

Leamington 'Newcomer' Wins Top Groundsman Award From The FA

When you are the groundsman of a football club that has only been around for six years and are shortlisted for a national award, you don't expect to beat off competition from clubs that have been going much longer.

But that's exactly what Idris Elms has achieved, winning the FA's National Groundsman of the Year Award for Football Level 5-6 Leagues.

As 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, Idris Elms has been groundsman at Leamington FC since it was established in 2000. From the outset, he was faced with an enormous challenge – how to create a first-rate pitch on ground that was riddled with blue clay, the legacy of an old cement works.

"The only thing you can do is build on top of it, so we had it drained and sand banded. And now each year we cover it with a further 100 tonnes of sand. It's been a tough proposition, and myself and two volunteers have to put in 20-25 hours each week to keep things in good shape."

He describes winning the award as a shock. "But it felt great, especially when you are up against clubs that have been going much longer."

And his football team itself has enjoyed an amazing run, having won 15 matches in a row this season to top the league by 12 points.

Clearly, at Leamington success breeds success.