

Turf Solutions

Scotts Helps Put Villa On Track For A Cracking Season

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A longer than usual close season, due to the World Cup, has given Aston Villa the chance to construct a new pitch this summer. Head groundsman Jonathan Calderwood believes that this, along with a new, feeding regime using Scotts fertilizers, will help to return the team to winning ways this season.

"I have used many fertilizers on all kinds of stadium pitches and training grounds," says Jonathan. "But the ones that stand out with the most consistently reliable and lasting performance have been Scotts."

Jonathan has worked at many top grounds, including Wembley, Molineux – where he won IOG Groundsman of the Year in 2003 – and Prenton Park. For two seasons he was in charge of three different pitches at the same time!

On Aston Villa's old pitch he used Scotts Greenmaster NK, a high nitrogen/potash blend, which provides a quick colour response during the summer. During the winter he applied Greenmaster Double K, a high potash, phosphate-free turf hardener which helps the sward resist disease.

"With the old pitch we applied fertilizer as and when it needed it," Jonathan explains. "But with the new pitch I have devised a programme with Mark Rayner, from Scotts, to follow for the whole year."

The pitch was seeded in mid-June and had to cope with scorching temperatures during establishment. A first fertilizer dressing of Greenmaster NK was applied on 10 July, followed ten days later by a first application of Scotts Sierrablen – a granular controlled release product designed to release its nutrients over a growing season.

"The new pitch is 97 per cent sand and is therefore very free draining. We need to have something that will stay within the root zone and feed the grass over a longer period of time, rather than leaching away. This is why we are using the slow release product. We will then top up with the 12.0.12 throughout the year."



Jonathan Calderwood is applying a range of Scotts fertilizers to give his new pitch balanced nutrition throughout the season.

As the season gets under way, Jonathan plans to apply Scotts Greenmaster Blade – a biological stimulant containing carbohydrates and seaweed extract. In extensive trials this has been shown to increase sward density, vigour and plant health.



Growing success

“Blade promotes deep and healthy rooting and I feel that in this situation, with such a young sward and such a clean root zone, it could be very useful,” says Jonathan.

“With a brand new pitch you are never entirely sure how it’s going to react once the teams start to play on it. We are lucky that airflow within the stadium is good, but shading is a problem – even in summer a quarter of the pitch is in shade. So conditions are far from ideal.

“However, I’m confident that the new construction and new fertilizer programme will give us every chance of having an excellent playing surface this coming season.”



Growing success