

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT



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A photograph of two men standing on a golf course. They are both wearing brown hoodies and dark trousers. The man on the left is bald, and the man on the right has a beard and is wearing a dark beanie. Both are holding long-handled pitchforks. The background shows a green golf course with trees under a blue sky.

GREEN DYNASTY

How a father and son helped transform Yeovil Recreation Centre into a blueprint for sustainable grounds care

INSIDE

Sward secrets of Glorious Goodwood / Hybrid success at Whitgift School
Granular wetting agent trials / Pesticides: policy compliance and enforcement



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Paul White, Head Groundsman, Bloxham School

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WELCOME

PitchPower gets industry recognition



The GMA's Pitch Advisory Service (PAS)/Football Foundation's PitchPower app has been shortlisted for the Data and Insights

Award at the 2023 FEVO Sport Industry Awards.

The multi-sport version of the app was launched in 2022, benefiting cricket and rugby grounds in addition to football pitches, and is an excellent example of collaboration between Sport England, the Football Foundation, the PAS, England and Wales Cricket Board, Rugby Football League and Rugby Football Union.

Thousands of grounds volunteers across England now use PitchPower to expedite the collection of pitch assessment data, which gives them access to Sport England and Football Foundation funding. This has resulted in a 669 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of pitch assessments so more pitches are being improved in a shorter timeframe compared with in-person GMA regional pitch advisor visits.

In fact, since 2020, 7,144 pitches have been assessed and more than 1,800 community clubs have received funding, resulting in an 86 per cent jump in pitch improvement at grassroots level.

It was great to witness grounds management and sports body collaboration being recognised at these awards. I would like to thank the GMA's Nicola Collins, who was responsible for PitchPower's submission, and for her work behind the scenes to help establish the PAS and connect with stakeholders.

Geoff Webb, GMA CEO



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THINK

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UPDATE

GMA AND INDUSTRY NEWS

EFL GROUNDS TEAM OF THE SEASON REVEALED

Burnley, Derby County and Newport County have been named 2022/23 Grounds Teams of the Season in the England Football League (EFL).

Grounds teams throughout the EFL work tirelessly to make sure pitch surfaces are of a high quality through all weather and conditions, and these awards celebrate staff who have produced the best-quality playing surfaces in each division.

The winners and highly commended grounds teams include:

■ **Championship:** Burnley (winner); Watford and Stoke City (highly commended).

■ **League One:** Derby County (winner); Portsmouth and Ipswich Town (highly commended).

■ **League Two:** Newport County (winner); Carlisle United and Stockport County (highly commended).

To inform the decision-making, pitch marks are provided by the referee and away-team manager for all EFL matches. The clubs from each division with the highest average marks are then visited by Neil Rodger, from the STRI, who further assesses the grounds for pitch quality, environmental conditions and usage, resources, management and sustainability.



Derby County's winning ground



Rubber crumb contains microplastics, which are a concern to human health and the environment

Joint statement released on rubber crumb in 3G pitches

Partners and key stakeholders – including the GMA, Sport England, sportscotland, Sport Wales, DCMS, Football Foundation, the FA, RFL, SAPCA and England Rugby – have released a joint statement that relates to the use of rubber crumb in 3G pitches and the sustainability of artificial grass pitches.

This statement includes the fact that “concerns have been raised about the environmental impact of 3G pitches, which are most commonly related to the fibre loss of microplastics and, in the case of third-generation (3G) pitches, the presence of rubber infill, which is also a microplastic”.

Understanding these concerns, the statement says: “We are aware of potential developments in the EU following the [2022] European Commission’s statement, which recommended the introduction of a ban on the future sale of ‘intentionally added microplastics’ onto the European market, which includes rubber infill for 3G artificial grass pitches (AGPs). The Commission proposed a six-year transition period before the new restriction becomes effective, although the timing for it to become law has not yet been made clear. Following the UK’s exit from the EU, the regulatory framework for these matters now sits at a UK level (except for Northern Ireland, which will follow EU REACH requirements).

“DEFRA has commissioned an evidence project, under the UK REACH 2022/23 Work Programme, to review emissions of intentionally added microplastics. It will consider the risks they pose to human health and the environment ... The project will include rubber infill and will inform future regulatory actions in the UK.

“Sport England, Sport Wales, sportscotland, Sport NI and leading sport bodies are working together and with respective governments to understand what the EU ban will mean for the stock of 3G AGPs in the UK and the timings for any legislative decisions.

“If the EU law on a ban is passed, it will be important to have a transition period as 3G AGPs are in widespread use by communities across Europe, and were costly to put in place and will be to remove. It is also important to note that there are currently no widely available alternative infill products on the market that are as effective, suitable for all weather conditions and deliver the required performance standards. That is why we are also committed to exploring alternative artificial pitch systems and more sustainable infill products. We will continue to work with partners across the UK and Europe to research and reduce the spread of microplastics into the environment.”

■ **For more information, visit: bit.ly/43UOXgR**

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ALTERNATIVE ARTIFICIAL
PITCH SYSTEMS AND MORE
SUSTAINABLE INFILLS**

Lincoln City hosts Schools into Stadia

The GMA's Young Board of Directors held the first Schools into Stadia event since COVID-19 at Lincoln City FC's LNER Stadium to help inspire the next generation of grounds staff to enter the sector.

At the interactive event, local schoolchildren were given a taste of what it's like to be a groundsperson at an iconic sports venue. *Read the full story on page 11.*



Practical experience on the pitch

#GROUNDWEEK ENJOYS RECORD MEDIA COVERAGE AND INDUSTRY SUPPORT

The GMA's recent #GroundsWeek initiative has attracted a 6.6 million total reach in broadcast, social and print media coverage this year.

Helping to raise the profile of grounds personnel who help to make sport possible at all levels, the initiative was generously supported by industry sponsors. *For the full story, see page 8.*



EA issues new guidance on artificial turf recycling

The Environment Agency (EA) has issued new guidance on the management of end-of-life artificial turf and other types of surfaces.

Its recently released time-limited Regulatory Position Statement (RPS 279) applies to England, and includes new conditions and limitations on storing and treating waste artificial turf, rubber shock pads and redundant athletics tracks.

The RPS does not change the legal requirement to get an environmental permit for a waste operation. However, the EA has stated it will not normally take enforcement action when the storing/treating (even without an environmental permit) complies with the requirements in the RPS.

■ For further information, visit: bit.ly/3LrQpyQ

SHUTTERSTOCK

OBITUARIES

Mike Lillington

GMA Life Member Mike Lillington has died aged 89. He was born and raised in Bristol and started his career at the Bristol Education Committee as a groundsman/gardener.

Mike first heard of the GMA, (the former National Association of Groundsmen) in 1955, when the school groundsmen were given a talk about correctly maintaining mowing machinery. He regularly attended the GMA's Bristol branch meetings, and over the years he held the branch secretary, chairman and president positions – and made many friends in the Bristol and South Wales GMA community.

Mike joined his favourite football team, Bristol City FC, as head groundsman in 1968. Although farming



techniques were still being used on the pitch in his early days at Ashton Gate, Mike brought in modern methods and machinery. The club won promotion to the top flight in 1976, no doubt due in part to the high-quality pitch.

Mike left Bristol City FC in 1978 and set up a successful landscape and sportsturf consultancy, where he continued to provide advice to local and national clubs.

He retired in 2000, after 46 happy years in the profession he loved.

David Cook

In March this year, David Cook died suddenly, aged 56, while in hospital. He was born in Middlesbrough in January 1967 to Winnie and Len Cook and was raised on the family farm.

On leaving school, family friend Tom Francis got him a job at Cleveland County Council's education department and encouraged him to join the IOG (GMA). After a short stint working for a private contractor in 1990, fellow GMA member Bruce Burnell offered him a job as a greenkeeper at Eggescliffe Golf Club on the condition that he went to Askham

Bryan College to train as a course manager. David worked at the club for 10 years and as his skills developed he moved on to be assistant groundsman at Norton Sports Complex, where he worked for 22 years.

David also tended the ground at Maltby Cricket Club on a part-time basis. Affectionately known as 'Cookie', he produced some of the best wickets in the various leagues at Maltby over the years.

David's friends and colleagues remember him as hard-working, selfless, humble and unassuming. He leaves his wife, Claire, and daughter, Emily.

BRIEFING

THE LATEST INDUSTRY HEADLINES FROM THE GMA

GMA launches Grounds Management Framework

The GMA sets the standards for natural turf sports surfaces to help people, both inside and outside the industry, to better understand what it takes to prepare high-quality, safe playing surfaces for sport

BYLINE: OLLIE SWAN, GMA SENIOR PR AND COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE

The GMA has officially launched the Grounds Management Framework (GMF) at an event hosted at Lord's Cricket Ground and attended by key industry personnel, including GMA members and representatives of the national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport.

To support the sports industry in better understanding how to maintain natural turf sports surfaces to the best possible level, as well as presenting grounds management as a viable career path, the GMA has developed the GMF to offer a set of standards to benchmark pitch quality and educational skill sets.

With the quality of playing surfaces directly impacting the amount of sport played on them, the GMF shines a spotlight on the importance of grounds

management in a way that is simple to understand for people outside of the industry, such as facility operators, club chairmen and directors.

RAISING THE BAR

Developed by the GMA and experienced sports consultant Tim Nicholls, the GMF combines long-standing performance quality standards with relevant skills and knowledge.

Backed by NGBs, the easy-to-use framework will determine whether pitch standards are at a 'basic', 'good', 'advanced', 'high', or 'elite' level, and will ensure that those responsible for their upkeep are aware of the characteristics, resources, skills and knowledge required for their playing



Dr Iain James talks about how the GMF will benefit cricket surfaces



surface, and how to progress the pitches to the next level.

The framework is already in use on the Football Foundation's revolutionary PitchPower app. Furthermore, the GMA has aligned its courses and qualifications to the different levels of the GMF.

During the launch event, the England and Wales Cricket Board's head of facilities services, Dr Iain James, discussed the impact the GMF will

THE GMF WILL ENSURE THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PITCHES' UPKEEP ARE AWARE OF HOW TO PROGRESS THEM TO THE NEXT LEVEL



From left to right: Simon Barker, Tim Nicholls, Hannah Buckley and Wesley Matthews

ALTHOUGH THE GMF HAS ONLY JUST BEEN LAUNCHED, IT'S ALREADY PLAYING AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN INNOVATIVE NEW STRATEGIES

that almost two million more children will benefit from improved playing surfaces.

“Our work is focused on getting the best for the industry and highlighting the hard work, knowledge and skills that go into making sport possible. This framework will make it clearer for people inside and outside of the industry, from club chairs to stadium managers, to understand what it takes to prepare playing surfaces at all levels, and will better match the required training and experience to the quality of playing surfaces.”

CENTRAL TO SPORT

Having played a key role in the development of the framework, sports consultant Tim Nicholls said: “The Grounds Management Framework has taken a lot of work and time to get it to where it is today.

“Although it has only just been launched, it’s already playing an essential role in innovative new strategies to improve our pitches through programmes such as PitchPower. I’m looking forward to seeing where it takes our industry and its place in sport over the coming years.”

■ **The GMF is free to use and is targeted at grounds staff, grounds managers, club committees and senior management at all levels, including those at community clubs, local authorities, educational establishments and professional sports clubs. For more information, please visit: thegma.org.uk/GMF**



Industry delegates at the GMF launch at Lord's

have on improving cricket playing surfaces. Simon Barker, assistant CEO, Professional Footballers’ Association; Hannah Buckley, FA senior facilities and project manager – women’s professional game; volunteer groundsman Wesley Matthews; and GMF consultant Tim Nicholls answered questions from the floor that related to how the GMF will benefit both professional and grassroots sport.

Speaking about the framework at the event, GMA CEO Geoff Webb said: “The

Grounds Management Framework has been in development for a long time and has been a big focus for us as an organisation, so it’s great to finally see it officially launched.”

He added: “The grounds management industry already employs around 26,000 people [and has] more than 37,000 part-time volunteers, but more people are needed to join our sector if we are to keep up with the increasing demand for sport. We need 1,000 newcomers a year, as we know from our research

Level 2 Reinforced-Hybrid Pitch Maintenance course covers all bases

The new online course gives an overview of the construction of reinforced hybrid pitches and explains how to maintain them

The GMA has released a new online course for use by those who maintain reinforced hybrid pitches.

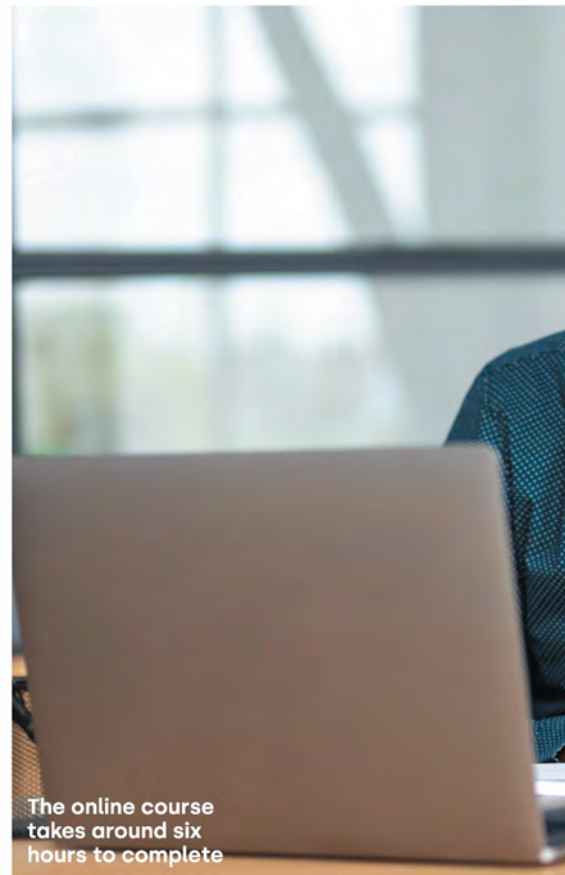
The Level 2 Reinforced-Hybrid Pitch Maintenance course, which has been independently tested by a professional grounds manager who maintains hybrid pitches at an elite level, will give learners an overview of the types of materials used in reinforced hybrid pitches and how to successfully maintain them.

The course will also help to build on the skill sets learned on the GMA's Level

1 course, as well as the Level 2 Winter Pitches course.

The new course provides a broad overview of the materials used in the construction of reinforced hybrid pitches and includes a wide range of points to consider for adequately maintaining these surfaces, as well as information on their benefits and limitations, to ensure a pitch's longevity and return on investment.

The course content is designed to be of equal benefit to grounds personnel



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THE COURSE PROVIDES A BROAD OVERVIEW OF THE MATERIALS USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF REINFORCED HYBRID PITCHES AND INCLUDES A WIDE RANGE OF POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR MAINTAINING THESE SURFACES

currently maintaining these reinforced hybrid pitches, as well as learners who want to gain a better understanding of these surfaces and their upkeep.

Reinforced hybrid pitches can provide more wear resistance than non-hybrid pitches of the same soil type and are created by stitching synthetic fibres with natural turfgrass. The intertwined fibres speed up the grass-recovery process as they allow the playing surface to retain the natural grass plants, which can be impaired during use, therefore ensuring that a higher number of games can be played on the surface.

The online course, which takes around six hours to complete, covers several topics, including the different types of reinforced hybrid surfaces, safe working practices and how to control undesirable organisms.

Commenting on the new course, Dan Prest, the GMA's head of technical and learning, said: "Understanding how to properly maintain a reinforced hybrid pitch is key to ensuring the longevity of the playing surface.

"This training course offers unbiased points of consideration to all those within the grounds community who work on reinforced hybrid pitches or are considering this type of playing surface at their facility. Understanding the successful maintenance required to achieve the desired quality is a key factor when considering any inputs versus expectations."

■ **The Level 2 Reinforced Hybrid Pitch Maintenance course is available to buy from the GMA's website. For more information, please contact: learning@thegma.org.uk**

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Schoolchildren try their hand at line-marking at Lincoln City FC LNER Stadium

Young Board event showcases groundscare to next generation

Schools into Stadia scheme gives local secondary school pupils a taste of the industry

The GMA's Young Board of Directors has held the first Schools into Stadia event since the COVID-19 pandemic. Held at Lincoln City FC's LNER Stadium during the GMA's #GroundsWeek campaign, the initiative's aim was to showcase a groundsperson's role within a sports stadium environment to young people.

The Schools into Stadia scheme forms part of the GMA's 'Get into Grounds' strategy, which looks to encourage GCSE-level students, school leavers and young people to consider a career in grounds management.

The GMA's Young Board, with support from the Lincoln City Foundation, invited a group of local secondary school children to the home of the Imps to raise awareness of what it's like to be a groundsperson and to help them understand more about the wide range of careers available within the groundscare sector.

The youngsters were able to try their hand at some of the day-to-day tasks of a groundsperson, as well as develop a deeper understanding of how subjects such as biology, maths and geography have strong links to the skills required to work within the industry.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

The experience day was split in two, with students attending a theory session where they were shown the basics of soil nutrition and sustainable maintenance methods, before heading into the stadium to carry out a pitch assessment. They then joined a practical session, which included showcase stations that offered information on how pedestrian cylinder mowers, verti-draining and the use of lighting rigs were important to pitch maintenance. The students also got to try their hands at line-marking on the stadium pitch.

After the event, Brad Jefferies, head groundsman at Lincoln City FC and member of the GMA Young Board, said: "It was great to get the students thinking about grounds management in a fun, educational and hands-on way. It's important that we encourage more young people to join the industry to ensure we can continue making sport possible in the future."

Having spent the day learning about grounds management and testing their skills in some maintenance tasks, one student said: "It's great to see how it all works behind the scenes. We got to understand things that you don't get to see from the outside and how much work goes into putting on a sports event."

Following the success of the event, the GMA Young Board, with support from Reesink Turfcare, are busy planning future Schools into Stadia events to inspire young people at other venues and locations across the UK.



#GroundsWeek hits the headlines

The GMA's initiative to highlight the importance of grounds care achieves a record 6.6 million reach

The GMA's recent #GroundsWeek awareness campaign, which took place between 20 and 26 March, has broken all previous records regarding the level of engagement by people and organisations within the UK's grounds care and sports sector.

The resulting media coverage helped to raise the profile of the grounds staff who dedicate their time to enable sport to take place at all levels and, importantly, promote the profession as a career prospect to young people.

This year's campaign, which included interviews, case studies and blog posts that attracted national and regional media engagement, included 32 pieces of media coverage that attracted a 6.6 million total reach (of which 3.5 million featured as broadcast media). This in turn resulted in a 143 per cent increase in Google searches compared with last year's campaign.

The initiative was also buoyed by support from key industry organisations, representing all corners of the grounds care sector – from products and services to industry media. Supporters included: Barenbrug, Farol, Husqvarna, Infiniticut, ISEKI, Kubota, Origin Amenity Solutions, Premier Pitches, Reesink Turfcare, Sports&Turf from British Sugar and *Turf Matters* magazine.

RAISING OUR PROFILE

The GMA launched #GroundsWeek two years ago amid a challenging environment for the sector caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the objective of raising awareness of the vital work of grounds care volunteers and professionals in the UK, and with a focus on inspiring new recruits to consider a career in the industry, #GroundsWeek has since caught the attention of the sporting world.

The awareness week was featured on BBC Sport, ITV News and Sky Sports, as well as BBC regional radio, and earned support from leading sports organisations.

Commenting on the initiative, GMA CEO Geoff Webb said: "We launched #GroundsWeek at a time when the sector needed support and deserved recognition. By supporting the week and backing the industry, our #GroundsWeek sponsors have helped us invest in campaigns that catch the attention of the media, highlight the vital work of grounds staff, and introduce new people to careers and organisation roles in the sector.

"As a not-for-profit organisation, support from the broader industry is essential if we are to expand on activity that promotes the sector. Initiatives such as #GroundsWeek wouldn't be possible without their support – we are extremely grateful to have had them on board."



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WHITGIFT PIONEERS HERALD HYBRID

Whitgift's new hybrid playing surfaces are possibly a first in the UK's independent schools sector. We talk to Daniel Ratling about the planning and installation process, as well as the maintenance measures that ensure year-round use **BY KAREN MAXWELL, EDITOR**

When Whitgift School's hybrid playing surfaces opened for full use on 1 November 2021, it was the culmination of several years of facility planning by the school's grounds and estate manager, Daniel Ratling, to provide pitches that would enable pupils of all ages and abilities to play sport all year round.

Daniel identified key pitch issues and started to table proposals for improvements as soon as he joined the 45-acre school in 2015. "The school is landlocked within a residential area with no room for wider development, so multi-use pitches were needed to make the most of the land we have and to maximise their use," he explains.

The project was supported by a forward-thinking senior leadership team within the school, and Daniel considers the hybrid pitch development and investment in infrastructure to be pivotal in providing the quality of facilities to which the school aspires.

"I've had a rare opportunity to be involved in all the stages, from concept through to the planning, design, build and overall project management," Daniel says, adding that he appreciated the invaluable support from the director of estates and facilities, James Stremes, during the planning and installation of the GrassMaster surface by White Horse Contractors.

WHY HYBRID?

The school originally considered replacing the natural turf pitch on the school's 4,000sq m site, known as Puntabout, with a 3G artificial pitch to allow year-round use by the school's



Daniel Ratling, grounds and estate manager at Whitgift School

REGARDING PRODUCT USE, DANIEL SAYS HE TRIES NOT TO GET INTO OVERCOMPLICATED NUTRITION PROGRAMMES

1,550 pupils. However, the alternative and cost-effective hybrid solution, possibly a first in the UK's independent school sector, has also enabled Whitgift to make a multi-use transformation of a full-sized 8,000sq m senior rugby pitch at the Bigside location.

"Before we made a final decision on choice of surface, members of our senior leadership team and I visited hybrid pitch solutions at Crystal Palace FC's training academy. Our director of sport, Stuart Litchfield, our project consultant, Dr Richard Earl of TGMS, and I visited the Sport England-funded pilot scheme at

London's Regents Park. The weather was poor when we visited the park's pitch, but we could see that it was entirely playable compared with the surrounding natural turf pitches," explains Daniel.

Richard was involved with the park's four-year pilot scheme and shared pitch performance data to support Daniel's recommendation to the school, which supported the idea that with appropriate maintenance the pitches would be able to support average hours of use of at least 20 hours a week – and at a potential cost saving compared with a 3G surface.



Whitgift's Bigside rugby pitch during grow-in



The Puntabout pitch during its grow-in phase



Desso GrassMaster fibre renovation

“This cost saving has enabled us to install 12,000sq m of hybrid for a similar cost to 8,000sq m of 3G carpet, and has helped to answer some of the potential issues around migration of microplastics and potentially carcinogenic contents of rubber crumb infill, which is particularly pertinent in an educational establishment,” Daniel says.

Once the school approved his recommendation, the project went out to tender and the White Horse Contractor's GrassMaster combination met the school's requirements. Cost was a consideration, but Whitgift also wanted

to ensure longevity and there are GrassMaster pitches that are still in play after 10 years.

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

On the school's Bigside site, the pitch installation included stripping off the vegetation from the existing pitches, cultivating and laser grading, then installing a soakaway as outfall, followed by primary drainage cut in at 3m centres and secondary drainage at 0.5m centres.

On the Puntabout site, the topsoil was stripped, sub-base graded and

redistributed, and an identical drainage infrastructure to Bigside was installed. The 85mm sand carpet was then laid and a 100mm root zone was added on top of that to ensure an 185mm profile build-up on top of the drainage system ready for stitching. Soil amendments were incorporated and then each surface was seeded before the fibres were stitched by GrassMaster using its latest electrically powered Gen-S machines. They were then brushed, overseeded again, fertilised and handed over to Daniel's team of nine grounds staff, led by Peter Booth, who have been growing it ever since.

Regarding product use, Daniel says he tries not to overcomplicate his nutritional programmes. “I try to maintain consistent nutrient availability when the plant needs it to optimise growth. We attempt to iron out peaks and troughs by applying little and often on the hybrid pitches. We have used Advance Grass Solutions Sustane organic fertiliser to good effect during the grow-in, and

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Left: Players enjoy the hybrid rugby pitch at the Bigside site

Below: The hybrid pitches are mowed regularly with a sharp, well-set mower

conventional granular and liquids once established,” he says.

Soil Scout sensors, used on the school’s other pitches, have been installed in the hybrid pitches too. The school also has a weather station and a range of equipment for surface testing.

Whitgift also took the opportunity to upgrade the irrigation system, including installing a new Hunter Controller, which utilises the Centralus cloud-based operating system.

MULTI-USE EXPECTATIONS

The hybrid pitches had their first renovation in July 2022 through the combined efforts of White Horse Contractors and Daniel’s grounds team. Now the pitches are up and running, Daniel and his team continue to work with the school’s sport department regarding sport programming on the new surfaces.

Daniel says that both pitches have performed extremely well and they look set to increase pitch usage on Bigside and Puntabout by over 100 per cent on pre-hybrid years. In fact, the outcomes have been so favourable that the school is considering installing a third hybrid pitch on site, this time potentially on the main football pitch.

Daniel is confident that the pitches will continue to perform well given the correct management and with the benefit of hindsight feels that the decision to install these playing surfaces was “entirely the right thing to do in our particular situation”.



THE DECISION TO INSTALL THESE PLAYING SURFACES WAS “ENTIRELY THE RIGHT THING TO DO”

Hybrid pitch maintenance

- Mow regularly with a sharp, well-set mower. Always box off clippings.
- Aerate/decompact in season every four to eight weeks using pencil tines. Vary depth and heave applied according to profile construction and required outcome.
- Apply fertiliser to maintain steady rates of growth throughout the season. Tailor to nutritional requirements of rootzone based on soil chemical analysis.
- Irrigate regularly during seed establishment to aid germination. Once established, water less frequently but in greater volume to encourage deeper rooting. Aim to maintain moisture 15–25 per cent W/V.
- Clean organic matter and detritus from the surface regularly in season via raking, hoovering and verti-cutting.
- Carry out thorough annual end-of-season renovation, including:
 - removing all herbage and organic detritus
 - restoring fibres to an upright position via raking
 - overseeding with perennial ryegrass typically at 50g/sq m
 - applying appropriate medium or medium-fine sand to match existing drainage media
 - aerating/decompacting to a depth suitable to profile construction
 - applying soil amendments if required at this stage.
- Inspect the drainage system and silt traps after heavy rainfall at least once per season
- Inspect and maintain the irrigation system to ensure even and consistent coverage throughout the season.

Written by Daniel Ratling and Dr Richard Earl, TGMS

CRUCIAL TOOLKIT FOR CRICKET

The role of the grounds manager is a critical factor in ensuring cricket thrives at all levels of the game. We look at how the ECB and the GMA have adapted an online 'toolkit' to help grounds managers access essential advice and support

BY IAN MATHER-BREWSTER, GMA KEY ACCOUNT MANAGER, CRICKET



Demonstration of cricket square line-marking

In April 2021, the GMA and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) looked at how they could combine their resources to offer more support for cricket grounds managers as the new Pitch Advisory Service (PAS) was established. Both organisations agreed that one of the best ways to offer this support would be to provide best-practice advice and guidance on how to manage their grounds.

The start of the PAS programme coincided with the GMA's PAS team agreeing to manage an area on the Sport England website that supported sportsturf grounds management covering cricket, football, rugby union and rugby league.

It was quickly identified that this was an ideal platform for providing guidance in an easily accessible, freely available way and that the existing content would need to be rewritten to provide a clearer user journey throughout the sporting seasons



The toolkit recommends verti-cutting in season to improve the quality of the sward and the performance of the pitch

to help everyone – from the experienced professional to the new volunteer – to produce better-quality pitches.

The ECB also recognised that more support was needed regarding the management of health and safety in cricket grounds management, and that a new resource would need to be developed to support this area.

STEPPED APPROACH

With this in mind, work started in mid-2022 with the ECB and GMA working in partnership to create the online Grounds Management Toolkit for Cricket. This involved the development team combining the experience and expertise of ECB specialists – head of facilities services Dr Iain James, pitches and



Thinning out the grass during the early stages of preparation is an important maintenance task, as detailed in the guidance

THE REAL ADVANTAGE OF BUILDING THE TOOLKIT IN THIS WAY IS THAT THE ECB CAN CONTINUALLY UPDATE THE INFORMATION TO ENSURE IT PROVIDES THE LATEST BEST PRACTICE AND INNOVATIONS

grounds advisor Andy Mackay, and health and safety manager Andy Cooper – with the PAS team led by GMA key account manager for cricket Ian Mather-Brewster.

The aim was to build this toolkit as an easy-to-follow information platform for all levels of grounds management. This meant going back to basics, so a new structure was devised that would enable grounds managers to follow a step-by-step process from the start right through to the end of the cricket season.

This new maintenance guide breaks down the year into four sections: Pre-season, In-season, Post-season and Winter. Within each of these sections there is a step-by-step guide that provides the essential maintenance guidance for the pitch, the square and the outfield.

INFORMATION HUB

The website brings together lots of advice from existing sources and experience, but also innovates. It introduces a new ‘three phase’ approach to preparing cricket pitches that helps explain the science and the art of cricket grounds management. There is even a tool for solving pitch performance issues, and a guide on how to tweak your grounds management to get more pace, bounce and turn.

The health and safety section of the toolkit was developed with the aim of guiding the user on safety around the ground and in sheds and workshops. The advice uses videos to guide the user through each section, combining six new videos with simple-to-follow checklists and supporting information.

Commenting on the aim of this section, Cooper says: “Complying with health and safety law and regulations can seem daunting, but the priority is to be safe when working on the ground. This

Drag brushing helps remove worm casts prior to mowing



THERE IS EVEN A TOOL FOR SOLVING PITCH PERFORMANCE ISSUES, AND A GUIDE ON HOW TO GET MORE PACE, BOUNCE AND TURN

guide takes a step-by-step approach to looking at different aspects – from risk assessment and operating machinery to storing chemicals safely. The ECB hopes this guide will help grounds staff to work safely and enjoy grounds management.”

BANG UP TO DATE

The real advantage of building the toolkit in this way is that the ECB can continually update the information to ensure it provides the latest best practice and innovations. Examples are the new section on stitched hybrid cricket pitches and how the ECB was able to rapidly

develop new guidance on watering during the 2022 cricket season drought.

The ECB plans to build on the toolkit over time to ensure it will be a ‘living guide’ to cricket grounds management.

As Dr Iain James concludes: “We know that grounds management is essential to cricket – put simply: no ground, no game. So our partnership with the GMA is vital to support all those hard-working grounds managers who are making cricket happen by producing the best pitches they can.

“We want to welcome people into cricket grounds management and to help them step forward to volunteer. This new toolkit is part of a package of resources that we are developing with the GMA to help everyone to improve pitches and to be proud of the game they make happen.”

■ **Check out the new toolkit at: resources.thegma.org.uk/cricket/cricket-home**

GOODWOOD'S ONTO A WINNER

We catch up with Goodwood's Ed Arkell and Andrew Blunden to find out how the award-winning grounds team keep the racecourse in prime condition for elite equine athletes

BY ANDY CARMICHAEL, FREELANCE WRITER AND SPORTSTURF ACADEMIC

The Goodwood Estate has been the seat of The Duke of Richmond and Gordon for more than three centuries. In that time, it has been indelibly tied to sport: one of the earliest regular venues for cricket matches; home of the famous Festival of Speed motorsport event; and the more contemporary glorious Goodwood, a grand celebration of all things dog. Yet the name Goodwood, and its four-legged association, is most familiar in the context of horse racing.

The course, still independently owned and managed, hosts 19 fixtures in the flat season, including the internationally



celebrated Qatar Goodwood Festival. This five-day occasion is recognised as a world-class leader in its field, and so too is the award-winning grounds team responsible for the racetrack turf on which the competition relies.

TALKING TEAMWORK

Clerk of the course Ed Arkell and grounds team leader Andrew Blunden are key members of the 2022 GMA John Deere Professional Horse Racing Grounds Team of the Year. They both took time out from their busy schedule to tell me about the management of a course that has hosted horse racing for over two centuries. I suggested that

their roles must mean a close working relationship between the pair and they both confirmed their inherent trust in each other. “Andrew knows what I will be thinking and can get on with doing it if I am away. “I’m confident in his decisions so I can leave him to do it – it saves a lot of phone calls,” Ed says.

This is an arrangement that has had time to prove itself. Amid the long line of custodians, Ed has been at Goodwood for five and a half years, initially entering the sport he loved so much through working for a trainer. Andrew, meanwhile, has been with the estate for almost two decades, having started out doing mechanical duties on the site.

They also rely on six full-time and two part-time staff, and for race days 15 to 20 of what Andrew describes as “a group of race-day casuals, and great guys”.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Visiting jockeys have described Goodwood as a challenging course to ride, with a lot of tactical considerations. It consists of a six-furlong straight with a loop and what the *Racing Post* publication describes as “unique undulations”.

I ask if this impacts wear in certain areas. “It does,” agrees Ed, adding that most of the localised problems can be railed off, the bends being particularly

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susceptible. “It is a very large site to manage and after five days of flat, and flat-out, racing we need to rectify the damage wrought by 500 horses,” he says.

Both Ed and Andrew share a real enthusiasm for the racing experience and the historic course, and ensuring all jobs are done well. They particularly appreciate comments on the appearance and performance of the surface, having often solved considerable problems to reach the desired standard.

Amid increasingly challenging environmental circumstances, they have introduced new approaches to maintain the quality of their turf. For example, Ed says it previously took a day and a half to cut the course, but it now takes a more efficient three and half hours as they have identified and procured the right tools for the job: a Kubota M Series tractor with a 4.6m Wessex ProLine mower.

MATERIAL GAINS

They have also changed their materials programmes. Ed recalls that sourcing grass seed used to start with the question: “What does the merchant have on special offer?” This is due to financial pressures that many of us will recognise, but similarly acknowledge as a false economy. Now they ensure sound reasoning behind every decision. For example, regarding ‘post-meet’ repairs, Andrew says they avoid using a lot of topdressing as it tends to dry very quickly in their windy West Sussex position. New growth tends not to take hold in such applications and can be easily dislodged, so instead they lift and replace divots from the existing rootzone, encouraging the turf to knit back together – as Ed says: “Sure footing for the elite equine athletes is essential.”

The course’s native soil has a high chalk component, which makes it very free draining, but this can be both a blessing and a curse. Race meets are rarely impacted by excess water, but maintaining the levels of moisture in the ground, and the going as good, is an increasing challenge.

Three of Ed’s five festivals have been preceded by very dry spells and he



Above: The racetrack takes a pounding



Left: Soaking up the atmosphere in Goodwood’s immaculate parade ring

THEY KNOW THE TURF MUST SUSTAIN ITSELF FINANCIALLY, SO BEING READY TO ACT ONCE THE LAST HORSE HAS LEFT THE COURSE IS VITAL

recognises the “huge problems” linked to a changing climate and the extremes that many sports venues are now having to contend with. Moreover, he says there is a lack of predictability, or at least reliability, in the forecasts.

“A suggestion of a likely 40mm of rainfall overnight may only materialise as 3mm, far below our needs,” he explains. This issue has resulted in the investment of a Briggs Irrigation boom system, with a new ring main (with pipework laid around the course) and pop-up sprinklers installed by Top Turf Irrigation, which offer more accurate and uniform water distribution.

RACE-DAY PRESSURES

The height of cut for the racecourse’s ryegrass sward is 3.5 inches for racing. Out of season, the team reduce this down to 1.5 inches after heavy scarification. With 19 fixtures in the racing season, Ed says there is always pressure on renovations. In an ideal world, there would be an earlier finish to the season, something groundstaff across many sports will empathise with. However, both Ed and Andrew know the

turf must sustain itself both financially and environmentally, so being ready to act once the last horse has left the course is vital and getting started in the short period of time before the weather makes conditions difficult is crucial.

For us at home watching the racing action unfold on television, the parade ring takes on great importance in identifying potential winners. This focus means the grounds staff devote a lot of time to the minute detail that only a camera lens will notice. Ed witnessed just what that can be when he was at home with COVID-19 during a meet and found himself being an anxious onlooker. Despite the magnificent spectacle, he could not shake the image of a slightly marked furlong post – one I am sure only he noticed. Such is the standards that both Ed and Andrew expect, it was clearly the last time it offended. A kingdom for the horse is very much their aim.

“I’m rightly proud of our team of skilled professionals and we have each other’s backs,” Ed says, which is a fine testament to the GMA’s Professional Horse Racing Grounds Team of the Year.

ECO CHAMPIONS

There's no better proof than Yeovil Recreation Centre of how skilled, hard-working and passionate groundsmanship can transform a public recreational site into a GMA Award-winning sports centre

BY COLIN HOSKINS, FREELANCE WRITER





Opposite: From left to right: Mick Greetham, Jordan Baker, Rodney Pippard, Jamie Pippard and Callum Hanson

This page: Rodney and his team have introduced a host of sustainability measures, from regular aerating to reduce watering and feeding to reusing the water from the steep-chase pit and planting trees

Despite limited manpower and a conservative annual budget, the 37-acre Yeovil Recreation Centre in Somerset enjoys overwhelmingly high usage levels, especially on its three natural turf football pitches and its sand-dressed artificial floodlit pitch, which is primarily used for hockey and football training.

The football pitches are fully booked six days a week in season and cater for teams of five- to 16-year-olds, with a waiting list of clubs wanting to use the pitches. The artificial pitch is also in use every day for much of the time between 8am and 10pm.

The grounds team responsible for this success – head groundsman Rodney Pippard; his son Jamie, who is senior groundsperson; assistant groundsperson Callum Hanson; and part-time members Jordan Baker, who oversees bookings for the artificial surfaces, and Mick Greetham, who maintains the grass pitches at weekends – are worthy winners of the 2022 GMA Awards for Best Environmental and Sustainability Impact (sponsored by Sports&Turf) and Best Managed Artificial Sports Surface.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

While the benefits of the maintenance programme for the artificial pitch are clear (see “Tangible sustainability outcomes, p28”), winning the GMA Environmental and Sustainability

PHOTOGRAPHY: BEN WRIGHT



THEY HAVE TRANSFORMED THE RECREATIONAL GROUND FROM AN ‘ECO WRECK’ INTO A HIGH-STANDARD SPORTING FACILITY THAT NOW FULLY SUPPORTS BIODIVERSITY

Award recognises how Rodney and his team have transformed the recreational ground from an ‘eco wreck’ into a high-standard sporting facility, with first-class grass football pitches, that now fully supports biodiversity. Sustainable land management techniques are successfully being used at this formal sports environment to help encourage wildlife, while at the same time improving wellbeing opportunities for visitors.

With 42 years of industry experience, Rodney joined the team after spending the previous seven years as head



groundsman at Yeovil Town FC. Over the past 15 years, he has gradually transferred his wealth of grounds care knowledge and skills (including an FA Groundsman of the Year Award in 2003) to improve both the presentation and playability levels of the football pitches.

Part of this process was to replace the turf care equipment by introducing compact tractors and a triple-cylinder mower – and, more recently, an electric mower as part of the environmental strategy. Importantly, he reflects: “I also immediately got rid of the roller!”

The COVID-19 lockdown period also played an important part in the team's development of the more sustainable pitch care and land management practices.

"With no play allowed, the grounds team were redeployed by the council for food deliveries and other council contracts, such as the maintenance of highway verges," says Rodney. "But we would regularly return to the 'rec' in our own time to ensure that essential jobs were completed so the playing surfaces remained serviceable and would be ready in the shortest timeframe to prevent a pitch care mountain to climb after lockdown ended.

"During lockdown, however, we recognised how the reduced mowing programme encouraged an increase in wildlife and wildflowers. Hand in hand with this was our desire as a grounds team to take swift and positive action in response to South Somerset District Council's recognition of a climate and ecological emergency in May 2019.

"By October that year, the council had a new environment strategy, and we knew we had a part to play in delivering actions to tackle both the climate and ecological emergency at our site. We identified achievable goals that would secure environmental improvements – for example, by reducing the council's wider carbon



Above: Maintaining the athletics track

Right: Wood is recycled into bird and bat boxes to increase species diversity

emissions via reduced grass cutting and transitioning from fossil-fuelled equipment, as well as encouraging fauna and flora."

TRADITIONAL METHODS

Rodney admits that some may describe him as a bit of an 'old school' groundsman because he has always preferred to work with the weather and use maintenance programmes built around generous amounts of slitting and aeration for reduced watering and less feeding, rather than constantly reaching for off-the-shelf chemical solutions.

"Our annual renovations – which, like everything else, are carried out by the in-house team – consist of spiking, verti-draining and dressing," he explains.



"Aitkens grass seed is used: Blade 6 (rye and fescues) for the football pitches and Blade 3 (bent) for the golf course. We don't mow if it's not needed and try to keep the grass a little longer than usual – 2.5 to three inches – to help reduce stress on the sward."

He adds: "I've always been a believer that cost-effective grounds care is about having to go 'backwards' to

Tangible sustainability outcomes

- The team have saved around £5,800 on annual fertiliser use by switching from petroleum-based granulars to a locally sourced sustainable seaweed concentrate. The granular costs £6,400 per year for 200 bags (with the plastic ending up in landfill), while the seaweed concentrate costs £600 per year for 20 litres and the tubes are collected for reuse/refilling.

- They have reduced the use of selective weedkiller and herbicide from 90 to 17.5 litres. They use weedkillers on three football pitches and nine putting greens, reduced from 60 to 15 litres by using a concentrated product considered less harmful to pollinators. This includes bi-annual spot treatment of

the worst-affected areas, and a speed brush-and-harrow scarifying technique is used on playing surfaces to help reduce broadleaf weeds. Herbicide use on the wider site has been cut from 30 to 2.5 litres, costing £800 per year compared with £2,000.

- Electric mowers (around £5,000 each) replace petrol equipment. The cost of mowing a pitch with these mowers is around £1.50 compared with £12–£14 with the fossil-fuel version. Previously, the cost per pitch per year for mowing was around £650; now it is around £150. A biofuel (HVO) tank has also been installed to aid the transition from fossil fuels. HVO is a diesel drop-in replacement with 90 per cent less CO₂ emissions.

- Amenity grass management includes 'no-mow' areas to encourage grassland and wildflower diversity and sinus 'meandering mowing' in marginal areas to reduce mowing costs. Cutting winding paths/swathes helps create a diverse grassland (15 grass species have been identified) providing habitat for invertebrates, pollinators and birds.

- The annual reuse of around 20,000 litres from an athletics steeplechase pit is now used for watering on site rather than being released into a storm drain.

- Extensive mulching has also reduced watering.
- Recycled pallets and wood have been repurposed into bird and bat boxes.



The purchase of turfcare equipment such as compact tractors has played a key part in the team's success

Hectic schedule

The sand-based hockey/football pitch endures heavy usage, especially by the Yeovil and Sherborne Hockey Club, which plays its Saturday home fixtures on the surface from September to March.

Community use takes place on Monday to Fridays and is divided into thirds for football teams to play in hourly slots from 5pm to 10pm.

As well as setting up the pitches, Rodney's team undertake a maintenance programme for the sand-based surface and adjacent Astro training area, and their work has extended the life of the playing surface beyond 10 years.

Maintenance programmes are also in place for the athletics track and golf course. The equipment used include: a 25hp compact tractor, zig-zag brush, drag mat, sweeper vacuum, box sweeper, backpack blowers, boom sprayer, topdresser, pitch marker and rotary head power washer, all of which are maintained in house.



THE PROGRAMME HAS NOT ONLY TRANSFORMED OUR GROUNDCARE BUDGETS AND REGIMES, BUT LOCAL WILDLIFE FIGURES HAVE IMPROVED OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS

go forwards – that is, returning to more traditional pitch care practices, especially when money is at a premium.” It was this mindset, coupled with the ecological alerts, that were central to the sustainability programme.

Supported by advice from the council's environmental specialist, Josh Bennett, and council managers (in particular leisure and recreation senior manager Katy Menday, team leader of horticulture Quentin Coleman and tree officer Phil Poulton), the process involved planting trees in copses and linear hedgerows to create windbreaks between the pitches and help drainage on what was “open parkland with no buffers”, says Jamie.

Phil created a plan that distributed 2,700 trees across the site. It comprised mainly native species, but also included fast-growing and climate-resilient trees. The scheme also helped the council achieve its five-year carbon offset targets for the site. Careful consideration was

given to many aspects of tree planting, including minimising the density of planting by keeping spacing to at least 3m (with the exception of hedgerows) to allow convenient access and minimal risk of mowing damage.

STAGED APPROACH

Developed following research by team members, these changes were introduced in stages. They were also complemented by alterations to existing work programmes on a rolling basis to avoid overstretching resources while clearly identifying successes and failures.

“The programme has not only transformed our grounds care budgets and regimes – for example, less mowing throughout the site means we can spend more time on the pitches – but the local wildlife figures have also improved immeasurably over the past three years, with record numbers of owls, badgers, foxes, deer, partridges and lizards, and

insects and pollinators are prevalent across the site,” says Jamie.

BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Rodney is certain that other sites could adopt the regimes to their advantage. Their ‘blueprint’ has been widely broadcast via the council's communication channels and is freely available for others to adopt.

While the desire to continue to maintain the rec's playing surfaces during lockdown is clear evidence of their passion for the job, the team's devotion to duty is demonstrated daily as their remit also includes pitch-and-putt golf; a landscaped nine-hole golf course; hard-surface tennis courts; softball, short cricket and grass volleyball courts; and an international A Grade rubber crumb polymeric athletics track, as well as amenity play and grass areas. And the popularity of these areas bears witness to the calibre of their work.

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More matches for Sutton Coldfield Town Junior FC

We find out how Sutton Coldfield Town JFC's progressive improvement, via the FA's Pitch Improvement Programme, has led to more playing opportunities on the club's pitches

**BY KEVIN DUFFILL,
GMA REGIONAL PITCH
ADVISOR – CENTRAL WEST
(FOOTBALL)**

Sutton Coldfield Town Junior Football Club (JFC) was formed in 1970 with four teams and was based in the Walmley district of Sutton Coldfield. By 2012, the club had grown to around 16 teams and needed a base where all its teams could play.

This led to a pitch-sharing with nearby Bishop Walsh Catholic School. The four-hectare site consisted of 10 pitches of varying sizes. These were maintained by the school, which included mowing and marking, together with some end-of-season goalmouth repairs. The annual maintenance budget was around £8,000 with the club contributing around £6,000 per year.

PITCH IMPROVEMENTS

In 2014, the FA introduced the Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) and



One of the 10 pitches at the Bishop Walsh School site

THE AREAS HIGHLIGHTED FOR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDED GRASS SWARD QUALITY, WITH A REDUCTION IN WEED PRESENCE

Birmingham County Football Association (BCFA) offered clubs/sites the opportunity for a PIP visit from a GMA regional pitch advisor.

The first of several GMA visits to the school took place in

June 2016 and highlighted a number of areas where improvements were needed to address the increasing pitch demands – at the

time, more than 300 matches were played on the pitches per year in addition to school use.

The areas highlighted for improvement included grass sward quality, with a reduction in weed presence

(from 20 per cent) plus end-of-season overseeding and turf nutrition. Compaction was also a significant issue as deep aeration/decompaction had not been undertaken.

The initial PIP report included short- and long-term pitch maintenance plans, and an introduction to contractors that would be able to assist. This resulted in Sutton Coldfield Town JFC developing a long-term relationship with Woodward Turf Care.

Equipment recommended in the report included a compact tractor, a rotary roller mower and a grass-care combination system.

By October 2017, when the first FA PIP follow-up visit was undertaken, this equipment had been acquired

and an end-of-season £6,500 renovation plan had been introduced, which included weed control, deep aeration and overseeding.

An FA PIP follow-up visit in 2018 confirmed that the pitch quality had increased to pitch grade of 'High'. However, issues still needed to be addressed on the mini soccer pitches as the number of teams using the mini pitches at the site increased to 17.

EXPANSION PLANS

Additional FA PIP support was provided in 2019 when the club was looking to increase the number of teams from 30 to 50 over the next four to five years.

A more intensive pitch maintenance plan was developed, which included





More than 700 girls and boys now enjoy football at the site

pitch drainage for the mini pitches and the requirement of a more powerful tractor and deep aerator.

The FA PIP report recommended that the club explore the possible options for drainage and, following investigation, the club made the decision to install Turfdry's Hydraway geotextile membrane drainage system.

FUNDING SUPPORT

The club successfully applied for a Football Foundation Small Grant and the drainage improvement work was completed in 2020. This also coincided with the introduction of the Football Foundation's Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF) and the club was able to secure a grant of £72,000 towards pitch maintenance, which would be phased over six years.

The club acquired a New Holland Boomer 40hp tractor and an Imants ShockWave

THE FUNDING HAS ENABLED THE CLUB TO APPLY TOPDRESSING TO A DEGREE THAT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE BEFORE

decompactor, and the club's part-time groundsperson can now undertake deep aeration in house.

Additional secondary drainage has also been added to pitches one to four, and the club is considering extending drainage to pitches five to



A GPMF grant enabled the club to buy a Boomer tractor

nine. The funding has also enabled the club to apply topdressing to a degree that would not have been possible before – 400 tonnes were applied in 2022 – and to install a 300m irrigation 'main'.

This GPMF has also enabled the club to continue

to produce good-quality pitches and by the beginning of the 2023 season the club had met its target of 54 teams, enabling 700-plus boys and girls to enjoy football at the facility, which is generating more income for the club.

GETTING THE GRADES

The club continues to undertake two pitch assessments per year (to meet with GPMF requirements) using the PitchPower app. Its last submission, in October 2022, showed that all but one of the pitches were graded as 'Good' or above.

During the 2022/2023 season, the site will accommodate approximately 25 matches per weekend, which equates to 650 matches for the season.

Commenting on the club's successful pitch improvement programme, and its plans for the future, Sutton Coldfield Town JFC chairman Steve Banks says: "As the pitches improve further, our plan is to increase the number of teams to 65, which will be the site's capacity. The perfect complement to the work that we are doing is that we now have teams wanting to move to our site – having seen our facilities and played on our pitches – and long may this continue."



BEFORE

Above: Previous pitch quality at Sutton Coldfield JFC



AFTER

Right: The turf after the club followed the FA's PIP and used Football Foundation funding for equipment and improvements

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TECHNICAL INSIGHT

GRANULAR WETTING AGENTS; AND WEED, PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL



Granular wetting agents trials

With climate change making weather patterns more unpredictable, turf managers need to find practices and products to ensure turf health is maintained under a range of irrigation levels

BY GEOFF FENN, R&D DIRECTOR, AND KELLY CLACK, AGRONOMY TECHNICAL MANAGER, ORIGIN AMENITY SOLUTIONS

Water availability is going to be a significant issue in the near future, as legislators will obviously prioritise mains water for housing and industry over sportsturf. It is important therefore that the turf industry demonstrates good water-use responsibility to enable access to future water supplies. If we can show we are only using the water we need to maintain our playing surfaces, we have a better chance of being granted access to irrigation supplies.

The use of wetting agents as a turf management tool has been widespread for decades, and there is proven research that demonstrates their ability to improve turf health and growth during times of drought or soil moisture stress. A lot of this work has been done on established turf, but a key part of the turf manager's year is establishing a new surface from seed, whether that be an entire football pitch, a new golf green or divot/goalmouth repairs.

SEED ESTABLISHMENT

The very first stage of grass seed germination is imbibition – the process where seed is exposed to water, which is drawn in through the seed coating to initiate new root and shoot growth – and sufficient soil moisture around the newly sown seed is vital to get a good 'strike'.

Many grounds teams have old, inefficient irrigation systems, limited access to mains water or restrictions on extraction licences, and so need to maximise any water

available. Turf managers with good irrigation systems are able to apply large amounts of water to ensure good germination, but with diseases such as brown patch and grey leaf spot affecting young swards, can we reduce this watering to lower disease pressures and still allow for good seed establishment?

Wetting agents are available in both liquid and granular form, but granular wetting agents may have advantages over liquid applications in seeding situations in terms of ease of application, longevity and cost-effectiveness.

RESEARCH TRIAL

At the Origin Turf Science and Technology Centre in Essex, we carried out a trial looking at the use of our granular wetting agent (Tricure AD Granular) in the establishment of new ryegrass seedlings and how the sward development is affected at different irrigation levels.

Utilising a sand-based rootzone and controlled environment to simulate day/night temperatures and daylight of early UK summer, ryegrass was sown at the same rate and either treated with our granular wetting agent at 24g/sq m or left untreated. Three different irrigation regimes were then employed to both the untreated and treated pots in a randomised and replicated experiment:

- Low – 4.5mm twice per week
- Medium – 9mm twice per week
- High – 18mm twice per week

Sward coverage was measured over a five-week period following germination using our custom-built lightbox that ensures identical lighting. Photographs were taken using the same setting on a digital camera and analysed by a turf-specific software program that analyses each individual pixel in the photo to give a percentage of sward coverage.

PRODUCING GROWTH

We recorded statistically significant speed of emergence in low and medium irrigation regimes. The seed emerged one day faster in treated pots under low irrigation and two days faster under medium irrigation. This can be a key factor for grounds teams in establishing new surfaces quickly and efficiently.

Although no data was taken, it was also visually apparent that initial infiltration of water is faster with our granular wetting agent. When identical amounts of water were applied to untreated and treated pots, the untreated pots held the water on the surface for a short period before going down into the rootzone. This did not occur on treated pots and water



Above left: Low irrigation untreated Above right: Low irrigation Tricure Granular treated
The above photographs show low-irrigation treatment results at the end of the trial. Visually, at the end of the trial, the treated pots exhibited more green leaves, whereas the untreated pots had many desiccated and dying shoots. The two pots were also watered and photographed at the same time – it was noteworthy that visible soil moisture could be seen on the surface of the treated pots, whereas untreated pots looked completely dry.



Above left: Medium irrigation untreated Above right: Medium irrigation Tricure Granular treated
The above photographs show medium-irrigation treatment results at the end of the trial. The pots with the medium levels of irrigation also showed significant visual differences. All leaves in the treated pots looked visually green and healthy, but there was still a good percentage of desiccated leaves in the untreated pots.

infiltration was immediate. In practice, this may mean that surface ponding and resultant wash-outs during downpours can be reduced when employing a granular wetting agent at seeding.

This trial demonstrates that our granular wetting agent offers a benefit in terms of reducing the water required to produce growth. Grounds managers with no or limited access to an irrigation system

can be assured that any rain or irrigation water that reaches the surface will be taken down into the soil and held in a plant-available state for longer when our granular wetting agent has been applied.

With weather patterns as they are, the use of granular wetting agents will enable grounds managers to maximise growth and establishment using a limited amount of water. Some will

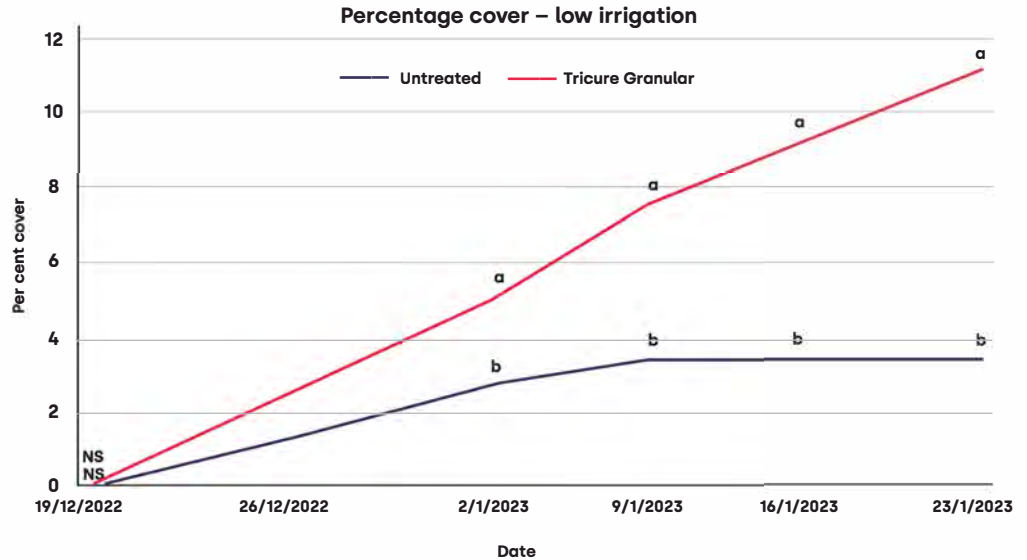
be able to significantly reduce their irrigation applications and still achieve the same level of establishment as they previously enjoyed with more applied water. This may help reduce disease pressure and maintain a healthy sward during the crucial period of early establishment of a new surface.

■ **Find out more at:**
originamenity.com

Graph 1: Low irrigation treatment results

At the lowest level of irrigation, there were significant differences in sward coverage once the seeds had emerged. Due to the low irrigation and sand-based soil, the coverage was still thin, but untreated pots recorded only 3.3 per cent coverage by the end of the trial and the Tricure Granular-treated pots showed 11.1 per cent.

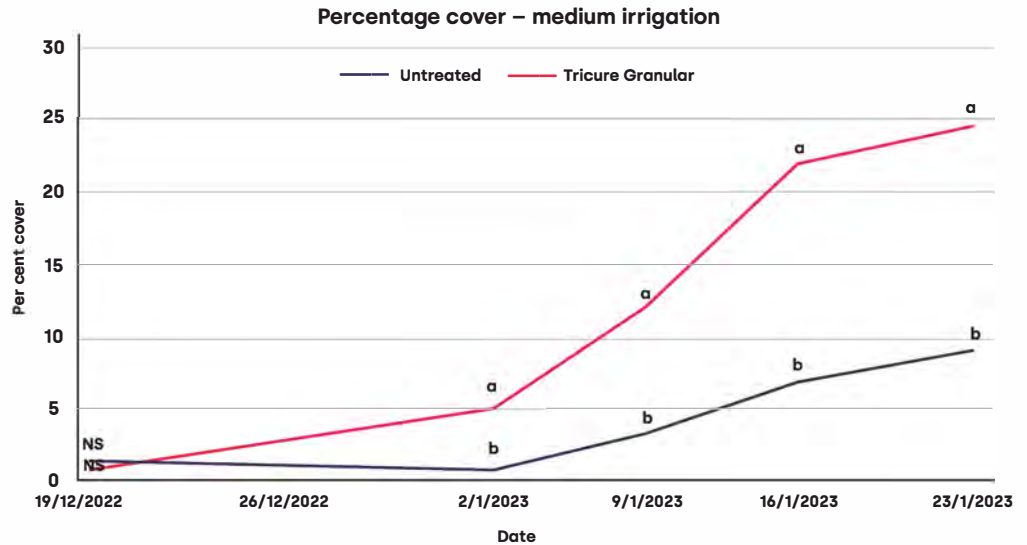
Different letters indicate statistically significant differences ($P \leq 0.05$).



Graph 2: Medium irrigation treatment results:

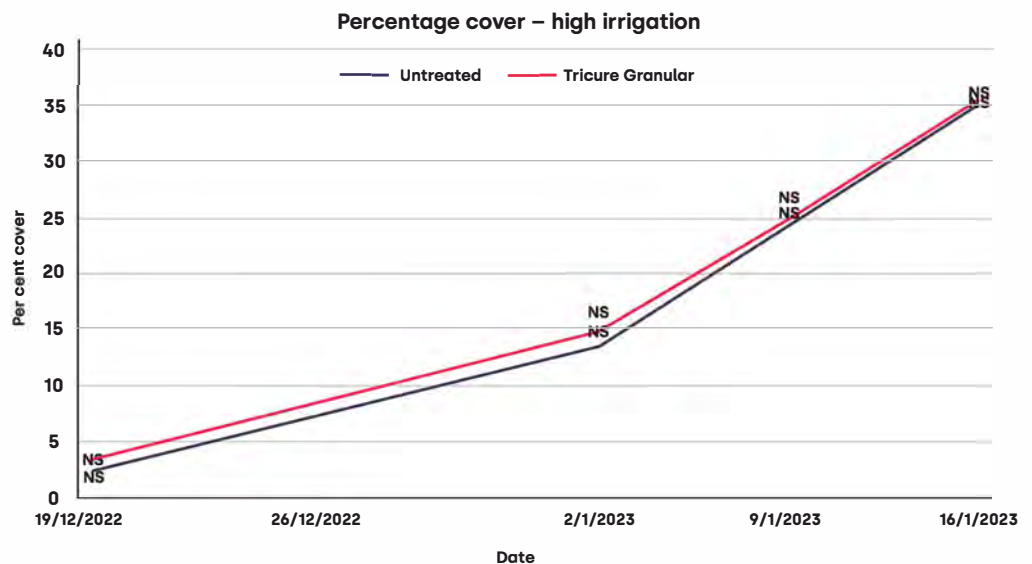
With the medium irrigation treatments, we also saw a significant difference throughout the trial. At the end of the trial, untreated pots averaged 9.1 per cent coverage with Tricure Granular-treated pots at 24.6 per cent.

Different letters indicate statistically significant differences ($P \leq 0.05$).



Graph 3: High irrigation treatment results:

There were no significant (NS) differences in the pots treated with high levels of irrigation and coverage between the two pots were mirrored almost exactly all the way through the trial. This result was to be expected – when there is adequate soil moisture, wetting agents offer limited benefits in sward establishment. Wetting agents will optimise soil moisture availability, but soils at or above field capacity will already supply enough moisture to the seeds/roots.





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Policy, compliance and enforcement

The Amenity Forum's calendar of Updating Events is helping to educate the amenity sector on issues around UK pesticide regulations and how to comply with them to avoid DEFRA's policy enforcement

BY PETER CORBETT, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMENITY FORUM

The theme for this year's Amenity Forum Updating Events is policy, compliance and enforcement. These three areas cover the working environment for many organisations and projects in the amenity sector. Policy and legislation set the framework to work within. Compliance ensures organisations work within the envelope of legislation and good practice. Enforcement ensures those who do not comply and take shortcuts are caught and either closed down or are made to comply to produce

a safe working environment and an even playing field for all organisations.

REVISED NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

We are awaiting publication of the Revised Pesticide National Action Plan (NAP), a five-year plan that aims to minimise the risks and impacts of pesticides to

human health and the environment, while ensuring that pests and pesticide resistance are managed effectively. The Amenity Forum is at the forefront of lobbying for the development of sustainable solutions that fulfil the requirements of the NAP.

Unfortunately, the NAP is unlikely to be published until later this year. We were hoping to be able to present to members our interpretation of the NAP and what the sector needs to achieve in order to comply with this five-year plan.



In order to manage the wide range of surfaces looked after by our members, we need to have access to a wide range of nutritional, chemical, biological, cultural and physical solutions for weed, disease and pest control.

To obtain the surface expected by stakeholders, we have to employ an integrated approach using the most sustainable solutions available. The use of integrated pest management (IPM) practices will be a key pillar of the NAP.

OCR REGULATIONS

The EU Official Controls Regulations (OCR) were established to provide an integrated and uniform approach to official controls across all aspects of the agrifood supply chain. The regulations, following Brexit, were retained in UK law.

The OCR for plant protection products (PPP), set up in 2020, apply

TO OBTAIN THE SURFACE EXPECTED BY STAKEHOLDERS, WE HAVE TO EMPLOY AN INTEGRATED APPROACH USING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

to the whole of the UK and supplement existing regulations that govern the sale and use of PPP.

The government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is the nominated competent authority to coordinate registration for England, Scotland and Wales. It will coordinate the collection on behalf of the devolved governments. The exception



Organisations using plant protection products will need to be registered with DEFRA under the new regulations

being Northern Ireland, which will manage its own registration.

Any organisation or individual selling registered PPP, and organisations using or having professional PPP applied, now have a legal requirement to be registered with DEFRA under these regulations.

Amenity users are those who undertake professional work in gardening, landscaping or grounds maintenance – or another role in an amenity setting such as in schools, parks, sports grounds (including golf courses), public or private property, infrastructure (roads, railways, waterways and so on), and utilities such as transport and water companies.

If your organisation is not registered with DEFRA, you need to complete either a seller form at bit.ly/3My52Ta or a user form at bit.ly/43loxS3

PESTICIDE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

DEFRA has provided the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) with funding for the training and employment of 18

THE PEOs WILL UNDERTAKE A COMBINATION OF PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE DUTIES, INCLUDING INVESTIGATIONS

pesticide enforcement officers (PEOs) and their support team. To date, 14 PEOs are active, with four nearing completion of specialist training. The full role of the PEO will be explained at our Updating Events.

The primary role of the PEO is to ensure compliance with PPP legislation relating to use, storage and handling. This will be achieved through inspection, guidance, partnership working and leadership to raise awareness and promote behaviour change to help improve the control of hazardous substances in the workplace.

The UK's implementation of the EU OCR 2017/625 requires the establishment of a new inspection and enforcement capability within the HSE to put into effect official controls on the manufacture, supply, storage and use of PPP.

The PEOs will also undertake a combination of proactive and reactive duties, including involvement

in investigations.

In June this year, the Amenity Forum intends to host a virtual meeting for its members, by which time hopefully the NAP will have been published and we can interpret the potential impact of this five-year plan. We will also present best practice solutions in order to help with compliance.

UPDATING EVENTS

This year, we are holding five in-person events at various venues. See the programme at bit.ly/3MQvYht

Some of the events will include lunch and sponsor presentations, and post-lunch venue tours. Due to the generosity of our sponsors, all events are free of charge for delegates.

Registration is essential. Please book for the events by sending an email to: admin@amenityforum.net

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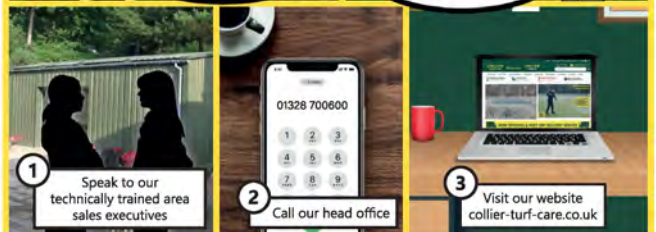
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Maintaining sports grounds across the UK

Three organisations explain how they utilise industry products and services to ensure their grounds and facilities are kept in top condition

DENNIS E-SERIES SHINES AT SAN SIRO

Two models in the Dennis E-Series battery-powered range are setting pitch standards in Italy at San Siro stadium – home to AC Milan and FC Internazionale (Inter).

Giovanni Castelli has been the agronomist at San Siro since the FIFA Italia 90 World Cup. He oversees a team of six grounds staff and is responsible for every pitch operation. Under his remit, Giovanni also decides on machinery use and he explains why he chose the Dennis ES-860 and ES-34R.

“Our main goal is to have a perfect pitch for every game,” he says. “There isn’t any room for mistakes, so you need the best machines for innovation, quality and performance. We looked at other battery-powered mowers, but the Dennis E-Series were the best. With the E-Series you get a better cut – you can set the clip rate and you can cut in difficult conditions, when it is raining or when the pitch is very young.”

The ES-860 delivers maximum versatility and the 13 interchangeable cassette options provide a solution to many maintenance tasks. The ES-34R 34-inch, battery-powered, twin-blade rotary mower is ideal for fine turf mowing and cleaning-up operations.

■ Find out more at: dennisuk.com



Dennis E-Series mowers out in force at San Siro

Despite a busy 2022, Headingley Stadium has maintained quality turf thanks to ICL



ICL FERTILISERS AND WETTING AGENTS HELP LEEDS RHINOS THROUGH BUSY YEAR

Ryan Golding, head groundsman at Leeds Rhinos, claims that ICL products have helped the club to successfully navigate its busiest year on record.

Ryan has been at the club for nearly two decades, but says he witnessed his busiest year yet in 2022. This was due to Headingley Stadium being the most used pitch at the Rugby League World Cup last year, as well as hosting standard club fixtures and events – and he knows that using the correct products was the key to his success.

Highlighting three ICL products that have made a significant impact in the past year, he says: “ProTurf 15-5-15 controlled-release fertiliser always provides us with a good base. The longevity we get from the feed, and its colour and response, are first class.

“The response of the Sportsmaster NK 12-0-9+Fe phosphate-free compound fertiliser is also rapid. The colour is fantastic and it is ideal for match preparation or recovery.”

Ryan adds: “We’ve also used the H2Pro TriSmart wetting agent and have seen great results with retaining moisture. Moreover, it has had a good effect on our root depth by managing movement of the moisture throughout the profile.”

■ Find out more at: icl-sf.com



The team show off their new Verti-Drain 2519

VERTI-DRAIN 2519 HELPS PRESTON NORTH END IN THE RACE AGAINST ‘TINE’

A high-speed Redexim Verti-Drain@ 2519 is delivering outstanding results for the grounds team at Preston North End FC as they work to complete regular aeration in ever-tighter schedule windows. Currently in use at the club’s new first team training complex at

Euxton, head groundsman Peter Ashworth says the ability to Verti-Drain two or three pitches in one day enables them to meet other maintenance deadlines while bringing multiple benefits to overall surface condition.

Peter and his team of six look after nine pitches across two training ground sites and the Deepdale Stadium and have the use of the 2519 alongside their existing Redexim 7316 Verti-Drain. “With one machine to operate across all three facilities, we found that everybody needed to use it at the same time,” Peter explains.

The 2519 offers a PTO speed of up to 540rpm, which enables it to cover almost 9000sq m per hour when spaced at 165mm. It delivers durability and versatility, with a range of tine options for effective aeration around the maintenance calendar.

■ Find out more at: redexim.com



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SUMMER OPERATIONS

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

Bowling greens

- Verti-cut when conditions allow to help control annual meadow grass seed head production. Try not to cause stress, which will reduce the ability to withstand wear.
- Maintain a suitable height and cut frequency. Be prepared to raise the height in dry weather and watch for strong winds on coastal areas.
- Continue to drag brush or switch to remove morning dew if required. Monitor disease pressures during changes in weather and treat accordingly.
- Light surface aeration should not be neglected – ensure moisture levels are sufficient to facilitate this operation.
- Irrigation will be fundamental in maintaining good grass plant health. Be careful not to over water, though – and avoid watering during the hottest part of the day.
- Rotate rinks and sides regularly to accommodate levels of use, ensuring wear is spread as evenly as possible over the green – make repairs as required.
- Monitor nutrient levels and apply fertiliser accordingly, but plan this with weather and schedule of play.



Be prepared to raise the height of cut on bowling greens in dry weather

Cricket squares

- Continue using the verti-cutter, rake or brush to maintain a clean upright sward. Be mindful of pitches drying out too quickly during prep works, and flash or utilise covers as required.
- Apply a balanced fertiliser in line with growth, weather conditions, fixture demand and repair schedule. Pitches to be brought back into play can be treated independently to the square.
- Following play, carry out repairs to foot holes.
- Maintain cut height across the square as conditions allow – focus on cut quality and height of cut to match growth and weather conditions.
- Monitor the recovery of pitches – re-use of early tracks will be possible if they have recovered adequately.
- Ensure rolling is only carried out in line with best practice and when conditions allow. Make sure moisture levels are sufficient to facilitate consolidation.
- Time spent rolling and frequency of roll are important to monitor and adjust. This will need to be adapted throughout the season.
- Ahead of turning attention to planning renovations at the end of the season, ends can be lightly forked over to



Maintain cut height across the cricket square

produce a fine seed bed, dressed and a suitable grass seed applied – cover and keep moist.

Cricket outfields

- Check for weeds and consider control methods if required. Only apply herbicide when growth is active and ground/ climatic conditions are favourable.
- Spot overseeding may be required to promote increased coverage in isolated areas.
- Repair any worn or damaged areas as soon as possible. Irrigation may be required on run-ups to promote and allow good germination, establishment and recovery.
- Continue to cut in line with requirements of play and needs of the surface, reducing frequency and raising the height where possible during extended dry and hot spells.

Football pitches

- Any thin areas will require a light topdressing and spot overseed. Keep moist and cover if possible to retain moisture to promote germination and establishment of these areas.

- Try to keep people off the spot-renovated areas and allow establishment prior to cutting.
- Continue mowing regularly to thicken the sward when weather conditions allow, being mindful not to stress the grass during extended dry and hot spells.
- A light fertiliser application may be considered to encourage growth if the weather conditions allow. This should only be provided if soil moisture is adequate and the grass is still maintaining growth.
- Utilise irrigation, where possible, to keep moisture levels up and encourage good growth and continued establishment.
- Herbicide application may be required – decide if spot treatment or full pitch application is necessary.

Horse racecourses

- Increase irrigation as required, ensuring even application to produce a suitable firmness of ground for the day of a race meeting. Be mindful to minimise water wastage.
- Continue to divot and repair after each meeting, ensuring they



Cut the sward on rugby pitches to maintain plant health

ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK



Check nets and winding gear on tennis courts

- are made in good time to ensure maximum time for recovery and establishment.
- Weed control may be required – decide if spot treatment or full course application is necessary.
- A liquid feed may be considered for the home straight, show paddock and ornamental lawns to raise the aesthetic for larger meetings.
- Continue grass cutting in line with growth and weather. Reduce frequency and raise height of cut during prolonged dry spells or hot weather.
- A fertiliser application may be given to all or part of the course, dependent on grass plant needs, and is recommended following a nutrient analysis.

Rugby league pitches

- Irrigate as required and where possible to promote wear recovery and grass plant health.
- A fertiliser application may be required to promote sustained growth – a liquid or granular product may be used, but a balanced controlled-release

- alternative is a longer-lasting option.
- Light verti-cutting or grooming may be required to help control the *Poa* and keep the sward clean.
- Overseeding may be carried out if coverage isn't ideal – lightly dress to increase seed soil contact and irrigate sufficiently to promote establishment.
- Continue cutting if conditions allow, although suspend and revert to drag brushing if conditions are not suitable – this will help stand the grass up and clean the sward.

Rugby union pitches

- Alter cut height and frequency in line with weather and ground conditions to continue promoting plant health and thickening of the sward. In suitable conditions, cut frequently but not too closely while establishing the pitch.
- Irrigate as often as required, at preferable times during the day and in suitable conditions.
- Apply fertiliser if a top-up of nutrients is required

and growing conditions are suitable.

- Brush/rake to help stand the grass up and eliminate morning dew in changing conditions.
- Monitor and make repairs where required if cover didn't establish sufficiently. Walk over and make good any remaining divots, scuffs or scrub damage.

Tennis courts

- Continue to roll if there is a suitable amount of moisture within the soil profile and avoid if there has been a prolonged dry spell, as there's a good chance the soil surface will crack and crumble. If rainfall has been regular, then rolling will need to continue through the early season to help firm the surface.
- Check nets and winding gears are in good condition throughout the playing season – make time to monitor or carry out repairs.
- Verti-cut and groom regularly. Take care around renovated areas, with the blades likely to be raised over these areas.
- Ensure irrigation is carried out evenly and at a time of the day that minimises water wastage. Check that all equipment is functioning, including blocked or damaged sprinkler heads.
- Monitor nutrient levels, and apply fertiliser in line with usage demands and ground and weather conditions.
- Where there are multiple tennis courts on site, try to retire some early where use demands can be consolidated and renovate them prior to September.



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PRODUCT NEWS

THE LATEST TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES FROM GMA CORPORATE PLUS MEMBERS



TORO DELIVERS PREMIER IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Reesink Hydro-Scapes is reminding grounds managers at football stadia that Toro's B Series sprinkler system with Turf Cup is the best in the league when it comes to invisible in-field irrigation.

The combination of Toro's B Series and Turf Cup results in irrigation uniformity, player safety, best pitch playability and the ultimate in field aesthetics.

Explaining why, Robert Jackson, division manager at Reesink Hydro-Scapes, says: "Elevating turf quality with the right irrigation shouldn't interfere with the usability of the pitch – it should go virtually unnoticed by grounds staff, spectators and, most importantly, the players. With Toro B Series sprinklers, the volume can be easily altered to meet the exact requirements of the pitch with a large nozzle selection for accurate watering. This level of control and head-to-head coverage comes from the full-circle configuration designed to deliver regardless of the weather and without the need for disassembly or additional parts."

Built to withstand the tough environment of the typical UK sports field, the Turf Cup has been tested to ensure the highest levels of reliability and durability demanded by the market today. Its flexible rubber compound means grass grows in the cup on top of the sprinkler to create a continuous area of uninterrupted turf.

■ reesinkturfcare.co.uk

NEW WEIGHT KIT ENHANCES ADAPTABILITY OF INFINICUT CYLINDER MOWER RANGE

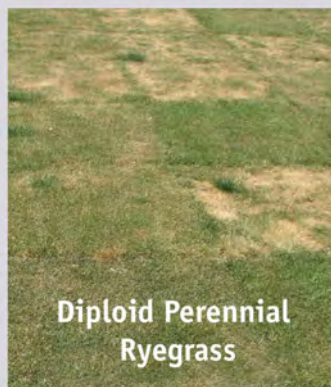
In response to the additional technical variations in the way that sports pitches can now be reinforced, MK6 models of Infinicut® can now accommodate an adjustable/removable weight kit, which is designed to control rootzone gravimetric results through the alteration of down-pressure force exerted by the Infinicut mower during use.

The Infinicut is one of the lightest professional sportsturf mowers on the market and it is optimally balanced to emit even, low-ground pressure on the turf surface. The weight kit is ideal for consolidating a surface following intensive wear, or invasive maintenance such as deep aeration, to influence both the playability and agronomic characteristics of the turf.

Each plate weighs 14kg and any number can be affixed to the holder, which is centrally positioned above the traction

drum to ensure that the additional weight is directed evenly through the rolling action and not via the cutting element, thereby retaining cut consistency and quality. The weights can then be quickly and easily removed when gravity readings are at optimal levels.

■ infinicut.com



SAFEGUARD AGAINST DROUGHT WITH DLF 4TURF

With drought conditions becoming more common in the UK, research conducted at DLF's RadiMax root-screening facility has shown that 4turf® delivers deeper rooting and a better visual appearance when starved of water compared with the performance of traditional diploid perennial ryegrasses.

Where most plants or trees form new shoots at the top of the plant, grasses develop new shoots close to the roots, highlighting the important role that roots have in helping the grass to survive in stressful conditions. As drought progresses down the soil, the first line of defence will be its deep root mass, which needs to be strong enough to enable the plant to continue taking up required water and nutrients.

In the DLF trials, plants were assessed based on the root profile and above-ground tolerance. Roots were compared on their depth and how much colour the plant retained when starved of moisture. The results showed that 4turf varieties performed better than the diploids under the same trial conditions.

DLF has also conducted screening of turf cultivars for salt tolerance where, again, 4turf tetraploid perennial ryegrass came out on top.

■ dlf.co.uk



STIHL LAUNCHES BACKPACK CORDLESS BLOWER

STIHL has launched its first cordless backpack blower for professional users, which offers high performance and a significantly less disruptive sound thanks to its innovative STIHL Noise Reduction System.

With a maximum blowing force of 26 newton, STIHL's new BGA 300 cordless backpack blower is the most powerful in the STIHL cordless range and features a high air speed to ensure even wet leaves can be cleared quickly and efficiently. The blower is powered by STIHL's professional AP System AR 2000 L or AR 3000 L backpack batteries.

Thanks to the STIHL Noise Reduction System, the BGA 300 produces fewer of the high-pitch frequencies often associated with cordless blowers, meaning operation is less intrusive for use in noise-sensitive areas such as schools and parks, or around public amenities.

The maximum blowing force can be selected from three power setting options, allowing for efficient energy management and longer run times. The blower also features an LED power display and cruise control function to enable simple energy management and comfort. It offers a curved nozzle and the blower tube length can be adjusted. Moreover, the backpack reduces the strain on the user when used for long periods.

■ stihl.co.uk

SECURION HELPS PREVENT BATTERY FIRE

Fire is a key risk with lithium-ion batteries, which may occur through faults inside the battery or from external damage, and can arise when they are being charged and stored overnight.

With this in mind, Pellenc, distributed in the UK by Etesia UK, has launched Securion storage, a unique charging and storage F90-rated cabinet, developed by Pellenc and a leading German security cabinet manufacturer. The product has been designed to protect employees, buildings and equipment from battery-causing fire, heat, toxic fumes and smoke.

In the event of a fire, the doors inside or outside the Securion cabinet close automatically, so those affected have enough time to get to safety and to alert rescue services. Fire, vapours and fumes remain mostly inside the cabinet and can be extracted directly via the standard ventilation connection. This gives the fire services control and enables the cabinet to be opened backdraft-safely after it has been triggered, regardless of whether the source of the fire is inside the cabinet or outside the building.

Batteries can be charged while being safely stored, and Securion also offers TÜV-tested fire protection for charging devices and batteries from other manufacturers.

■ etesia.co.uk



SYNGENTA'S OVERTAKE OFFERS RELIABLE WEEDKILLING SOLUTION

Now available for sportsturf management, amenity areas and golf courses in the UK, Syngenta Overtake's unique combination of two herbicide actives delivers reliable results against a wide spectrum of problematic broad-leaved weeds.

Furthermore, Syngenta application trials have shown optimum results with treatment at a water volume of just 200 l/ha, giving significant savings in time and reduced interruption in play, compared with herbicide treatments typically applied at 400 l/ha or more.

Syngenta technical manager Sean Loakes says that Overtake has shown outstanding turf safety in more than 70 trials across nine countries.

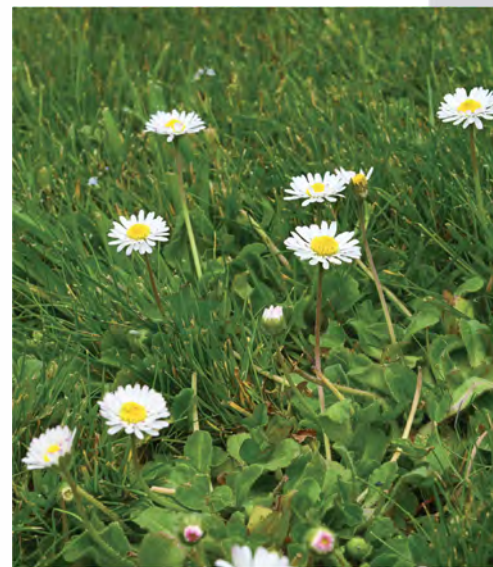
He says: "Trials at STRI recorded no adverse phytotoxic effects across 19

cultivars of all key cool-season turfgrass species, even at more than double the recommended application rate."

He adds: "In addition to greater reliability in a wider range of temperatures and conditions, the two different modes of action in Overtake reduce the risk of weed resistance developing."

To get the best from Overtake, Sean advises application in spring when weeds are actively growing and the leaves are dry. Treatment should be made at a rate of 2.0 l/ha, applied in 200 l/ha water volume, using XC025 or XC04 nozzles to better target the leaf area and minimise risk of drift. Turf should ideally be left for three days after application before mowing.

■ syngentaturf.co.uk



'THE PROFESSION IS GETTING NOTICED AS PEOPLE BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT SPORTSTURF MANAGEMENT IS TO PLAYER PERFORMANCE'

We talk to Haberdashers' Boys' School groundswoman Pippa Lewis about what attracted her to the industry and how she thinks we could encourage more young people to get involved

BY KAREN MAXWELL



How did you get into grounds management?

By accident, really. I was working at my secondary school during the summer holidays and covered the groundsman's duties while he went on holiday. I enjoyed it so much that I enrolled on a Level 2 apprenticeship in horticulture while I worked at the school as a caretaker/gardener.

Eighteen months later, I joined Habs' Boys as a gardener. However, I really wanted to work on the sportsturf side, so when a member of the grounds team retired I took their place and have never looked back.

What sports facilities do you maintain at the school?

We have football and rugby pitches, three cricket squares and Astro wickets, grass and Astro practice cricket nets

and two hockey Astros. My department also looks after the sports facilities on the Habs' Girls' side (next door), which has lacrosse pitches and netball courts.

I help to maintain the sports pitches and liaise with school staff regarding fixture setup. I have my PA2, so I also spray when needed, and I do most of the machine servicing, maintenance and cylinder grinding.

What part of the job do you most enjoy?

I enjoy all aspects of the job, especially when the sun's out! I particularly like re-grinding the cylinders, then using the machine to cut and seeing the difference in the quality of finish.

I enjoy working within a team, as we all have our different strengths and we aren't afraid to ask each other

questions no matter how silly they may seem.

Do you think there are the same career progression opportunities for women as men?

Yes, I think so. There are more and more women who I follow on social media who are in senior/management positions, so the opportunities are there. As an individual, if you have the knowledge and experience, then why not?

How could the industry attract more young people into the sector?

The industry needs to be recognised as a proper profession and to offer a more consistent pay structure to attract young people. We need to link qualifications to starting salaries and to show career and money-

Fast facts:

What do you do outside work?

Play football and ride my motorbike.

What was the last film you watched and enjoyed?

Strange World on Disney Plus.

What's your favourite food?

Can't beat a Sunday roast.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

Life's too short. If you want to do something then do it.

earning progression, like other professions do. The profession is getting noticed, though, as people better understand how important sportsturf management is to player performance.



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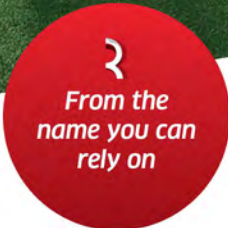
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