

GMA AWARD WINNER
LIVERPOOL FC

AXA TRAINING

HARD WORK PAYS OFF

Warren Scott discusses his team's award-winning, sustainable, data-driven pitch management processes at Liverpool FC

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NG CENTRE

LIVERPOOL FC



Warren Scott (centre) with members of Liverpool FC's grounds team, which deservedly took home this year's GMA award for Professional Grounds Team (Elite) of the Year

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**This page: Sustainability is key at the club
Opposite: Team members gear up for mowing**



Those who do not follow football particularly closely may not be fully aware of Liverpool Football Club’s recent return to greatness.

The short version goes that this historic club was closing in on 30 years without a Premier League title when it was taken over by US consortium Fenway Sports Group in 2010.

Since then, a data-driven revolution in recruitment has pulled the club back to the summit of the English game and, at the time of writing, put it firmly on track for a second league title and an eighth major trophy under its new ownership.

However, perhaps the most interesting aspect of the story is that this analytical approach is not solely restricted to the players’ achievements on the pitch.

Attention to data also underpins the work of a grounds team that recently picked up their own silverware in winning the Professional Grounds Team (Elite) of the Year Award at the 2025 GMA Awards.

Warren Scott, who is in his 26th year at the club, heads up that 34-strong team in his role as senior grounds manager, ensuring that the 18 pitches, which cater for the club’s first team, academy and women’s sides across multiple sites, are in top condition.

And he says that, as has been the case for the aforementioned recruitment department, the success he and his staff have enjoyed owes much to following the numbers closely.

IT’S ALL ABOUT THE DATA

“I am, and I’ve always been, a stickler for data,” Warren says. I’ve wanted to collect it, learn from it and keep collecting it. In fact, most of the work we do here at Liverpool FC is data driven.”

Warren explains that data collection is all about minimising waste and resources. “Every bit of our collected data is analysed, whether it’s linked to the nutrients in the ground, how much moisture is in the ground or the amount of water that we use.

“We’ll also look at the data from a player safety point of view by testing pitch compaction, energy restitution or the traction of a player’s boot on the playing surface.

“A lot of the club’s players over the last 10 years are into that themselves, so they know when the pitch isn’t right for them, and that helps the grounds team to make changes in pitch management where needed.

“For example, we analyse leaf tissue in the grass and data from the soil, and correlate the findings.

“If you can analyse collected data, you can apply exactly what’s needed, where it’s needed. This means that we’ve made big reductions in the amount of chemicals and fertilisers that we use across all sites.”

The reduction in wasted materials comes with an obvious financial upside, as evidenced by the club’s 40 per cent drop in pitch care expenditure over the last three years at Melwood, the former home of the first team, now occupied by the women’s side.



THE RED WAY

The environmental benefits from the grounds team's sustainable management techniques – across all sites – played an important role in Liverpool earning recognition from the GMA.

The club launched its own sustainability programme, The Red Way, in 2021, and grounds staff are at the forefront of a club-wide push to support this ethos.

For example, last summer the club partnered with Husqvarna, which was announced via an amusing video suggesting grounds staff now had time to learn the violin, paint and play golf, thanks to their new robotic mowers. However, Warren explains that this collaboration has had a genuine impact in both environmental and workload terms across several sites.

He says: "This partnership has resulted in a massive reduction in our CO₂ emissions. We think in the next three months the whole of our club's landscape across all sites will be cut 100 per cent by electric technology

and about 80 per cent of this will be by robot mowers."

And is that new free time really used to tune up the golf swing? Not quite.

"The one question that comes up is, if you use robots, do you need the staff? Well, the good thing about it is that time taken off those areas can be put into more sustainability projects to increase our biodiversity, take on landscape projects and increase our pollinator planting. The robots have enabled us to do that."

Liverpool FC isn't just paying lip service to sustainable solutions. The grounds staff are now also responsible for an allotment, an orchard and even keeping bees. Warren says: "We produced 450 kilos of fruit and vegetables this year from the allotment, and this amount increases year on year. We also brought bees into the allotment, so we've now got 12 beekeepers who aren't just staff from the grounds department, they're from all areas of the club. In fact, this year we produced honey, which is used in club kitchens.

"At the academy, we built a vegetable garden where parents can come and sit among the fruit and vegetable patches. We've got wildflower meadows across the site and we planted an orchard with 36 fruit trees this year."

Warren pays tribute to services manager Christine Fawcett for her role in running the allotment and ensuring the wider community also benefits from it by bringing local schoolchildren and veterans to the allotment.

As you might expect, recycling is also a key tenet of the sustainable approach Liverpool FC is looking to embed, and Warren says pitch recycling is an important aspect.

"With the help of our pitch contractors, Hewitt Sportsturf, the pitch's plastic grass fibres are washed and melted down into plastic pellets, some of which have been converted into benches for the orchard and allotment areas. We also recycle the rootzone and the sand in the pitch, so we can reuse it on landscape areas around the site," Warren explains.

JUST REWARDS

Clearly, it takes a huge team effort to pull all of this off and to get through the less-glamorous work of, for example, shovelling snow from pitches in order to get games on.

Warren is a big believer in that collective approach, as could be seen in him bringing most of his staff up to the podium to collect their award at the GMA Awards ceremony, hosted in the familiar surroundings of Anfield Stadium in March (see page 14).

He says: "It has been drummed into us over the last seven or eight years that we're the team behind the team. We used to be split sites, so because Melwood was a bit further down the road, we wouldn't really mingle a lot. The academy did their work, Melwood did their work and Anfield did theirs.

"However, since we moved up to the new [AXA] training ground at Kirkby, we've worked hard on integrating the team, so staff members can move across all sites to help each other out, especially through the winter and during difficult weather conditions.

"We've always wanted to be just one big team and I couldn't have asked for anything more from everyone this year, so it's nice to get recognition from the GMA with an award for our hard work."