

Spurs and England star Harry Kane opens “amazing” new £580,000 3G pitch

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Tottenham Hotspur FC and England star, Harry Kane, was in Walthamstow recently (Thursday 3 March), to officially open the new £578,696, floodlit, third generation (3G) artificial grass pitch (AGP) at Peter May Sports Centre, which he described as “amazing.”

The Spurs Vice Captain, who offered words of advice to budding young footballers using the new surface, was joined by Virginia May, the widow of Peter May – a hugely gifted former England cricket captain – who the facility was named after. Lord Cadogan, Chairman of London Playing Fields Foundation; Nick Bitel, Chair of Sport England/CEO of London Marathon Events Limited and Joe Thompson, Senior Grants Officer for The London Marathon Charitable Trust were also present at the opening.

The facility has a rich history of producing professional sportspeople. As well as Harry Kane, David Beckham played at the site during his formative years, as did Ravi Bopara who honed his cricket skills on one of the site's outfields.

The project was made possible thanks to a £368,696 grant from the Premier League & The FA Facilities Fund, which is delivered by the Football Foundation and provides grants towards developing new or refurbished grassroots football facilities.

The facility, which also received grants from the London Playing Fields Foundation (£135,000) and the London Marathon Charitable Trust (£75,000), now boasts a new full-size, floodlit, 3G AGP complete with spectator viewing area.

Previously, the site was home to a sand-filled pitch, which could no longer cope with the high demand from local grassroots football clubs who were lacking a quality venue for training and matches.

Several amateur teams will now call the new facility home. Ridgeway Rovers FC, Ryan FC and Egbertians FC cater for forty five different teams of all ages and abilities between them. Forecasts predict that over the next five years, the number of teams at each of those clubs will increase by 40%.

Colchester United FC are already using the pitch to run their Elite Player Performance Centre for players aged between 12-16. The Leyton Orient Advanced Soccer School's 25 teams will also use the pitch regularly with a view to increasing their provision for disability football. Their girls' Under-15 side will play at the site too, which would support progression to Under-21 and senior football.

The Football Foundation worked alongside the London FA and London Playing Fields Foundation to put together a five-year Football Development Plan, emphasising increases in participation levels.

Harry Kane said: **“This facility is amazing and it was a real pleasure to open it alongside Virginia May. The Peter May Sports Centre is a great example of the Football Foundation's commitment to improving grassroots football across the country, using money from the Premier League, The FA and the Government through Sport England.**

“It is so important that there are partnerships like that in football because it means that the grassroots game can prosper. Not so long ago, I was just like the kids who are using the facility now, training hard and enjoying my football – we all start out in the grassroots game after all.

“I grew up learning my football trade in this part of the world, so I know how much this new pitch will mean to the local community. This facility will inspire more people to get involved in sport and in doing so will create quality, home-grown talent and increase participation levels in football.”

“Again, the Football Foundation, Premier League & The FA Facilities Fund, London Playing Fields Foundation and London Marathon Charitable Trust all deserve huge praise for making this pitch a reality.”

Virginia May said: **“The new pitch is absolutely wonderful and I was thrilled to officially open it with Harry. The whole facility, including the sports hall that was originally made possible by the Peter**

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May Memorial Appeal and the Sports Lottery, is a fitting legacy to Peter who would have been thrilled to see so many people playing the sport they love.”

Alex Welsh, London Playing Fields Foundation Chief Executive, said: **“Playing fields are where sport starts and for the gifted few they are where careers start, so it was great to see Harry come home to where it all began. I'm sure that this new pitch will dramatically improve the playing and training experience for a whole generation of young footballers and be a model for other facilities across the country.”**

Nick Bitel, Chair of Sport England/CEO of London Marathon Events Limited, said: **“Research shows that the provision of affordable and local facilities are key in helping people to get and stay active. The London Marathon Charitable Trust provides grants for recreation facilities across London and more widely to enable and encourage more people to take up an active lifestyle. We are pleased to support the upgrade of the 3G pitch at the Peter May Sports Centre and look forward to seeing increased participation in the region.”**

Paul Thorogood, Chief Executive of the Football Foundation, said: **“I am delighted that a grant from the Premier League & The FA Facilities Fund has enabled Peter May Sports Centre to upgrade their 3G pitch. This development will provide a real boost to sport in the local area and I would like to thank Harry Kane for officially opening the new facility. Since 2000 the Football Foundation Funding Partners' investment has provided 282 grants worth £27.8m towards grassroots sports projects worth over £67.3m across the whole of London.**

“With this funding, provided by the Premier League, The FA and the Government, through Sport England, we are helping to improve community sports facilities across the country and thereby the playing experience of those who take part. This project in Walthamstow is the latest addition to the inventory of modern community sports sites we are developing that cater for the needs of local people who want to play sport purely for the love of it and to stay healthy.”

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