Heroic installation
a highlight for City academy

To keep Manchester City FC’s training academy up-to-date and on top of its game, grounds manager Roy Rigby has installed a Hero Hybrid Grass system to ensure more playing time, great renovation and value for money.

Grounds manager Roy Rigby manages the grounds at Manchester City’s state-of-the-art training ground and Etihad Stadium as well as on reconstruction and renovation work abroad for the renowned club. Roy persuaded Man City to invest in a new HERO Hybrid Grass system, installing the first full-size pitch of its kind for a premiership club.

Following a lot of research, meetings and pre-planning, the HERO Hybrid Grass carpet system was the right choice for Roy and his top-class club, as he explains: “I tried to look for something that was better than what we had already. The board of directors wanted more playing hours on the pitches and asked me to scour the world to see what else was out on the market.

“I looked at different hybrid systems and the HERO Hybrid Grass carpet system took my fancy. I knew a few people abroad, at Real Madrid, and had some great advice from Paul Burgess who recommended it and he has been really pleased with it all.

“The key to this installation is that it renovates really well and I’m confident that we’re going to get value for money and the playing hours that we didn’t have before.” Once the decision was made, installing the HERO system happened quickly, as Roy adds: "After 12 months, the installation took place over just three weeks and we went for the plunge, becoming the first premier club ever to have a full-size HERO hybrid carpet turf system.

Roy, Premier Pitches, County Turf and Charles Henderson (Managing Director from Professional Sportsturf Design) all had a part to play when it came to bringing the HERO installation into fruition. Consultancy was provided from Charles, who has dealt with Man City for more than 10 years, during the original build of the training academy and further management construction and ongoing maintenance at their Etihad stadium.

Commenting on the HERO project, Charles explains: “We’ve been involved with the HERO installation from the very start in terms of input. The requirements for this pitch were quite unique; it was about creating more usable hours and the best quality as they have an exceptional high demand put on the pitch. We could address all these issues w hich w as important, as Roy agrees: “I wanted a stable pitch because we were losing a lot of grass cover in the winter. This new pitch gives me 70-80 playing hours in the winter and now the appearance and presentation will still look right.

On this particular installation project, the club had its own set of requirements as Charles adds: “With this pitch specifically, the budget was key. The HERO option offered an opportunity to leave in some of the existing materials. There with this subsidence issue which was expected. When you’re trying to create a level surface, this HERO system was more flexible and economical compared to a stitched hybrid. Stability and traction are also key to create more usable hours as is renovation. We have produced a cost model and a pitch that is built to last for five and seven years plus.”

Roy is proud to leave the new installation as his legacy, as he concludes: “I’m at the forefront of this football club and I want to leave something special behind when I do retire and finish.”

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