

IOG LAUNCHES AWARDS TO RECOGNISE GROUNDS CARE INDUSTRY'S CONTRIBUTION TO BRITISH SPORT

Sports Minister Gerry Sutcliffe MP leads universal support of scheme that acknowledges industry's hard work and expertise.

New industry-wide annual awards that recognise the important contribution by grounds care staff to the sustainability of British sport and best-practice grounds care across a multitude of disciplines and technologies have been launched by the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG).

The IOG Industry Awards will acknowledge the high standards achieved by a wide range of volunteer and professional grounds care skills and facilities - from grass roots to professional stadia level. The 2009 results will be announced Oscar-style at the Emirates Stadium, London, on 15 October 2009 as part of the IOG's National Conference.

Commenting on the launch, Sports Minister Gerry Sutcliffe MP says: "I recognise the valuable contribution which grounds staff around the country, whether volunteers or professionals, make in keeping sports facilities well maintained. Their hard work and technical knowledge helps make sport accessible to everyone and should be publicly acknowledged."

Paul Burgess, Arsenal FC's head groundsman, who has been instrumental in establishing the inaugural Awards ceremony and the 2009 IOG National Conference at the Emirates Stadium, comments: "An industry-wide Awards scheme has been long overdue, and the IOG is to be applauded for an initiative designed to recognise the dedication and expertise of grounds care practitioners from across the sector, both volunteer and professional as well as, most importantly, the younger generation."

Jim Lamb, chief executive of CCPR (Central Council of Physical Recreation), the national alliance of governing and representative bodies of sport and recreation in the UK, and which is sponsoring the Grass Roots Sports Ground of the Year Award, adds: "Representing 150,000 clubs across the UK and around eight million participants, CCPR fully endorses these Awards that will give recognition both to people and to skills that are generally underrated by the public. We are especially pleased to be involved at the grass roots level since this is an area essential to the ability of our members to deliver high quality sport and recreation."

According to IOG chief executive, Geoff Webb: "Everyone involved in grounds maintenance knows how much time, effort and skill goes into ensuring the quality of playing surfaces at both public and private sporting venues, as well as ensuring that the facilities the public enjoy on a regular basis are first-class."

"These Awards are designed to publicly acknowledge these unstinting efforts, and the fact that the Award ceremony is being staged at such a prestigious venue should also contribute to gaining much-deserved public recognition for these outstanding achievements and for our industry as a whole."

With industry-recognised judges, each award category will be judged on strict criteria. Depending on category, these will include available resources, budget control, maintenance and use of machinery, presentation and housekeeping standards, technical knowledge, scale of operations and frequency of use, health & safety management, record keeping, environmental issues, community involvement and training & education.

The IOG Industry Awards - the first all-encompassing award programme for the industry - embraces four broad categories of entry covering Sport, Grass Roots, Young IOG and General, comprising:

Sport

- The Groundsman's Groundsman of the Year - peer nomination - recognising the very best of the sports turf management industry
 - Spectator Sports Ground of the Year - recognising the exceptional management and maintenance processes undertaken to produce the UK's very best professional sports ground
 - Independent School Sports Ground of the Year - recognising teams or individuals who produce high standards of multi-sport surfaces for school sports in the private education sector
 - Best Maintained Artificial Pitch of the Year - recognising the skills required for the maintenance and management of a safe and sustainable artificial surface
 - Professional Sports Grounds Management Team of the Year - recognising the outstanding results achieved through team work in grounds care
 - Public Sector Sports Ground of the Year - recognising teams or individuals, in local authority employment, who produce high standards of sports surfaces for public use.
- #### Grass roots
- Grass Roots Sports Ground of the Year - recognising grounds staff who produce high standards of playing surfaces at a grass roots level - often contending with low maintenance budgets and high, amateur usage throughout the year

- Volunteer Sports Grounds Management Team of the Year - recognising the exceptional skills and commitment of a volunteer grounds management team to achieve outstanding results through team work in a sports club at grass roots level
 - Volunteer Sports Groundsman of the Year - recognising the exceptional skill and commitment of a volunteer to producing quality playing surfaces at a grass roots level.
- #### Young IOG
- Most Promising Sports Turf Student of the Year - recognising the effort and potential of full-time or part-time sports turf students both in terms of practical application and theoretical knowledge of the profession
 - Young Groundsman of the Year - recognising the very best of the new crop of young grounds professionals (16-24 year olds) who have already made their mark on the industry.

General categories

- Environmental Project of the Year - recognising the particular consideration given to environmental matters when constructing or maintaining a new or existing sports ground or open green space, or the operations and applications that are undertaken to maintain the area
- Employer of the Year - recognising forward thinking, progressive employers in the grounds care industry who encourage ongoing learning and skills updating, provide appropriate levels of support and investment into the ground and include the grounds staff in key decision making that will impact on the ground
- Innovation in Grounds Maintenance - recognising innovative solutions to overcoming maintenance problems in grounds care
- Public sector outdoor facility of the year - recognising the skills and expertise of grounds professionals who maintain publicly used facilities, including parks and gardens, to the highest standard
- Lifetime Achievement of the Year - recognising the outstanding contribution of an individual to the industry. **IOG**

The Institute of Groundsmanship

Visit www.iog.org or email: awards@iog.org for full details and entry forms.