



Lighting up the Forest



TLS 80 lighting rig at St George's Park

Ewan Hunter, Nottingham Forest FC Grounds Manager, has been undertaking research into lighting rigs for the past five years and has had a number of demo units on trial from three different suppliers.

During last season Nottingham Forest FC was acquired by new owners and an agreement was made to invest in lighting rigs.

"Because I had trialled number of different rigs over a number of seasons I knew the benefits and disadvantages of each of those I used and the new range from TLS had a specification that met my exact requirements."

"It is ironic that all year round we try to reduce compaction on our pitches by hand mowing, instead of the lazy ride-on option and spend hours on time consuming aeration methods to relieve compaction

and yet, in the depths of winter, are expected to take lighting rigs weighing like mini tanks out onto the same surface!"

Ewan liked the non-rusting TLS aluminium rigs very much as they are almost half the weight of others on the market and give fantastic light levels even to the edges of the footprint. The biggest rig, TLS 400, has a 400 m² footprint and features extra wide low pressure tyres, which evenly distributes the weight over the pitch surface. They are easily moved over a short distances by just one man, or by two if they are to be taken in and out of the stadium without the use of tractors, although they can be hitched up if preferred making them very user friendly.

"The initial reaction from the clubs groundstaff when hearing the news that we were investing in our

own lighting rigs was one of dread," revealed Ewan.

"However, this view quickly changed after seeing and working with the TLS range. They all agree now that the system we have is fantastic."

The club invested in four large TLS 400s which covers the pitch between the two 18 yard boxes in just three moves. At pitchside, there are four double sockets on both sides of the ground so only a minimal length and cable numbers are required. This removes any problems that could arise if the sockets were too far from the rigs. In addition, the clubs purchased two medium sized TLS 160 rigs, which are used in each of the four corners of the ground. There are also two smaller TLS 80 rigs which are use in the goalmouth areas.

"Last season was our first year ▶



Because of the results being achieved, cutting and feeding is more frequent with half rate feeds every two weeks



Ewan Hunter, Nottingham Forest FC Grounds Manager. Above and previous page, his pitch

► of having our own rigs and these were not operational until late December, so we were having to play catch up. We were using the rigs 16 hours every day before moving them into new positions.”

Ewan was very surprised how quickly they started to get results and for the first time ever were cutting grass on the shadiest part of the stadium in January and February.

Last year the pitch had its best ever

season and the results from using the rigs was very impressive.

For the 2014/15 season, the club has been able to introduce the rigs earlier but at a much reduced length of time and number of days. Lighting began at the back end of October, using them the odd day here and there for a maximum of 10 hours at a time. The TLS rigs have many options that can be set on timers to come on at half rate or full rate with any length of delay in between. They can be set at full height of 4.4m to cover the full 400m², or can be set at any lower position down to 2.2m for a reduce footprint but increased light intensity. They are also fitted with a light sensor, which can be adjusted and will switch to half rate or even off, if the natural light levels reach the preset level where extra light is not required.

These options allow for economies to be made on the amount of electricity used. The smaller rigs also have timers and light sensors but do not the height options of the TLS 400s.

An excellent feature for those pitches that do not have a fully automatic irrigation system is that TLS offer this an option. As the club already had such a system installed,

they did not select this option.

Ewan is very happy with the TLS system as the results are very impressive and he has now a better, more sustainable pitch to work with during the winter months. Because of the results being achieved, cutting and feeding is more frequent with half rate feeds every two weeks instead of full feeds once a month. The club has selected the Microlite Activ8 mini-granular range from Rigby Taylor, which provides superb spreading consistency. The plant receives all the nutrition it needs and this has enabled the development of fantastic root development, resulting in a far stronger, more resilient pitch than in previous seasons.

“Coming up to a very busy Christmas schedule, the pitch will have to contend with FA youth cup games, first team games and training sessions, yet it is going into the winter in its best condition ever as in the past it just would not be able to take that amount of use in such a short space of time. The next few months will not be easy but I believe the investments we have made have shown excellent results and are a platform for the future.”



Here at Turf Matters we are determined to applaud the great work that this country's local authorities do – particularly with the budget cuts.

Does your council do a fine job in maintaining its amenity space and sporting facilities? Does it take time to landscape its roundabouts and boundaries? Are its pitches well draining and cut regularly to the optimum height?

If the answer is yes then please let us know and we will try to showcase the work that it does.

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