

## **Institute Of Groundsmanship Says Pitch Quality Not To Blame For Wayne Rooney Injury**

The Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG), the leading organisation for football grounds managers and groundsmen, has said that it is wrong to blame pitches for injuries to footballers without a thorough investigation.

Following recent Press coverage about Wayne Rooney's injury, the IOG points out that there is no conclusive scientific evidence to support the claim that 'firm' pitches cause injuries to the metatarsal bone, and that the apparent increase in such problems could be due to a number of factors - not least the evolving technology of footwear, the high number of games being played by footballers, intensive training programmes and the physical stresses that result. Says IOG chief executive Geoff Webb, "UK football grounds managers in general and IOG members in particular have raised the bar in terms of pitch quality and the levels of professionalism applied to managing and maintaining playing surfaces that are the envy of the world.

"Our members are increasingly harnessing science and technology to produce the ideal pitch environment, and they communicate and work closely with all members of their teams to produce the ideal playing surfaces.

"At Arsenal FC's new Emirates stadium, for example, computer modelling is being used to determine the levels of sunlight and ventilation at pitch level, for optimum conditions."

Geoff Webb says the current debate in soccer circles reminds him of a recent Jockey Club investigation into racehorse tendon injuries, where it was suspected that ground conditions were to blame but the claims were unsubstantiated. "Recent conclusions by the Jockey Club when investigating racehorse tendon injuries said that the injuries are the culmination of a series of changes in tendon due to ... the amount of work a horse undertakes. It also stated that 'the standard and professionalism of groundsmanship on racecourses has improved significantly over the past ten years'.

"It could well be that the same applies to professional footballers."

"Without the correct study, nobody in the football industry knows for sure what causes these problems," he concludes. "The IOG will be working closely with its members and welcomes discussions with the football authorities in an attempt to find the answers."