

Turf Solutions

Scotts Relieves Close Season Pressure

31st July 2006

Major pitch renovation and hosting a summer pop concert have made close season management at Stoke City FC's Britannia Stadium particularly tricky these past two years. But careful planning by stadium groundsman Andy Jackson, and a switch to a new range of fertilizer and turf products, has produced a better playing surface than ever before.

"Last summer we replaced the old root zone material which had been down since the stadium was constructed in 1997, and laid 240 tonnes of new fibresand," Andy explains. "This made it very tight, just seven weeks, to get the pitch re-seeded and ready for play for the first pre-season friendly. Applying Scotts Preseeder PS5 fertilizer to the new seedbed definitely helped us to achieve a quick and even germination."

Preseeder is a high phosphorous mini-granular compound fertilizer, which actively encourages root development. It also contains nitrogen and potassium – also essential for good establishment – as well as two per cent magnesium and seaweed extract.

During the playing season, Andy now uses a selection of Greenmaster Pro-Lite fertilizers to feed the sward, including NK, a high nitrogen/potash, 12-0-12 compound with added iron and magnesium. This provides a quick colour response, and sustained growth for up to six weeks.

"We changed to Scotts because of the quality and reliability of the products; they start working very quickly and keep going for a long time," says Andy.

In October and November he applies Double K – a high potash, phosphate-free turf hardener, which also helps the grass resist disease. Between December and February he switches to Invigorator, a 4-0-8 fertilizer with added iron and magnesium to help the pitch through the worst of winter, before going back to the Double K in the spring.

Stimulating Microbial Activity

During the summer, Andy also uses Scotts Greenmaster Blade – a fully researched and carefully engineered biological stimulant containing carbohydrates and seaweed extract. These encourage beneficial micro-organisms within the root zone to recycle decaying organic matter more quickly, breaking down any black layer or thatch, and increasing the nutrients available to the grass roots.

In independent trials, Greenmaster Blade increased beneficial bacterial numbers in the root zone by 80 per cent and increased root mass by 40 per cent.

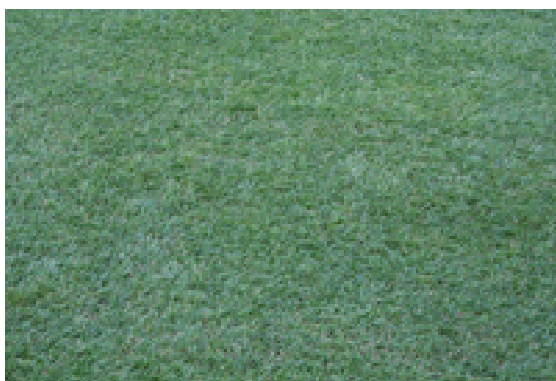


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“We apply it every 14 to 21 days and can quickly see a difference,” says Andy. “The grass is green and lush, and looks bright and healthy very soon after putting on Blade.”

Minimising ‘Crowd’ Damage

After the extensive renovation carried out last year, the pitch was just scarified; hollow cored and over-seeded this May. But with a ‘Summer in the City’ pop concert scheduled just four days before the first pre-season friendly, Andy has turned to the new turf growth regulator – Primo MAXX – for extra help.



A close up of the Stoke City pitch immediately after the flooring was taken up after the ‘Summer in the City’ concert.



Just four days after the concert, the pitch is all ready for the first pre-season friendly match.

Primo MAXX blocks the production of the naturally occurring plant growth hormone gibberellic acid, which limits cell elongation and leads to more compact growth. As vertical growth is slowed, root and lateral growth are boosted, creating a stronger and denser sward.

Grass plants growing in shade, such as under flooring laid for the crowd to stand on at the concert, increase gibberellic acid production, as they try to reach the light. Applying Primo MAXX in these conditions will stop this happening. Treated turf also has a bigger root system, which better resists the effects of drought and stress, and recovery after stress is much quicker.

Andy concludes, “We ask a lot of our pitches these days and put them under a great deal of pressure. The advice and service back-up I receive from Mark Rayner at Scotts, and the wide range of products they can offer, really help. I don’t think we could do it without them.”



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