

Bristol City FC Groundsman's Skill And Hard Work Is Recognised By FA Award

The commercial realities of survival in modern sport mean many top clubs have to find new ways to generate more money, such as staging big-name concerts and other extra-curricular events. The additional impact that can have on a pitch is colossal, as Bristol City FC's head groundsman Craig Richardson knows only too well.

Now, his dedication and effort in ensuring the pitch always stays in top condition have been duly recognised, for he has carried off the FA Football League 1 National Groundsman of the Year award.

"I'm absolutely ecstatic about winning," he says. "It's a massive privilege, which I never expected."

A member of the Institute of Groundsmanship, the leading membership organisation for grounds professionals involved in the management of sports pitches, landscape and amenity facilities, Craig Richardson's approach in the five years he has been in charge at the club has been to ensure there is a balanced feeding and aeration programme.

"We've had concerts with Ronan Keating, Rod Stewart, Neil Diamond and The Who, as well as international rugby matches, such as Wales versus The Barbarians, and that puts a massive extra strain on the pitch.

"But the pitch and stadium provide a valuable stream of income for the club, so you have to ensure it's always in good condition.

"No matter how long you are doing this, you are always learning. And it's also about the hard work you put in."

The FA award is clear recognition of how well he has fulfilled those objectives.