



# QUALITY OF PITCH

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14-04-2021



# ABOUT ME

## FROM ROCHDALE TO LEUVEN



# MY BACKGROUND

FROM ROCHDALE TO LEUVEN

Rochdale (ENG)

Cricket/Football/Tennis/Golf

Always wanted to be involved in sport



# CAREER PATH

Rochdale football club (England league 1)

Qatar in the middle east as Assistant sportsturf manager

Bowdon Sports club in Cheshire, South Manchester hockey  
and cricket  
Head groundsman

Scunthorpe United Football Club (England League 1)  
Deputy Head groundsman

OH Leuven  
Groundsmanager



# HOW I BECAME A GROUNDSMAN?

GOOD QUESTION!

While I was playing cricket

Phil Collinson (Head groundsman Rochdale FC)

Apprentice groundsman position became available

Award for the best pitch in Belgium



# GROUNDSMAN JOB @ OH LEUVEN

# WHAT A GROUNDSMAN JOB INVOLVES @ OHL



- To have the best playing surfaces in Belgium.
- Basic maintenance of the surfaces through different techniques.
- Mowing the grass, marking the white lines, fertilising and aeration, setting up the goals and the corner flags.
- Communicating with coaching staff about daily training schedules (first team and youth teams).
- We have 4 full time groundsman including myself.
- Being involved in budget organisation for the current season and planning ahead for projects in the future.



# MAINTENANCE RENOVATIONS

At the end of the season

Koro off the top surface

Removing all the grass and organic material

Level the surface out again





# RENOVATIONS

## TOP DRESSING - SANDING

Top dress the pitch (spreading sand)

Helps the levels & drainage

Gives a nice seed bed

# RENOVATIONS

## VERTI DRAINING AND DRAG MATTING

Punching holes into the pitch (20-30 cm)

Allows air to get underneath

Stops any compaction of the ground below

Allows any water to drain away quicker

Drag mat the pitch



# RENOVATIONS

## SEEDING

Put fresh seed down on the pitch

First with a disc seeder:  
placing the seeds in the lines

Second with a dimple seeder:  
drops the seed on the surface of the pitch in little indents

When the seed germinates, it gives an even coverage all over the  
pitch



# RENOVATIONS

APPLY RENOVATOR FERTILISER, ROLL FLAT AND WATER



- We then apply a **renovator fertilizer**.
- We then **roll the surface completely flat with a roller**.
- We then **apply water to the pitch with our automatic pop-up irrigation systems**.
- We normally see signs of the **grass starting to grow after 5 days**.
- We then giving the pitch the **first cut after around 14 days**.
- From the start of the renovation process it is **6 weeks later** when the **pitch will be ready** to play on.



# BUDGET RENOVATIONS

## SMALLER RENOVATIONS FOR SMALLER BUDGETS

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- Spray the pitch with a selective weed killer to kill all weeds that have developed through the season.
- A week or so after spraying, cut the pitch as short as possible.
- Scarify/verti-cut the pitch in 2-3 directions.
- Top dress the pitch with around 60-90 tonnes of sand depending on the size of the pitch.
- Verti-drain the pitch then drag mat to get the levels as flat as possible to also get the sand going down the holes.
- Seed the pitch and fertilise with a renovator fertiliser and roll flat.
- Water as much as possible to keep the seed damp and allow it to grow as quick as possible.



# BUDGET RENOVATIONS

## GROW IN PROCESS

After around 12-14 days

First cut (rotary mower)

Follow up with some good general maintenance



# GENERAL MAINTENANCE

## TROUGHOUT THE SEASON



# GENERAL MAINTENANCE

## THROUGHOUT THE SEASON



- **Verti-drain**

Try to verti-drain every 6 weeks to keep the surface as open and get as much air underneath the pitch as possible.

- **Fertiliser**

Try to fertilise your pitch once a month if possible if not financially viable then as many times as you can.

- **Regular mowing**

Make sure you're regularly mowing the grass at least 3 times a week in the growing season (March to October)

- **Top dressing and overseeding**

Around the end of October, lightly top dress your pitches with a dry sand around 10 tonne for a full size pitch and overseed lightly to get some growth of new grass going into the winter months.

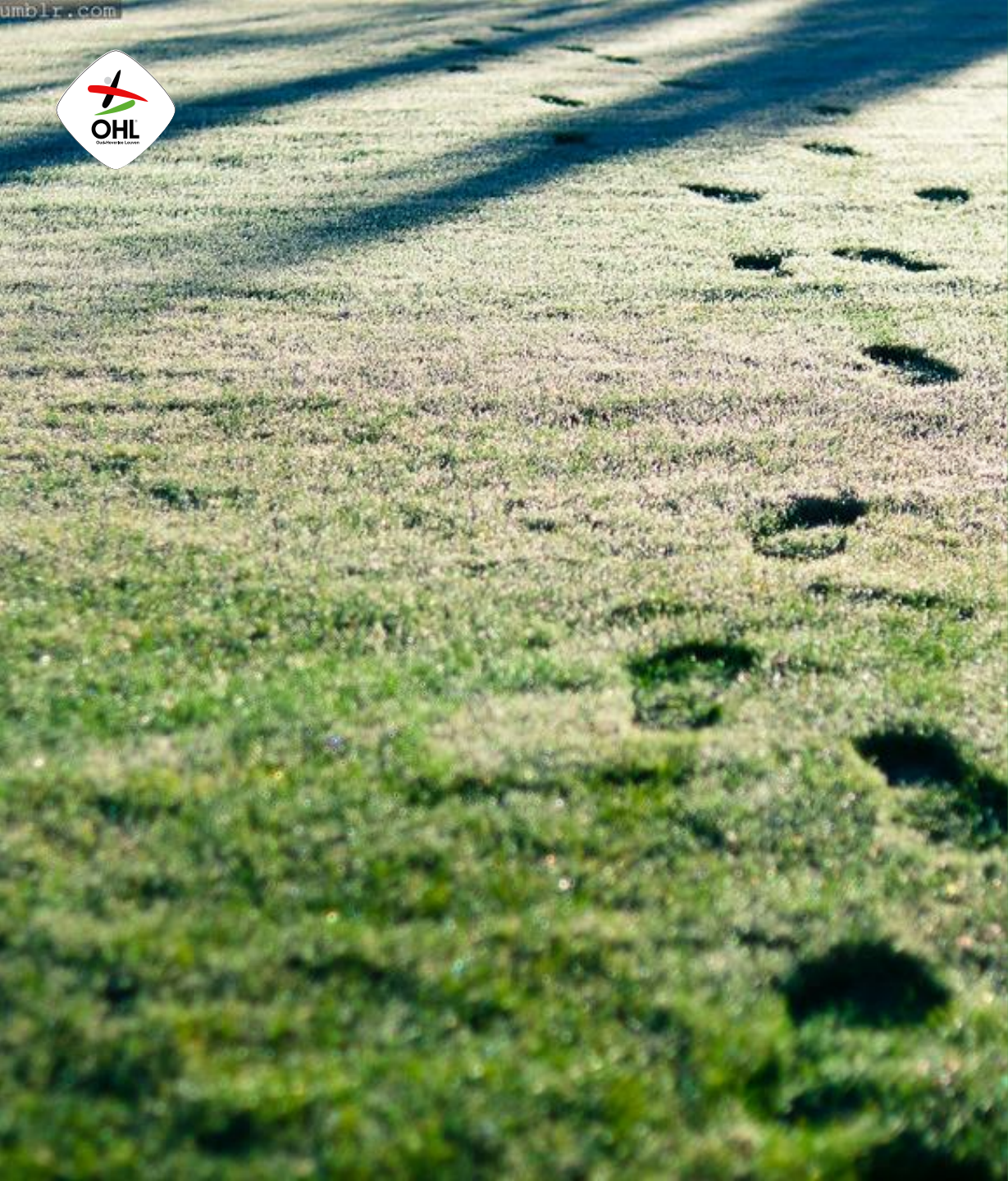


# WINTER MONTHS

## DO'S

Verti-drain / aerate the pitch (if dry enough)

Brush instead of mowing the grass



# WINTER MONTHS DON'TS

Avoid unnecessary maintenance work

If the pitch is wet, stay off it!

Do not roll the pitch if it is wet

Do not fertilise when there is frost forecast

Do not spray chemicals when there is frost around  
or walk on the grass when it is frosty

# HOT WEATHER

## MAINTENANCE TIPS



- Important to try and get as much water on the pitches over night and early morning before the temperatures start to rise.
- Watering in hot direct sunlight can burn the grass.
- You can use a wetting agent product.
- Signs of stress due to heat on grass are: changes of colour going a very dark green or even black.
- It is vitally important not to go on the pitch with a mower or any machinery as this will just stress the plant out even more.
- In event of stress try to get as much water on it as possible to give it some life and stay off with machinery until it has turned back healthier.



# MAINTENANCE AFTER TRAINING SESSIONS AND GAMES

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'Divot' the pitch

Clean the pitch after a session with a rotary mower + vacuum

Throw some new seed on areas that look worn



# TIPS AND TRICKS



- Always make sure your mowers blades (knives) are as sharp as possible and are not blunt.
- If using a cylinder mower check the blades in the cylinder are cutting with the bottom knife before everytime you use the machine.
- Presentation is a big part of being a football groundsman. Try and present your football pitches to the best standard as possible.



# STRIVE TO MAKE IT BETTER

Hard work and dedication is the key to making your pitch better.

The few small simple steps I have gone through in this presentation will help improve your pitches and not at a huge cost. Just the little things you do extra will make a big difference.





VOLUNTEERS WELCOME  
ON MATCHDAYS

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QUESTIONS?