same.

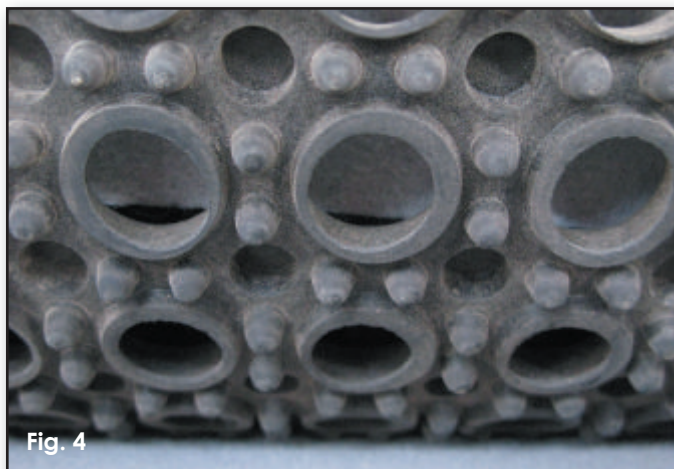


Fig. 4

The mat that I used previously is of an entirely different construction and method of operation. Up until now, it was the most satisfying that I had found.



Fig. 5

A cross section of the Ground Floor Packaging mat showing the hard top skin, which is bonded with the foam below.

standing on the mats. Nice. They seemed a bit pricey when I inquired, but they felt nice. I went back the next day and they still felt nice underfoot, but then just about all of them do for a short period of time. I liked the look, liked the feel, but still thought they were a bit pricey. I went back the last day as the show was closing. I told myself, "Do it now or forget it." Okay, I did—I bought three mats that would be shipped.

A short while after I returned home, a huge (at least compared to what I expected) box arrived. The mats are shipped in a huge box because they can't be folded or rolled too tightly without causing damage to them based on their construction—there is a hard skin on top sandwiched to the foam. Inside this packing box, the mats were loosely coiled in a diameter to just fit inside the box's dimensions. They were well packed with a heavy-duty plastic bag holding them in this loosely rolled circle. I took one of them out and put it in front of my lathe. It felt good, but then I had expected it would. I used it for a few days with varying amounts of time at the lathe. It still felt good, just as I expected. Then I had a few monumental sessions at the lathe. I cleaned up and was a tired little puppy with the corresponding aches and pains, but realized that I felt much better than I had in the past after long sessions. I unrolled the other mats and put those in two other work areas. Same thing—feels good initially and feels good over the long haul. As I write this, it's now been three months on my new mats—dirty, yes, comfortable, yes, happy with my purchase, YES! They have held up to the wear and tear in my shop. I have metal lathes, wood lathes, drill presses, cutting fluids, general purpose shop chemicals, debris, etc., with no indications of any wear or punctures from any of those. (Glue dripped on the mat does stick pretty well though.) I leave them flat on the floor, and clean over and around them. The care instructions warn against folding them, so I don't move them around or agonize about cleaning under them, but since they lie flat and tight to the floor, nothing gets underneath anyway. I now have one more of their mats—a smaller one that I take on the road when I teach and demonstrate. That is how much I've come to enjoy using these mats.

The company, Ground Floor Packaging, offers various sizes and a few different types for other applications. I have the Unique Therapeutic Mats Runner Series (foam). I don't know much about what the top material is, nor do I know much about what the magic of the foam is, and I don't need to know. All that matters is that I like how well they work for me and I think they are a winner. They are not inexpensive compared to other mats, but they are well worth it. My three bad vertebrae along with some other back issues are still with me, but the time at the lathe is far more enjoyable with the change in mats. At this point in time, Ground Floor Packaging sells these directly from their Minnesota office. You can find out more about sizes and prices on their website at [www.groundflr.com](http://www.groundflr.com) or by contacting Tim Tompkins at [tim@groundflr.com](mailto:tim@groundflr.com) or by phone at 612-963-503.

