



Background Information - TurfTrax Branches Out

TurfTrax was formed in 2000 by a group including soil physics/sports turf lecturers to build on the expertise at Cranfield University and provide solutions to ground management services such as improved drainage design and ground scanning. TurfTrax soon realised that there was a market for its knowledge in the horseracing industry and was asked by the UK Horseracing Regulator to use its expertise in turf management to develop a device for the comprehensive assessment of ground conditions at British racecourses.

In collaboration with Cranfield University, a device known as the GoingStick was developed, and after two years of intensive testing (both in a controlled laboratory environment and live at all 59 UK racecourses), the Regulator approved the device for use in 2003. In 2007 every turf racecourse was instructed to issue readings by the British Horseracing Authority and from 1st January 2009 its use has been required under the rules of racing. During the development of this device, TurfTrax became aware of the lack of information available on racecourse conditions. As a consequence, its subsequent products have been aimed at making information more readily available to the racing industry.

However, expertise in turf management extends beyond horseracing and is applicable to many other sports. Knowledge about the condition of the playing surfaces is crucial to the preparation and maintenance of grounds in football, cricket, rugby, lawn tennis and polo. Too often, games are affected by difficulties in preparation, as a result of external conditions like weather or a lack of information available for assessing the state of the ground. Greater understanding about ground and weather conditions has ramifications not only for player safety but also the long-term maintenance and care of the playing surface.

Use of equipment such as the TurfTrax GoingStick and more pertinently, the TurfTrax Weather System, will allow for better informed decisions to be made regarding the condition of sporting surfaces. As Adam Mills, Chairman of TurfTrax said, "TurfTrax manufactures and operates products which are relevant to all sports where knowledge of sporting surfaces is imperative. Racing is a key market, but the timing is now right to expand into new areas". This expansion will include the promotion of the TurfTrax Weather System as an essential component for effective and high quality turf management.

The TurfTrax Weather System provides a comprehensive log of atmospheric conditions as well as factoring in elements such as ground and soil temperature for the specific location in which it is situated. Its advantages over local and regional weather records are an improved level of detail and accuracy resulting in better informed turf management decisions.

It is extremely user friendly requiring negligible knowledge of meteorology to operate the technology and interpret the resulting data. Information can be accessed either through a password protected website or handheld device. SMS messages can also be sent out to warn users of any adverse or unusual weather conditions affecting their sporting or recreational surface.

To date, the TurfTrax Weather System has been used on all the UK's leading racecourses. Sporting clubs and venues like Arsenal FC, Twickenham RFU and currently, Chelsea FC, have also used the TurfTrax Weather System to monitor ground and climatic conditions in and around their stadiums.

The TurfTrax GoingStick allows for accurate assessment of the firmness of the ground by measuring the penetration (the amount of force required to push the tip into the ground) and the shear (the energy needed to pull back to an angle of 45° from the ground). As of March 2007, all UK turf racecourses have been required to issue a GoingStick reading with their race day going report.

July 2009