

Restoring old pitch to playable condition

THE SYNTHETIC pitch at St Augustine's Priory School in Ealing is now seeing a variety of outdoor sports during school hours and evenings, following the implementation of a rolling maintenance programme.

The school took full control of its sports facilities from a financial institution eight years ago, at which time the synthetic pitch was in a bad shape having been neglected over the years. It established a regime of regular cleaning and maintenance using specialist equipment to improve performance and enhance the life of the surface.

Topping up

Technical Surfaces was commissioned to restore the pitch back to a playable condition, avoiding the need for a replacement surface. Several essential maintenance tasks are regularly undertaken. These include drag brushing to redistribute the sand infill; brushing to lift the pile and regulate ball speed; topping up the infill in heavily used areas such as goal mouths & centre circles and removing surface litter and debris. Using purpose built equipment is important in order to achieve the best results.

In some instances, as on pitches that have had years of neglect, more drastic remedies might be required, according to Simon Lemanski, operations manager for Technical Surfaces. While sand encourages the percolation of water to drains underneath, it also traps debris and dust, which results in the infill becoming compacted, dirty and inefficient. Rejuvenation processes are available that can remove the debris and filter out the dust.

"Properly planned and with the right equipment, maintaining synthetic surfaces need not be difficult and it should certainly not be neglected," Lemanski told *bfl*. "Groundsmen and site managers of facilities can all play their part by using a little thought: the strategic placement of litter bins around the perimeter of the facility can reduce the amount of debris left on the pitch in the first instance, and boot-cleaning brushes placed at entrance points can minimise the amount of dirt transferred onto the carpet."

