

RFU TWICKENHAM FORMS AN ALLIANCE WITH CAMPEY



In September 2019 the RFU appointed Jim Buttar as Head Groundsperson for Twickenham, and so began a co-operation between RFU Twickenham and Campey Turf Care Systems to deliver the highest standard of turf surfaces for the stadium and the Pennyhill Park training centre.

With over 20 years' experience in grounds maintenance, two consecutive Premier League Groundsman of the Year awards and more recently working as an International Sports Turf Development Manager for Pro Pitch, Jim brings a wealth of experience, particularly around new technologies and the effect of pitch surfaces on player performance and recovery.

Soon after joining Twickenham Covid struck and a period of 6 months effective lock-down allowed Jim space to re-assess the entire machinery and maintenance approach at Twickenham. The Twickenham site is also under-going an expensive re-structure. There are five ground staff looking after the pitch and what is effectively a 12-acre site, the stadium sits within. Jim is responsible for all the landscaping and roadways and car parks and any landscaping on-site. He also splits his time with Penny Hill Park, providing advice, consultation and support to the non-RFU stand-alone team based there.

Jim explains "I had in my mind that this would be a very good time

to have a clean slate, get everything in that we required, and really start building a machinery package that was fit for purpose and gave us everything we needed. Bearing in mind our existing machinery deal was due to finish at the end of 2020.

"Ben Taylor, Product Specialist for Campeys came in and introduced himself very early doors into my time at Twickenham. So, as we started to slowly build a bit of a relationship, one of the first early discussions we had was how to move forward with machinery intake for the future and create a much wider scope of co-operation than just randomly purchasing a few pieces of essential kit."

After many months of work a multifaceted agreement was reached whereby Twickenham and the RFU, has a standalone lease deal with Campey Turf Care to supply equipment over a five-year period. In addition, there is also a partnership with Rugby Grounds Connected, stipulating that Campey Turf Care will be exclusive suppliers of machinery packages for rugby clubs around England. In return Campeys offer favourable discounts for members and any clubs engaging with them for equipment and advice on managing their sports surfaces at all levels of the game.

"The result has been incredible." Says Jim "Certainly, it is better value for money in terms of what we are actually getting and more importantly better operationally.

We're much more capable. We've

got much more robustness in our maintenance approach. We know the machinery is some of the best kit on the market, so it's going to be reliable, and we won't have any issues with it. And the beauty this arrangement, is that we have if we do have any issues, we've got superb backup too."

"We've got a really good service agreement built into this lease deal as well, guaranteeing our machinery is being serviced annually. We've got some emergency breakdown cover in there as well."

Ben is delighted with progress at Twickenham and in particular the close relationship between Campey and the RFU. "It's always been Campeys goal to offer more than just a machine. Working with Jim to establish a genuine workable agreement that went beyond just supplying the machines, is a great achievement. Campeys advocate best practice and this way we can provide help and advice to RFU clubs all the way down the line, should they need it."

Jim summarises by saying "Part of my working week is trying to develop a bit of a strategy from 2024 to 34 for the grounds team and this is made so much easier as a direct result of the efficiency and structure provided by range of new machinery. We can now organise ourselves better and produce more results within our working day, using our staff more effectively, and without hours of overtime. Better for costs and better for morale." ■

