

# WEMBLEY BRINGS IN NEW PITCH FOR SEASON OPENER

Submitted by: Mercieca Ltd

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Wembley Stadium, connected by EE, will have a new state-of-the-art pitch in place for this week's FA Community Shield between Manchester City FC and Arsenal FC.

The FA Community Shield is the traditional curtain-raiser to a new football season. Last year's contest was moved to the King Power Stadium in Leicester while Wembley Stadium hosted the UEFA Women's Euro '22 Final.

The fixture returns to its usual home this week, with the Wembley grounds-team adding the final touches to a playing surface, which over the summer played host to sell-out concerts attended by over half a million people.

The fact Wembley Stadium is ready to host such a prestigious football match, so soon after concert season, is down to the latest advancement in pitch technology. The hybrid carpet 'Lay and Play' grass pitch was grown off site, on a turf farm hundreds of miles away from the stadium. Link to timelapse video here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HEHX2zIwJzPx\\_wLp7qjQ6YzdbSNhD1HS?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HEHX2zIwJzPx_wLp7qjQ6YzdbSNhD1HS?usp=sharing)

Once it was ready, more than 720 rolls of the hallowed turf were put on a number of lorries and transported to the stadium, before it was laid out last week. At 10 metres long by 1.2 metres (which if end to end would be 7km in length), the whole install took 60 hours to complete.

Wembley Stadium's Grounds Manager Karl Standley said: "Lay and Play is a game-changer for a multi-purpose venue like Wembley Stadium. Previously, it might have taken up to five weeks after a concert to get a pitch ready for a football fixture. Now this can be done in just five days.

"Growing it offsite means we can ultimately cut down the time required between concerts and football to let the pitch recover, so that Wembley can continue to keep up with global demand to stage world-class events."

It took more than three years of research and development to get to a stage where the meticulous Wembley team was happy that lay and play technology could meet their high standards.

"The Wembley pitch is unique and has very certain requirements. It involves a specific blend of sun, water, nutrients and takes 14 weeks to get into perfect shape. Even the fertiliser plan is bespoke to our requirements," adds Karl.

"It is like one big chemistry experiment. We had to test every stage of the process including the grow time, any potential damage during transport and how it reacts when it comes into the stadium. It is a very precise procedure, and we monitor every stage closely.

"The pitch for this week's FA Community Shield fixture came into the stadium on July 25 and has settled in nicely. After that it will be used for the Rugby League Challenge Final before concerts and events including AEW Elite Wrestling at the stadium.

"The next step is to make the whole process sustainable with the old pitch going back into grassroots football.

"At present the old pitch goes off to a production site where the grass, sand and plastic is separated. The grass decomposes naturally, and the sand is sent back to us so it can be re used or sent out for use on grassroot pitches.

"We are close to now finding a use for the plastic, whereby it can be melted down and used

to produce equipment for sports teams. Eventually the whole process will be 100% sustainable.”

-ENDS NOTES TO EDITORS

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