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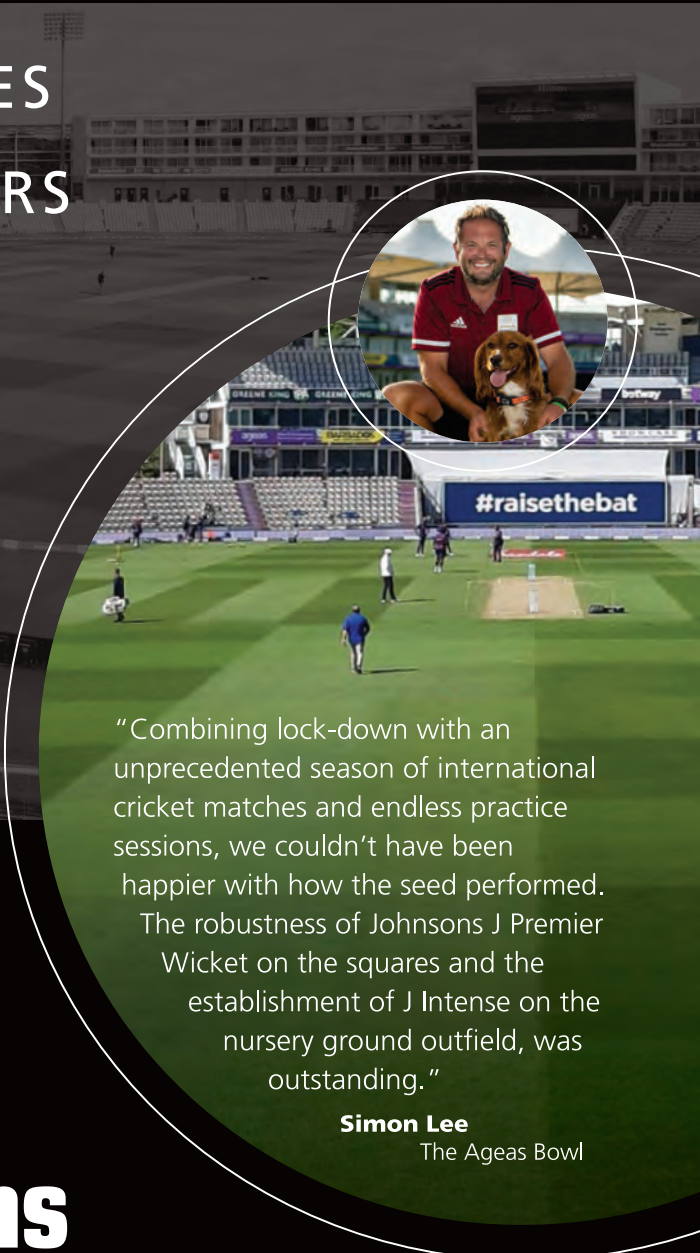
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The Ageas Bowl



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AUTUMN ISSUE

WELCOME

Stepping closer to normality

I am delighted to be able to share with you the new 'hard copy' seasonal issue of *Grounds Management* magazine.

We have a packed issue, which includes a GMA update on probably the most challenging period in our history and for our sector. We are, of course, cautiously optimistic that our freedoms that have been constrained by this pandemic are returning and are extremely encouraged by the fact that since opening up the pre-registration for SALTEX this November, we are tracking above the pre-COVID-19 2019 rates. We are working responsibly with the venue to minimise risk and are closely following Government guidance and industry best practice.

In this issue, we report on our progress as an association. Like every business, we have felt the financial impacts of the pandemic on our operations. However, our board and staff members have worked tirelessly to navigate our way through the challenges faced.

It has been great to attend recent industry events. This signals a return to normality and the opportunity to meet colleagues outside of the Zoom or Teams environment. While we are readjusting, one advantage of face to face is not having to say "You're on mute" any longer.



Geoff Webb
Chief executive officer,
Grounds Management
Association



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CONTRIBUTORS



KAREN MAXWELL
Editor of *Grounds Management* magazine



DR ANDY CARMICHAEL
Freelance writer and sportsturf academic



**GROUND
MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION**

THINK

GROUND MANAGEMENT

Editorial address: 28 Stratford Office Village, Walker Avenue, Wolverton Mill East, Milton Keynes MK12 5TW / t: 01908 312511

GMA membership and general enquiries: t: 01908 312 511 / e: membership@thegma.org.uk

Magazine subscriptions: Jo Cornford t: 01908 312511 / e: accounts@thegma.org.uk **Subscriptions:** £30 UK / £50 Europe / £70 rest of world

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Editor: Karen Maxwell t: 07866 736597 e: editor@thegma.org.uk **Head of communications:** Miri Buac e: mbuac@thegma.org.uk

Managing editor: Rica Dearman **Group creative director:** Matthew Ball **Client engagement director:** Anna Vassallo

To advertise in this magazine: Tony Hopkins t: 020 3771 7251 / e: tony.hopkins@thinkpublishing.co.uk /

Tom Fountain t: 020 3771 7250 / e: tom.fountain@thinkpublishing.co.uk



BRIEFING

GMA AND INDUSTRY NEWS UPDATE



UK grassroots football facilities receive further Government funding

New team members

The GMA welcomes its new team members. Richard Eastham has joined as key account manager for rugby league and takes responsibility of the GMA partnership with the RFL through its Pitch Advisory Service (PAS). (Read Richard's Q&A interview on page 50.) As the GMA gears up for SALTEX, Verity Newton joins the sales and commercial team, and will support corporate membership. Also joining the PAS team are: Ash Hendrickx-Nutley as regional pitch advisor (RPA) – football for the South West; Andy Welsby as RPA – cricket in the North; and Todd Harrison, who joins as RPA – rugby union in the Midlands.

Further £50m funding for grassroots football

The Government has announced an additional £50m for grassroots football facilities. It is in addition to a £25m investment into new community football facilities announced earlier this year.

The funding – available next year – will enable more people to access high-quality football pitches that can be used for football and other sports across the UK, and will be a further step towards everyone being an average of 15

minutes from a high-quality football pitch.

Combined with contributions from the Football Association and Premier League, as well as other local partners, this latest funding will build 185 new 3G artificial pitches, improve 5,000 existing grass pitches and create nine 'hub' sites with multiple pitches.

Last year, the Government introduced the £300m Sport Winter Survival Package to protect spectator sports in England and, in the Budget this year, a further £300m was announced for a Sport Recovery Package to support clubs as fans return to venues.



TREVOR CHARD APPOINTMENT

Reesink Turfcare's new East Anglian branch in Burwell, which will open this autumn, has appointed industry and Reesink stalwart Trevor Chard as branch manager.

Trevor has been national accounts manager for Reesink Turfcare for 25 years. The move to branch manager is, he says, one that will give him a new challenge, along with the opportunity to share his knowledge from

years in one of the company's key customer-relationship roles.

Trevor says: "The new branch has an extensive catchment of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. It will focus on dealing directly with customers, building relationships – that's the

part of my role that I've loved so much up until now."

■ reesinkturfcare.co.uk



NEW PPP REGULATIONS

The Official Controls Plant Protection Products (PPPs) Regulations 2020 have been issued with a policy statement. These apply to the UK and

supplement existing regulations that govern the sale and use of PPPs.

They allow regulatory authorities to enforce legal requirements that apply to the placing on the market and use

of PPPs, and explain the action enforcement authorities can take where non-compliance is identified or suspected.

Businesses concerned with placing PPPs on the market authorised for

professional use, and/or place components of PPPs on the market are required to notify competent authorities of their details and business activities by 22 September 2021.

■ Amenityforum.co.uk



Origin Amenity
Solutions Turf
Science & Technology
Centre in Essex



ORIGIN AMENITY SOLUTIONS LAUNCH

Headland Amenity, Rigby Taylor, Symbio and TurfKeeper have joined forces to create Origin Amenity Solutions. This partnership combines leading-edge plant science and turf technology products that fit within integrated pest management and microbiology programmes.

The new business is supported by the new Origin Amenity Turf Science & Technology Centre – an amenity R&D facility featuring trial grounds for fine grasses and ryegrass sports surfaces. It uses a fully functioning Rain Bird irrigation system, Davis weather monitoring and

recording station, and Soil Scout below-ground temperature, moisture and salinity monitoring. Greenhouses, a fully equipped laboratory and conference facilities are also available to help identify, develop and inform the industry on new and innovative products, techniques and practices.

COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS INTERNATIONAL WATER CHARTER

The GMA has adopted The Leisure Association Water Charter and is working with the water sector to highlight how members, facility operators and stakeholders can prevent or reduce irrigation use from adversely impacting supplies of potable water, its quality or habitat and ecology.

■ The full story is available at thegma.org.uk/news

REESINK SUPPORTS GMA YOUNG BOARD

Reesink Turfcare has agreed to continue its long-term support of the GMA's Young Board of Directors' activities to help promote grounds management as a career choice for young people.

Commenting on the partnership, Reesink Turfcare MD David Cole says: "The Young Board initiative fills an important gap to raise awareness of the rewarding, long-term careers that can be forged in grounds to school leavers. We are very pleased to continue our support for this important work."

New battery-powered E-Series from Dennis

Dennis' new range of environmentally friendly, battery-powered E-Series mowers are a reliable and long-lasting alternative to petrol mowers, which don't need constant recharging or battery swapping.

Products include the Dennis ES-860 cylinder

mower, the ES-34R and the ES-36 rotary mowers, which all feature an LCD keypad screen. The E-Series mowers take two hours for an ultra-fast full battery recharge utilising a British 110A battery, and help to meet sustainability and carbon-neutral goals.

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■ dennisuk.com



The battery-powered E-Series range from Dennis

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for GMA online training

Level 2 Winter Pitches (Applied Turf Culture)

This online Level 2 winter pitches course explores how technical aspects of turf maintenance can influence overall pitch quality, helping to create a suitable annual maintenance plan for your playing surface.

Key topic areas include:

- Performance requirements of a playing surface
- How maintenance activities might influence pitch playability
- The purpose of risk assessments
- Different soil types
- Basic drainage design
- How to identify turf grasses in general
- How to create an annual work schedule

Price per course:

Member price: **£75**

Non-member price: **£105**

Register at:

[www.portal.thegma.org.uk/
education/courses/search](http://www.portal.thegma.org.uk/education/courses/search)

TRAINING COURSES



**GROUNDS
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BRIEFING

THE LATEST INDUSTRY HEADLINES FROM THE GMA

A year in review: the GMA annual member report

The industry has faced one of its most challenging years due to the COVID-19 pandemic

This annual member report looks at the GMA's achievements and challenges over the past year, during the pandemic

BY GEOFF WEBB, GMA CEO & DAVID CARPENTER, CHAIR

During a year like no other, GMA team members have had to contend with a myriad of challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we thank them, and our members, for your continued dedication and support.

From navigating the varying scenarios and outcomes of our annual trade exhibition, SALTEX, to suspending our face-to-face consultancy and training courses, the GMA team has made exceptional headway to bring forward the organisation despite financial restrictions due to the uncertainty faced.

Agility and strategic management has been at the forefront of our approaches, and as we begin to get back on track, we are looking to diversify our income portfolio to support and reignite our industry in any way possible.

SALTEX COMMITMENTS GROW

Last year's show cancellation certainly hit our bottom line, however, the brands that signed up last year will

continue to exhibit. We now have more than 400 brands confirmed, with visitor registrations significantly growing; a huge success ahead of November 2021.

We have also launched our most recent campaign – #SeeYouAtSALTEX – as we recognise that this may be the first opportunity that friends and colleagues will be able to reconnect.

GMA TRAINING EXPANDS

In March 2020, we had to pause our face-to-face course delivery. However, by April 2020, we launched our first online course for both volunteers and professionals, and now have eight courses online and have had more than 1,500 sign-ups. We have more training courses on the horizon and are planning to return to face-to-face training later this year.

We are currently exploring partnerships to benefit all aspects of our membership to help grow our training and qualification capabilities. We have

AGM notice

If you would like to attend the GMA's annual general meeting this year, details are set out here:

- The GMA's annual general meeting (AGM) will be virtual this year. It will take place on 23 September 2021 at 12pm.
- Any GMA members who wish to join the AGM must register their interest by contacting membership@thegma.org.uk, or by phoning 01908 552989 stating your name, membership number and email address.
- More details regarding the AGM and eligibility to vote is available on our website (thegma.org.uk/agm2021) and will include details of the agenda, resolutions, director re-elections and how to vote. A reminder that only Full Individual Members and Associate Members are entitled to vote.
- Information and updates will also be available via the GMA's social media pages.

The GMA launched #GroundsWeek to raise the profile of grounds staff

Member benefits

Looking ahead to 2022, the GMA is:

- Refreshing and relaunching member benefits to reflect member feedback.
- Continuing to simplify access to products and services so you get more out of your membership/ access flexible learning options.
- Launching a learning pathway alongside a continuing personal development programme.
- Relaunching its website; new features will benefit professional grounds staff and volunteers, including a business directory of Corporate and Corporate Plus members.
- Continuing to raise the influence of the turfcare sector, inspire people to enter the profession and encourage volunteers to support sports communities.

also reviewed our online learning platform and look to expand its user experience in the near future.

EMBRACING THE DIGITAL AGE

We have increased our monthly news and member updates to share relevant information via digital e-news. This included regularly updated documents to help our members maintain surfaces during national restrictions, in collaboration with the national governing bodies of sport, and these documents have been accessed more than 15,000 times.

We also evaluated the research, commissioned last year, to review our membership offering and engagement, which led us towards the decision to provide a quarterly hard-copy magazine, supported with increased digital news between each edition.

This new publication supports the GMA's wider communications strategy, allowing us to continue engaging with national and trade media to raise the profile and influence of the profession while sharing relevant thought leadership and technical content.

Our member updates and online resources include the Grounds Management Toolkit, which will expand when the new GMA website is launched next year. This site will offer an improved member portal to help

improve member access, and we are also creating a more refined membership management system.

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AND NETWORKS

We have successfully negotiated a third phase of the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme, which has been renamed the Pitch Advisory Service (PAS). This programme has increased support to grassroots clubs since its launch in 2014, and continues to raise pitch standards to increase playability, maximise player experience and decrease the number of game cancellations.

Both codes of rugby have now joined football and cricket under PAS, with Sport England fully supporting the

scheme and the expanded regional pitch advisor network. This is led by GMA COO Jason Booth, who has been integral to the ongoing success of the programme. (The press release confirming the £3.9m investment and the areas of grassroots sport it will support can be found at thegma.org.uk/news)

We continue to work with the Football Foundation on its digital services for volunteers programme, with the launch of Pitch Power, which enabled the GMA's regional pitch advisors to remotely assess pitch reports during the COVID-19 restrictions. Our advisors have completed more than 2,000 virtual inspections to date. During 2019-20, the advisors visited more than 4,500 pitches, with the programme improving grounds maintenance practices at 91 per cent of the sites visited.

The Football Foundation Groundskeeping Community app (Hive), managed with GMA support, experienced a 43 per cent rise in users

“This new publication supports the GMA's wider communications strategy”



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A Sidewinder from Toro does all the moving for you. Carefully cutting those trickier to reach areas.

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during lockdown and has 3,000 engaged members, with user numbers continuing to climb.

GROWING THE TALENT PIPELINE

We continued to push forward on the findings of our Sport's Vital Profession (2019) research by launching the first-ever industry-awareness campaign #GroundsWeek. The reach and impact of the initiative was fantastic. We engaged with our members, international associations, national and trade media, turf ambassadors, high-profile sports influencers, businesses and key stakeholders across the UK. It also

had an impact internationally in Reuters news agency and in publications such as the *Pakistan Times*. Overall, the message reached more than 135 million people, and 29 million users on social media.

Building on our excellent media relations, we recently supported an article headlined "The Silicon Valley of turf": how the UK's pursuit of the perfect pitch changed football' that appeared in *The Guardian's* Long Reads, with a podcast to coincide with the story. This is possibly one of the most inspiring stories to a consumer audience about grounds management in the past decade.

Regarding industry pay scales, we continue to conduct our annual salary survey and are working with recruiters to improve pay across the industry.

Our Young Board continues to promote the industry to young people, and we thank Toro for its continued support and Reesink for supporting the Board in the year ahead.

AND FINALLY...

The GMA has continued to campaign and advocate best practice, although we have been operating with resource and

budget restrictions. This has been magnified by the inability to hold SALTEX for one year, but if we can navigate our way through this, then we believe that we can recover, and continue the expansion of our aims and objectives on behalf of our membership.

In the coming months, we can only hope for safer times for us all, an economic recovery and the green light for larger-scale indoor events. We now look forward to continuing to meet the challenges we face, not unscathed by the financial impact, but with a will and a drive to create from adversity a better association moving forwards. We have also taken this opportunity to take stock of who we are – and the members we represent as an organisation. More news on this will be shared with you over the next few months.

All the work involved to achieve the above activity is testament to the efforts of the team at the GMA, including our Strategy & Finance Group, SALTEX Steering Group, Young Board and the GMA Board of Directors.

Our work is endless, and we will continue to lobby and enhance the

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HorseHopper



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Profihopper 1500



'How the UK's pursuit of the perfect pitch changed football' article made headlines in national publications earlier this year

Appearances in the media

The GMA has featured in the following media outlets over the past year:

- Grounds management is vital if we are to get back to play – *Turf Matters*, June 2020
- Ground staff now ballboys – and they will not give it back without disinfecting first – *The Times*, September 2020
- Grassroots Sport: Clubs' investment in volunteers improves grass pitch quality – BBC Sport, October 2020
- Natural turf pitches need our attention amid the COVID-19 crisis... if urgent action isn't taken, millions of players at grassroots level will be left unable to play – *Mail Online*, November 2020
- Rain or shine, Premier League is pitch perfect – Reuters, February 2021
- Grounds Week: Younger generations targeted in drive to recruit new ground staff – BBC Sport, March 2021
- 'The Silicon Valley of turf': how the UK's pursuit of the perfect pitch changed football – *The Guardian*, *Daily Mirror* and available on all podcast platforms, June 2021
- Grounds Management Association secures £3.9m investment to help boost grassroots sport – *FCBusiness*, June 2021

“We will continue to lobby and enhance the opportunities for our professional and volunteer members”

opportunities for our professional and volunteer members, as well as ways to support turfcare businesses and suppliers, including a renewed focus on stress management and mental health initiatives, too.

We look forward to returning to the office in due course, seeing our members again and greeting everyone at SALTEX. We wish each of our members every success over the next 12 months and, as promised, we will continue updating you on developments as we progress further.

again

augers to maximise work rates

The two augers provide blockage-free collection and maximum compaction



Wet or dry grass, long or short, collect or mulch, the PH 1250 and PH 1500 models take it all in their stride.

And it's that flexibility that sets the Profihopper apart from the crowd.

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Contact the Amazone Team on: **01302 755 725**.



AMAZONE



All new 2021
Innovation Award
category entries
will be showcased
at this year's event

Celebrating 75 years of SALTEX

SALTEX will be opening its doors for the 75th time on 3 and 4 November at the NEC, Birmingham. Here is an early snapshot of what visitors can look forward to

BY CHRIS BENNETT, SALTEX PRESS OFFICER

SALTEX INNOVATION AWARD – NEW AND IMPROVED

Since its launch at SALTEX 2017, the Innovation Award has helped to highlight some of the most groundbreaking, innovative products and services within the grounds care industry. This year, visitors will notice some remarkable differences.

Show organisers have announced that there are now several innovation categories, which include:

- Machinery
- Hand tools
- Consumables
- Vehicles
- Environmental/ Sustainability
- Information technology
- Sports equipment
- Robotics

Visitors will get the chance to see every entry on the show floor. There will be a winner in each and every



Top industry
speakers are a
big attraction
at SALTEX's
Learning LIVE

category, so keep an eye out for news on when and where the final ceremony will take place.

ECO VILLAGE – AN 'ELECTRIFYING' SHOWCASE OF PRODUCTS

After making a storming debut at SALTEX 2019, show organisers have confirmed

that this year's Eco Village will feature a programme of daily demonstrations in cutting-edge sustainable technology. This will allow visitors a unique opportunity to witness a multitude of products in action.

The powerful line-up of innovative product manufacturers will include Avant UK (headline sponsor),

Dennis Mowers, Overton UK, GroundWOW and Allett Mowers – with more to be announced soon.

LEARNING LIVE – FREE EDUCATION AND CPD POINTS

Featuring several CPD-accredited seminars, the free-to-attend Learning LIVE programme has been developed by leading industry partners and influencers to provide support, insight and real solutions to key industry issues.

Highlights of the programme this year include a virtual tour of Leicester City FC's new Sports Turf Academy, hosted by grounds manager John Ledwidge; an insight into how ongoing research by county cricket grounds and how England's Centre of Excellence will impact the recreational game, led by Andy Mackay



#SEEUATSALTEX – THE NEW CAMPAIGN

After a turbulent time through COVID-19, it's time to celebrate resilience and unity within our sector.

Whether it is through Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, SALTEX organisers are encouraging everyone associated with the show to post a picture or video of themselves at their place of work supported by the hashtag

#SeeYouAtSaltext.

Participants will be in with a chance of winning a prize from a fantastic array of exhibitor products. These great prizes will be revealed very soon!



Register for a chance to win a prize

In addition to the limitless opportunities available on the show floor, one lucky visitor will be presented with an incredible battery-powered compact loader from Avant UK worth approximately £30,000.

Every person who registers will be in with a chance of winning this fantastic prize – on loan for six months. The live draw will take place on the first day of the show.

Register for SALTEX 2021 for free at

gmasaltex.co.uk/visitor-registration

■ For more information, visit gmasaltex.co.uk
 ■ Follow SALTEX on Twitter: @GMA_SALTEX and Facebook: facebook.com/GMASALTEX

(ECB), Gary Barwell (Warwickshire CCC) and Will Relf (Loughborough University); grounds managers Ed Ramsden (Perse School) and Greg Smith (Nottingham University) will be offering advice on how to achieve a quick turnaround on multisport surfaces; pesticides and what the future holds for them will be explored by Dr Christian Spring (STRI) and Glenn Kirby (Syngenta); the pressures of the job, coping mechanisms and work-life balance will be discussed by Ian Avery (Sutton Valence School), Jim Dawson (BT Murrayfield) and Maria Kuzak (CALM); and turf consultant Richard Hayden will be providing a behind-the-scenes look at the turfcare techniques that ensured the pitches shone at Euro 2020.

Why I love SALTEX

"I want to be a part of the SALTEX team for as long as I possibly can"

Health and safety executive Les Gibbs (pictured), a key member of the SALTEX operations team, says that attending SALTEX this year is more important than ever.

The University of South Wales grounds manager has been involved in SALTEX operations for the past 16 years, and as the current health and safety officer, he's one of the first people on-site and the last to leave.

While walking the SALTEX halls, he admits he marvels at the technological advances in grounds maintenance equipment he sees on exhibitor stands, compared to what was



available when he started in the industry in 1977.

Over the past 30 years, Les says he still loves his outdoor role. He loves the friendliness of the people in the industry, who are willing to share their expertise. He thinks SALTEX is an ideal place to promote this highly skilled sector as a career choice to young people.

"SALTEX offers an ideal opportunity to find out about industry innovations, share expertise and advice through networking, and to keep learning through seminar attendance. If you know anyone who's looking to join the industry, bring them to SALTEX, as they'll gain plenty of inspiration," he says.

"SALTEX offers the perfect post-COVID-19 industry reconnection opportunity – for information on trends, new products and to meet up with old friends and new in a safe face-to-face environment.

"I always look forward to the show every year."

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1 PRO RANGE
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Hard-work is par for the course in maintaining Warwickshire Golf Club. But STIHL's Pro Range provides all the tools a professional Grounds Team needs to get the job done right. Hardworking for hard terrain, reliable and robust for every job, the STIHL range offers durability day or night whenever you need to use them. With brushcutters, hedge trimmers, chainsaws and more, whatever challenges your team come up against, the STIHL Pro Range can help you achieve the perfect finish.

Daniel Rowe, Head Groundsman,
The Warwickshire Golf Club with the
STIHL FSA 130 cordless brushcutter

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Attracting school leavers

Blair Drew has set his sights on a career in sportsturf testing, thanks to social media, his interest in science and his love of sport

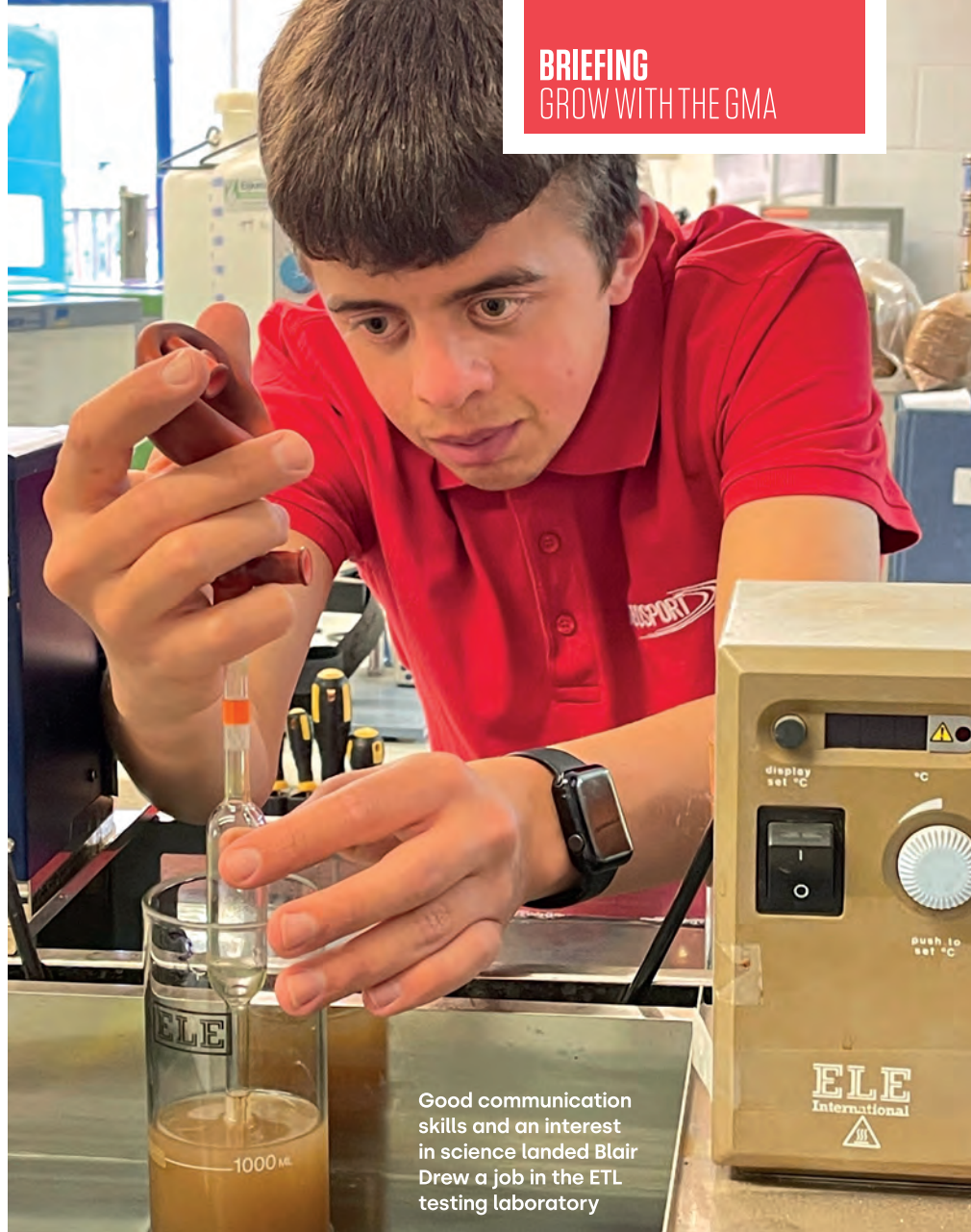
BY KAREN MAXWELL

When European Turfgrass Laboratories (ETL) managing director Sharon Singleton-Bruce decided to grow her team of Scotland-based laboratory technicians, she looked to connect with school leavers who had an interest in sports and science subjects. The firm then used a targeted Facebook advert to promote the opportunity.

Shared by an ETL employee, the advert was seen by a football teammate and shared with 21-year-old sports lover Blair Drew, who was intrigued about a laboratory job linked to testing at venues across Europe; from pay-and-play facilities to R&A and European Tour golf venues, Premier League football clubs and high-profile racecourses which, until then, he didn't know existed.

"When I was at school, I was interested in chemistry and physics, and did a national course in engineering at college. But I had no idea what I wanted to do when I left, until I heard about this role. As I have a keen interest in sports, I wanted to find out more," says Blair.

When granted an interview, Blair told ETL he was "a team player who could bring enthusiasm, hard work and leadership skills to the role, which I'd learned during 13 years in the Boys' Brigade". He subsequently joined the ETL team in 2017 as a trainee lab technician, where his duties include sample preparation, testing and recording data, calibration of laboratory equipment and maintaining stocks of chemicals.



Good communication skills and an interest in science landed Blair Drew a job in the ETL testing laboratory

YOUNG ATTRACTION

Sharon says that young recruits need to have the relevant educational skills and pass a practical test to show how they follow instructions – but personality is also a really important factor.

"I look for someone who is keen to learn, has an interest in science and sports, is good with numbers but, above all, they need to be a good communicator and a team player. Each day in a laboratory can have similar work patterns, so you want someone who is methodical and outgoing, and can

interact with everyone. Teamwork is essential – I can't stress that enough.

"At ETL, we test the materials used for the construction of natural-turf golf courses and football pitches – essentially to ensure that the grass will grow and the profile will drain. We are one of eight labs in the world that have American Association for Laboratory Accreditation, so we are not expecting a newcomer to be up and running on day one. Staff need to demonstrate competency in test methods, and so rigorous training is given before they undertake a test on their own.

"Blair has proved to be a hard-working, sociable and flexible team player, who sets himself high standards. We will continue to mentor him to help him take on more responsibilities within the business."

■ To find out about career routes, contact learning@thegma.org.uk

"I had no idea what I wanted to do when I left [school], until I heard about this role"

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MULTI-USE OLYMPIC LEGACY THRIVES AT LONDON STADIUM

Eleven years after the iconic images of London Stadium showcased the London 2012 Olympic Games, it's now living up to its intended legacy as a major international multi-use venue – which isn't without its challenges for the grounds team

BY ANDY CARMICHAEL

James Williams has been the head groundsperson at London Stadium for the past four years, having enjoyed a rapid rise in promotion since joining the organisation as a skilled operative in 2016. His position also represents fulfilled ambition since entering the profession at his local Swansea FC's former Vetch Field ground.

Knowing he wanted to “work in sport” and “loved being outdoors”, James tells me he did not feel academic and consequently left school as soon as possible to start with the South Wales club. He might not have felt that way then, but subsequent moves to the Liberty Stadium, as well as time at Dunvant RFC and finally the English capital, suggest not only a capacity to learn new skills, but an ability to interpret data, manage challenging projects and solve complex problems.

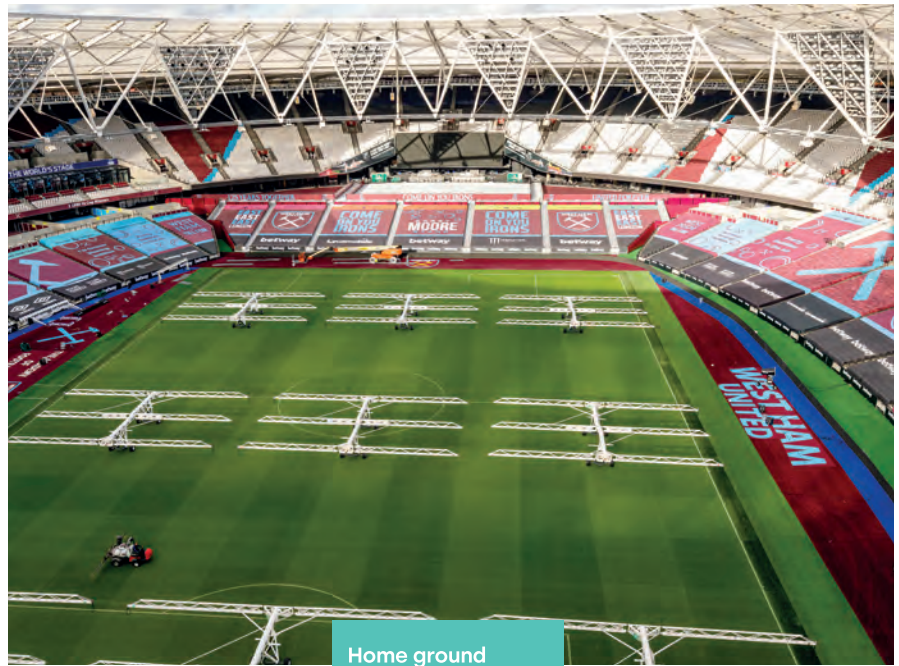
LEGACY GAINS

There are many operational aspects of London Stadium that provide challenges. Well known for being the home ground of West Ham United FC, the venue in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, that was built to host the 2012 Olympic Games' opening and closing ceremonies and the athletics events, is owned by the London Legacy Development Corporation.

Its London 2012 legacy responsibility means the stadium now plays host to a broad range of sports and cultural events, and needs to demonstrate a positive use of public money. These include major music concerts, rugby, baseball and athletics events, plus a London Marathon Community Track venue that is used for school groups, community sport and charity events.

James jokes that the children using the London Marathon Community Track as a playing field “are likely to have no idea it is mowed and maintained by the same people who prepare the surface for their Premier League idols”.

The legacy of the London 2012 Games and its inspiration for future generations was always the intention of the original stadium design. Since the Games, there has been a reduction in seating capacity from 80,000 to 66,000, reflecting the unique nature of the Olympic requirement and the realistic management of a modern multi-use venue. The running track has been retained and is covered by seating when



Home ground of West Ham United FC, London Stadium grounds need constant care



“Its London 2012 legacy means the stadium now plays host to a broad range of sports and cultural events”

not in use. The venue has played host to both the IAAF World Athletic and Para Athletic Championships, and a round of the Diamond League is an annual fixture.

Seating tiers can be moved and replaced to accommodate the needs of each event hosted, such as football with a smaller playing arena. The West Ham playing surface is a hybrid Desso pitch, managed to James' and the stadium's standards rather than those of the football club, although he has a great relationship with the club's grounds manager, Dougie Robertson. He says he also benefits from the positive, respectful approach from team manager David Moyes and his staff – something he hasn't experienced with previous managers. “David always says hello,

comes and has a chat, and asks what area of the pitch we would like him to train on,” James explains. This

is a good example of how no conflict is needed between a manager's training ambitions and preparation of surfaces.

MULTI-USE CHALLENGES

At the end of West Ham's season, the pitch is renovated; this is when James and his staff encounter some challenging deadlines. Such is the schedule of multi-use events that the ArmorDeck heavy-duty flooring is often laid down to accommodate a series of music concerts. If the stadium is also hosting Major League Baseball (MLB) matches, the ArmorDeck is covered with chippings, an artificial outfield and clay, which is sent over from Transylvania, to build the mounds.

The stadium may then host an athletics event and be required to grow an inner surface capable of hosting field events only two weeks from sowing. James says: “It must be one of the most active multi-use stadiums in the world.”

The javelin athletics field event means major considerations for the turf manager. The desire to avoid wayward javelin flights means the stadium has no openings – none of the larger gaps featured in other stadia to allow vehicle access or air to circulate. This is perfect for trapping sound and great for acoustics, but also means humidity can increase rapidly at pitch level and the pressure for disease incursion builds.

The Development Corporation has purchased fans for use within the stadium bowl, to create artificial air movement. Consequently, James keeps the fertiliser inputs and moisture levels to precise and low levels, opting for a little-and-often schedule of liquid feeds, bio stimulants and targeted intervention to avoid adding to the potential for pitch issues.

The pitch is decompacted every four to six weeks with alternately a ProCore and verti-drain. West Ham employs ProPitch to undertake testing, and James uses similar methods to understand the data relating to surface health. For example, clegg readings for soil strength and consolidation can show a change of 65-80 gravities for a Premier League game compared to 140 post-concert. Hardly surprising when the likes of AC/DC has been at one end!

TEAM WORK

A permanent grounds team of five covers the divotting post-football matches on a Monday and Tuesday, rotary cuts midweek, and then preparation for

“James is proud that a number of the people who have worked alongside him have gone on to manage their own venues”

Events since James joined London Stadium in 2016

Athletics

- 2017 World Athletic/Para Athletic Championships
- 2018 Athletics World Cup
- Annual Muller/ Anniversary Games
- IAAF Diamond League

Baseball

- 2019 MLB Red Sox v Yankees

Football

- West Ham United FC home stadium

Rugby league

- 2016 RL Four Nations

Rugby union

- Harlequins v Saracens

Concerts

- AC/DC
- Beyoncé/Jay-Z
- Depeche Mode
- Foo Fighters
- Guns n Roses
- Muse
- Rolling Stones

a game leading into the weekend includes cylinder mowing for a cleaner and finer cut. The team expands by eight to 10 on match day or for events. However, James says there are always staffing issues. Over the past 14 months of COVID-19 restrictions, maintaining safe practices has seen the need for some people to isolate. The cost of living in London can also challenge recruitment or lead to capable team members having to move on as their families expand and their needs change.

James is proud that a number of the people who have worked alongside him have gone on to manage their own venues. It is a path that he himself took, thanks to the guidance and support from head groundsperson Dan Duffy when he was at Swansea FC, and James feels he has inherited his mentor’s “meticulous ways”.

Similarly, he wants to acknowledge the efforts of London Stadium’s CEO, Graham Gilmore, and chief of operations, Darren Raczkowski, both invaluable to the team effort in turning round the venue for such an ambitious local and international programme. It sounds a hectic schedule, yet providing such a legacy must offer immense satisfaction.

■ You can learn more about multitasking on multi-use sites during Learning LIVE at this year’s SALTEX



James and his grounds team have a big job preparing London Stadium for ongoing multi-use events



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RUGBY LEAGUE MAKES HISTORY

The Rugby Football League hopes to raise the sport's profile plus fund facility and pitch improvements following this year's Rugby League World Cup

BY KAREN MAXWELL

The Rugby League World Cup (RLWC2021) is going ahead as planned this autumn. It is expected to be the biggest and best ever Rugby League World Cup tournament, with 32 teams from 21 nations playing 61 games at 21 sports venues across the UK. The tournament is unique in that the men's, women's and wheelchair competitions will be staged together for the first time, and broadcast live on the BBC, to ensure it leaves a lasting legacy for the UK game.

To capitalise on the nation's expected increase in interest, national governing body the Rugby Football League (RFL) – committed to developing and growing rugby league at all levels of the game – recognises that the availability of sports facilities, including quality playing surfaces, is fundamental to the sport's growth, sustainability and overall success.

FUNDING SUPPORT

"We've attracted significant investment into the community game through the RLWC2021 CreatedBy grants and Sport England funding, and have also gained substantial support for the women's game through National Lottery funding," RFL national clubs manager John McMullen explains. He adds that the RL Cares Facilities Trust funding mechanism complements local authority Playing Pitch Strategy funding to help improve playing and training facilities at clubs across the country.

These RLWC CreatedBy grants invest in projects that offer opportunities for people from different backgrounds to engage in all variations of the game by



England player Jodie Cunningham promotes the women's game through the RLWC2021 tournament

RLWC2021 VENUES

University of Bolton Stadium, Bolton
Coventry Building Society Arena, Coventry
 Keepmoat Stadium, Doncaster
John Smith's Stadium, Huddersfield
 MKM Stadium, Hull
Emerald Headingley Stadium, Leeds
 Leigh Sports Village, Leigh
Anfield Stadium and M&S Bank Arena, Liverpool
 Emirates Stadium and Copper Box Arena, London
Old Trafford, Manchester
 St James' Park, Newcastle
Bramall Lane and the EIS, Sheffield
 Totally Wicked Stadium, St Helens
Halliwel Jones Stadium, Warrington
 LNER Community Stadium, York

improving the environments where the sport takes place.

So far, £4.1m has been awarded in 17 large-scale grants; £1m has been awarded in 157 small-scale grants; and an investment of £2.7m has been made through RLWC CreatedBy grants to improve playing facilities and invest in grounds maintenance equipment.

These projects include the £60,000 conversion of a natural turf pitch into a hybrid pitch, with added floodlighting, at Siddal ARLFC in Halifax, and a similar hybrid pitch conversion at Thatto Heath Crusaders in St Helens – both of which allow for more playing opportunities for the clubs' women's and girls' teams. Other pitch improvements, made possible by the grants, include a 3G pitch at West Bowling ARLFC in Bradford (in

VICTORIA PARK, WARRINGTON

The club's newly funded 3G pitch is now used by several rugby league clubs. It has transformed the stadium and surrounding area into a community hub for the development and growth of the sport. With fantastic community backing, Warrington Borough Council, supported by

Warrington Wolves Foundation, is also using the grant to help grow the Physical Disability Rugby League and Learning Disability Rugby League plus the women's and girls' game.

The site is also hosting the Physical Disability World Cup fixtures.



Victoria Park has a newly funded 3G pitch. Right: RLWC2021 legacy programme launch with Kevin Sinfield



partnership with Bradford Park Avenue AFC), a 3G pitch installation at York St John University (in partnership with the York City Knights Foundation) and a 3G pitch upgrade at Victoria Park, Warrington, supported by Warrington Wolves Foundation, to help grow the community game for all abilities across that region.

RAISING STANDARDS

John admits that the current standard of most of the 1,000 rugby league community natural turf pitches – whether club-owned, rented or local authority-managed – are “basic”, and that improvements will take a considerable amount of work. This is why the RFL has become a Pitch Advisory Service (PAS) partner, alongside the Rugby Football Union, the England and Wales Cricket Board and the Football Association (with funding through the Football Foundation charitable arm).

He believes that this partnership, which includes GMA training and educational opportunities, plus the recent appointment of former Liverpool FC and Manchester City FC grounds manager Richard Eastham as RFL key account manager, is moving the sport's

facility strategy in the “right direction”.

In addition, Leeds Rhinos' grounds manager Ryan Golding and Stuart Vause at Castleford Tigers are helping with community club pitch improvement advice through the GMA's PAS programme, with John adding that Ryan has also been “critical to our pitch-improvement strategy and RLWC2021 venue pitch preparation”.

Referring to the millions of pounds of CreatedBy facility funding investments to date, John says: “Pitch standard sustainability depends on the



RLWC CREATEDBY TRUST INVESTMENT

- 17 large-scale grants = £4.1m
- 157 small-scale grants = £1m
- Investment in playing facilities and grounds maintenance equipment = £2.7m

requisite technical advice, guidance and support for groundskeepers and volunteers, through education and development. After all, without the pitch, there's no game!

“Our grounds staff plays a crucial role in enabling sport to take place, and almost every professional rugby league player started out on a community pitch,” John explains. He says Richard Eastham has to be “rugby league's best signing of 2021”, such is the level of technical expertise, experience and knowledge he'll bring into the game.

“Richard is clearly in tune with the values of our sport. He can engage with grounds staff and volunteers at all levels of the game.”

SCOTT LEADS BY EXAMPLE AT WATFORD FC

Watford FC's grounds manager, Scott Tingley, explains why the club's close-knit team spirit has been a major factor in creating award-winning pitches

BY KAREN MAXWELL

The 2020/21 season was a very successful one for Watford FC. The football team took the Championship League by storm, with a club record of 19 league wins at Vicarage Road Stadium – sealing its promotion back up to the Premier League. And the grounds team, led by grounds manager Scott Tingley, received the EFL Championship Grounds Team of the Season – a well-deserved accolade praised by head coach Xisco Muñoz, the players and many supporters.

Scott, whose team also won the 2017/18 Premier League Grounds Team of the Season, says the award was testament to the excellent team spirit at the club. “We rode a fantastic wave of support last season from everyone at the club – and the fans, who often referred to us as the ‘12th man’,” he says, explaining that the Bristol City home game was a turning point for both the club and the grounds team.

“We worked on a firm, fast surface; the players played brilliant fast-flowing football and won 6:0. We then aimed to produce the same surface week after week. We got the grass height down to 18mm and kept up with verti-cutting, raking and brushing to thin the grass sward out so it was fast for being short, fast for being wet and fast from lack of friction due to grass cover.”



Scott Tingley heads up an award-winning grounds team at Watford FC

GETTING STARTED

Vicarage Road wasn't always known for its good playing surface. When Scott joined the club in 2016, he says the club was getting bad publicity for its poor pitch. It had recently been replaced, and the hybrid Desso pitch had been turfed over, so he and the team had to do the best they could to improve its condition until they were able to remove the pitch during the renovation window that summer.

Having gained plenty of hands-on renovation experience during his previous job at Arsenal's training ground, Scott says he still employs the in-house renovation method conducted during his first year at the club. A contractor removes the pitch and spreads the sand, and then the team does the finishing work. This includes aeration, grooming the pitch to ensure the Desso fibres stand up, and they manage the nutrition and seeding programmes which, he says, has made a big difference to the quality of the pitches. “It's been a massive learning opportunity for the whole team, and the results speak for themselves.”

TEAM SPIRIT

Scott is proud of the grounds team's work ethic at the club. Although he's both lost and gained staff members in recent months – mainly due to Tottenham, Arsenal, Chelsea, West Ham, Reading



Watford FC's Vicarage Road pitch has a dedicated team keeping the grounds in optimum condition

“We worked on a firm, fast surface; the players played brilliant fast-flowing football and won 6:0”



and Wembley being on Watford's doorstep – he says the current team is very well balanced in skills, ability and experience, and everyone is “focused and working towards the same goals”.

Scott started his career as an apprentice at Chelsea FC, after helping out at his dad's contractor firm, then moved to Arsenal FC's training ground and progressed to senior groundsperson. He joined Watford in 2016 and oversees both sites. He spends most of his time working with his assistant, Freddie De-ath, who's recently joined from Arsenal, and two other team members at the stadium.

His deputy, Cameron Hutcheon, manages nine team members at the training ground. They look after three first-team and two Under-23 pitches plus two goalkeeping areas, in addition to a further 21 playing surfaces for the University College of London at the

leased site. Another team member, Tom Rennie, is currently overseeing Scott's brief for pitch management at Udinese FC's stadium pitch in Italy (also owned by Watford owner Gino Pozzo).

When asked how he motivates his staff, Scott says: “I have to admit that Arsenal grounds manager Steve Braddock's attention to detail has definitely rubbed off on me, and I've taken his work ethic into my role, too. I can be one of the team and have a laugh and joke, but we all know when it's time to be serious and get down to work. That's when the lads put in their headphones, get their heads down and crack on with the job. The fact that they all have such a great attitude makes my role much easier.”

He also says that he's lucky that Cameron has a similar way of thinking. “It's almost as though we see things through the same pair of eyes,” Scott

says. “He has been at the club almost as long as I have, and it helps that he has a great rapport with the manager and coaching staff at the training site.”

When it comes to pitch maintenance, Scott says both he and Cameron agree that they want their pitches to be hard-wearing first and foremost. “We encourage good grass cover, but not so much so that the plant starts to sweat and gets diseased, so we constantly thin out by regular verti-cutting, raking, scarifying and light top-dressing – using the correct levels of nutrients,” he explains.

PITCH TESTING

The pitches are also tested daily for moisture and electrical conductivity levels (which measures the amount of available nutrients in the soil, the grass density and plant health), by using Raw Stadia testing kits at the stadium and

training ground. The team is also planning to use ProPitch testing kits.

Once a month, testing includes pitch pH levels and infiltration rates, to check on water retention. “These test results are collated, correlated and historically compared, which has allowed us, for example, to apply fertiliser only when needed, rather than routinely,” Scott says, adding that this process has definitely allowed for more informed decisions and budget savings on products.

The team also uses two pitches at the training ground for new product trials with Rigby Taylor, Consolidate Turf and ICL products to name a few.

“Seventy per cent of our fertiliser comes from Advance Grass Solutions,” Scott explains, who adds that he also uses products from Headland Amenity and ICL within the club’s fertiliser programme. His preferred choice for grass seed is Rigby Taylor’s R140 Tetraploid ryegrass for its hard-wearing benefits. However, he is now using ICL’s ProSelect on all of the training pitches, after a successful trial using the grass seed with the club’s current fertiliser programme.

“What impressed me during the trial is that although we had 100 per cent grass cover, we could see the surface, which makes it much easier to keep clean. It had a short, dense, but open appearance, which is not a normal combination in ryegrass,” he says.

PROGRESSIVE PRACTICES

Regarding sustainable grounds management, Scott says the plan is to make the stadium as electric as possible by replacing diesel and petrol-guzzling machines in favour of electrical-powered machines. These include a new order of



The stadium pitch is tested daily for moisture and electrical conductivity levels

“We constantly thin out by regular verti-cutting, raking, scarifying and light top-dressing”

Infinicut cylinder mowers and Allett C34E for grooming at the stadium to replace the Infinicut cylinder mowers that have been moved to the training ground, to branch out the club’s initiative across the two sites.

He’s also recently purchased the SGL UVC180 ultraviolet light to help control pitch-borne bacteria, which he hopes will negate the use of fungicides, and says that there’s a noticeable decrease in disease outbreaks already. However, he believes that monitoring daily, together with ensuring the correct level of nutrients (applied only when needed) is also keeping disease at bay.

Other lighting rigs include the recently upgraded SGL LU440 model,

which Scott says is easier to manoeuvre and allows use during tighter gaps between fixtures – due to a lighter-weight aluminium frame, which is less of an impact on the pitch surface.

CAREER PROGRESSION

As Scott and I started our conversation discussing the industry’s staffing shortage, I ended the interview by asking him what he thought the industry could do to attract more young people into the profession.

“We had quite a few people connect with us after the GMA’s #GroundsWeek initiative,” he says. “However, we tend to offer them a match-day experience, so they often only see the glory side of the job in the first instance. What I’m looking for is a willingness to learn and a keenness to work hard and accept that there are times they are going to have to work unsociable hours.

“I’ve also started to interview potential candidates outside of the meeting room environment, preferring to walk and talk to them during a tour of the training grounds, at which time I might ask them to do some of the daily tasks to check their competency. If they join the team, work hard and extend their skills set, I actually don’t really mind losing them to another club. I’m just glad that we’ve been part of their career progression.”

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Scott and his team with their 2017/18 Premier League Grounds Team of the Season award

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HOME ADVANTAGE FOR AFC LEWISHAM

AFC Lewisham struggled to find grass pitches to meet increasing fixture demands until it secured a site lease and gained PAS support to raise playing standards at its new grounds

BY DANIEL BRADLEY, REGIONAL PITCH ADVISOR – SOUTH EAST

When AFC Lewisham was searching for a place to call home, club secretary Josephine Mayendes suggested the 2.5ha disused Gresham Sports Ground, which had not been played on for the previous five years. The club, established in 2012, cut an informal agreement in late 2019 with the maintenance provider to use the ground ad hoc, before securing a long-term site lease from Dynamo Developments in October 2020. Prior to this agreement, maintenance was restricted to occasional grass cutting only and was procured for development, which was denied, owing to the site being listed as Metropolitan Open Land.

PITCH IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT

A Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) assessment was carried out in August 2020 and set out a road map offering short-, medium- and long-term recommendations to match the club's ambitions for improving the four pitches and wider site for community use.

Following on from the PIP report, the club secured Football Foundation funding to support the purchase of a 23Hp Kubota compact tractor, which allowed the cutting of the pitches and other tasks to be performed by club volunteers.

The pitches are now cut at a frequency and height that improves the quality of cover and the health of the sward. The additional slitter attachment also allows aeration operations, which has greatly improved the pitch quality.

The club also enrolled in the Football Foundation's tapered

AFC Lewisham volunteer
Phil Mashaga



TODAY
Gresham Sports
Ground's pitches have
been transformed

“Understanding when conditions are – and are not – suitable has been essential”

Enhanced Grass Pitch Maintenance fund, which supports renovation operations over the next 10 years.

COMMUNITY USE

Since GMA assistance, the pitches' carrying capacity has increased to sustain the club's home fixtures and is also used by local school Trinity Lewisham for PE lessons.

The land lease has been secured for 30 years. Through grounds care knowledge gained through PIP and GMA online training courses, Josephine has developed a greater understanding of recording the maintenance, condition and use of the pitches. She has also established a

sustainable model to allow for wider community use, satellite pitch hire and continual use by the school.



2019
The site before AFC Lewisham
secured the lease from
Dynamo Developments

“As a grassroots club, we could not afford to hire a specialist to help us with pitch maintenance planning, and we are grateful for the GMA's ongoing commitment to help our local community to improve the pitches. We also get plenty of useful information from the Football Foundation's Groundskeeping Community [Hive].

“It's the awareness of timing and best practice that has allowed the pitch transformation. Understanding when conditions are – and are not – suitable to perform operations has been essential to help us develop and improve our playing surfaces for the community.”

■ For more information on the Pitch Advisory Service, visit thegma.org.uk/pitch-advisory-service
■ For access to the Football Foundation's HIVE community, visit footballfoundation.hivelearning.com



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PELLENC

LANCHESTER'S FIELD OF DREAMS

Club secretary and grounds manager Dennis Laycock is keeping the village's grass courts in perfect condition – with valuable help from member volunteers

BY ANDY CARMICHAEL

In the village of Lanchester, County Durham, I catch a glimpse of the idealised amateur sporting life. Freshly mown and over-marked grass tennis courts stand ready for play. The groundsperson responsible for their upkeep serves tea from the pot and offers me a chocolate digestive from a tin. Posters advertising the forthcoming Lanchester Lawn Tennis Club Strawberry Tea adorn the clubhouse walls, alongside the plaque presented on reaching the club's centennial year.

Dennis Laycock, a retired firefighter and maintenance gardener, now grounds manager of Lanchester Lawn Tennis Club, joined the club in 1990 and quickly became secretary, a position he retains today. Becoming involved with grounds duties in 2000, he took on the role completely six years later. He explains what led me to drive past the club twice before he found me slightly bewildered just yards from the entrance.

Founded in 1911, the club moved to its current site in 1926. A visitor back then would have looked down from the road, across the valley to the Smallhope Burn, and would have been surprised to see carefully manicured tennis courts

Lanchester Lawn Tennis
Club grounds manager
Dennis Laycock



punctuating a farmer's field. Sounds like the inspiration for *Field of Dreams*. Dennis suspects the farmer was both well off and an enthusiast of the game, sculpting and rolling the native soil to provide a platform for his sport. He built it, and indeed they did come.

The march of time and expansion of population have seen housing envelop the site, so much so that the courts are now completely hidden from view, the field long since gone and access only possible through a gate opening onto a long grass track, at the bottom of which the oasis of calm remains. The three courts that lie at the end of the journey run northwest to southeast, with a clubhouse and grounds shed set back, allowing plenty of room for spectators.

COMMITTED TO GRASS

Keeping the perennial ryegrass sward at 10mm, Dennis employs a Masport 24-inch machine, sometimes alternating with an Atco Royale. A walk behind a Poweroll keeps the playing surface level, and a light feed of Angus fertiliser with a top-up of iron helps keep things green and healthy without promoting excessive growth.

Given the natural fall of the land and presence of the watercourse, drainage is very good, so much so that the old-style drains, installed



decades ago, continue to function well. Marking out the courts, "it's all screwdrivers and string", says Dennis, before sharing his secret to making the lines shine: "a drop of matt white emulsion in the mixture".

It is not a recommendation I expect to find in the copy of the STRI's *Grass Tennis Courts: How to construct and maintain them* that is kept in the clubhouse. Yet it is clearly well-thumbed, and while we all appreciate the importance of understanding your soil, sward and maintenance, we know that public opinion is very much swayed by stripes and shiny paint.

Grass court tennis has to respect the seasons in a way the game played on artificial surfaces can view more flexibly, and in this often less-than-sunlit part of the world, there are few clubs that remain as committed to turf as Lanchester.

A light scarification of the surface is undertaken in spring, prior to the season start in May, with further scarification after the season ends in early October. Last year, hollow tining was commissioned to relieve compaction, with top dressing and reseeding



Lanchester's grounds are in good hands with Dennis keeping them in top condition for club members



CLUB EQUIPMENT

- A couple of mowers
- A small roller
- A line marker
- A tin of emulsion with a brush for white lines



“There is nothing better than an evening when the sun is shining and the courts are full of juniors”

competitive senior teams, and five days of alternating social play and coaching. The club has access to porous tarmac courts in the village during winter, but Dennis says: “There is nothing better than an evening when the sun is shining and the courts are full of juniors.”

Inspired to continue the tradition by a visit to Wimbledon in

using a Barenbrug amenity mixture.

The problems tend to come from outside the controlled environment. Trees, often the curse of the golf and bowling green, impact here, too.

Dennis regularly swishes the surface to keep it free of debris and early-morning moisture, but little can be done on an amateur club budget to combat the shade – no artificial lighting rigs are coming down that track.

Weed incursions, particularly from the adjacent domestic gardens, and a family of moles down near the riverbank remain an ever-present threat.

COMMUNITY GAINS

Dennis has the backing of a good committee, and a couple of members can always be relied on to help out with groundscare. Given the restricted access, this can be somewhat challenging; everything has to be wheelbarrowed down from the road to the courts.

Likewise, there is a positive relationship with the neighbours.

“Well, at least the tennis balls keep coming back,” jokes Dennis. Typical of the cheek-by-jowl existence is that Dennis regularly cuts the lawn of a resident who kindly allows him to take a shortcut through her garden with supplies.

If artificial courts have the edge in terms of the weather and timing, grass allows for greater fun. “The kids can fall down and love it,” says Dennis, and in these ever-competitive times, he notes that all sports “want that little person to come through the gate”.

Lanchester actually increased its number of senior members during the pandemic, but like a lot of clubs, attracting younger recruits was a struggle amid the various lockdowns.

The aim is to continue to build back the junior section, alongside the three

recognition of the club’s centenary, Dennis has gathered club members together in a working group to consider long-term plans for the courts. He wants to know more about their construction. His feeling is that the land has slipped slightly down towards the valley, and he is keen to understand how they can safeguard the future of their surfaces.

You can only imagine that the future of Lanchester’s courts is in very good hands, even if someone got a little too optimistic with that strawberry tea and the weather forecast.

■ For more information on GMA training courses that suit natural turf tennis court management, visit thegma.org.uk/learning

AUTUMN OPERATIONS

The GMA's seasonal maintenance guide to help you keep your sports surfaces in top condition all year round



Cricket grounds need less cutting at the season's end

Bowling greens

- Continue to carry out routine cutting; be mindful of approaching end-of-season renovation works.
- Aim to complete planned end-of-season works as soon as possible, following completion of the fixture schedule.
- Ditches should be cleared of their fill material, cleaned and washed down.
- Carry out repairs to banks when work on the green is complete.
- Once end-of-season works are complete, out-of-season work includes:
 - Drag brush or switch regularly to remove dew and maintain a dry surface with upright grasses – this will also help to disperse any worm castings.
 - Keep the grass topped, if required.
 - Mild, humid autumnal weather creates ideal conditions for diseases, so keep an eye on the health of the surface.

- Aeration should not be neglected – perform when conditions allow, at varying depths.
- Keep leaves off the green by removing on a regular basis.

Cricket squares

- With the season now coming to a close, renovation of the square needs to be carried out as soon as possible, following the final game:
 - Cut the square short, clearing arisings to give a clean top surface.
 - Scarify at multiple passes at slight angles.
 - Aerate, ideally with a punch-action solid tine machine; provide sufficient irrigation beforehand to assist in tine penetration.
 - Spike the square, then overseed, using a suitable perennial ryegrass mix.
 - Dress with a suitable loam, ensuring levels are maintained.
 - A pre-seed fertiliser can now be applied.

- Into autumn, germination sheets can aid late germination or required overseeding, but monitor underneath and watch out for disease:
 - Drag brush on a regular basis, especially if dew is present. Earthworm activity can be high now, so drag brush when dry to help disperse the casts.

- Keep the square topped at a suitable height of cut. This will maintain sward density and prevent it from thinning out.
- If any levels or material in top-dressed tine holes have sunk, carry out additional top-dressing; although be careful not to apply too much.
- Be mindful of growth through autumn – the square may require a fertiliser application.

Cricket outfield

- Reduce the frequency of cut and raise the height of cut after the final game. Repair areas of wear as required.

- Inspect for pest and disease attacks as the weather changes; the use of a drag brush to remove morning dew and stand the grass up will be beneficial.
- If transitioning to winter sports, an application of a balanced, controlled-release fertiliser will be required to sustain growth and grass plant health.
- Aerate throughout autumn and decompact to maintain surface drainage potential and root development.

Football pitches

- Repair divots to maintain an even surface.
- A light top-dressing or overseeding will make good any areas suffering poor levels of coverage. Germination sheeting can be applied to make the most of the remaining good growing conditions.
- Slightly raising the height of cut in high wear areas can help to maintain an improved level of ground cover for a longer period.
- If weeds are a problem, this is the last realistic opportunity for any selective herbicide application before heading into autumn.
- Into the autumn, aerate or decompact the pitch when the ground conditions are suitable.
- Frequent brushing to remove morning dew is good practice – this should be done ahead of cutting if conditions allow. Brushing in dry conditions will help to disperse worm casts and clear leaves from the pitch.

- Cutting may still be required, although try and keep it as high as possible to allow for maximum amount of coverage going into the winter.
- Dressing and overseeding of high wear areas may be required as the season progresses. Ensure hand forking takes place beforehand; cover and keep irrigated.

Horse racecourses

- Autumn is the main renovation period for flat racing courses, which includes:
 - Scarification (or chain harrowing with the tines facing downwards).
 - Deep aeration.
 - Mowing grass to a shorter length to expose thin areas.
 - Fertiliser application.
 - Overseed thin and bare areas.
 - Top-dress thin and bare areas.
 - Light roll.
 - Irrigate, particularly seeded and thin areas.
- Into the autumn, the course should be prepared ahead of the start of the National Hunt season. Courses used just for flat racing will be rested over autumn and winter; prepare fences and jumps prior to the start of the season.
- Fallen leaves could be a major problem on some parts of a course. Continue to clear as they fall.
- A light topping of the grass may still be required and/or a roll to firm.

Rugby league pitches

- The end-of-season renovation window is near. This should involve:



- Scarification or raking/chain harrowing to help reduce thatch.
- Overseeding at a suitable rate with a perennial ryegrass mix.
- Top-dressing will depend on budgets and materials available. Alternately, dress up and restore any isolated worn or damaged areas.
- Decompact the profile through a mechanical vertical or linear method.
- Apply an autumn/winter controlled-release fertiliser, but be mindful not to apply a feed containing iron (Fe) so soon after seeding.

- Throughout autumn, drag brushing and switching of the surface will be advantageous to stand the grass up and dispense with morning dew.
- Keep on top of pitch repair where coverage or levels are low, along with clearing of leaves as they begin to fall.
- Cut as required, topping in line with growth and as weather conditions allow.
- Aerate as and when weather and surface conditions allow.

Rugby union pitches

- Continue routine cutting, but lower the frequency and raise the height of cut as the weather changes, and in line with grass growth.
- Aeration and decompaction operations are key to maintaining drainage potential and aid root development into the autumn.
- Repair divots and scrum damage as a priority – use a hand fork.
- Ensure sufficient nutrient availability to sustain recovery and disease resilience throughout the winter. Feed with a balanced, controlled-release product into autumn.
- Drag brush or switch to remove morning dew and disperse worm casts – this will help stand the grass up.

Tennis courts

- Renovate as soon as possible, following the last game. A typical renovation programme includes:
 - Irrigate, to soften the surface soil profile.

- Initial aeration to penetrate the surface layer.
- Further irrigation to soften the lower soil profile.
- Further aeration – this time at a greater depth.
- Scarify to remove thatch build-up and lateral growth.
- Clean the surface of debris or arisings.
- Overseed – this is especially important along the baseline and service boxes.
- Top-dress with a suitable loam. The amount will depend on the degree of wear and aeration equipment used.
- Apply a conventional pre-seed fertiliser.
- Into the autumn, as the weather begins to change:
 - Lightly top the grass as and when conditions allow.
 - Earthworm activity may be high. Regularly switch or lightly drag brush the court surface to remove dew and disperse casts. Also keep an eye open for disease, especially if mild and humid conditions occur.
 - Remove fallen leaves to avoid smothering the sward.
 - Aerate if ground conditions are favourable.

- For more seasonal maintenance tips, visit resources.thegma.org.uk and footballfoundation.hivelearning.com/home



Rugby pitch at the University of Oxford



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TECHNICAL INSIGHT

AN OVERVIEW OF PEST CONTROL

Crane flies emerge from leatherjacket larvae cases, which are left discarded



Integrated pest management

BY KAREN MAXWELL

Why integrated pest management methods are needed to ensure effective pest control and prevention



Leatherjackets feed on the roots and leaves of turfgrass

The GMA's recent Integrated Pest Management (IPM) webinar was a popular event for members. Images depicting turf devastation by increasing pest populations – including writhing masses of leatherjackets (crane fly larvae) found on cricket grounds, golf courses, racecourses and other green spaces – are becoming commonplace on social media. This increasing problem is due to the ban on effective chemical pesticides and a reduction in turf maintenance practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

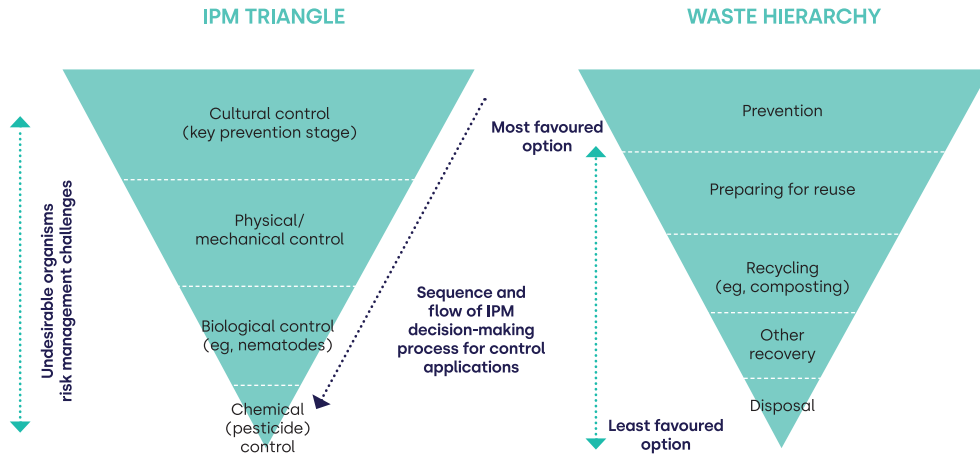
Leatherjackets, for example, feed on the roots and leaves of turfgrass, causing large areas of dieback. Birds and other insect-eating wildlife then cause secondary damage by digging up the soil to get at these larvae, which can result in unsightly and unplayable surfaces. Grounds managers are often left unsure of the extent of the problem underground.

Since the banning of the pesticide Chlorpyrifos in 2016, and in the absence of effective alternative chemical control methods, leatherjacket (and chafer beetle grub) populations have significantly increased. The insecticide Acelepryn has been made available through an emergency authorisation, yet a greater understanding of how its combined use with other products through an IPM is needed.

WHAT IS AN IPM?

GMA learning programme architect Chris Gray says IPM has been defined as “a sustainable, science-based, decision-making process that combines biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools to identify, manage and reduce risk from pests and pest management tools and strategies in a way that minimises overall economic, health and environmental risks” (US Department of Agriculture, 2018).

The UK Government identifies and defines IPM through the application of eight general principles



COMBINED IPM AND WASTE HIERARCHY INVERTED TRIANGLES

The IPM triangle shows the various pest-control methods, while the waste hierarchy triangle portrays the most and least preferred approaches to solid waste generation and management

(see The Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012).

These are embedded within the classic IPM control triangle, but if this image is inverted and contrasts with the Government’s guidance on applying a waste hierarchy, then attention is better focused to grounds maintenance practices in helping to minimise the use

THE EIGHT IPM PRINCIPLES’

1. Measures for prevention and/or suppression of harmful organisms
2. Tools for monitoring
3. Threshold values as a basis for decision-making
4. Non-chemical methods to take precedence
5. Target-specificity and minimisation of side effects
6. Reduction of use to necessary levels
7. Application of anti-resistance strategies
8. Records, monitoring, documentation and check of success

of pesticides. Chris says this doesn’t change the principles, but it’s a potential change in thought processes of how best to approach the challenge of managing undesirable organisms.

“The top priority is to prevent and reduce turf conditions more favourable to undesirable organisms in the first place,” he explains. “This reinforces the need for effective and efficient grounds maintenance practices, which consider a wider, systems and longer-term approach to the impacts and consequences of maintenance activities. For example, if a fertiliser has been applied for reasons of ease of application and more controlled release of nutrients, yet through continued routine use of this has resulted in a more neutral soil pH reaction as well as a significant increase in earthworm surface activity (at certain times of the year), then maybe this approach has not been the most suitable for the longer-term needs of the sward and needs revision.”

LACK OF EVIDENCE

Leicester City FC’s (LCFC) Sports Turf Academy manager, Jonathan Knowles, believes there is a lack of trusted evidence-based research to

support UK turf managers in applying integrated management for pest control.

“There was a silver bullet in the form of insecticides for turf and therefore no real appetite of an ‘integrated’ cultural or biological approach or investigations into alternative practices, so we’re now on the back foot,” Jonathan says.

“Now, like most venues, at LCFC Sports Turf Academy, we’re scrutinising all our practices and regimes as an integrated overhaul – such as NPK input, management of thatch, aeration activity, surfactants, bio-stimulants and mowing regimes, etc. But it’s the bigger picture of integrated or holistic management that needs addressing first. The 2012 Sustainable Use Act even directs us to use an integrated control before considering a pesticide/biopesticide.”

EFFECTIVE EVALUATION

Jonathan suggests an evaluation of the impact of cultural practices in terms of frequency and intensity on larvae incidence and whether relatively simple changes in the timing of, for example, aeration, changing tine type and irrigation regimes may impact on larval numbers.

He suggests a better understanding of the pests’ life cycle and habitat to enable the application of measures that may reduce their survival, and says that biosecurity measures on imported material (such as turf) may also require closer scrutiny for possible contamination.

He adds that the use of biopesticides and/or more biological approaches may also be part of an integrated solution, but says we need to ask what warranted impact they have on a local ecosystem. “There are a range of biologicals and it may be that an integration of these are required for adequate control on populations,” he says.

“An evaluation of population size verses visible surface damage is a useful data-driven approach and helps to set thresholds for deciding when a pest becomes a problem. Setting a threshold and monitoring the numbers before damage occurs is good preventative action.

“There are still a lot of unknowns for integrated pest management, especially without pesticides. To really work sustainably, more research to inform decision-making and developing knowledge for the future is still required.”

■ Find the GMA’s top tips on dealing with leatherjacket pests at thegma.org.uk/news/top-tips-dealing-leatherjacket-infestation-and-protecting-your-turf-1

■ The GMA offers training courses and qualifications, including modules and sections on IPM and waste minimisation, such as Level 4 GMA Professional Certificate in Turf Surface Management and Level 4 GMA Certificate in Sustainable Turf Management

■ For more information, visit thegma.org.uk

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Biodiversity in turfgrass

Knowing what organisms are present in turf – and when they are active – is helpful when managing rootzone biodiversity

BY DR DEBORAH COX, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
LAGAN VALLEY SCIENTIFIC

When it comes to biodiversity, outdoor sports facilities are not all equal. Some landscapes can support a wide range of botanical, aquatic, mammalian and avian life. In others, changes to encourage wildlife to thrive can be relatively easy and cheap to implement – as can be the monitoring of key indicator species (i.e. pollinators, birds and mammals) to assess the effect of management change.

For example, in 2020, the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds established a three-year collaborative approach to supporting those pursuing GEO certification, as well as offering general advice on rare and endangered species. While golf courses and public parks are unique, it's important that realistic expectations and goals are set across all types of grounds and playing surfaces; this begins with understanding what is present, and when certain organisms are active.

MICROBIAL POPULATIONS

Professionally managed turf is often described as biologically limited, specifically in terms of turf playing surface ecosystem biodiversity. There are

limits, for example, to sward compositions of closely mown, high-quality playing surfaces, and it is widely documented that sustainability usually depends on biological diversity (starting with the primary producers: plants, algae and some bacteria). Despite relatively simple swards across the amenity industry, when we assess the complement of organisms that dwell below ground in the playing surface rootzone, there can be just as much, if not more, diversity present in professionally managed rootzones than in some agricultural and forest soils.

In a new playing surface construction, it is common to consider applying products to support early plant development and attempt to accelerate the formation of soil aggregates. The physical structures and pore spaces that are created from combinations of plant root exudates, biofilms, fungal hyphae and naturally decaying material take time to assemble, yet they are critical for diverse microbial population establishment.

Newer constructions are typically softer with less resistance to mechanical pressure, and as the rootzone



There's plenty of biological diversity in professionally managed rootzones

matures, it changes both physically and biologically

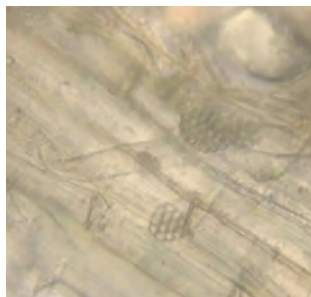
through carefully managed thatch accumulation, soil particle aggregation and microbial diversification. Non-native microbes inoculated onto mature turf may be somewhat outcompeted or displaced by residual communities, as older turf tends to have significant biological buffering capability and resilience that younger swards sometimes lack. However, subtle changes in the rootzone profile can

still occur, and older turf is not immune to non-native pests and diseases.

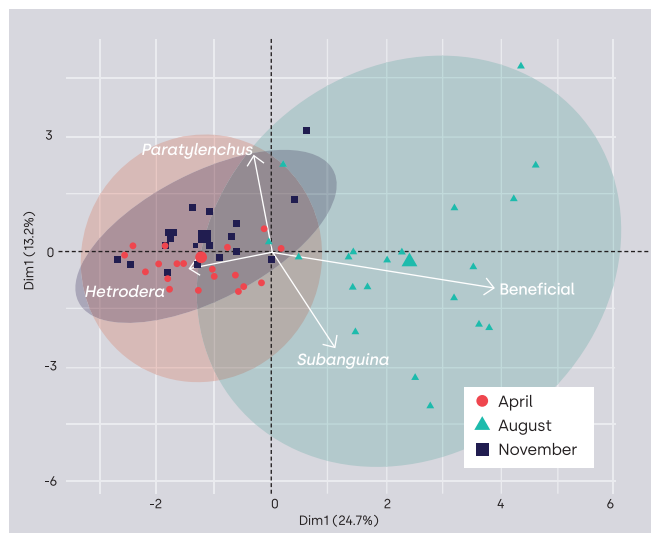
BACTERIAL PROFILES

The major components of well-established rootzones of *Poa spp*, *Festuca L* and *L perenne L* are not massively dissimilar to published research on agricultural fields under pasture, although there are unique attributes in each. Proteobacteria often commonly dominate more than half of the rootzone bacterial profile. This group of bacteria can be divided further into six classes based on their DNA sequences: Alpha-, Beta-,

SHUTTERSTOCK



Plasmodiophorid *Polymyxa graminis* (above left) and nematodes (above right) are commonly found in turf; graph showing turf samples assessed for different types of plant parasitic nematodes (below)



Gamma-, Delta-, Epsilon- and Zeta-; the latter three are usually less abundant in turf.

Alphaproteobacteria are known as oligotrophs and thrive in environments with low nutrient content. Betaproteobacteria are copiotrophs and usually require high nutrient content. Gammaproteobacteria is an extremely diverse group and has no overarching distinguishing characteristic. Using *Pseudomonas* as an example, several species are known to have beneficial effects on different plants, while others are highly pathogenic. Many Proteobacteria have the ability to synthesise extremely useful natural products, some of which are antibacterial or antifungal themselves. Many organisms have the potential to regulate each other to an

extent and managing rootzone biodiversity has become a recognised component of integrated turf management.

SEASONAL PATTERNS

Relationships between microbes are not always straightforward and soil food webs in turf rootzones are far from being completely documented or understood. Some microorganisms are mutualistic, some are pathogenic and some organisms, such as *Polymyxa graminis*, sit somewhere in between; although mostly benign, they can be carriers of important plant viruses.

Plasmodiophorids are not the only group of complex organisms capable of viral transmission; ‘stubby root’ nematodes (*Trichodorus spp* and *Paratrachodorus spp*) are also commonly found in turf.

Larger microorganisms found in turf, such as nematodes and arthropods, are important, because as they have the potential to be key biodiversity indicators, they will also be hosts to smaller microorganisms and contribute significantly to nutrient recycling in turf.

Both beneficial organisms and plant parasites seem to be common in older turf, as are plant parasitic nematodes all year round. Detecting certain types is affected by the time of year a sample is taken. For example, in the graph (left), three sets of 20 samples were taken from the same locations at different times and assessed for different types of plant parasitic nematodes. We can see a shift in the types of nematodes found in August compared to April and November.

When we consider the diversity in multiple samples, we can start to explore seasonal and spatial patterns in microorganism behaviour over long periods of time. If we examine the biological differences between sports pitches with different construction types (for example, with and without stitched fibres), we can find a number of differences in the types of bacteria associated with each.

Ultimately, biodiversity assessments of microbial life in turf will be affected by many factors and the exact sampling strategy adopted. As we learn more about the ‘biological personalities’ in different types of turf rootzone, we will be able to better support turf managers in modifying rootzone microbial communities and help achieve their goals.



Dr Deborah Cox can be contacted at deborah@laganvalleyscientific.com

“While golf courses and public parks are unique, it’s important that realistic expectations and goals are set across all types of grounds and playing surfaces”

Maintaining sports grounds across the UK

Four organisations utilise industry products and services to ensure their grounds and facilities are kept in top condition

SISIS AUTOSLIT AIDS WORLD-CLASS BOWLING GREENS

A SISIS Autoslit is playing its part in helping to prepare world-class greens at Victoria Park, Royal Leamington Spa – the home of Bowls England and the host of the annual Bowls England National Championships.

The five greens, also used for county competitions, national events and international games, are managed by head greenkeeper Mike Finch of idverde, who chose the SISIS Autoslit after plenty of research.

“The greens at Victoria Park have always been of a very high standard, but we are now working towards making them world class, and I decided that the SISIS

Autoslit was the best choice,” Mike says.

The purpose-built pedestrian deep slitter – which can be used on either fine or outfield turf – helps reduce compaction and assist the percolation of surface water. It cuts through the turf and the rootzone, leaving a thin slit on the surface and minimal surface disturbance.

These slits encourage strong, healthy root growth, improve tolerance to drought conditions and promote rapid recovery after damage in play. The SISIS Autoslit also incorporates a rear, smoothing roller, and its cantilever system lifts the machine out of operation.

“It is very easy to use and I’m very impressed with what it can do,” adds Mike.

■ [Find out more at sisis.com](https://www.sisis.com)



The SISIS Autoslit helps to reduce compaction at Victoria Park's bowling greens



“Radley College has renewed its Reesink Turfcare arrangement to supply Toro fine-turf and grounds care mowers”

RADLEY COLLEGE EXTENDS TORO AGREEMENT

World-class sporting facilities are one of the cornerstones of prestigious boys’ school Radley College in Oxfordshire. Therefore, maintaining impeccable grounds is essential.

After a successful 10-year agreement, Radley College has renewed its Reesink Turfcare arrangement to supply Toro fine-turf and grounds care mowers to ensure the school’s grounds are kept in pristine condition.

It has opted for a wider range of smaller machines for more flexibility.

Head of grounds Adam King’s team of 19 maintains

the school grounds and gardens, including 30ha of rugby pitches, cricket squares, football pitches, synthetic turf hockey pitches and tennis courts, plus a nine-hole golf course.

“We have 750 boys playing sport five days a week, so pitches need to be playable and immaculate. Deploying smaller machines in accordance with the school calendar allows for ultimate flexibility,” Adam explains.

The school uses nine Toro mowers, including two Greensmaster 3150-Q, a Reelmaster 3100-D, a Greensmaster TriFlex 3400, two Reelmaster 3550-D and two compact and lightweight Reelmaster 3555-D mowers.

“We seldom have issues,” Adam continues, “but our lease agreement has backup



Clockwise from left: Radley College's world-class sporting grounds; battery-powered mower; Ageas Bowl head groundsman Simon Lee with his dog, Winston

care built into it, so if we have a problem, we'll have a mechanic on-site the next day. We've never had a machine down for more than 36 hours."

■ **For more information, visit reesinkturfcare.co.uk**

DLF DELIVERS FOR AGEAS BOWL

A break in play, caused by the first COVID-19 lockdown, provided Ageas Bowl head groundsman Simon Lee with a window of opportunity to conduct a full renovation of the club's nursery ground. His experience of using Johnsons Sports Seed mixtures meant excellent results.

Before joining the Hampshire CCC in 2020, Simon was head groundsman at Somerset CCC for nine years, where he'd used both J Intense and J Premier Wicket. "We had seven weeks to complete the project, before international teams used the ground as a training base for three



months. The speed with which the seed established allowed us to get the ground back in play rapidly."

The 100 per cent perennial ryegrass J Intense mixture was sown on the nursery ground outfields in May, providing exceptional disease resistance and high wear tolerance and recovery, even under close mown conditions. On the main ground, J Premier Wicket mixture was sown at relatively high rates to recover some bare areas from the previous season, and set

the stage for a condensed season of matches – albeit behind closed doors.

■ **Find out more at dlf.co.uk**

AYLESBURY VALE DYNAMOS SCORE WITH HUSQVARNA AUTOMOWER®

Aylesbury Vale Dynamos recently turned to autonomous mowing to help the 32-team club maintain its football pitch. It has already seen the benefits of using the Husqvarna Automower Club Solution in just three months. The club and its chairman,

Mike Borrett, decided to purchase the Husqvarna Automower Club Solution, following local equipment distributor Farol Ltd's recommendation. This allowed two Automower 550 mowers to work alongside each other, using just one boundary wire.

Mike says: "Making the move to Automower has been brilliant. Following discussions with Husqvarna and our Automower dealer, Farol Ltd, it quickly became evident that it could solve many of the grounds care challenges we were facing.

"Like many football clubs, we rely heavily on volunteers to maintain our grounds. In rain or shine, the grass requires twice-weekly cutting, so thanks to Automower, we're able to redeploy our volunteers to more skilful tasks. The battery-powered Automower means we've also eliminated the need for petrol, which has been great for reducing CO₂ emissions."

Regular use of the Automower means minimal impact on the turf. The small, quick-composting clippings provide a constant source of fertilisation and moisture, creating greener, denser turf.

■ **For more, visit husqvarna.com/uk/products/robotic-lawn-mowers**

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Managing grass with microclimate data

SGL launches the TurfPod, an all-in-one monitoring tool that is affordable to lower leagues – and also offers advanced pitch testing to the highest levels of sport.

The TurfPod is a small device containing six sensors that track the essential growing conditions above ground and in the soil. When pinned into the soil, the TurfPod operates automatically and shows the microclimate data in real time on the SGL Portal.

The TurfPod is developed in line with SGL's strong belief that data is a basic

necessity for every groundskeeper. SGL founder Nico van Vuuren said: "Every playing surface is different, every climate is different and every budget is different. There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to managing grass. Every groundskeeper should be able to respond to the ever-changing conditions and make well-informed decisions during their daily work and the challenges they face."

Flexible accessibility is a key driver for SGL regarding this product. SGL supplies the TurfPod



as a flexible lease, starting at €49 a month, with hardware and software included. Customers can upgrade the software whenever they please, with a wide

range of TurfModules, such as data analyses and visualisations.

■ sglsystem.com/EN/news/1128/introducing-the-turfpod

ETESIA

Etesia makes grass cutting child's play

A zero per cent interest finance offer from Etesia UK enables improved operations on school playing fields in Warwickshire.

During last year's uncertainty and financial pressures, Etesia UK explored the best ways it could help its customers. It introduced a three-year, interest-free finance offer on the Etesia Hydro 80 MKHP5 ride-on mower, which would allow customers greater flexibility with their finance.



It was an offer that Martin Carty, managing director at Carty Services, found too good to ignore. Based in Warwickshire, Carty Services has a glowing reputation for maintaining gardens,

grounds and school sports fields to an incredibly high standard.

"We were in the market for a new ride-on mower and the Etesia finance offer gave us the financial flexibility to purchase

two mowers rather than one," said Martin. "It absolutely had to be the best mower for us – we want the finest equipment."

The Etesia Hydro 80 has been designed to cut and collect both long and short grass, without clogging in any weather. Add to that its compact dimensions, ease of use, hydrostatic drive and powerful 15hp twin-cylinder Kawasaki engine, and you have a highly efficient machine offering the kind of output that would easily replace three walk-behind mowers.

■ etesia.co.uk

PRICE TURFCARE

Estate management made easy with a little help from Ventrac

The Ventrac 4500, together with its dedicated attachments, is the ideal combination for land management on large estates and the grounds of country houses. Marketed in the UK by Price Turfcare, based near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, it can maintain all areas of an estate, including game shoots, woodland, parkland and even pristine lawned areas.

One unique feature is that it can operate on slopes of up to 30 degrees, providing the capability to maintain previously inaccessible areas.

Sebastian Fenwick is the owner of Shilstone, a lovingly restored Georgian manor house and family home set in several hundred acres



of breathtaking rural countryside in south Devon.

"Because we run a wedding business here, everything has to look immaculate," he said.

"We've got to have stripes on the main lawns, and the valley, with its three

ancient fish ponds, has to look good. Everything has to look right, and the Ventrac plays a significant part in maintaining the grounds.

"We had endless demonstrations of different types of banks mowers, but none were

brilliant," he continues. After the demonstration of the Ventrac, I bought one on the spot! My staff love the Ventrac and I'm a complete convert; I never stop telling people how good they are."

priceturfcare.com



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The pins of the GKB DTA deep aerator repeatedly pierce the ground, creating a carpet of regular, even holes, which allow surface water and air to find their

way to the soil. More oxygen in the soil ensures better root conditions and field quality. Breaking open the top layer stimulates root growth

and strengthens the turf. Deep aeration is therefore an essential part of sports field maintenance.

If you are a field manager or greenkeeper with a natural grass sports field, then you know how big the problem of soil compaction is. An annual deep aeration is strongly recommended. The DTA is more durable than competing deep aerators due to heavy-duty sealed bearings. This will save you significantly in maintenance.

■ gkbmachines.com/machine/dta

DENNIS UK

Artistry meets mastery at AFC Bournemouth

After a stringent search for a new rotary mower, Ian Lucas, head of grounds at AFC Bournemouth, concluded that the electric Dennis ES-34R was by far the best choice.

Ian excelled in art at school and originally set out to be a graphic designer by trade. He may not have followed his original career path, but one look at his work will tell you he certainly has an artist's eye for detail, and that extends to every aspect of his job, including the purchasing of new equipment.

"We had demonstrations carried out for every single electric and petrol rotary mower you can think of," he said. "It was the new Dennis ES-34R that ticked all the boxes and proved to be the best overall."

The ES-34R is a 34" (860mm) battery-powered twin-blade rotary mower using the latest lithium-ion battery technology. It is ideal for fine-turf mowing and cleaning-up operations in stadia and training facilities. Utilising the contra rotating hardened steel blades and low chute



ensures maximum collection performance.

AFC Bournemouth purchased two Dennis ES-34Rs, which are now playing an integral part

in Ian's maintenance programme at both the Vitality Stadium and the training ground.

■ dennisuk.com



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With its huge area capacity of up to 75,000m², the CEORA™ is great news for all green space professionals. Systematic cutting and virtual boundaries deliver superb results and easier turf management on larger surfaces than ever before.

CEORA™ is a state-of-the-art autonomous solution guided by

Husqvarna EPOS technology. Precise satellite navigation with virtual boundaries eliminates the hassle of physical wires. Quick definitions of work areas and stay-out zones accommodate optimal use of the turf.

The robotic mower travels between work areas on defined transport paths, while temporary stay-out zones can be created for more flexible turf management.

CEORA™ is lightweight and battery driven, minimising noise and reducing carbon footprints with zero-direct emissions while in use.

■ husqvarna.com/ceora



KAR UK

Spurs makes a splash

The new Hunter irrigation system from KAR UK achieves outstanding results for world-class football facilities.

Regarded as one of the best training facilities in world football, Tottenham Hotspur FC's state-of-the-art training centre has upgraded to an advanced Hunter irrigation system.

Head of playing surfaces and estates Darren Baldwin says the club's facilities have seen remarkable improvements



since the installation of the irrigation system, which was purchased through KAR UK, a leading wholesaler of irrigation equipment and distributor of Hunter products.

"The whole package is superior, from technical, set-up, flexibility, the design – it just all works

for us," says Darren. He also brought in an experienced irrigation technician to care for the 16 grass pitches and hundreds of acres of green spaces and landscaping areas.

The upgraded Hunter system, which consists of three ACC2 controllers and the Centralus irrigation

management platform, enables a watering schedule to take place with ease. Each of the training centre's three zones is managed by an ACC2 controller with the Centralus software controlling those three areas.

Hunter's ACC2 delivers advanced water management to meet the demands of large-scale commercial projects. The ACC2 has built-in intelligence, with the ability to maintain preset flows on up to six flow zones simultaneously.

■ karuk.com

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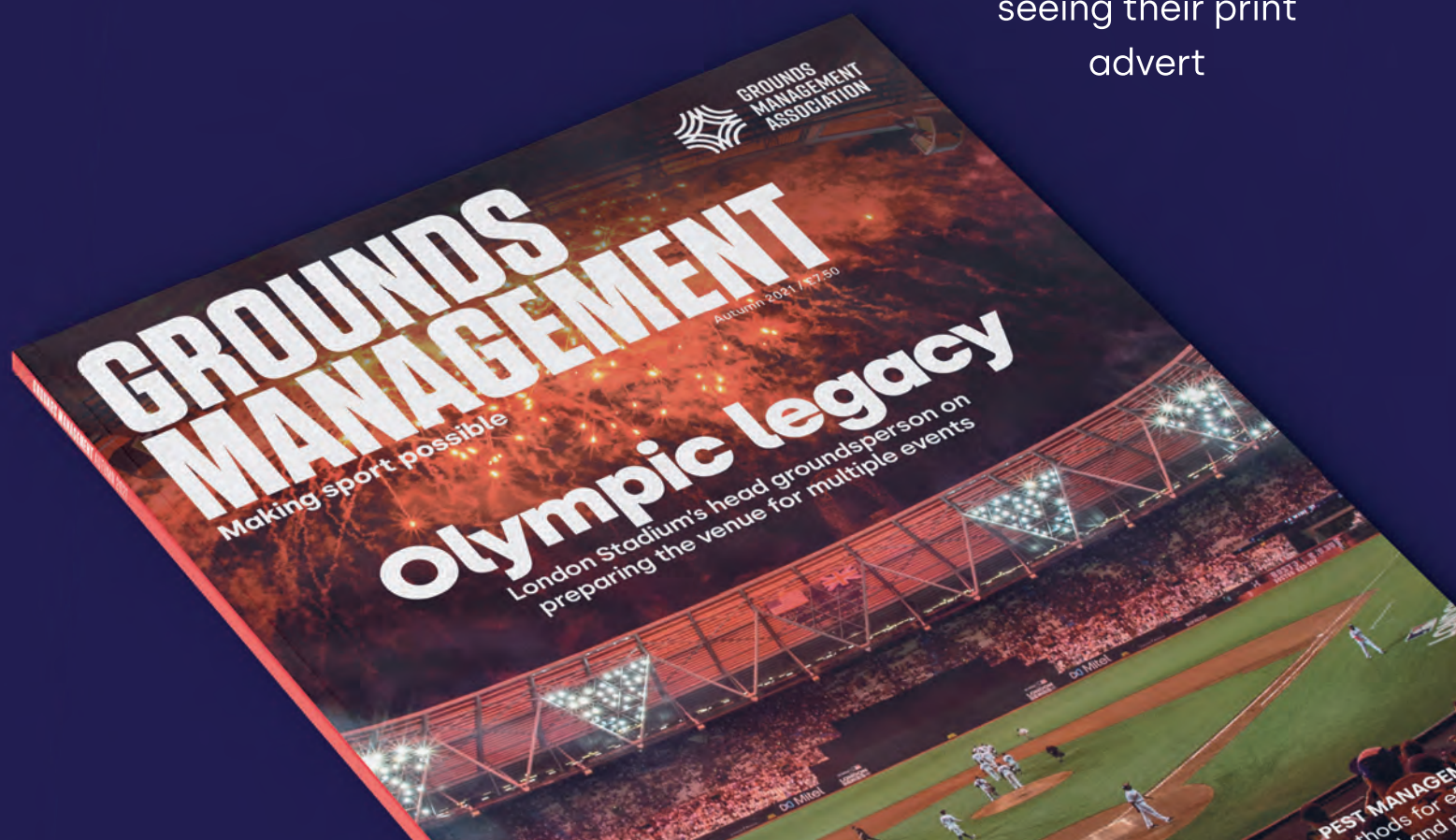
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PRODUCT SHOWCASE

SYNTHETIC SURFACES

REDEXIM

New Redexim equipment for Bonnyton Thistle FC

Bonnyton Thistle FC now has complete flexibility and control over the maintenance of its full-size synthetic pitch, thanks to the recent purchase of a Redexim Verti-Groom EV and Dragmat.

The Redexim Verti-Groom EV features a combination of tines and brushes to decompact, redistribute and level the infill. The tough 5.5mm tines 'rake' through the



infill, breaking up any compaction to improve the draining ability and playing qualities. Its 2.0m working width means surfaces can be covered quickly and with ease,

with the working depth easily adjustable.

"We decided on a Dragmat, which we're using for the regular brushing three times a week, and a Verti-Groom EV to conduct

a deeper, more thorough brush once a week," explains Ian Higgins, club and communities development manager and pitch maintenance manager. "In a short space of time, these two machines have already improved both the visual appearance and playability of our pitch.

"Before, we had issues with fibres laying flat, causing the ball to 'slip' – not to mention the potential hazard this posed to the players. Now, the fibres are upright, improving not only the safety, but the look of the pitch."

■ redexim.com

SISIS

Sustaining synthetic surfaces

The SISIS Osca's oscillating brushes ensure the best maintenance for your synthetic surfaces.

Synthetic sports surfaces require a good maintenance programme in place from the very beginning. Failure to maintain the surface could lead to issues such as compaction, loss of porosity, inconsistent playing characteristics, damaged fibres and contamination of the infill.

One machine that is being used by many grounds staff is the SISIS Osca tractor mounted



powered oscillating brush, which is ideally suited to either a sand or rubber crumb surface.

A pair of oscillating brushes allows periodic aggressive brushing to be undertaken to agitate the upper infill level, helping to reduce compaction,

encourage the fibres to stand upright and reduce the risk of contamination and surface water.

It can also be used for regular light brushing, helping to stand the fibres up, move the infill around, create a level surface and minimise the threat of

moss and algae. It uses fewer passes than a conventional drag brush, and has the option of adding a further 1.8m-wide brush to the system, which helps to enhance the final finish.

■ sisis.com

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Richard Eastham

The newly appointed GMA Pitch Advisory Service key account manager for rugby league brings exceptional grounds management experience to the role. He says he's excited about passing on his knowledge to volunteer groundspeople within the sport

BY KAREN MAXWELL

“This role offers me an opportunity to empower volunteers at community-level rugby league clubs”

How long have you been in the industry?

About 26 years so far! I started, aged 17, as a trainee groundsperson at Chorley FC. I also worked at Preston North End FC to shadow Peter Callion, the head groundsperson, and went back to Chorley FC as a part-time head groundsperson to help manage the extra pitch load, as rugby league club Chorley Lynx played there during the summer.

Although pitch preparation was the same for both football and rugby league, we only had a two-week period to do a light verti-drain, sand and oversee renovation in between the sports' seasons. When Peter retired, I became head groundsperson at Preston North End for the next three years, aged 23.

After that, I worked for Liverpool FC – at Melwood training ground in West Darby – and was in charge of the pitch at Anfield Stadium for a couple of years. My next move was to Manchester City FC, and during my six years there, I was responsible for a team of six, which looked after seven academy pitches at the club.

What's your new role remit at the GMA?

This role offers me a great opportunity to empower volunteers at community-level rugby league clubs with the knowledge and technical know-how to help them better understand what pitch management jobs they need to do, and why, to help improve playing

surfaces within the sport, and guide them through the GMA's Pitch Grading standards.

I'll also be offering advice on available funding opportunities to help improve their skills and technical knowledge, and obtain the equipment and materials needed to improve and maintain quality surfaces.

What excites you about the role?

Apart from being a big rugby league fan (a Wigan supporter), this job fits with something I've wanted to do for a long time. I've always enjoyed mentoring team members.

I think I'm a good listener and have a knack of being able to explain how to do a task – and why you need to do it – in a way that people understand. For example, during my time at Manchester City, I helped five team members achieve job promotion.

Throughout my working life, my job has always been to grow pitches and grow people – and this role will allow me to continue to do that.

■ RLF clubs can contact Richard on reastham@thegma.org.uk for help and advice



Richard tests turf in China on behalf of Manchester City FC



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