

GROUNDS & NATURAL TURF IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME



CASE STUDY TRUBSHAW LADSANDDADS



The club has an interesting history, having been formed by a former Lord Mayor to the City of Stoke (Doug Brown) in 1967. The aim was to provide more opportunity for children to play football who did not make the school team, and Trubshaw Cross was the founding branch of the Staffordshire Ladsanddads club.

The site at Trubshaw Cross is substantial, consisting of more than 10 pitches of varying sizes. The pitches are located on two levels across the substantial 3 ha site. Historically, the pitches were maintained by Stoke City Council (SCC) who undertook very limited mowing and line marking. Postponements were numerous and the pitches very prone to waterlogging.

In 2015, SCC conducted a review of several of its sites and offered a number on a 'self- management' basis which essentially required interested parties to commit to maintaining the pitches, facilities, car parks and site surrounds. As part of this process, the RPA visited this and a number of the other sites in April 2015 and provided initial feedback to SCC, the club and Staffordshire FA.

The club saw this as a tremendous opportunity to improve the quality of their pitches and to take control of their own destiny. Following a series of meetings with SCC and Staffordshire FA, the club produced a detailed development plan which highlighted the need for advice and guidance both in terms of pitch improvement and machinery.



Staffordshire FA arranged for an initial Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) visit to be carried out and the PIP report produced at the time (December 2015) highlighted a number of significant issues which included waterlogging/compaction resulting in high levels of postponements. The quality of the grass sward was poor (50% weed grass) and an infrequent mowing regime was contributing to a significant thatch build up.

Following receipt of the report, which contained several machinery related recommendations, the club undertook a major fundraising programme. As a result, in 2016, they purchased a Shockwave 155 deep aerator, a SISIS Twin Play and mowing was undertaken with a Trimax Pro Cut S3 rotary roller mower which were used with a Kioti tractor.

Significant improvements have been achieved through more frequent mowing, very regular deep aeration, turf nutrition, weed control and top dressing. Added to this a process of mole ploughing has been undertaken on the clay based lower tier. Postponements are dramatically lower, levels of utilisation higher, and the number of teams having doubled. Weekly usage for the site is now 17/18 matches per weekend.

In 2018, the club were successful in applying for a grant that has enabled them to replace the Kioti tractor with a Branson 6225 tractor. There is a team of 12 volunteers (led by Club Chairman Andy Salt), aged from 18-55 who contribute around 25 hours per week of voluntary effort to maintain the pitches. The work undertaken is shown below.

Maintenance carried out per pitch	Total Tasks	Hours per Task	Hours Worked
Cutting - 5 hours per cut	106	5	530
Marking Out - 5 hours for all pitches	25	5	125
Drag Mat/Brush - 3 hours for all pitches	38	3	114
Aeration - Star Spiker - 5 hours for all pitches	16	5	80
Aeration - Earthquaking - 8 hours for full size pitch	26	8	208
Fertilising - 4 hours for all pitches	4	4	16
Rake/Scarify - 4 hours for all pitches	1	4	4
Collecting/Sweeping - 6 hours for all pitches	11	6	66
Oversowing - 20 hours with 2 people	1	20	40
Seeding - 14 hours with 2 people	1	14	28
Goal Safety Inspection - 4 hours	1	4	4
Setting out - 40 hours with two people	1.5	40	120
Grass Verges - 1 hour	0	1	0
Tree Pruning	7	4	28
Mole Ploughing	10	6	60
Machinery Maintenance	77	2	154
Total Volunteer Hours			1577

The team's knowledge was increased significantly through an IOG training course organised by Staffordshire FA and Stoke City Council. This was delivered in September 2017 and also included a number of other volunteers from other Staffordshire Ladsanddads branches. The club continues to develop its plans which are discussed and reviewed with the Staffordshire FA pitch advisors.

Definitely, more than just another football site and in February 2019 were judged to be Staffordshire FA Grounds team of the Year.

Without the Pitch Improvement Programme, we would not have been able to achieve a continued improvement in our pitches resulting in an increase, each season in the number of fixtures we could hold on each pitch. In fact, one of our worst pitches has seen a 217% increase in the number of fixtures it can accommodate which is a direct result of the Pitch Improvement Programme and I would recommend any club/venue having a PIP visit. You won't regret it.

Trubshaw Ladsanddads