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IMPROVING PLAY

A joint collaboration has resulted in improved conditions and a reduction in the number of cancelled games at Chadderton FC

Work by the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme (GaNTIP) in conjunction with The FA's Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) and the Football Foundation means Chadderton FC has not only avoided losing games through waterlogging but has also seen more games played on its improved pitch.

I initially carried out a PIP visit to Chadderton FC, based in Oldham, Greater Manchester, in January 2017. The pitch – which is used for North-West Counties League Division One matches – was in average condition but looking tired. All maintenance is by dedicated volunteers who look after mowing and marking out; renovations and other work is done by contractors. My recommendations included:

- Scarification
- Decompaction
- Drill seeding
- Initiating a fertilisation programme
- Instigating an annual renovation programme.

The club had received some investment from a third party with support from the Football Foundation and, with guidance from myself, it decided to invest in the playing surface. Thatch removal and the working in of sand topdressing was the main aim, to improve the playing surface and increase playability.

“More games were played last year, including end-of-season finals”



Investment in the playing surface has certainly paid off

The club employed a sports turf consultant and sourced three quotes to carry out the work. The project started in July/August 2018 and comprised:

- Stripping existing vegetation and organic surface matter to approximately 25mm deep
- Cultivating exposed topsoil to around 75-100mm
- Importing 300 tonnes of a quality 70:30 blend sports rootzone and amelioration with existing topsoil
- Spreading a 6-9-6 pre-seed fertiliser
- Seeding initially with four passes using dwarf perennial ryegrass sports mix
- Initial establishment and three months' maintenance.

GOOD RESULT

The club delayed any home games until October 2018, allowing the pitch to establish. No matches were postponed due to waterlogging during the 2017-18 season.

A follow up visit in early September 2018 found the pitch in good condition following the end-of-season renovation, which the club will carry out annually.

Post-match maintenance is carried out by the dedicated volunteers, and the pitch is mowed twice a week. More games were played last year, including end-of-season finals, which has seen an end to the need to play a lot of postponed games at the end of the season.

It has been a pleasure to work with the club. This is another good example where the link with PIP, the Football Foundation and the GaNTIP has improved playability and where recommendations have been taken up and will continue to provide the club with a quality playing surface.

[i] Visit www.iog.org for more details about the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme