

# 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 premier 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



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work for other many premier club so the desire to achieve an exceptional standard was a priority.”

#### Why HERO?

The new hybrid HERO is a big investment for Manchester City even though they are one of, if not the richest, Premier club in the UK. But, as Roy explains, it wasn't just about costs: "With the club, I have to provide something that enriches and improves them. The bottom line is, that this installation is something I believe in and I believe it benefits the club which is why I managed to get the investment over the line. I do feel it is the way forward for Manchester City."

Roy and the contractors selected the HERO hybrid system to help overcome the older pitch's issues in the most successful and economical way possible, as Roy adds. "The middle of the pitch moved four or five inches up over 72 metres by 25 metres and the crown of the pitch moved and gave us and the players problems and it just wasn't playing right. The HERO carpet system, graded off the pitch and got it back to a reasonable spec from when it was built in 2014."

David Figgins-Barrett from Premier Pitches worked alongside County Turf during the installation process, mobilising his teams and starting work on the pitch just two weeks after receiving his first call, as he says:

"Although we've been involved in a number of carpet installations, this is the first full-on HERO project we've been contracted to do at such a top

club. First, we assessed the levels of the pitch and the subsidence. We took the top off, worked with the existing materials and created the flattest, levelled surface possible. It was a tight, complex project but was achievable. Our staff are used to working hard and to the highest standards."

Stability and an installation that could address all these issues was 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 sets 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 was also 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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