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Cricket groundsmanship at Grass roots

20 July 2010

Preparing cricket pitches at the grass root (league) level, can be challenging sometimes with unreliable machinery, lack of time because of working during the daytime, the high level of junior cricket, little or no budget, many of these pitches are prepared by volunteer groundsmen who carry out their duties in their spare time.

In my role as the regional advisor for the North of England, I come in contact with many volunteer groundsmen and all of them do a fantastic job, they are a credit to our industry, part of my role is to help and support the groundsmen across the region, this is an enjoyable part of my role and one I will continue to carry out.

If preparing pitches is not difficult enough, groundsmen in the North region have had one of the driest summers on record and some of the region have had the first hose pipe ban in over a decade, the dry weather has given many groundsmen their first encounter with preparing pitches under these conditions.

When travelling around the region, I have been asked to give advice on preparing pitches in dry conditions, in many ways it is recommended to follow your normal routine, but there are some areas that will require some extra attention.

- Ensure watering is carried out as part of your normal preparation; this can vary from ground to ground and depends on soil types.
- Do not over roll, rolling a dry pitch can produce a sub standard pitch and valuable time can be wasted.
- Ensure that the pitch is covered to retain the moisture within the pitch; this will allow the pitch to dry as normally as possible, which means the groundsmen maintain the control of pitch preparation and not the weather.

Preparing pitches in dry conditions can be difficult, in the North region we don't get too many dry summers, it is not common to protect the pitch from the sun, it is normal in this area to keep the rain off the pitches and getting them dry can be difficult.

Keep up the good work and enjoy the rest of the summer.

Groundsmanship in Schools

5/05/2010

What is the future for the groundsmanship industry? Like all industries, without young groundsmen coming through the industry will fade away. So, how can we ensure that future groundsmen are out there? One way is to go into the schools and make the students aware that the sports turf industry is worth investing time and effort in.

We need to make the students aware of the importance of the groundsmen in the staging of sport and the role that a trained and experienced groundsmen has in producing the surfaces, at all levels.

In the past three years the IOG has been delivering the NPC (National Practical Certificate) at Ashton-on-Mersey School, over 100 students have been trained, assessed and have passed the NPC. It was first run as a pilot scheme in 2007.

The course, which ran during the summer of 2007, was commended by OFSTED which said "...the programme is innovative and is in line with wider participation, which is a government target".

The students' enthusiasm for the programme can be seen in the following results:

- 100% pass rate in all practical assessments
- 100% attendance was achieved by 100% of the students throughout the programme.
- Punctuality was the best the department head teacher had seen all year.

The Course

22 students from Years 10 and 11 (aged 14 – 16) took part in the course which ran from 8 May to 17 July 2007 and offered students the chance to be trained in the elements of sports turf management covered by the IOG's National Practical Certificate.

The theory tests were run online through the IOG Moodle system, the innovative Virtual Learning Environment [VLE]. This VLE marks the exam papers instantaneously, allowing for immediate feedback of results.

This type of training and education is the way forward in engaging youth; similar schemes have been rolled out into other schools and, at the moment, the target is high school students but perhaps, to secure the future of groundsmanship, the process may need to start at primary school level.