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Turfgrass



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MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

HG's Singapore sling

Transforming Singapore National Stadium

2015 AGCSA & STA Award winners

Simon Bourne, Nick Kinley,
Alex Smith and Grant Woolley

Committee confidential

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Chambers Bay controversy

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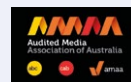
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COVER

Cottesloe Golf Club: The 11th hole at Cottesloe Golf Club, Perth, WA, home to 2015 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award winning superintendent Simon Bourne. **Photo:** Gary Lisbon, www.golfphotos.com.au



LEAD STORY: HG Sports Turf's Singapore sling

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In January 2015, Victorian-based HG Sports Turf was approached by Singapore National Stadium representatives to assist in remedying a number of issues with their newly laid playing surface. With the 28th South East Asia Games just months away, HG Sports Turf undertook to grow, harvest and install 20,000m² of its Eclipsed Stabilised Turf product, including laying the stadium pitch in a 48-hour window immediately after the Games' Opening Ceremony on 5 June. As HG's general manager Erik Kinlon writes it was a race against time for his team which comprised 40 international and 20 local staff.

FEATURES Open slather

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The US Open always throws up plenty of controversy and the 115th staging of the game's toughest major at Chambers Bay proved no different. Melbourne-based assistant superintendent Mick Pearce was one of five Australian greenkeepers to volunteer at the Open and here he looks back on the week which saw Jordan Spieth rack up yet another title.



Committee confidential

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Love them or loathe them, green committees are an integral component of many golf clubs. John Rydell, a one-time green committee member of his home club in California, looks back at his time served and imparts some advice for incumbent or incoming committee members. Former superintendent Martyn Black also weighs in and provides some tips for those supers struggling to effectively communicate and deal with their committee.

Flying the flag

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Back in Volume 8.4 of ATM, young South Australian apprentice Luke Partridge wrote about his time on The Ohio Program. Little did he realise then that his time spent in the US would spark an international journey that 10 years later is still continuing.

Hunter right on the mark

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The regional concept again proved extremely popular as the 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition headed to the Hunter Valley for the first time in the last week of June. ATM editor Brett Robinson looks back on the week.



2015 AGCSA and STA Awards

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ATM profiles 2015 AGCSA and STA Award winners Simon Bourne (Cottesloe GC), Nick Kinley (Hartfield CC), Alex Smith (Fairbairn GC) and Grant Woolley (Aurora Stadium) who were recognised in front of their peers at the recent Hunter Valley conference.



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GRASS-ROOTS WITH JOHN NEYLAN

Sand types and the influence of turf

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ATM columnist John Neylan provides a final summary of his recently completed sand types project and picks out his highlights from the recent 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference.

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AGCSATech agronomist Andrew Peart takes a look at two of Alice Springs' major sporting facilities – TIO Traeger Park and Alice Springs GC.



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Nathan Arnett (Traralgon GC); Martyn Black; Simon Bourne (Cottesloe GC); Chris Chapman (STA NSW); Idris Evans (The Western Australian GC); Peter Frewin (AGCSA); Stuart Gill (NSWGCSEA); Tony Guy (STA Aust/STA WA); Martyn Hedley (STA Qld); Mark Johnson (Ulverstone GC); Nick Kinley (Hartfield CC); Erik Kinlon (HG Sports Turf); Nick Launer (Murray Downs G&CC); Dean Lenertz (NSW GC); Stephen Mallyon (The Lakes GC); Adam McMahon (Longyard GC); John Neylan (Turfgrass Consulting and Research); Luke Partridge (Emirates GC, UAE); Mick Pearce (Northern GC); Andrew Peart (AGCSATech); John Rydell; Singapore Sports Hub and Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth, Singapore; Alex Smith (Fairbairn GC); Michael Smith (Scotch College); Simone Staples (AGCSA); Richard Stephens (Turf Australia); Ben Tilley (GCSAQ); Peter Todd (STA VIC); Grant Woolley (Aurora Stadium).

Courting controversy

an Poulter is one professional golfer guaranteed to never mince words and within moments of posting a closing round 77 to finish 11-over at the 115th US Open at Chambers Bay he was loading up. Poulter proceeded to post a stinging attack on Instagram about the condition of the greens and the course setup, taking a fair swipe at USGA executive director Mike Davis in the process. Poulter's sentiments echoed those of a number of players including Swede Henrik Stenson who likened the greens to "putting on broccoli" and "putting down on something that looked like the surface of the moon".

Although a wholly fescue course, some of the Chambers Bay greens had *Poa annua* in them and the close up picture that Poulter included with his Instagram post clearly showed the varying sward. His post attracted more than 8225 likes and over 1960 comments, some backing his sentiments and plenty telling him in no uncertain terms to head back to the European Tour. The post read as follows:

"I look forward to congratulating the 2015 US Open champion very soon, I simply didn't play well enough to be remotely close. This is not sour grapes or moaning or any of that crap. It's simply the truth. Mike Davis the head of the @USGA unfortunately hasn't spoke the truth about the conditions of the greens. I feel very sorry for the hundreds of greens staff who spent countless hours leading into this week and this week doing their best to have it the best they could and I thank them for that. But look at the picture. This was the surface we had to putt on. It is disgraceful that the @USGA hasn't apologised about the greens. They simply have said "we are thrilled with the course condition this week".

"It wasn't a bad golf course, in fact it played well and was playable. What wasn't playable were the green surfaces. If this was a regular PGA tour event lots of players would have withdrawn and gone home on Wednesday, but players won't do that for a major. They were simply the worst most disgraceful surface I have ever seen on any tour in all the years I have played. The US Open deserves better than that..." Whack!

Geoff Ogilvy, the 2006 US Open champion and so often a measured voice among the professional ranks, eloquently tempered some of the criticism his contemporaries were firing at the course: "I think we're a little bit precious sometimes, the pros. We're spoiled. We get such perfect surfaces and such perfect conditions everywhere we play. We're just not used to seeing it. The average guy probably plays on surfaces like this all the time. They're probably like, these guys, what are they talking about?"

"You have to use your brain (here) which is a rare thing in modern golf and something we're not very good at I don't think. We are losing the ability to adapt. I like the golf that it (Chambers Bay) got us to play. We play so much restrictive, narrow, soft golf that the last two years the (US Open) setups have been setting a responsible example for how golf is supposed to be played. It's not supposed to be over watered, it's supposed to turn brown, the ball is supposed to roll when it lands. This has been a pretty extreme example, obviously, but the USGA are... trying to show there's more ways to make a golf course difficult than just making it narrow and soft. The last two years have been the widest two US Opens ever and they've both been really, really difficult. (While Chambers Bay) is not my favourite course, I like the idea behind it." Amen to that Geoff!

For the five Australian greenkeepers who volunteered on the US Open course crew, it was certainly an eye-opener and in this edition Mick Pearce, Idris Evans, Stephen Mallyon, Nathan Arnett and Dean Lenertz look back on their week at Chambers Bay. We also review the recent 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference and profile the winners of the 2015 AGCSA and STA Awards. Enjoy the read...



Brett Robinson
Brett Robinson, Editor



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Happy hunting ground for Hunter Valley delegates



Well, the dust has settled on the 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition and quite a bit of space in this edition will be devoted to a review of the event. The Hunter Valley and Crowne Plaza proved to be a great destination and while delegate numbers were down a bit, all who attended had a great week both educationally and socially.

It was disappointing that in the lead up to the event some in the industry were talking negatively about both the venue and content. For the record, the venue was first class in all areas and for anyone with a short memory it was not that long ago there were no international speakers at the off-year event. This year we were privileged to have three highly regarded international presenters and those that attended were provided with some quality take-home information.

The opening plenary session was one of the most powerful that I have seen in some time at any conference and it was disappointing that there were not more in this session. The webcasts of the conference sessions, which are this year being delivered in conjunction with AGCSA Silver Partner Nuturf, will be available in the coming weeks and I strongly recommend finding the time to watch the 'Danger, Sun Overhead' session.

This year's conference, like the last few events, started on the Sunday with the Toro AGCSA Golf Championship. The major difference this year was that we crowned a new champion in Chris Burgess from Yarrowonga Mulwala Golf Club Resort. Chris

played very solidly around the tight and beautifully presented Newcastle Golf Club to take the title by one shot from a group tied on 78. The stableford event was won by host superintendent Matt Goodbun with a solid 35 points, some local knowledge no doubt playing a big part in that outcome.

The state team's event was also a close-fought affair with the title being taken out

by the ACT from Queensland by a single point! The dinner was again a highlight with guest speaker Max Walker entertaining all with his stories about cricket, AFL and his best-selling books. A big thanks to Toro for again partnering the event and also Matt Goodbun, Mark Gilson and Paul Foulcher from Newcastle Golf Club who made sure the day ran seamlessly and all felt welcome.

The education component of the week kicked off on Monday morning with Dr Jack Fry and David Bancroft-Turner front and centre to present workshops as part of the

series partnered with Jacobsen. Both speakers provided excellent content and all involved had a great day. David presented his political intelligence workshop which was a repeat from 2014 and will be returning in 2016 to again offer this workshop. If you have not participated in the workshop I would recommend the experience; it is a great insight into the politics of any workplace.

Jack's workshop on 'Stress management strategies for maintaining quality turf' was well attended and provided plenty to think about. Later in the week Jack hosted a 'walk and talk' session



Dr Jack Fry's on-course presentation, which delved into the rules of golf and their impact on course maintenance, was one of the highlights of the week



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on the golf course titled 'When turf maintenance and the rules of golf collide'. Interestingly some of the keener golfers' knowledge of the rules of golf were found wanting as the group went through a series of scenarios on the course in what was one of the highlights of the week.

The President's Dinner was again partnered by Syngenta and held on the Monday night to kick the week off on a high. Over 220 attended with the highlight of the evening the handing out of the 2015 AGCSA and STA Awards. Congratulations to Simon Bourne (Cottesloe Golf Club, WA) on his victory in the AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award which was partnered for the first time by Rain Bird. Nick Kinley (Hartfield Golf Club, WA) was the winner of the Claude Crockford Environmental Award which was partnered by Syngenta.

Alex Smith (Fairbairn Golf Club, ACT) and Grant Woolley (Aurora Stadium, Tas) were the respective winners of the AGCSA and STA Graduate awards which were again partnered by Toro. The fields in the graduate awards were first class this year and the judges had a tough time selecting winners in both categories. Thanks to Syngenta, Rain Bird and Toro for their continued support of the awards and dinner.

I would like to thank all delegates, speakers, trade partners, major sponsors and exhibitors that attended and supported the Hunter Valley event; we appreciate your continued support and commitment. Also, a big thank you to the AGCSA and STA staff, in particular Simone Staples, Allison Jenkins and Jenny Zadro for their efforts throughout the week. While there were a few distractions behind the scenes, no-one in attendance would have been aware of them and the event ran very smoothly.

In 2016 the 32nd Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition will return to Melbourne albeit to a new venue. The event will be held between 19-24 June at the Crown Entertainment Complex in the Palladium, River and Garden Rooms.

While some international speakers have been confirmed we will also be calling for expressions of interest from presenters in early September. This process will take place once the delegate survey information from this year's event has been dissected to ensure we are offering a line-up of speakers that is relevant to the delegates that attend. We hope that opening up some of the speaking opportunities will assist in growing the educational component of the event.

The trade exhibition in 2016 will be on a smaller scale than the traditional larger exhibition which would normally be associated with the Melbourne venue. This is a deliberate effort to reduce costs for those that participate.

Enjoy what is left of the remaining period of cooler weather and I look forward to catching up when our paths next cross. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have an issue or suggestion; any feedback is greatly appreciated. 🙏



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Following the Opening Ceremony of the 2015 SEA Games on 6 June, HG Sports Turf had a 48 hour window to lay the surface at the Singapore National Stadium

HG Sports Turf's Singapore sling

The past eight months has seen HG Sports Turf resurface the likes of the Melbourne Cricket Ground, ANZ Stadium and Hunter Stadium. As the company's general manager Erik Kinlon writes the company also successfully completed the transformation of the Singapore National Stadium surface ahead of the recent 2015 South East Asia Games.



The Singapore Sports Hub is Singapore's premier sports, entertainment and lifestyle hub with integrated community programming. Consisting of a unique cluster development of integrated world-class sports facilities on a 35-hectare site in Kallang, it plays a critical role in accelerating the development of the country's sports industry, excellence and participation. The centrepiece of the Singapore Sports Hub is the 55,000-capacity Singapore National Stadium which boasts a retractable roof and movable tiered seating.

The design of the stadium and Singapore's unique climate has provided a challenging environment for the playing surface ever since the stadium's opening in 2014. The original field was sown with perennial ryegrass and the Desso Grassmaster turf system installed shortly prior to the unveiling of the stadium. Given the climate within the stadium – high humidity, high temperatures, low light intensity, shade and air flow – the cool-season ryegrass struggled to gain a foothold and the performance requirements of the field were not being met.

Victoria-based HG Sports Turf had been involved with Singapore National Stadium since its inception through the trailing of its Eclipse Stabilised Turf System. Although not being successful in the original pitch construction, HG Sports Turf were contracted to specify, design, construct and prepare the drop-in cricket wicket trays.

Following on from this original relationship, HG Sports Turf was approached by Singapore National

Stadium representatives in January 2015, noting that the 28th South East Asia Games (SEA Games) were to be held in June 2015 and that the stadium field fell short on meeting the desired requirements for this and other global international sports events. It was put to them that the Eclipse Stabilised Turf System would be the perfect solution especially given that it is ready to play on immediately after installation.

Singapore National Stadium has positioned itself as a sports hub for global international sporting events and while recognising the difficulties that the stadium pitch was having, we wanted to meet that challenge head on and provide a playing surface that was fit for the performance and playability demands of international sport. HG Sports Turf also saw it as a great opportunity to add to our track record and reputation of delivering elite quality playing surfaces ahead of major games events.

In order to meet and exceed the expectations of all parties involved, HG Sports Turf also entered at this time into a contract with Sports Hub P/L to be the stabilised turf supplier going forward. In support of this supply agreement, HG was also awarded the stadium management contract to ensure the pitch met the standards required for international sport.

To that end and after a thorough and deliberate search, Danial Bridges was appointed to the role of Singapore National Stadium arena manager. Danial started the role in May 2015 and given his past employment in a similar role at Melbourne's Etihad Stadium he has the skills and expertise needed to



PHOTOS: SINGAPORE SPORTS HUB AND MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY & YOUTH, SINGAPORE.

manage turf in such a challenging environment. Danial is supported in the management of the stadium by two ex-pat assistants plus three local Singaporeans and local interns.

INITIAL CHALLENGES

The Singapore National Stadium project presented many challenges right from the initial planning stages through to final turf installation. Given the issues with the previous surface and the fact that the stadium is owned by the people of Singapore, there was significant pressure to deliver the goods, even from government Ministers.

Being an international project you automatically look at the local availability of resources, plant, materials, logistics and labour that is essential for the fulfilment of such a project. Land is a scarce commodity in Singapore and one of the initial challenges was finding a site capable and adequate enough to grow 20,000m² of the Eclipse product.

The timeframe was also extremely acute. From the signing of contracts to the actual delivery of the field there was only four months to play with, with the grow-in being just three months. The climatic and environmental conditions both at the nursery site and within the stadium also proved challenging both from a working and turf management perspective. The coordination of the works to mobilise a crew of 40 internationals and 20 locals also required a lot of planning, not to mention the fact that all staff had to be inducted and accredited to gain entry during the Games.



With a suitable nursery site found and turf established (see later for more on the turf variety used and its management), in April HG Sports Turf staff started rehabilitation works on the stadium field. This effectively became enabling works for the Games project but given the timeframes involved for the SEA Games installation they needed to be completed in advance.

These works saw the removal of vegetative and plant material from the Desso Grassmaster system, the installation of 18 soil moisture sensors across the field and retrofitting the irrigation system. We also placed sand over the Grassmaster fibres and laser graded the field to the design grades before the field was handed over to the Games' Organising Committee to put down the protective flooring and prepare for the Opening Ceremony on 5 June 2015.

Given HG Sports Turf's established track record and reputation in delivering major games projects, it was decided to undertake a rehearsal of the turf installation prior to the Games to showcase to all organisations involved the Eclipse Stabilised Turf System and how the actual resurfacing would occur come the Games.

The resurfacing project saw HG Sports Turf mobilise a crew of 40 internationals and 20 locals

As part of remediation works prior to the installation of the new surface, HG Sports Turf removed vegetative and plant material from the old Desso Grassmaster system, installed 18 soil moisture sensors, retrofitted the irrigation system and laser-graded the surface to the desired levels





INSTALLATION PROPER

After months of planning, completion of the rehabilitation works and the dress rehearsal, the event proper was upon us. In order to meet and exceed the expectations for this project, HG Sports Turf assembled and coordinated a highly experienced international crew of about 60 personnel through its Eclipse Stabilised Turf partners, including The Motz Group (US), County Turf (UK) and World Sports Solutions (BRA), as well as the company's own resources from Australia. As with any international project HG Sports Turf also had the full assistance of its Singapore-based partner TEHC International which had been involved from the very early stages.

With the rehearsal successfully completed and the crew assembled, inducted and accredited, logistics planned, equipment mobilised and every single detail checked and re-checked, the teams rested on the day of the opening ceremony – the calm before the storm!

The project had a time frame of just 48 hours in order to meet the deadlines and to ensure this happened the assembled personnel were split into two crews, each working 12 hour shifts at both the harvest end (nursery) and installation end (stadium). There were approximately 20 guys on the stadium crew and 10 guys on the harvest crew. We also had a shift project manager for each crew, a guy solely for PR, photography and timelapse and the HG Sports Turf arena manager and assistants to link the stadium and ceremony operations to our physical works.

Following the opening ceremony on 5 June, the Organising Committee through its contracted partners set about stripping the staging and the floor protection for the field works to start. The exposed sand was once again laser graded and consolidated to meet the design grades and ensure the field met a fine tolerance. Infield infrastructure including irrigation heads, valve boxes, moisture sensor probes and post fixings were all identified, checked and raised to their correct levels.

Celebration Bermuda (couchgrass) was the grass of choice following thorough evaluations of different grass varieties. The Eclipse Stabilised Turf nursery was established in February 2015 with sprigging completed on 27 February. The nursery grow-in and maintenance was managed from start to finish by some of HG Sports Turf's key personnel including Marty Cupples and Brad Kidd to ensure the turf was on track.

The programme for nutritional inputs was set in consideration of the climate and the conditions. Liquid and granular fertilisers were applied fortnightly to ensure a rapid establishment. Following establishment and getting a 100 per cent cover, plant growth regulators and hardeners were included in the programmes. Fungicide applications were also made if required and prior to the harvest event and insecticides were applied also as preventatives to armyworm, couch mite and beetles.

◀ **The Eclipse Stabilised Turf System, used at the likes of the MCG, ANZ Stadium and Hunter Stadium, was also used to provide the new turf solution at Singapore National Stadium**

On 19 May, just over two weeks ahead of the installation proper, a 1/8th scale rehearsal of the full event was completed which effectively saw the preparation, harvesting, transporting and installing of about 1000m² of Eclipse Stabilised Turf. The final stages of this were overseen by representatives from the Singapore Sports Hub, Sport Singapore, SEA Games Organising Committee, local media and Singapore's Minister for Sport Lawrence Wong.

The rehearsal event went very well and after the turf was installed and rolled several national football players tested the surface out to demonstrate the safe, durable and robust qualities of the new turf solution.

The rehearsal was essentially a practice run for every component of the works and gave us a greater understanding of timings in particular. With the resurfacing project running 24 hours we were able to quantify the productivity of each shift by scaling up and this ensured we were comfortably within the prescribed deadlines.

It also served as a good reminder of the importance of having contingency plans in place for machinery, logistics and man power. The rehearsal also allowed us to finalise the processes and procedures that were achievable and this was further documented in our project management system. Overall the rehearsal meant that no stone was left unturned and this was replicated in the main project.

Installing the Eclipse system. Crews worked 12-hour stints laying about 3000m² per shift

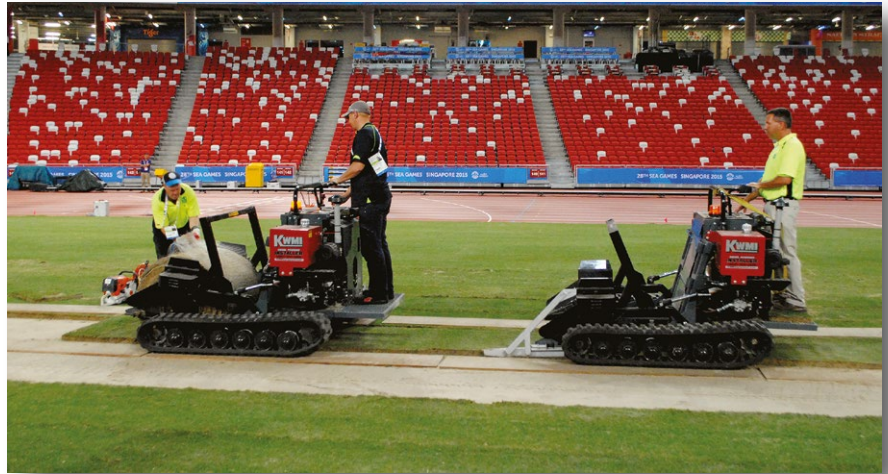


Irrigation needed to be managed very closely and on a daily basis as this could change by the hour. For example we had almost 100mm of rain in one hour followed by 34 degrees for the rest of the day! It was important to keep the profile as dry as possible without stressing out the plant. The turf had a consistent profile depth of 40mm and was ready to be relocated to its new stadium home.

The turf was harvested using a Magnum Turf Harvester and then relocated from the pad to a designated truck loading area. A local logistics company was arranged through our local partner TEHC and each truck was loaded with 28 rolls of turf or 300m². The first rolls arrived at the stadium at 7am on 6 June and we were allocated a designated set down area outside the stadium but within its confines. A team of four forklifts were then used to ferry the turf into the arena.

Turf laying started at 8am and each 12-hour shift laid approximately 3000m² of turf. The rolls were laid using Woerner turf installers with one machine laying and a second pushing in. Two tractors and operators kept a continual flow of turf to the installers and the crew of guys behind moved the boards, cut in, raked and forked.

In order to keep the field within the level tolerances, a laser grade box operated constantly ahead of the installers to ensure this key deliverable. A meeting was also held at the end of each shift to ensure a smooth transition between teams.



The last roll of turf was installed at 8pm on 7 June and the surface rolled three times with a 2m Mentay turf roller. Following this, every seam and join were checked. Every inch of turf was checked and some further testing of the surface was conducted for hardness, trueness, levels and traction, with all these tests comfortably falling within the desired ranges.

Following installation, the turf was mown at 15mm and irrigated before the SGL light rigs were deployed. During the days that followed, the light rigs would come on at night with limited time for turf management given the hectic schedule. Danial Bridges coordinated his programmes with those of the events to keep everything on an even keel.

The Eclipse turf rolls were laid using Woerner installers with one machine laying and a second pushing in



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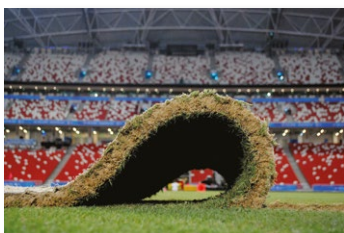




◀ **Above right: Turf management during the Games proved challenging and due to the roof being closed for the entire period SGL light rigs were deployed to assist the turf**

Above: The last roll of turf was installed 36 hours after the first. The surface was then rolled three times with a 2m Mentay turf roller before being cut at 15mm

The surface hosted a full schedule of track and field during the Games as well as soccer matches, including the Gold Medal clash between Thailand and Myanmar



The new pitch was put through its paces during the Games with a full schedule of track and field competition as well as football programme with no concerns or issues raised. Track and field events were conducted from 9-12 June followed by two football semi-finals on Saturday 13 June with normal maintenance practices conducted throughout.

The pitch also hosted the bronze medal match between Indonesia and Vietnam, followed by the Thailand and Myanmar gold medal clash. Thailand were the eventual winners with coach Choketawee Promrut commenting "Eight players in our squad had played on the previous surface during last year's AFF Suzuki Cup group stage matches and we give this new pitch the thumbs-up."

Turf management during the Games proved challenging and due to the roof being closed for the entire Games period the SGL light rigs had to be deployed and removed from the arena each evening and morning. General maintenance practices took place when possible including mowing, irrigating and field preparation. Due to the stability of the Eclipse Stabilised Turf System little or no divotting was required and no replacement turf was needed to repair the surface from the hammer, discus or shot put events.

Following the Closing Ceremony the surface was given a light renovation to help the regeneration of the Celebration Bermuda ahead of the arrival of



English Premier League clubs Arsenal, Everton and Stoke for the 2015 Barclays Asia Trophy in mid-July.

PLEASING PROJECT

Although the final result is often much the same, each project that we have been involved with brings a different set of challenges. This project being international was probably a little more challenging than others we have completed recently like the MCG, ANZ Stadium and Hunter Stadium.

There were many pleasing moments with this project. The bringing together of an experienced international crew was fun and the camaraderie and work ethic of the guys was sensational. We have established a great network of partners globally and a lot of the guys will work together again.

One of the things that we wanted to ensure was that in the seriousness of such a project the guys could enjoy what they were involved in. The sense of pride and achievement was especially pleasing to see from the guys. It was also great to have Joe Motz, the man behind the original Motz turf concept, and Hamish Sutherland, HG Sports Turf managing director, sharing some of their earlier memories.

I suppose the most pleasing aspect was the culmination of the months of planning, the establishment and readiness of the product in three months and the final installation of the field and to see how well it played for the Gold Medal match at the Games. The feedback and comments in general from all concerned was very pleasing with client superintendent Roger Hawke summing it up best – "The whole operation was like a well-oiled machine with seamless gear changes". 🇲🇻



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TM

Northern Golf Club
assistant superintendent
Mick Pearce was
one of five Australian
greenkeepers to volunteer
at the recent 115th US
Open at Chambers Bay.
The unique public access
course courted plenty
of controversy during
the week but ultimately
provided yet another
dramatic chapter in Major
history.

The dramatic undulations of
Chambers Bay's 18th green

PHOTOS: MICK PEARCE, IDRIS EVANS AND STEPHEN MALLYON



Open slather

After experiencing the coldest start to winter in Melbourne for more than 20 years in early June, I was somewhat happy to be boarding a plane bound for the warmer climate of Seattle to work at the 115th US Open at Chambers Bay. This would be a great opportunity to not only gain tournament experience, knowledge and meet new people, but also renew old acquaintances from when I volunteered at the 2012 US Open held at The Olympic Club in San Francisco.

The 2015 US Open was to be a significant event. It was the first time in 120 years that a US Open was to be held on a course in the Pacific Northwest and on a links style golf course. It was also just the third time in the event's history that it had been held on a municipal golf course, following the likes of Bethpage Black and Torrey Pines.

Chambers Bay itself was designed by Robert Trent-Jones Jnr and was officially opened in 2007. It is routed through a dramatic former sand and gravel quarry which supplied rootzone sand for most of the golf courses in the Pacific Northwest as well as

Canada. The mining scars are still visible on the hills that surround the course and make for a very unique landscape, especially for a course hosting a US Open.

The University of Puget Sound, or UPS as the locals call it, was to be our home for the week of the Open. With students on summer break, the Chambers Bay organisation was able to secure the dorms which meant an easy 20 minute bus ride to the course. Most of the volunteers were paired two to a room and I was fortunate to share with Kolby Beaton, assistant superintendent from Pinebrook Golf and Country Club in Calgary, Canada.

Upon arriving at the accommodation and settling in, I met five fellow greenkeepers who were also staying in the dorm. As it transpired they held positions at Chambers Bay and were staying in the dorms for convenience, as travel was a nightmare due to traffic congestion.

During our discussions they mentioned that over the previous fortnight the course had experienced some unseasonal hot weather which had caused the greens and fairways to dry out quicker than expected. This meant that most of the crew were carrying out hand watering duties around the clock. The weather for the week leading up to the tournament had settled thankfully with temperatures ranging between a comfortable 22-27°C.

It was interesting listening to them as this was their first US Open and you could tell they were very excited given it was also the first time that an event of this stature was being held in this area. Their excitement was akin to how I felt when I worked at The Olympic Club for my first US Open.





Opened in 2007, 2015 US Open host course Chambers Bay was crafted out of a former sand quarry which makes for a unique landscape. Pictured in the foreground is the tee complex on the 9th which sits 100 feet above the green



Looking down on the 1st (left) and 10th (right) holes at Chambers Bay. The 1st, along with the 18th, were able to be switched between par fours and fives depending on the daily conditions

I was one of five volunteers from Australia and was joined by Stephen Mallyon (assistant superintendent, The Lakes Golf Club, NSW, who also volunteered in 2012), Dean Lenertz (assistant superintendent, NSW Golf Club, NSW), Idris Evans (superintendent, Western Australian Golf Club, WA) and Nathan Arnett (superintendent Traralgon Golf Club, Vic).

DRAMATIC LANDSCAPE

When I applied for an Open volunteer position I looked at photographs of Chambers Bay and quickly formed the opinion that it was a very interesting layout. Nothing, however, could quite prepare me for actually stepping foot on site. Photos of the course simply do not do it justice. It is a phenomenal piece of land and the elevation changes on some holes have to be seen to be believed. It's certainly a greenkeeper's heaven but golfer's nightmare.

On Sunday afternoon, the agronomy contingent that consisted of 120 volunteers, representing 15 states of the US and 11 countries, along with the 28 permanent ground staff assembled in a large marquee. We were all greeted by Josh Lewis who has been superintendent at Chambers Bay for the past five years and is a former first assistant at Bandon Dunes.

Josh introduced the key personnel involved in the organising of the event. Chambers Bay was selected to host the US Open just six months after the course had been officially opened on 14 August 2007. Josh then went on to give a rundown of the course itself which consists of 1.45 hectares of greens (supposedly the largest green area of

any US Open), 3.5ha of tee complexes, 14.3ha of fairways and an impressive 7.5ha of bunker and waste land areas. The course is wall-to-wall fescue with the greens, fairway and tees being a mixture of Chewings and creeping red fescues and the rough consisting of sheeps and hard fescues.

After hosting the 2010 US Amateur Championship, considered a test run for the Open, the course underwent a number of changes with select greens renovated and in some cases re-seeded. Other changes encompassed improvements to a number of approaches, extensive bunker work and the construction of new championship tee complexes to add length to the course.

Once the formalities were over, all the volunteers received their uniforms for the week and were assigned their tasks. Then we were taken out onto

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

The Australian volunteer contingent at the 2015 US Open (from left) Mick Pearce, Dean Lenertz, Stephen Mallyon, Idris Evans and Nathan Arnett



'A WORLD CLASS SURFACE, NOT A WORLD CLASS COLOUR'



A number of Chambers Bay's fescue greens, particularly those closest to Puget Sound, had significant populations of *Poa annua*



The undulating Chambers Bay greens stimped between 11-11.5 feet during the four rounds of the Open

Tee and hole locations were GPS'd ahead of each round for future reference



"Putting on broccoli" and "simply the worst most disgraceful surface I have ever seen on any tour in all the years I have played". Pretty harsh! Such comments from the likes of Henrik Stenson and Ian Poulter certainly grabbed world-wide headlines during and after the 2015 US Open held at Chambers Bay, placing the USGA in the firing line over the course set up and condition of the greens.

For Idris Evans (Western Australian Golf Club, WA), Stephen Mallyon (The Lakes Golf Club, NSW) and Nathan Arnett (Traralgon Golf Club, Vic) who were among the five Aussie volunteers present for the week, it was certainly an eye-opener and one experience they won't forget. ATM asked them for their impressions of the week:

STEPHEN MALLYON

"Despite comments like Poulter's on social media, Josh and his team had thoughts quite the opposite. They were all happy with the surfaces provided. I asked Josh personally of his thoughts and he said 'We are here to provide a world class surface, not a world class colour. The surfaces we have provided are firm and true, it's just not the look that everyone is used to. I couldn't be happier.'

"I have to agree with Josh. The bad comments about the course seemed to only come from the players shooting over par. The players shooting under par were raving about the course.

"There was a lot of *Poa annua* present on the surface, obviously, though every green was smooth and the balls all rolled true. I was lucky enough to be on a couple of the greens when the USGA were making all their measurements (stimp, Clegg, smoothness and trueness), all of which fell within the desired parameters.

"An interesting stat was that the 2015 US Open had a lower putts per round average than the previous three US Opens. I feel it was the colour and the mountainous greens that had the players too scared to play attacking golf.

"My overall impression of Chambers Bay is one of amazement – the way the fairways run into the greens with only a minor difference in the height of cut and the undulations of the greens, which, coming from The Lakes, I thought I would be used to, but some of those slopes were incredible."

NATHAN ARNETT

"With everyone being on social media the staff and volunteers certainly knew the greens were a talking point among the golfers. It was no secret that a couple of the greens probably weren't where they needed to be in terms of presentation, but overall I believe the greens were certainly a fair test. With Chambers Bay being a public golf course and only closing three weeks prior to the Open it was always going to be a tough task keeping wear areas to a minimum (on greens) as high numbers poured through the gates in the lead-up.

"In terms of the course as a whole, I really enjoyed the layout. The elevations were spectacular and there is no way that TV could capture just how dramatic they were. The massive waste areas were a sight to see and would certainly be very time consuming from a maintenance perspective.

"Highlight of the week, aside from the unlimited ice creams in the volunteer tent, was being made to feel very welcomed and very much part of the maintenance team. Viewing 20 fairway mowers head down in the same direction is also a sight that never gets old."

IDRIS EVANS

"It is difficult to comment on the green surfaces when I was only there for a week without knowing the history of the course. Clearly the appearance was a surprise given the enormity of the event and knowing the worldwide exposure and scrutiny they would be under. However, appearance aside they rolled quite well and statistics show that putts/GIR at Chambers Bay were in fact similar to the last two US Opens. I do believe it was a fair test but obviously an extremely difficult one with the dry hard surface the USGA wanted.

"As for the pros, these guys are given perfect conditions week in week out and are looking for an excuse if their performance doesn't meet expectations. The USGA has control of course set up and for the US Open like a particularly firm and fast golf course and look for a modest total winning the event. These conditions don't always go well for course appearance and playability.

"Overall I thought the Chambers Bay course was amazing. I'm a big fan of golf courses that are natural and while it's new it looks like it has been there forever. The bunkering and green complexes stood out along with the massive elevation changes.

"I guess the one thing I took away was that course preparation is the same everywhere, just for these events it's on a grander scale. Obviously resources enable it to be completed in a short time and allow many tasks to be taken on manually, like hand mowing, watering and bunker raking. The interaction with other superintendents was great and to find out the industry is the same worldwide in that we are all fighting the same battle for perfection."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

the course to familiarise ourselves with the dramatic undulating layout.

What took everyone by surprise was just how much change in elevation there was throughout the course. The highest point is the 14th green at 69 metres above sea level with the lowest point being the 17th green at just 8.8m. With the additional championship tees the course had the potential to play 7900 yards (7223m) for the week with a par of 70.

Every hole at Chambers Bay has its own unique features and names to boot:

- 1st (Puget Sound) – can play from 453m to 546m as either a par four or par five;
- 4th (Hazard's Ascent, 452m) – long uphill par four with a massive wasteland on the right;
- 7th (Humpback, 464m) – another long par four with elevation changes and large bunkering;
- 8th (High Road, 561m) – par five with a left to right sloping fairway;
- 9th (Olympus, 204m) – downhill par three with two tee locations (high and low – the high tee is perched 100 feet above the green) which dramatically change the aspect of the hole;
- 10th (High Dunes, 389m) – par four which has the two largest sand dunes on the course situated either side of the green;
- 12th (The Narrows, 284m) – a drivable uphill par four, but boasting a wildly sloping green;



- 15th (Lone Fir) – this par three can play anywhere from 152m to 224m due to multiple tee locations. Also boasts a great bunker complex which surrounds the green area with the only tree on the property – a 50-foot Douglas Fir – located in the background ;
- 16th (Beached, 386m) – par four with bunkering that runs the entire length of the right side of the fairway. A risk/reward driving hole that also has the smallest and one of the most undulating greens on the course;
- 18th (Tacoma) – can play from 480m to 552m as either a par four or par five with bunkering complexes that frame the undulating fairway. Also boasts a 10 foot deep pot bunker (known as Chambers Basement) located 109 metres from an extremely undulating green.

Depending on the conditions of the day the USGA were able to alternate the pars on the 1st and

The Lakes assistant Stephen Mallyon in the 10 foot deep Chambers Basement pot bunker on the 18th and (below) with US Open winner Jordan Spieth



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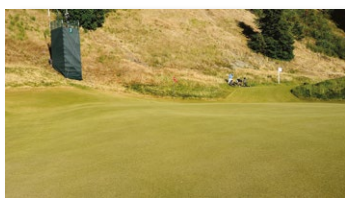
Michael Dennis
Course Superintendent Royal Perth G.C



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◀ The fortnight leading up to the Open was unseasonably warm with hand watering a priority. Pictured is the 2nd

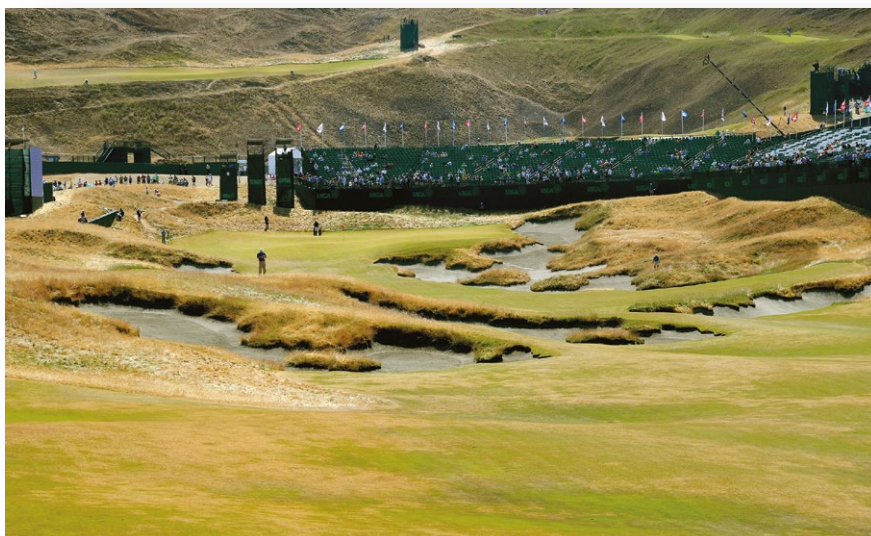


Chambers Bay is wall to wall fescue with the greens, fairways and tees a mix of Chewings and creeping red fescues. Pictured is the 7th green



The 9th green pictured from the final round low tee location

A shot of the dramatic setting coming up 18



18th, with the opening hole playing as a par four for rounds one, three and four and as a par five in the second. For the second round the 1st played 593 yards while for the final round it measured just 443 yards. Similarly, the 18th stretched to 617 yards for the opening round and was back to 514 yards the following round. Overall yardages across the four days fluctuated from a maximum of 7637 in round two and 7384 in the final round which is where all the drama would eventually unfold.

Chambers Bay is certainly a course that requires plenty of imagination, skill and a sense of humour and it quickly became apparent on our first wander around that it was going to be a brutal test, especially if the wind got up. It was also an arduous prospect for the spectators and due to the undulating nature of the site the USGA installed more grandstands to make it easier for them to watch the action.

OPEN PREPS

As with any major tournament there was no shortage of equipment at Josh's disposal. The Open fleet included:

- 28 Toro Reelmaster 3550-D fairway mowers;
- 10 Toro Greenmaster 3420 Tri-flex hybrid mowers;
- 18 Toro Greensmaster Flex 2100 walk-behinds with trailers;
- 7 Toro GreensPro 1240 rollers;
- 2 Toro SandPro 2040-Z bunker rakes;
- 46 Toro MDX Workman utilities; and
- 10 EZGO Express S6 carts.

Mowing heights for the greens started out at 0.200" (5.08mm) four weeks out from the tournament, and gradually dropped to 0.170" (4.3mm) prior to the practice days. Fairway and tee heights were 0.500" (12.7mm), green surrounds 0.300" (7.6mm) and rough 4.5" (114mm).

All volunteers were assigned various tasks with Stephen and I cutting fairways and tees, Idris and Dean cutting green surrounds and Nathan GPS'ing tee and hole locations. Preparations for the mornings and afternoons included:

- **Morning shift:** Cutting fairways, greens, tees, green surrounds and fairway clean-up; rolling greens; bunker maintenance; divotting and smoothing off and dew whipping rough; changing holes and markers; and hand watering hot spots on fairways.
- **Afternoon shift:** Consisted of bunker maintenance; practice facility clean-up; divotting fairways and tees; hand watering fairway and green hotspots; green maintenance which consisted of repairing pitch marks and removing any small rocks from the green that had come from the bunkers.

Our days would start when the buses came to UPS to transport us to the maintenance facility at 3am. There we were briefed for the day's preparations and were out on course by 4am with the morning shift completed by 8.30am. The afternoon shift started at either 6pm (practice rounds) or 6.30pm (tournament rounds). This shift finished at 9.30pm.

With the opening round of the tournament completed without issue, the greens were checked, as they were after each round, for firmness as well as moisture. The greens were very firm and running at 11 to 11.5 feet and the weather played its part by providing warm sunny days with a light sea breeze coming in during the afternoon.

The remainder of the tournament went off without a hitch aside from a few comments from some players about the course condition and set up. While the course had clearly come out on top during the first three rounds, the final day saw a battle royal coming down the stretch. With two holes remaining we were all thinking there was going to be a play-off only to watch Dustin Johnson three-putt the last to hand the title to Jordan Spieth.

There were numerous highlights from the Open but the one thing that will always stay with me was that first impression upon seeing the course for the first time. It rates as one of the most spectacular courses I have ever seen. This was also a trip during which I learnt new techniques, broadened by turf management knowledge in terms of managing fescues as well as meeting people from all parts of the world who share a passion for greenkeeping and golf course management. To be able to listen to their experiences, their ideas and share our collective knowledge while being part of one of the game's great tournaments was tremendous and something I will always cherish. 🌱



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Committee

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Love them or loathe them, green committees are an integral component of many golf clubs. John Rydell, a one-time green committee member of his home club in California, looks back at his time served and imparts some advice for incumbent or incoming committee members.

Whether your course uses recycled water or has access to plentiful ground water, it is important for the green committee to take the necessary actions to ensure an affordable and dependable supply of water for the golf course

2014 marked the end of my eight year involvement with the green committee at Mission Viejo Country Club in California, USA.

Throughout the years my experience ranged from being a brand-new committee member through to leading the green committee for a number of years.

During my time working with the green committee there were many ups and downs, two different course superintendents and two different general managers. We also were fortunate enough to oversee a \$6 million course infrastructure and renovation project.

At the end of my eight years I was asked to reflect back on what advice I would offer to other green committee members based on my experience. What follows is my personal Top-10 list of things that green committees should keep in mind.

1. MEMBERS SHOULD NOT BE GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

Every course should have a golf course architect or consultant that they rely on before making any significant changes to their course. The green committee should be encouraged to come up with ideas and concepts to propose to an architect, but they should not be able to make substantial changes on their own.

It is way too easy to want to make changes based on personal bias. For example, if you always find yourself behind a particular tree it is easy to start recommending its removal. However, would removing that tree be the appropriate action for the course or would it primarily benefit your golf game?

In addition, golf course architects have themes that are important to maintain from the standpoint of continuity. At Mission Viejo we were fortunate to work with Bruce Charlton, of the Robert Trent Jones Company, who helped keep our decisions consistent with the original course design created by Robert Trent Jones Sr.

2. FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS 'INSIDE THE ROPES'

The most important parts of your golf course are inside the ropes. Imagine yourself watching a PGA Tour event on TV or in person. There are ropes that keep the spectators off the core of the golf course. The places where the players play are the most important. Greens, fairways, teeing grounds, bunkers and a few metres of rough are the most critical pieces of your course.

Focus as much of your money and your resources on these areas. There are times when green committees start to focus their efforts on pretty flower beds, slopes or areas that fall outside the core of the course. There are times when you need to work on projects outside of the ropes, but spend less time and money on those projects until everything inside the ropes is as good as possible.

3. WATER QUALITY

There is nothing more important than the quality of the water used to irrigate your course. Some courses are extremely fortunate and get plentiful rainfall throughout the year while others are blessed with good quality bore water. However, if your facility is one of the vast majority of courses that are less fortunate, make sure your facility has short-term and long-term plans in place to ensure access to affordable, high-quality water.

Golf courses must be good stewards of the land and natural resources. Many courses are among the biggest customers of local water districts. The use of recycled water is often critical to the relationship between a golf course and local water supplier. Build the best relationship possible with your local water supplier and help them understand your needs so that you can work together effectively.

Is it possible for your course to use fresh water on your greens but recycled water on the rest of the course? Could your course use more recycled water if the salt content was slightly lower? What



is going to happen to the water supply during a drought? Start talking to your water supplier today to make sure that your course is receiving the quality and quantity of water you need at the right balance for the local community.

4. GIVE YOUR COURSE STAFF THE TIME THEY NEED

There is always a balance that needs to be found between the superintendent and the course officials in charge of revenue. In order to produce great results, superintendents and their teams need adequate time to complete their jobs every day. In addition, they occasionally need time to work without golfers in their way.

There are often large projects that are critical to the long-term success of a course that must be done on days when golfers aren't present. Superintendents can't go weeks in a row without having time to accomplish important maintenance projects. I offer three simple suggestions for how to handle this:

- Set up a calendar in advance that ensures the superintendent will get some work days periodically no matter what.
- Find some days where the superintendent and his staff can work early in the day but let a tournament/corporate event show up and play in the afternoon.
- Most importantly, make sure that the golf course staff and the people in charge of revenue are talking openly about their needs. The superintendent can't reasonably claim that he needs the course closed for one day every week. Likewise, the course officials that book events can't be unreasonable and claim that never closing the course is practical.

5. THE LESS YOU OVERSEED, THE HAPPIER YOU WILL BE

This item on the list obviously varies from course to course and from climate to climate, but overseeding is expensive and can have a long-term negative impact on course conditions.

Years ago Mission Viejo used to overseed the entire course every autumn. That meant we had to close for a period and spend a ton of time and money planting cool-season grasses. Afterward, we had to keep carts off the course for another few weeks. A few months later our course would look very green and visually appealing, but the process was massively disruptive and the playability of the overseeded surfaces was mediocre. Furthermore, the transition back to warm-season grasses in summer was difficult in our climate.

Eventually, we stopped overseeding. At first, we took baby steps by doing less fairway overseeding, then we stopped overseeding altogether. Now, none of the playing surfaces at Mission Viejo are overseeded and the course goes off-colour for roughly 10 weeks. Initially, we thought the members



would hate seeing the yellowish-brown colour. However, the members are happy to see an off-colour course because, through proper education (and this is the key), they now understand that better playing conditions can be achieved throughout the rest of the year by eliminating autumn overseeding.

6. LOOK AT THE LIFETIME COST OF EVERY PROJECT

Calculate the initial costs any time you are about to embark on a new course project, but do not forget to calculate the additional costs of the project over time as well. For example, people often want to plant beautiful flowers to make the course more visually appealing and they can justify the cost of the planting in the current budget. However, nobody asks what the flower bed will cost long term.

It is certainly possible that the actual cost of a \$5000 flower bed could be \$5000 the first year and an additional \$5000 each year thereafter if you account for water, maintenance and replacement of plants over time. Please be kind to future budgets and implement projects that do not have a negative financial impact on future green committees.

7. NOT EVERYONE WILL BE COMPLETELY SATISFIED

We live in an age where people have extremely high expectations of their golf course. Golfers expect a course to look beautiful all year round and every lie to be perfect. What we see on TV is part of the problem.

Just like supermodels who are airbrushed to look even better, the golf courses you see on TV have a number of things going for them. First, they are usually absolutely great courses. Second, they usually have additional funds and resources available because they are hosting a televised event. Third, they are usually being played during the season that is best for their course. Finally, the TV cameras are actually designed to make golf courses appear more green and more beautiful than they are in person!

In order to produce great results, superintendents and their teams need adequate time to complete their jobs every day. In addition, they occasionally need time to work without golfers in their way

The green committee must have a good financial solution to address capital expenditures like purchasing or leasing maintenance equipment

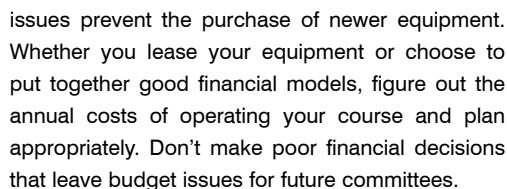




No golf course can be perfect all year. So don't judge your course on its average day against another course on its best day. With that said, set the bar high for your course. Have high standards and continue to strive to be the best that you can be. Try to help golfers understand this so that their expectations are reasonable.

Most golf courses have a budget that includes capital expenditures, like equipment, and a separate budget for the operational expenses of the course. Find a good financial solution that helps you truly understand and account for all costs. In certain situations, leasing equipment can be a very good solution because leasing can give management a very clear understanding of the true annual cost to own and operate equipment.

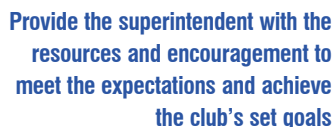
Without a clear understanding of the costs at your facility the superintendent may be forced to use antiquated equipment, or spend excessive amounts of time and money on repairs, because budgetary



Hire the best superintendent you can for your course. Hold him accountable but don't micromanage. The responsibility of the green committee is to work with the staff to come up with a set of reasonable expectations for the course as well as short-term and long-term goals. Provide the superintendent with the resources and encouragement to meet the expectations and achieve the set goals.

Just remember that every hour someone on the green committee spends asking questions, second-guessing decisions or just nosing around, is one hour that the superintendent wasn't able to focus on the core responsibilities of leading the maintenance staff and making the course great.

I obviously encourage dialogue and questions. However, if every member of a seven-person green committee plus a handful of board members each occupy 30 minutes of the superintendent's time per week, the superintendent can lose 20 per cent of his time talking to the club leadership rather than



maintaining the course. Furthermore, the lost time doesn't include time spent with the bosses or the time spent in monthly green committee meetings.

10. HAVE FUN

You play golf because it is fun. You likely got involved with your green committee because you wanted to be involved, learn more about the golf course and give back to your course. It might feel serious to be responsible for a course and I encourage you to take your responsibility seriously. But never forget that golf is a sport and a leisure activity. Treat your fellow golfers, green committee members and, most importantly, staff with the utmost respect, even when you disagree.

Above all, keep a smile on your face and be thankful for the joy that comes when you help make the game of golf better for those who come after you.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association has produced two comprehensive guides for incoming golf club committee members and general managers – the Course Operations Induction Manual and Guide for Greens Committee Members. Both guides have been developed by the AGCSA's HR and Best Practice Service in response to the desire of AGCSA superintendent members to ensure all parties with an interest in the



management and maintenance of golf courses have their views heard and respected.

The 29-page Course Operations Induction Manual provides a document for new board/committee members and general managers to assist in their understanding of golf course maintenance operations and the role the course superintendent and his/her team play.

The Course Operations Induction Manual includes sections on:

- Protecting your key asset;
- Course management structure and role of a superintendent;

No golf course can be perfect all year. So don't judge your course on its average day against another course on its best day. With that said, set the bar high for your course. Have high standards and continue to strive to be the best that you can be

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- What your course maintenance staff do;
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- How the AGCSA can assist your club; and
- Glossary of turf management and course maintenance terms.

The 13-page Guide for Greens Committee Members, which has been endorsed by Golf Australia, outlines the role and responsibility of incoming greens committee members in relation to the operation of the golf course.

The Guide for Greens Committee Members includes sections on:

- Where does the voluntary role of the greens committee fit?
- Planning;

- Managing expectations;
- Compliance;
- Water management;
- Meetings; and
- Glossary of turf management and course maintenance terms.

Both manuals are available through the AGCSA website www.agcsa.com.au or by calling the AGCSA on (03) 9548 8600.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

John Rydell is a member and former green committee chairman at Mission Viejo Country Club, Calif. This article has been reprinted with permission from the USGA Green Section Record and appeared in Vol 52 (2) – 3 October 2014 edition. 🙏

THE BLACK AND WHITE OF GREEN COMMITTEE DEALINGS

If there is one (now former) golf course superintendent who can instruct his peers on the vagaries of green committees, it is Martyn Black. The former Castle Hill Golf Club course superintendent of nearly 26 years, who hung up the hole cutter last December, has moonlighted for the past nine years as a member of the green committee at Sydney's Asquith Golf Club.

Like any proud golfer, Black's love for Asquith, where he first learned to play the game as an 11-year-old, was one of the principal reasons he decided to put his hand up to be on the committee after being encouraged by incumbent course superintendent Stuart Hall to do so. No doubt most superintendents would be rather envious of Hall having someone of Black's calibre sitting down for the monthly meetings, but as Black explains his role is to keep well out of the day-to-day running of the course.

"My relationship with Stu revolves around me *not* being involved with his operations," explains Black. "It is his golf course! I got involved originally at Stuart's request as the chairman at the time was well-meaning but had little knowledge of golf course management practices. So I stood for the board to basically provide some support for Stu so that he could be left alone to do his job."

"I think we have been going along for nine years now and I believe it is successful as the course continues to improve despite a very modest budget and small staff. Stu runs a tight ship and we have a greens meeting once every two months, which includes the lady captain, the president, the CEO and one other board member. Stu and I talk on the phone as often as required and the other board members know that if they want to put forward any suggestions they either ring me or bring it up at the monthly board meeting. In other words, they don't go to Stu!"

While most superintendents would kill for the effective communication skills that Black has honed into a fine art over many years, the sad reality is that ineffective dealings with green committee members has cost many their job. It is something that isn't taught, rather learned through experience, but Black has a few pointers for young superintendents who may be struggling with this important aspect of their role.

"Number one is to be honest in all dealings," states Black unequivocally. "Tell the truth at all times, don't be afraid to air your knowledge – hopefully you are the most qualified person in the room at these meetings – and have the confidence to state your case."



"When I was at Castle Hill, the new CEO requested that I attend the full board meeting each quarter. This was beneficial so far as I got the chance to debate any issues face to face and thus circumvent much of the misinformation that can sometimes develop when a bunch of well-meaning but unqualified members get in a room together."

"There will always be those who disagree with your point of view from time to time, but don't lose sight of the fact that you only need 51 per cent to win the argument! If you have a seven-person board, you only need four to agree with you and you should get the best result for the club!"

"I think it is also important for those superintendents who don't play golf to work at understanding the game and try to develop an interest in it. If you don't know the difference between a lateral hazard and a hazard you will leave yourself open to criticism."

"Before going into a meeting, spend some time preparing. Get your facts right so you can come from a position of knowledge. Gary Dempsey (course superintendent at NSW Golf Club) told me a beauty some time ago when a new board member, off a lower handicap than Gary, said 'I have been playing golf for 40 years and I know this...' to which Gary replied, without missing a beat, 'I have been cleaning my teeth for 50 years, but that doesn't make me a dentist!' or words to that effect."

"Another gem from another great superintendent John Odell was that when a person is making a statement that is technically or factually wrong ask them 'With what qualification do you make that statement?' This may be a bit cheeky coming from someone who has had some legendary dummy spits, but it's important not to lose your cool and certainly don't swear!"

"Most importantly, keep your sense of humour. You can disarm your harshest critic if you can make them laugh, preferably with you not at you!"

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For the second time in his career Luke Partridge (pictured inset) finds himself at Emirates Golf Club in Dubai. The South Australian has recently re-joined the crew as senior assistant golf course superintendent under director of golf course maintenance Craig Haldane

Way back in Volume 8.4 of Australian Turfgrass Management, then South Australian apprentice Luke Partridge wrote of his time on The Ohio Program. Little did he realise then that his time spent in the US would spark an international journey that nearly a decade on is still continuing.

The sprawling metropolis of Dubai provides a striking backdrop to the Emirates Golf Club



Flying the flag



In 2005 I was fortunate to be awarded a scholarship through the Australian Golfing Fellowship of Rotarians to work in the US as part of The Ohio Program administered through the Ohio State University. I was extremely lucky to receive placements at Oakmont Country Club in Pennsylvania and later Sea Island Resort in Georgia and in Volume 8.4 of Australian Turfgrass Management I recounted my time in the US in an article titled 'Mean greens and hallowed grounds'.

What I did not realise upon completion of that article and my time in the States was that it was just the beginning of a journey that has now lasted 10 years and taken me halfway around the world and back. Looking back the years have flown and from a young apprentice out of Adelaide I have now clocked up stints in not only the US but New Zealand, the Middle East and most recently China. It has been a journey of discovery both personally and professionally and one that I would not hesitate doing again.

Upon completion of The Ohio Program I was put in contact with then Kinloch Club construction superintendent Steve Marsden (now Royal Sydney GC) about a position on the construction crew at the Jack Nicklaus-designed masterpiece outside of Taupo in New Zealand. The Kinloch Club was in the early stages of construction when I arrived and having been exposed to course construction during my time at Oakmont (the 2005 course reconstruction in preparation for the 2007 US Open) I was duly put in charge of a small team responsible

for final shaping, drainage and installing bunker liner in the 200 odd bunkers that dotted the fairways.

It was no small task that took a full-time crew of 10 just over 12 months to complete. At the tender age of 21 it was my first exposure to a supervisory position, which was quite daunting, but under the guidance and direction of Steve I soon settled in and became comfortable with my newfound responsibility.

After the initial 12 months of course construction I then joined the grow-in crew where I completed a further 12 months as spray technician on a young team that had been made up of budding greenkeepers from all corners of the globe. In my two years under Steve at Kinloch we watched a patch of earth grow to become a championship golf course that was officially opened by Nicklaus himself in 2008. To see the man play the course that we had all worked so hard on was an extremely rewarding experience.

After two years in New Zealand I had a taste for course construction and headed back across the Tasman after securing a role on the construction crew at Hamilton Island Golf Club under Doug Robinson and Ben Marshall. It was here that I met and worked alongside Mark Stanley (now superintendent at Laucala Island, Fiji – see his article in ATM Volume 16.4) who is still a great friend today.

After a further 18 months on Hamilton Island I headed over to Europe to travel and see some more of the world from outside of the turf industry. This was a short-lived experience as within six months



I had landed a position as grounds manager at The Hive, London, home to the then League Two perennial cellar dwellers Barnet Football Club and the London Broncos rugby league club. The facility boasted eight hectares of rye/fescue training pitches and a 3000-seat stadium. I remained in the role for 18 months until my two-year UK working holiday visa had expired.

DESERT LURE

In April 2011 the position of assistant superintendent at Emirates Golf Club in Dubai was advertised on the AGCSA website. I was familiar with the course having watched The Dubai Desert Classic growing up and had always been blown away by the stunning backdrop and iconic clubhouse. After a lengthy interview process, I met with director of golf course maintenance Craig Haldane and within a month I found myself packing my bags bound for the Middle East.

Emirates Golf Club was the first golf course to be built in the Middle East. Designed by Karl Litten in 1988, the 'Majlis' Course at Emirates is known as the 'desert miracle', a lush green oasis in the middle of a dry arid desert. Twenty-seven years on and Emirates Golf Club is now the jewel in the crown of a sprawling metropolis and surrounded by spectacular high-rise developments. The club has a long history with the European Tour having hosted the Omega Dubai Desert Classic (ODDC) since its inception in 1989. It is also host to the Omega Dubai Ladies Masters (ODLM).



Like the city itself, the job at Emirates Golf Club was a hundred miles an hour. As well as being exposed to two professional tournaments in the space of six weeks, was the exposure to the annual overseeding process.

The annual overseeding at Emirates begins in late October, about six weeks before the ODLM. From the time the seed goes down it is all systems go. Disease pressure is high in the surprisingly high humidity of the desert particularly on the immature ryegrass seedlings making their way up through the semi-dormant 419 Bermuda stock plant. The golf course is seeded wall-to-wall except the greens, which remain TifEagle for the entire year.

Being six weeks out from the Ladies Masters, there is very little room for error. Machines are calibrated meticulously before planting, checked and then calibrated again. Wall-to-wall applications of trinexapac-ethyl and metalaxyl are not uncommon to keep the Bermuda at bay and protect the new plant from the ever-present pythium activity at that time of year.

After the Ladies Masters the push is on with the ODDC looming just weeks away. The ODDC is the longest running golf tournament on the European Tour outside of the UK and Europe. It boasts previous winners such as Tiger Woods, Ernie Els,

Partridge's Ohio Program article that appeared back in Volume 8.4 of ATM in 2006

Between June 2014 and July 2015 Partridge was course superintendent at Foshan Golf Club in southern China





Foshan Golf Club is a Tony Cashmore designed course and hosts the European Challenge Tour's Foshan Open



Shortly after arriving at Foshan, Partridge had to oversee the complete rebuild of the 10th green just months out from the 2014 Open

Working with a non-English speaking crew of 70 and just one interpreter made for some interesting times at Foshan



Seve Ballesteros and Rory McIlroy, just to name a few. The pressure of preparing the golf course for the tournament was immense.

During tournament week we would typically arrive on course by 3am. Fairway triplex mowers would be sent out to mow the morning's direction, collecting clippings along the way. The course would then be blown with a large crew of hand blowers inside the ropes from green to tee. This served the dual purpose of standing the rough up and removing the heavy morning dew from the playing corridor.

Cutting heights on the TifEagle were kept slightly below 3mm and greens were cut and rolled until the target speed was achieved. This meant stimping greens individually and giving each green the treatment it needed to maintain consistency throughout the 18 holes and practice greens. It was always a tedious task performed under extreme pressure and working only a few holes ahead of the first group certainly got the adrenaline going!

In my three years as assistant superintendent at Emirates Golf Club I was fortunate enough to be involved with seven professional events. These included three ODLMs and three ODDCs

as well as the National Bank of Oman Classic at Almouj Golf Club in Muscat, Oman, under Australian superintendent Steve Johnson. This event is the season-ending tournament on the European Challenge Tour and preceded what was soon to be the next chapter in my journey.

CHINA BOUND

In 2014, I was approached by the deputy director of agronomy for the European Tour Graeme Macniven with an opportunity to take a position as golf course superintendent at Foshan Golf Club an hour outside of Guangzhou, in southern China.

Designed by Australian course architect Tony Cashmore, the club had signed a 10-year involvement with the European Tour. Foshan Golf Club currently hosts The Foshan Open, which is the penultimate event for the European Challenge Tour's season-ending Final Swing. Held in late October, it holds a purse of \$USD 500,000 one of the highest on the European Challenge Tour.

Wanting to further extend my skills and experiences in the industry, I arrived at Foshan during a transitional period where the golf course had some agronomical issues coming out of winter. With five months remaining before hosting The Foshan Open I had to hit the ground running in regards to getting the golf course in shape while at the same time adjusting to the culture shock of life in southern China.

Upon arrival at Foshan I was aware of the agronomic issues I would encounter due to reports and discussion with Graeme. The TifEagle greens had experienced severe disease damage and shade stress through the winter, with seven of the 18 greens having between 50-75 per cent grass cover. The 10th green was particularly bad and required complete rebuilding.

I worked closely over the next few months with Cashmore Design and the European Tour to rebuild the 10th green to USGA specifications. In five months we successfully rebuilt and delivered the green in tournament condition for the Foshan Open, which was a massive achievement considering the challenges we experienced with weather in the tropical summer and the ever-present communication barrier with the staff.

We had a good run of weather coming in to the Foshan Open. The monsoonal rains had stopped and we experienced some good sunshine and warm temperatures in the two weeks leading up to the event. After discussion with tournament director Kevin Feeney and Graeme, we agreed on 11 feet as the target green speed for the week. The severe undulation on the greens meant that anything faster than 11 was going to limit pin positions and potentially slow down play.

On the Saturday and Sunday before the first practice round we cleaned off the greens with a quadruple cut at 3.2mm with brushes down and a double roll with Salsco greens rollers. After the

quadruple cut on Sunday afternoon the greens were stimping at 13.5.

This set us a good platform to work off for the rest of the week as we only required a single cut and roll each morning and an evening roll to reach the 11 feet target. In fact by Saturday and Sunday the morning roll was removed from the prep sheet as we were starting to creep over 11 feet and the greens were already firm and true.

We had achieved sufficient growth regulation in the weeks leading up to the tournament meaning we had minimal daytime growth in the plant which kept green speeds consistent and spiking non-existent. From a morning preparation perspective this took an enormous amount of pressure off, particularly for Rounds 1 and 2 with the two tee starts. The total greens area at Foshan Golf Club is a whopping 2.2 hectares and anything more than a single cut in the morning was always going to put time pressure on the operators.

With only a single cut and a roll required each morning and some overcast weather the week of the tournament, we were able to deliver an outstanding surface while putting minimal stress on the plant. The course presented well on television all week which pleased the course owners as the event doubles as a real estate sales promotion for the property development surrounding the golf course.

The Foshan Open was eventually won by Jason Palmer with a winning score of 14-under. The



modest score pleased no one more than course architect Tony Cashmore whom I had the pleasure of having alongside me for course set up for most of the week. The golf course received praise from the players and officials alike, with most agreeing that the playing surfaces were the best they had experienced all year on the Challenge Tour.

Although being involved with Emirates for the preparation of numerous tournaments filled me with a great sense of pride, The Foshan Open was particularly satisfying as it was my first tournament in charge as a golf course superintendent.



One of the many agronomic challenges Partridge faced while at Foshan was the low light intensity and its impact on the wholly Bermuda turf surfaces



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During his first stint at Emirates Golf Club between 2011 and 2014, Partridge was involved in six Omega Dubai Desert Classics and Omega Dubai Ladies Masters Tour events

There were many agronomical challenges to overcome after moving from the Middle East to southern China, but none more so than the low sunlight intensity experienced in this part of the world, particularly when managing ultradwarf Bermuda. The lack of sunlight meant that Bermuda management in China became a delicate operation, due to the slower recovery rates and weaker turf.

This is in stark contrast to Dubai where one can afford to be particularly aggressive with maintenance and renovation methods to achieve the desired results. Making the adjustment to not only my techniques but also my entire maintenance programme was a sharp learning curve and a timely reality check for a young superintendent with a point to prove.

Aside from the many agronomical challenges were the significant cultural challenges with regards to managing a Chinese crew. In the Middle East the maintenance crews are made up of mainly Filipino, Indian and Pakistani labourers, most of which have a grasp of the English language, albeit varying degrees of capability.

Working with a multi-lingual crew prepared me for China somewhat, but it was a whole different kettle of fish managing a large crew of 70 staff with only one interpreter whose English was not great. The language barrier was particularly frustrating

during the tournament when decisions needed to be made quickly and instructions given sometimes at the last minute. It certainly made for some interesting use of body language!

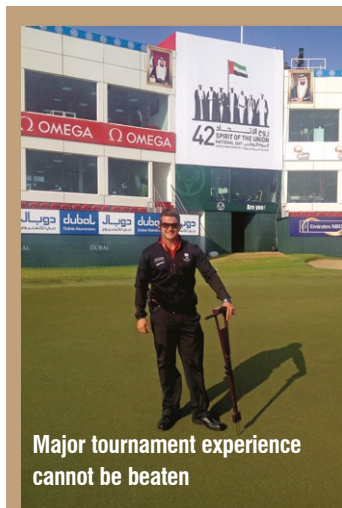
HEADING BACK

For a number of reasons my partner and I have recently decided to return to Dubai where we both have a strong network of friends and better access to basic amenities, such as western supermarkets and decent internet access to name just a couple. These simple necessities, easily taken for granted, are the types of things that have made life difficult outside of work, particularly for my partner who has been extremely patient and supportive over the past 12 months!

An opportunity has presented itself for me to rejoin Emirates Golf Club in a more senior role underneath Craig Haldane (director of golf course maintenance) and as I pen this I am winging my way back to the Middle East. It is an exciting time in Dubai for the growth of golf and Emirates Golf Club Management Company. Dubai Golf is at the forefront of development of the game in the region and it was an opportunity too exciting to turn down. It also helps to maintain a connection with the European Tour and tournament preparation, which is where my true passion lies and where I see my career involvement in the future.

My career to date has been anything but traditional, but I feel I have achieved a lot and having just turned 30 still have plenty to offer to the turf industry. I have been lucky in my career thus far to work with and learn from some influential golf course superintendents and agronomists such as John Zimmers (Oakmont), Berry Collett (Sea Island), Steve Marsden (RSGC), Doug Robinson, Craig Haldane (Emirates) and Graeme Macniven (European Tour).

Craig and Graeme in more recent times have been my biggest influencers and they have showed faith in me and been very supportive through the good times and the bad. And that's perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the journey to date – the people you meet and friendships you make. 🙏



Major tournament experience cannot be beaten

A DECADE OF VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED

Having spent the best part of a decade forging a career overseas, South Australian Luke Partridge is well placed to proffer some advice to those making their first forays into the turf management industry. ATM asked him to come up with five tips that young greenkeepers should consider as they look to develop their careers.

Do an international internship: Even if you don't want to forge an entire career overseas, the networking and experiences gained will prove invaluable wherever you end up. The Ohio Program is the most popular for young Aussies.

Do what is right for you: If you spend all your time trying to please everybody else you will never be happy.

It's a big world but it's a very small industry: Don't burn your bridges; you never know what is around the next corner.

Volunteer for a tournament: The adrenaline of being involved in a professional golf tournament is something that every young greenkeeper should experience.

Be humble enough to ask questions: The day you think you know everything is the day you need to look for a new career.

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Assessment by John Neylan

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Averages	4/02/2015	
	Quality	Turf Density
Penn A4	4.7	5.0
Penn G2	5.0	4.5
Mackenzie	4.3	3.7
Crystal Blue Links	5.0	4.0
Pure Distinction	7.3	7.3
Pure Select	6.7	6.7
LSD (P<0.05)	2.9	3.2

TESTIMONIAL

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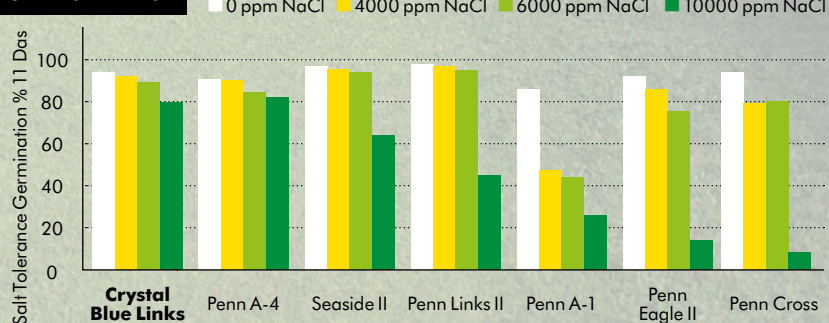
Crystal Blue Links is a great variety featuring very good drought tolerance for a bent as well as good shade tolerance. A great choice for our cool season fairways and tees given the extreme conditions we face in the ACT."

ANDREW BOYLE, SUPERINTENDENT – ROYAL CANBERRA GOLF COURSE

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Infiltration rate measurements are taken during John Neylan's recently completed sand types project

Sand types and the influence of turf



ATM columnist

John Neylan

provides a final

summary of his recently

completed sand types

project and picks out

highlights from the recent

31st Australian Turfgrass

Conference in the Hunter

Valley.

In ATM Volumes 16.5, 16.6 and 17.3, I have detailed a research project undertaken where the characteristics of different sand types have been assessed, particularly where it relates to surface hardness, moisture characteristics and, most recently, the influence of a vegetation cover.

While the sand by itself has a profound effect on the hardness of the surface and the rate at which the soil moisture content changes, it does not necessarily influence the hardness of the surface when there is a vegetation cover. Once there is a cover of grass it is more about the control of thatch, soil moisture and the rate of drying. The grass cover has a major overriding influence on the dynamics of moisture and hardness with regular sand dustings being critical in mitigating the effects of vegetation accumulation.

At the completion of the bentgrass/sand trial, the infiltration rate was measured and the pots destructively sampled so that root depth, thatch depth and organic matter could be measured. The infiltration rate was measured with and without solid tining (Table 1, opposite page).

At the October 2014 assessment date there was a significant reduction in the infiltration rate

due to the development of the vegetation cover. Interestingly the bent-dust treatment had a relatively low infiltration rate which was similar to the non-dust treatment. Upon examining the turf more closely it appeared that even with regular dusting there were thin layers formed that could be disrupting water movement.

In June 2015, the infiltration rate was measured following the solid tining of the treatments about four weeks earlier. The treatments were solid tined because the non-dust treatment was becoming waterlogged at the surface which was affecting the health and growth of the bentgrass. In order to maintain consistency in the treatments, all pots were solid tined. The results in Table 1 demonstrate the importance of regular aeration as a means of maintaining an adequate infiltration rate.

Maximum root depth, thatch depth and organic matter content were measured (Table 2, opposite page) and the organic matter was determined by high-temperature combustion (Dumas method). There was a significant difference in thatch depth with the bent-dust treatment having significantly greater thatch depth compared to the non-dust treatment.

TABLE 1: INFILTRATION RATE WITH AND WITHOUT SOLID TINING

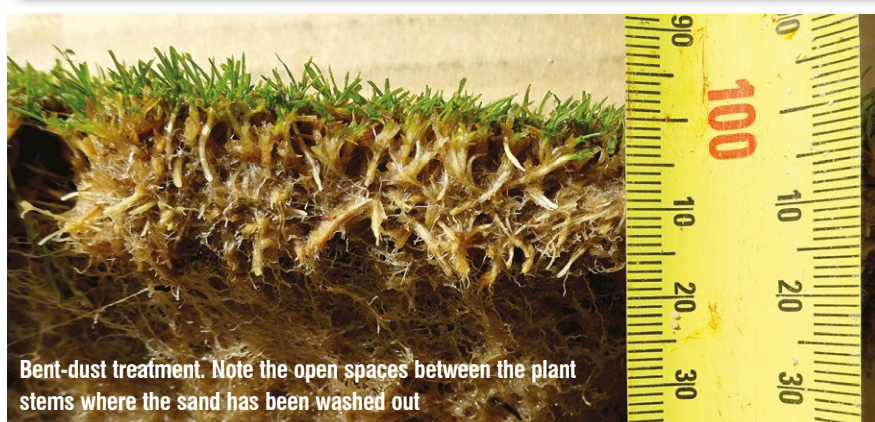
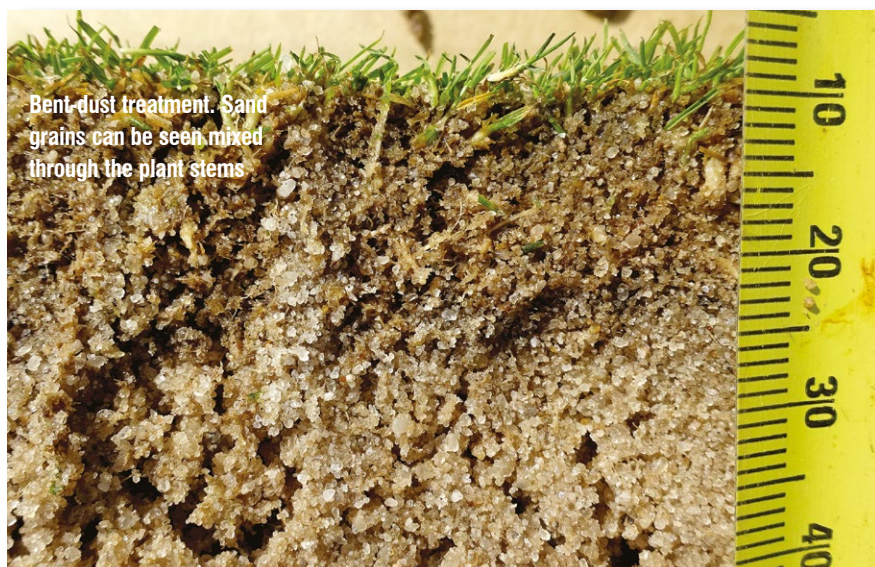
Grass	Infiltration rate (mm/hr) Oct 2014	Infiltration rate after solid tining Jun 2015
Nil	972	396
Grass only	117	285
Grass/dust	73	318
LSD (P<0.05)	238	NS
Sand		
FS	316	288
MS	458	378
LSD (P<0.05)	SIG	NS

TABLE 2: THATCH DEPTH, MAXIMUM ROOT DEPTH AND ORGANIC MATTER

Grass	Thatch depth (cm)	Max. Root depth (cm)	Organic matter (%)
Grass only	1.2	25.5	0.44
Grass/dust	2.0	26.3	0.67
LSD (P<0.05)	SIG	NS	SIG
Sand			
FS	1.6	26.0	0.61
MS	1.6	25.8	0.50
LSD (P<0.05)	NS	NS	NS

On close examination of the thatch it was obvious that as the sand is applied it encourages upright shoots to develop with the sand in between. The thatch in the non-dust treatment, which was not as deep as the dusting treatment, consisted of a solid mass of organic matter and was very 'sludgy' in character (see photos right). The % organic matter of the dusting treatments was significantly greater than the non-dusting treatment and reflects the greater depth of thatch.

There was no significant difference in root depth with all treatments and sand types having a root system that was as deep as the sand layer and generally growing into the gravel layer. The roots were white, healthy and dense (see photo page 32). Again this partially reflects growing plants in pots without any of the stresses and strains caused by compaction, traffic and maintenance activities.





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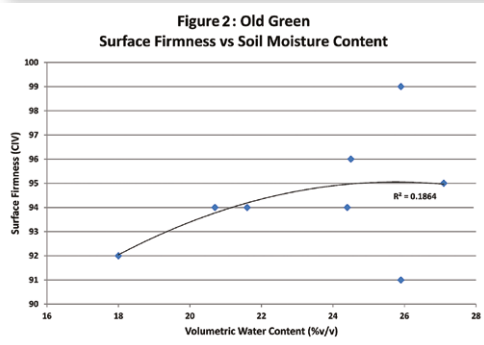
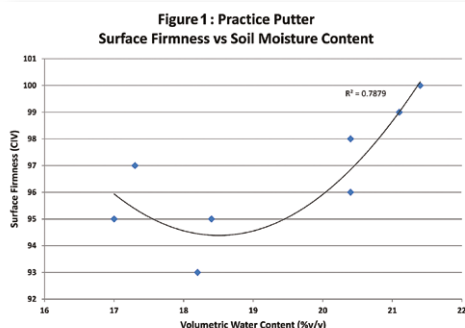
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Typical root growth. Note the depth and density

Figures 1 and 2: Surface firmness vs soil moisture content for the practice putter (Figure 1, top) and old green (Figure 2, bottom). An R^2 value close to 1 demonstrates a 'perfect' relationship. In the case of the practice putter, the R^2 value is 0.7879 which demonstrates that the relationship is moderately strong whereas on the old green the relationship is very weak



PUTTING GREEN PERFORMANCE

As part of these studies I decided to determine the changes in surface hardness and soil moisture content on in-play putting greens. A warm (maximum temp. 33°C) and windy day was selected where the surface hardness and soil moisture content were measured every hour over an 8-10 hour period. The purpose was to see how the golf greens performed compared to the pot trials. The data for two sites is presented as an example of the performance characteristics (Figures 1 and 2 above).

A golf green that was about 20 years old with a significant organic layer was compared against a relatively young practice putter that had been regularly dusted since construction. The relationship between soil moisture content and surface firmness can be summarised as follows;

- All greens have their own particular relationship between moisture and firmness.
- As the green gets drier it goes past peak firmness and actually becomes 'softer'. This is either due to the sand becoming a little shifty or the organic matter becomes less resilient to ball impact as it dries out.
- The practice putter had a reasonable relationship between firmness and moisture content (Figure 1) and reflects the younger age of the green and there being less organic matter. The curve is quite similar for the pot trial tests on different sand types.
- On the older green the relationship between firmness and moisture content was considerably less consistent and predictable (Figure 2). However, the data indicated that the soil does not need to be dry for the surface to be firm.
- The data from all of the greens indicate that the sand/turf does not necessarily have to be dry to be at its firmest.

With the soil moisture content, the following observations were made;

- Overall there was not a dramatic drop in soil moisture content.
- The organic matter content slows the rate of dry down.

CONCLUSIONS

In summing up all of the trials that have been undertaken and the data collected, the following conclusions can be made;

- All sands have characteristics peculiar to that sand in terms of hardness and moisture release.
- Sands that have some fine soil particles tend to produce a harder surface.
- The proportion of fines (i.e.: <0.05mm fraction) is the best indicator of what sand type will provide the firmest surface with about 3-4% by weight being the point where the firmest surface can be achieved while maintaining adequate porosity. In addition, the proportion of fine (0.15 – 0.25mm) and very fine sand (0.05 – 0.15mm) in combination with the silt plus clay fraction also affects surface firmness.
- The sands with no fines have maximum surface hardness when the moisture content is near field capacity.
- While the data points towards firmer surfaces using finer sands, there still remains the issue of low infiltration rates and excessive moisture retention.
- In perched water table greens where the thatch levels are well controlled, there is a case to be made for keeping the underlying sand at a higher moisture content. In discussions with a number of golf course superintendents, there is the practicality of being able to completely wet up profiles in terms of the volume of water required and the impact it can have on bunkers and surrounds.

- Regular light irrigations only keep the surface damp and potentially soft with a very dry and potentially less stable sand beneath.
- The turf cover quickly has an influence on the firmness of the surface.
- The grass cover has a major overriding influence on the dynamics of moisture and hardness with regular sand dustings being critical in mitigating the effect of vegetation accumulation.
- As the organic matter (thatch) content increases it has a buffering effect on the rate of change in soil moisture content.
- As with the different sands, each green and how it reacts to moisture has its own peculiarities. This is dependent on thatch depth, sand type, microclimate, shape of green and the evenness of irrigation.
- Greens preparation probably has a short-term effect on firmness. Rolling and mowing most likely draws moisture to the surface which can reduce the firmness early in the day.
- Maintaining the infiltration rate is critical in being able to control soil moisture content at or near the surface.

HUNTER VALLEY CONFERENCE

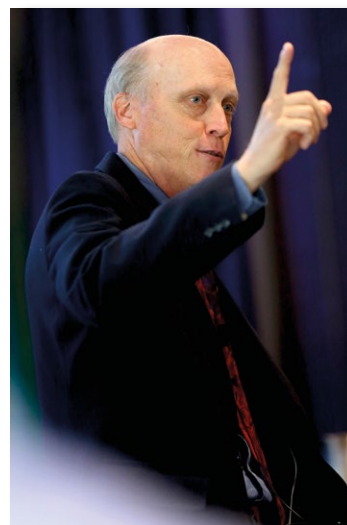
Once again I was delighted to be able to attend and present at the recent 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition held in the Hunter Valley. Anytime that you attend a conference there

is always something to learn and to ponder and from my perspective there were a number of presentations that had me thinking and motivating me to find out more.

The presentation by Dr. Jack Fry on 'Stress management strategies for maintaining quality turf' provided a lot of food for thought. There were several key issues that resonated with me with the most compelling being the importance of plant health. Seems incredibly simple, but often we are so focused on surface performance we forget the one factor that makes it possible to produce a high quality surface – a healthy and resilient turf.

Friend and colleague Daryl Sellar in his recent Turfwise Consulting blog noted: "I often find matters get complicated when looking for the 'silver bullet' that will ease the complexity of turf stress management" (<http://www.turfwise.com.au/turf-stress-management>). As Daryl went on to write "the truth is, there isn't one". The message from Dr. Fry was that the best turf management practices are those based on the simple, basic principles of plant health.

We constantly see the search for the 'silver bullet' within the industry as turf managers desperately seek a quick fix solution as to why the turf isn't performing. In particular there is a tidal wave of products that will fix it all. As I have noted on other occasions and so well-articulated by Dr. Fry, the failure of turf to perform can on most occasions



Dr Jack Fry emphasised the overarching importance of plant health and getting back to basics



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MCG arena operations manager Tony Gordon's presentation on his career demonstrated why is one of Australia's leading curators

be linked to readily identifiable factors including soil compaction, excess thatch, shade, poor air movement, traffic and poor irrigation coverage and inadequate drainage. From my experience these have usually been identified, however, the disbelief from players can often lead turf managers into searching for the magic elixir.

Dr. Fry rated many of the stress factors and management actions that can be taken on a scale of one to 10 and the key ones were all of the obvious ones that really make a difference. That is, improving light penetration, increasing air movement, increasing cutting heights, managing water and the overarching aim of improving root health (See Dr Fry's article in ATM Vol 17.3 - 'Root of happiness', pages 44-46). The 'muck and mystery' potions were those that rated lowly.

Listening to Dr. Fry and discussing issues with golf course superintendents and turf managers it further confirmed in my mind the importance of benchmarking. Facts and figures are irrefutable. They eliminate the uninformed comment and the 'Google expert' (except for the absolute ignorant). One particular useful example of where this data collection could be useful to turf managers would be to measure the effective sunlight and wind speed in a heavily shaded and protected environment versus an open area. This evidence could just be the proof required to demonstrate the challenges of less than ideal environments.

THE MODERN DAY TURF MANAGER

The presentation that impressed me most at the conference came from Melbourne Cricket Ground arena operations manager Tony Gordon. Tony, or 'Flash' as he is known throughout the industry, is the epitome of the modern day turf manager and I would recommend his presentation to any aspiring turf manager.

His has been an interesting journey in turf management, from working on golf courses in his native Iowa, USA to managing the outfield of one of

the biggest sporting arenas in the world. There were several key messages that resonated throughout his talk, including;

- Hard work generates rewards and builds experience.
- Have a strong work ethic and be responsible.
- Take full advantage of the opportunities presented to you no matter how mundane.
- All the people you work with may have an experience that you can learn from – don't discount anyone.
- Being organised and working within a structure makes you a better person.
- Doing a university degree makes you more rounded because it often exposes you to the things that take you out of your comfort zone.
- Look for mentors and prospective employers that will help to nurture your ambitions and help to train you.
- Work on an 'extra skill' that can set you apart in the work place. In Gordon's case he could speak Spanish which allowed him to better communicate with the staff.
- Invest in yourself – undertake additional courses and training throughout your working life.

POA, POA, POA

And finally, as a person that has been interested in *Poa annua* for over 30 years, I was fascinated by the presentation from Laura Williams (University of New England/Australian Antarctic Division). Her PhD research project on the ecology and control of *Poa annua* on Macquarie Island really hit home just what an incredibly hardy and opportunistic plant it is.

Poa annua is the most widespread weed in the sub-Antarctic region and on Macquarie Island it colonises disturbed sites and competes with native vegetation. Williams' research has investigated the seed bank dynamics and the competitive ability of *Poa annua* as well as mechanisms for its control through in situ physical disturbance trials and ex situ herbicide selectivity trials.

The research findings have strong parallels with our experiences with *Poa annua* in Australia. The key findings that we can relate to are the high seed numbers, the opportunistic nature of the weed to invade bare ground and the resistance to some of the commonly used herbicides.

Macquarie Island is in the Australian sub-Antarctic and the climate can be described as cold. In mid-winter the average maximum temperature is 4.9°C and rises to a 'balmy' 8.8°C in January. The amount of sunshine appears to be lacking with 0.8 daily sunshine hours in July to 3.7 in January. The weather data indicates a very cloudy environment with 21-25 cloudy days every month of the year. If all of this isn't tough enough the island is extremely windy!

I look at this information and it just reconfirms the challenges turf managers face when having to deal with turf's worst and most ubiquitous 'weed'. 🌱

Laura Williams' presentation on the ecology and control of *Poa annua* on Macquarie Island was a reminder of just how ubiquitous and adaptable the species is





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Dr Joe Vargas, Michigan State University



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In recent years TIO Traeger Park Oval in Alice Springs has hosted two AFL Premiership matches, including the 2015 Indigenous Round fixture between Melbourne and Port Adelaide

Red centre's green tinge

AGCSATech agronomist
Andrew Peart takes a look
at two of Alice Springs'
major sporting facilities
– Traeger Park and Alice
Springs Golf Club.

Alice Springs, or otherwise simply known as 'Alice', is situated nearly exactly half way between Adelaide and Darwin and is the geographic centre of Australia. The township is nestled to the north of the renowned MacDonnell Ranges and straddles the Todd River which is a dry sand bed for much of the year and hosts the annual Henley-on-Todd Regatta, the only dry river regatta in the world.

The climate in Alice Springs is challenging to say the least with its average maximum temperature in summer being 35.6°C and having an average minimum winter temperature of only 5.1°C. The highest and lowest recorded temperatures though are 49.2°C recorded on 6 January 2006 with the lowest of -7.5°C recorded back on 17 July 1976.

Alice's average rainfall is only 282mm, however in 2009 it received just 77mm for the year. True to form, the following year it received ten times that amount – 770mm. In March 1988 it received its record daily rain event of 204.8mm.

While Alice Springs has a rich sporting history, many of its iconic sporting events are not traditional sporting events as such. Among them, as mentioned, is the Henley-on-Todd Regatta, while the Camel Cup is held in July at Blatherskite Park, the only purpose-built camel racing venue in Australia. The Finke Desert Race, held annually over the Queen's Birthday weekend, runs from Alice Springs to the Finke community before returning the following day, a round trip of nearly 500 kilometres.

TRAERGER PARK

The Traeger Park sporting complex is the main sporting precinct in Alice Springs and hosts a number of sports ranging from tennis, swimming, hockey, baseball, basketball, cricket and football to name just a few.

TIO Traeger Park Oval is the main ground within the precinct. It is constructed from local sand, has no subsurface drainage and is grassed with kikuyu, although the wicket block is Santa Ana couchgrass grown on black clay sourced from Darwin. The outfield is watered with bore water that is of poor quality, being high in salinity, sodium, bicarbonates and pH. The wicket table, however, is watered with potable water.

Traeger Park Oval has a capacity of 10,000, although there is very little seating with the one single grandstand, the Bowden McAdam Grandstand, which was opened in July 2006, having a seating capacity of just 240, although it is complemented by a natural seating bowl around the majority of the ground.

In recent years the ground has hosted two AFL Premiership matches following a sponsorship agreement between NT Tourism and the Melbourne Football Club. This year it hosted the Indigenous Round fixture between Melbourne and Port Adelaide.

While the playing surface of the ground is generally in very good condition, it does require more attention to detail in the lead up to not only the AFL Premiership matches but also the NAB





TIO Traeger Park is constructed from local sand, has no subsurface drainage and is grassed with kikuyu. The wicket block is Santa Ana couchgrass grown on black clay sourced from Darwin

Challenge games and the Indigenous All Stars game (held in 2013), which are generally held during very hot weather in Alice. While the water quality is poor, as previously mentioned, the irrigation uniformity is also less than ideal meaning a large amount of hand watering is required to unify the playing surface not only in terms of colour but also surface hardness.

With an abundance of water being applied to counteract the hot weather, the growth of the kikuyu can be quite prolific and ensuring the surface is not too spongy requires careful management which needs to be implemented from spring onwards. In the last couple of years the ground has also received some thorough topdressings which has assisted in not only providing a smoother surface with less undulations, but also assisted with firming the surface by integrating some sand through the organic matter accumulation.

The last complicating factor in the lead up to the NAB Challenge games is softening the wicket table and providing a complete grass coverage following the annual Imparja Cup. While irrigating will soften the wicket, it takes additional time and effort for the groundstaff due to the high levels of evaporation. The short turnaround time generally means that the popping creases are normally turf doctored to provide a complete grass coverage.

Apart from these AFL fixtures, the ground hosts a number of football fixtures during the year with the Central Australian Football League, formed in 1947, having a number of teams and divisions. Apart from the regular local competition, the ground also hosts a major football carnival over Easter and in total up to 140 games of football are played at the venue during winter.

The ground does not receive any respite during the summer when cricket is played. It plays host to the local competition and during February the annual Imparja Cup Cricket Carnival is held. This is Australia's National Indigenous Cricket Carnival and includes teams from each state and territory with Western Australia the current trophy holders.

Traeger Park Oval should also hold special significance for those supporters of Victorian cricket

with the venue hosting two of Victoria's Sheffield Shield fixtures in the 2014/15 season due to the unavailability of the Melbourne Cricket Ground which had 2015 Cricket World Cup commitments. Victoria won both of those 'home' matches enabling them to finish on top of the Shield table and thus host the final.

Traeger Park Oval has also played host to international cricket with the most recent match a two-day tour match between an England XI and a Chairman's XI in November 2013. The ground was presented in a magnificent fashion under blue skies in the shadows of the MacDonnell Ranges.

The ground has a six wicket block which is to be reconstructed at the end of this year to remove significant organic matter accumulation as well as slightly shorten the length of the entire table. It will be raised by about 75mm from its current height to ensure no water runs onto the table from the surrounding outfield. The outfield turf is kikuyu and is well maintained throughout the year, although as all kikuyu grounds are it can be susceptible to becoming a little spongy if not given a thorough scarification throughout the growing season.

ALICE SPRINGS GOLF CLUB

As well as hosting a heavy schedule of cricket and

Designed and constructed by Thomson and Wolveridge in the early 1980's, Alice Springs Golf Club boasts large tees, rolling fairways and well bunkered greens set against the stunning natural backdrop of the MacDonnell Ranges





Above right: The Alice Springs greens are Tifdwarf couchgrass cut at a height of 2.4mm, while the tees and fairways are saltwater couch (*Paspalum vaginatum*) cut at 6mm and 14mm respectively

Above: Alice Springs ranks among the top 100 golf courses in Australia

Below right: Alice Springs Golf Club is maintained by a small staff of four

Below: Given the desert environment there is naturally a huge reliance on irrigation with the golf club using 1.3 megalitres of water each night through the summer months



AFL, Alice Springs is also home to Alice Springs Golf Club which is not only in the top 100 golf courses within Australia but also in the top 10 desert golf courses in the world.

It was designed and constructed by Thomson and Wolveridge in the early 1980's and boasts large tees, rolling fairways and well bunkered greens set against the stunning natural backdrop of the MacDonnell Ranges. The front nine is quite undulating, weaving its way through the local housing estate, whereas the back nine is much flatter and backs onto Lasseters Casino and Double Tree Hilton hotel.

As well as the magnificent backdrop of the MacDonnell Ranges, the course is also highlighted by the beauty of the white trunked ghost gums which are scattered throughout the course, none more obvious than the two magnificent specimens on the 17th hole.

The greens are Tifdwarf couchgrass cut at a height of 2.4mm. The tees are saltwater couch (*Paspalum vaginatum*) cut at 6mm, while the fairways are also saltwater couch cut at 14mm. Unfortunately there has been a large proportion of kikuyu which has invaded the fairways over time, which is difficult to selectively control and given its area is now unfeasible to non-selectively control. The kikuyu is lighter in colour, broader in the leaf and does not provide nearly the same quality as the saltwater couch as a playing surface and in addition is also susceptible to damage from cockatoos and galahs.

Given the desert environment there is naturally a huge reliance on irrigation to keep the playing surfaces in good nick. As mentioned earlier, Alice

Springs receives on average very little rainfall, with the vast majority falling in the months of November to March. This year, as an example, the course received around 195mm during January, but only received 5mm from February to May!

On average Alice Springs Golf Club utilises 1.3 megalitres of water each night through the summer months, reducing that usage to 800-900 kilolitres during the winter. Generally the greens, tees and green surrounds are watered on the same night, alternating with fairways.

The quality of the bore water is quite poor with salinity readings around the 2000ppm, with very high levels of sodium and chloride. The quality of the water can vary depending on the amount of water recharged into the aquifer, however, it would never be described as ideal.

The irrigation dam is fed from two bores on the property with one affectionately named 'Piggly Wiggly' bore. In total both bores only produce around 17 litres per second which is quite low yielding given the quantity of water that must be supplied on a daily basis.

The course is maintained by a small staff of four with a resident mechanic, although it does use the services of a couple of volunteers a couple of times a week to conduct duties such as bunker raking.

The course hosts the Men's and Women's NT Amateur Championships on an annual basis although it alternates either event with Darwin Golf Club. In addition to the major amateur event, it also hosts the Alice Springs Open which this year celebrated its 30th anniversary.

It has previously hosted both the Australian Boys and Girls Amateur Championships, in which Andrius Belkus shot a course record 66 in 2009. The previous course record holder for boys was Adam Scott who shot a 67 in 1997, when he won the event in the only other year it was held in Alice Springs. 🍷

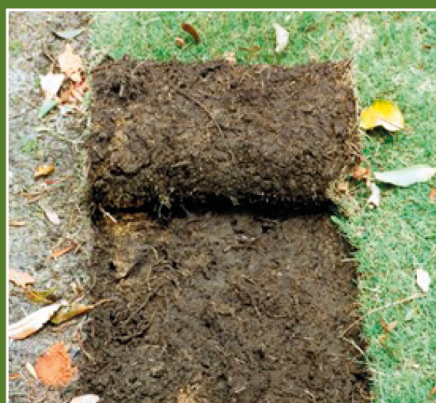


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A visibly emotional Mal Caddies courageously recounted his battles with melanoma which has transformed his life over the past 12 months. It was one of the most powerful presentations of the 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference and one which resonated with many in attendance



For the first time in its history the Australian Turfgrass Conference ventured to the Hunter Valley in late June. ATM looks back at some of the highlights of the week that was at Crowne Plaza.



Mal Caddies looked to the heavens and tried to regain his composure, but deep down he knew it was an exercise in futility. In the lead-up to his presentation on the opening day of the 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference in the Hunter Valley, the Suncorp Stadium curator had thought he would be able to control the range of emotions that he would no doubt be feeling, but as soon as he stood in front of the lectern the tumultuous ride that he has been on over the past 12 months all came flooding back instantaneously.

Fighting back the tears, his opening line will be one that delegates who made the effort to attend will likely never forget. "Today, a year ago, I was told by a doctor I was going to die." Indeed, exactly one year to the day, as his mates and industry colleagues were enjoying the 2014 conference on the Gold Coast, Caddies was being told he had Stage 4 melanoma and that the prognosis was that bleak he needed to get his affairs in order. That set in motion what has been a life-changing 12 months for him and his family, one which over 13 short, yet powerful minutes Caddies recounted with great courage, leaving many in the room speechless.

Fortunately for Caddies, despite the absolute nadir he felt all those months ago, the days, weeks and months since then have been nothing but positive. His surgery was successful, he is now on a

trial of a clinical drug to help prevent the melanoma from reoccurring and is back at work doing the job he loves. But as he was at pains to point out, he has, to date, been one of the lucky ones and by no means is the battle over yet.

Just as his opening line had hit everyone between the eyes, his parting advice was as equally as blunt and to the point – "For heaven's sake get checked, because you don't want to be here. It sucks!" With that resonating through the minds of those in attendance, a visibly emotional Caddies thanked everyone, apologised and as he walked off the stage everyone in the room stood and applauded him.

Caddies' presentation quickly became the talk of the week in what is being described as one of the most compelling and enlightening men's health sessions ever staged at the annual conference. The AGCSA has always made a point of focussing on men's health issues in recent years, whether physical or mental, and although skin cancer has been discussed in the past, never before had delegates heard directly from those who have suffered the trauma and fallout from this insidious disease.

It was gripping stuff and complementing Caddies were former superintendent turned Nuturf territory manager Scott Harris, who talked about

Hunter hits the mark



WORDS AND PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

his recent battles, and Jo Crotty, whose incredible personal journey with skin cancer also hit home with delegates just how tenuous life can be.

In 2009, Crotty laid to rest her husband Rohan, father of their four boys then aged five, four, two and one, after he lost his battle with melanoma. A construction worker originally from Victoria, Rohan moved to Queensland in the mid-90s and in 1998 had a mole removed from the back of his leg following a routine skin check. He subsequently met Jo, they married, had two kids not long after and in 2006 it was while playing with them that Rohan discovered a lump in his right groin.

Although removed successfully, it was a malignant melanoma which was traced back to the mole he had removed earlier. With no other treatment available at the time, the Crotty's carried on with life and had two more children. However, 18 months on Rohan developed a pain in his back that wouldn't go away and on New Year's Eve 2008 he was told his melanoma had metastasised (spread) throughout his body. He was given three months to live. He lasted seven. He was just 43 when he died.

After his initial diagnosis, Rohan made it his crusade to help develop a melanoma awareness and prevention programme for the construction industry. Since his passing Jo has picked up the baton and continued this important work with

the establishment of the 'Danger, Sun Overhead' programme. Danger, Sun Overhead is an education programme for outdoor industry workers promoting prevention, awareness and early detection of skin cancer. Some 25,000 people have benefitted from the programme in their workplaces with countless lives saved through early intervention and detection.

Crotty's 50 minute presentation delved into all aspects of skin cancer awareness and prevention and finished with a quite remarkable video titled 'How the sun sees you'. The video is shot using an ultraviolet camera that shows up not-yet-visible changes to the skin caused by sun exposure and how sunscreen protects you from ultraviolet radiation. The video shows all types of people – male, female, different ages and races – however, it's the closing frames which are the most sobering. They show a seemingly fresh-faced, pale-skinned teenage girl laughing and smiling, yet as the UV camera tracks across her face it highlights hauntingly and graphically just how different her skin actually looks.

Whether it was that or the personal accounts from Crotty, Caddies and Harris, the Danger, Sun Overhead stand that was a part of the 2015 Australian Turfgrass Conference Trade Exhibition on the Wednesday and Thursday was one of the busiest. Delegates were able to book in to have a five-minute skin cancer check, with skin specialists from nearby Newcastle conducting some 80 checks over the two days. And for a couple of delegates it may well have been life-saving.

"I really appreciated the support and opportunity the AGCSA gave me to attend and present at the conference," says Crotty. "It was a very successful two days on the Danger, Sun Overhead stand. On the Wednesday, with Dr Tony Azzi, we saw 45 attendees with 18 needing further treatment. On the Thursday, with Dr Alistair Lillyman, we saw 35 attendees with nine needing further treatment. That is a great outcome for early diagnosis. Statistics show that one in 17 will be diagnosed with melanoma and the checks did find one possible melanoma, maybe two until further investigations are made.



Jo Crotty, from the Danger, Sun Overhead programme, espoused the importance of regular skin checks and the obligation of sun exposure in the workplace



The ever-popular and ever-mercurial Dave Bancroft-Turner returned to repeat his political intelligence workshop and also conduct highly thought-provoking workshops on changing behaviour and change management in the workplace



"It was great to be able to present to the delegates on the Tuesday and help them learn more about sun exposure in the workplace and especially having Scott and Mal share their own stories. In saying that, I really would like to make a point about the benefit of bringing the Danger, Sun Overhead programme to workplaces, the WH&S obligation of sun exposure in the workplace and, especially with the outcome of the skin checks we conducted at the conference, the importance of early detection of melanoma and other skin cancers."

HUNTER VALLEY IMPRESSES

That opening plenary session set the tone for what proved to be yet another highly successful Australian Turfgrass Conference, one which for the first time headed to the famous Hunter Valley wine region. Crowne Plaza, complete with its recently constructed convention centre which played host to the two-day trade exhibition, provided a perfect venue with more than 600 industry practitioners attending across the week in various capacities.



Scott Harris joined Caddies in recounting his personal battles with skin cancer which saw the recent removal of a growth from his right eyelid

A total of 248 fully registered and day delegates enjoyed a very rounded education programme which boasted three international speakers, a rarity for the smaller regional format conference. After speaking at the New Zealand Fine Turf Seminar the week before, Kansas State University agronomic expert Dr Jack Fry headlined in the Hunter, conducting an all-day workshop sponsored by Jacobsen on the Monday. Looking at stress management strategies for maintaining quality turf, the workshop attracted in excess of 90, while his final presentation on the Thursday – When the rules of golf and course maintenance collide – took delegates out onto the golf course for what was one of the highlights of the week.

The ever-popular and ever-mercurial Welshman (don't call him English!) Dave Bancroft-Turner returned to repeat his political intelligence workshop that wowed delegates on the Gold Coast last year. In addition to this he also conducted new, highly thought-provoking workshops throughout the week on changing behaviour and change management which again challenged delegates to think outside the square in dealing with people in the workplace.

Dr Fry and Bancroft-Turner were joined by fellow international guest speaker and former GCSAA president Bruce Williams, the latter teaming with Daryl Sellar to take the two Taking the Next Step workshops, one for superintendents and the other for aspiring assistant superintendents.

Both the golf and sportsfield streams also heard from a wide variety of home grown speakers with plenty of highlights throughout the week. The Golf stream kicked off on Wednesday with Simon Muller and Graeme Grant discussing two of the industry's most talked about golf course developments at present – Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes on King Island.

That was followed later in the day by Dr Percy Wong who provided an update on his work into Fairway Patch, or Black Fungus 1. Since his initial

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46



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TM

Newcastle Golf Club was the stage for the anointing of a new Toro Red Jacket holder following what was a brutal 2015 Toro AGCSA Golf Championship. Played in brilliant conditions after what can only be described as a horrid build-up weather wise for host superintendent Matthew Goodbun, four-handicapper Chris Burgess fired a five-over 77 to win by a stroke and collect his maiden Toro Red Jacket.

The Yarrowonga Mulwala Golf Resort superintendent was consistent all day, shooting nines of 39 and 38 to pip Brett Woodward (Armidale Golf Club) and Bryan Kelly (Queanbeyan Golf Club) who both posted 78s. Woodward, playing off +3 and who was runner-up in the 2013 championship at Twin Waters, was looking in good form early with two birdies on the 2nd and 5th, however a costly double bogey on 17, the number one ranked hole on the course, ultimately put paid to his chances. Likewise for Kelly, a 1 marker, a horror 7 on the par five 4th would prove costly. Glenn Gibson-Smith (Riverside Oaks) also started off with a hiss and a roar with three birdies in his first four holes but foundered later in the round to close out with an 83.

The win came as a surprise not only for Burgess but also his wife, who refused to believe him when he phoned her to tell her the good news. Burgess will now go on to represent the AGCSA at the 2016 GCSAA Golf Championships to be held as part of the Golf Industry Show in San Diego next February.

In Volume 17.3 of Australian Turfgrass Management host superintendent Goodbun had commented that he was hoping for some good weather to assist in preparing the Newcastle surfaces for the 80-strong field. Having already copped 400-plus mm culminating with the devastating storms in late April, the six weeks leading into the 2015 Toro AGCSA Golf Championships saw another 200m fall, hampering Goodbun's efforts significantly.

Despite the wet conditions underfoot and a tee up rule on some holes due to the waterlogged conditions of some lower lying areas such as the 17th, Goodbun certainly ensured his course was set up to championship conditions. Playing off the blue tips, Newcastle proved to be a very tough and tight test at 6322m – two of the par threes, the 3rd and 16th, topped out at 216m and 214m respectively – and only five players would end up shooting 80 or better.

Perhaps there was some reasoning behind Goodbun's tough set up as he ended up, somewhat sheepishly, claiming the stableford prize after posting a very respectable 35 points. Goodbun used his local knowledge to beat home Royal Sydney's Adam Marchant and Hurstville Council's Adam Lewis who both posted 33s.

Newly crowned 2015 Toro AGCSA Golf Championship victor Chris Burgess from Yarrowonga Mulwala Golf Resort with AGCSA president Peter Lonergan and Toro's Mark Johnson



Burgess sees red

Chris Burgess joined the ranks of the Toro Red Jacket brigade after prevailing in the 2015 AGCSA Golf Championship at Newcastle Golf Club.



For the second time in five years the ACT collected state bragging rights, narrowly ousting defending champions Queensland. The ACT team of Andrew Boyle (Royal Canberra GC), Bryan Kelly, David Thomson (Bermagui CC) and Pat Wilson (Pambula-Merimbula GC) posted a combined 89 points while the Queenslanders, consisting of Paul McLean (Sanctuary Cove G&CC), Jason Bushell (Rowes Bay GC), Duncan Lamont (Surfers Paradise) and Mark Gahan (Redcliffe GC), finished one shy with 88.

The nearest the pin prize on the 12th went to Nick Kinley (Hartfield CC), while Bonville Resort's Aaron Banks secured the longest drive with a long bomb down the 13th. Effervescent former Australian Test bowler Max Walker stole the show following the golf as he regaled the field afterwards with tales of his days wearing the baggy green which he happily posed for photos in. The final standings were:

Stroke

- **77:** Chris Burgess (4, Yarrawonga Mulwala Golf Resort, NSW).
- **78:** Brett Woodward (+3, Armidale GC, NSW) and Bryan Kelly (1, Queanbeyan Golf Club, NSW).
- **80:** Anthony Toogood (1, Commercial Club, Albury, NSW) and Brett Balloch (1, Anglesea Golf Club, Vic).

Stableford

- **35:** Matthew Goodbun (28, Newcastle Golf Club, NSW).
- **33:** Adam Marchant (22, Royal Sydney Golf Club, NSW) and Adam Lewis (18, Hurstville Council, NSW).
- **31:** Mark O'Sullivan (19, Roseville Golf Club, NSW).

Teams

- 1. ACT 89 points; 2. Queensland 88;
- 3. Victoria 85; 4. NSW 69.

NTP/Drive/Twos

- **NTP:** Nick Kinley (Hartfield Country Club, WA).
- **Longest drive:** Aaron Banks (Bonville Resort, NSW).
- **Twos:** 3rd – Craig Molloy (Cypress Lakes, NSW); 16th – Brett Woodward.

COUNTRY CLUB OUSTS GLOBE

The following day at Hunter Valley Golf & Country Club (superintendent Dean Husband) around 40 representatives teed up for the AGCSA Trade Challenge. With Globe aiming for its third title in a row, a number of other companies were keen to knock them off their perch and so it proved the case.

The team from Country Club International (CCI), comprising John McCafferty, Tim Higgins and Tim Osmand, had a day to remember as they secured their first Trade Challenge win and with it \$2000 worth of advertising in Australian Turfgrass Management Journal. Both McCafferty and Higgins posted 39 stableford points for a combined total of 78 points, but it was Living Turf's ever-consistent



Moonah Links' Kyle Wilson blasts out of the greenside bunker on Newcastle's 2nd



David Worrada, who also posted 39 points, who won the individual honours on a countback. McCafferty also nabbed the nearest the pin prize on the 10th, while Craig Jones (Globe Growing Solutions) cracked the longest drive on the 16th.

On the Friday and for the first time at an AGCSA conference, a Big Hole Scramble event was contested at Cypress Lakes. The team of host superintendent Craig Molloy, Paul Mofflin, Darren Wilson and Brett Robinson shot a 10-under 62 to prevail narrowly over the team of Stephen Lewis, Matt McLeod, David Warnaar and Jody Walker

The AGCSA wishes to thank sponsors Toro and Newcastle Golf Club (in particular Matt Goodbun, general manager Paul Foulcher and professional Mark Gilson) for assisting in putting on a very successful 2015 AGCSA Golf Championship. And likewise to Dean Husband (Hunter Valley) and Craig Molloy (Cypress Lakes) and their respective crews for preparing their courses. 🌱



AGCSA Trade Challenge winners Country Club International

Host superintendent Matt Goodbun used local knowledge to his advantage to secure the stableford title

Some bushwhacking on the 4th would prove costly for Brett Woodward who finished runner-up





Simon Muller (top) and Graeme Grant discussed the Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes course developments on King Island

NSW Golf Club assistant superintendent Gareth Hammond teamed up with Nadeem Zreikat to delve into the world of technology and how it can assist the modern day turf manager



Dr Jack Fry's on course presentation looking at the rules of golf was one of the highlights of the week



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

presentation at the Gold Coast conference back in 2010, the spread of this as yet untreatable patch disease has continued unabated. The disease has now manifested in most states and has spread far beyond the three original Sydney golf clubs – New South Wales, Royal Sydney and Bonnie Doon – where it was initially identified.

Wong informed delegates that in 2015 alone new outbreaks had been confirmed at Pacific Harbour (Qld), Gosnells (WA), Mount Lawley (WA) and Kingston Heath (Vic) golf clubs, along with a number of school ovals in NSW, WA and a tennis club in Bunbury (WA). Wong also put out the call for the wider turf industry to provide some much needed funding for additional research into the pathogen. Up until now Bonnie Doon, Royal Sydney and NSW have borne the financial load which has allowed Dr Wong to undertake the work he has to date. However, more funding is required if this work is to progress, especially as it is quickly growing into a nationwide problem.

In the sportsfield stream, major recent resurfacing works at the MCG and ANZ Stadium were discussed in detail by the likes of Tony Gordon and Graeme Logan, while Wednesday afternoon

saw a number of practical demonstrations ranging from line marking to grass signage and weed identification and management.

The week kicked off with the Syngenta President's Dinner held on the Monday night which attracted another fine turn out with more than 220 in attendance. Likewise, the trade exhibition featured 52 exhibitors and 254 staff with more than 380 delegates and visitors passing through the doors over the two days.

For AGCSA events and education manager Simone Staples and chief executive Peter Frewin, the decision to take the annual conference to the Hunter Valley was always going to provide a number of logistical hurdles. However, the positive feedback from the majority of delegates and trade representatives during and after the conference more than vindicated that call.

"Initial feedback from the post conference survey suggests that delegates from both golf and sportsfield streams got a lot from all sessions and were incredibly positive about the event," says Staples. "The hardest part was getting there, but for those who made the effort it was incredibly worthwhile."

"The trade exhibition certainly felt intimate with exhibitors commenting that although numbers were down, those who were there were genuinely interested in listening to the reps and getting information on a variety of products. The 'Hear from the trade' sessions started slowly with interest growing as more delegates and visitors became aware of the new initiative."

Adds Peter Frewin: "The Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley proved a popular venue with both delegates and trade exhibitors. The small self-contained conference is my preferred option as it not only creates a wonderful opportunity for delegates to network, but it also provides our trade partners with greater contact with not only their current but also prospective customers."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

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The sportsfield stream included for the first time a number of practical demonstrations



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

"Like many, I thought the opening plenary session was one of the most powerful I have seen in some time at any conference and it was disappointing that there were not more in the session. The conference webcasts, which are partnered by Nuturf, will be available in the coming months and I would suggest finding the time to watch the Danger, Sun Overhead session.

"There is a great deal of work involved in putting an event like this together and plenty of things go wrong behind the scenes which most are unaware of. The professionalism and dedication of the AGCSA staff never ceases to amaze me and the wider turf industry is very fortunate to have their involvement."

EDITOR'S NOTE

In his column earlier in this edition (pages 30-34) John Neylan reflects on his highlights from the conference, including Dr Jack Fry's Monday workshop on stress management strategies for maintaining quality turf, MCG arena manager Tony Gordon's reflective look on his turf management career and the work of PhD student Laura Williams on the ecology and control of *Poa annua* on Macquarie Island.

The AGCSA wishes to extend a big thank you to all delegates, trade representatives, presenters and principal sponsors for making the recent 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition such a success and looks forward to seeing you in Melbourne from 19-24 June 2016 for the 32nd Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition to be held at the Crown Entertainment Complex.

If you would like to find out more information about the Danger, Sun Overhead programme and skin cancer awareness and prevention in the workplace, visit www.dangersunoverhead.org.au or check out their Facebook page facebook.com/dangersunoverhead.

WHAT THE DELEGATES THOUGHT...

NICK LAUNER

Assistant Superintendent, Murray Downs G&CC, Vic

"The relaxed nature and smaller setting allowed a more comfortable and easy way of meeting fellow industry members and absorbing information in both a formal and informal dealing. The highlight for me was the anticipated Taking the Next Step for assistants by well-respected industry names in Bruce Williams and Daryl Sellar. It provided the necessary tools and knowledge to help guide you up the career ladder. The three things I took home from the week were:

- Field capacity irrigation scheduling in some cases can lead to a firmer putting surface than one not irrigated at all;
- Identifying varying levels of political intelligence that allow you better analysis of people you are dealing with; and
- Advancements in turf machinery and companies that can improve your daily operations. The trade show targeted



Former GCSAA president Bruce Williams was among the international speaking contingent at the Hunter, teaming with Daryl Sellar to present two workshops on career progression

ways to improve our basic needs but work with better operational and productivity outlook which was very beneficial and enlightening."

MICK SMITH

Head Curator, Scotch College, Vic

"I enjoyed this year's conference enormously. I felt the venue helped facilitate greater networking opportunities and discussion among industry colleagues in a more

intimate environment. It is always interesting to hear about improved technologies within the sports turf industry and I thought the presentations from Graeme Logan (ANZ Stadium) and Tony Gordon (MCG) were insightful. The one thing I took out of the week was that precise communication and listening empathically is the essence of becoming a good leader."

ADAM MCMAHON

Superintendent, Longyard GC, NSW

"This year's conference was very well organised, held in a great location and a great way to meet people in the industry, especially as I have recently taken over my course as superintendent. The highlight was attending the seminars with Dr Jack Fry with the depth of knowledge he has about turf. It was good to hear his thoughts. Ideas I took away included how to manage irrigation more effectively with the rising costs of water and restrictions as well as implementing new practice facilities."



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Cottesloe's new-look 12th hole (main photo) and how the hole looked prior to the redevelopment undertaken in the summer of 2013/2014

Bourne excellence

In 2010, Cottesloe Golf Club course superintendent Simon Bourne was being told he would never work again after a freak holiday accident in Bali left him paralysed from the mid-chest down. Five years later at the recent 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference in the Hunter Valley he was accepting the 2015 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, presented in partnership with Rain Bird.



The standing ovation said it all. As Cottesloe Golf Club course superintendent Simon Bourne wheeled himself off the stage after collecting the 2015 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, more than 220 industry colleagues in attendance rose in unison to applaud him.

It was a hugely proud and emotional moment for Bourne who back in February 2010 was paralysed from the mid-chest down after a freak accident on holiday in Bali with his family. As has been recounted in the pages of ATM, Bourne's remarkable journey back to his cherished job at Cottesloe is nothing short of inspirational and at the Hunter Valley another chapter to the story was added when he accepted the award from Tony Irvine, general manager of new award sponsor Rain Bird Australia.

In doing so Bourne continued Western Australia's strong showing in the Excellence Award, becoming the sixth superintendent from the West to win it since it was first instituted back in 1990. He joins the likes of Trevor Strachan (The Vines, 1993), Jeff Lane (Gosnells, 1996), Allan Devlin (Secret Harbour, 2000), Idris Evans (WAGC, 2003) and Darren Wilson (Wembley Golf Complex, 2007). For his efforts, Bourne receives a \$5000 bursary which can be put towards further education or an AGCSA-approved study tour.

In his nomination of Bourne for the AGCSA award, superintendent colleague Glenn Cross (Mount Lawley Golf Club) perfectly summed up

Bourne's achievements: "Simon has been employed at The Cottesloe Golf Club for 19 years, firstly as an apprentice, then as assistant superintendent and for the last 10 years as superintendent. Simon's eye for detail and professional approach to his vocation has meant Cottesloe Golf Club has been presented beautifully for many years. These final years of construction, just one year away from completing the upgrade of Cottesloe Golf Club, are a testament to Simon's dedication to and love of the industry."

"Until recently Simon also somehow found the time and energy to be on the committee of the GCSAWA. During the last seven years Simon has made himself available to members and managed to mentor a number of younger superintendents and assistant superintendents. Simon was a very popular winner of our state Superintendent of the Year Award announced at the WA Golf Industry Awards held in early March.

"Simon's not-so-recent now paralysing accident has by no means slowed him down or affected his ability as a greenkeeper. The workload he has completed this last year was enormous for anybody and he, his staff and the Cottesloe Golf Club members can be very proud."

Upon accepting the award Bourne paid particular tribute to his staff and also to those who have helped him in his journey over the past five years: "I can't thank my staff enough for their work not only during 2014 but for the last five years or so," says Bourne. "Winning the GCSAWA and now the AGCSA award



WORDS: BRETT ROBINSON WITH SIMON BOURNE. PHOTOS: COTTESLOE GC

are both amazing honours and is something I am very proud of. But it's all due to my amazing staff and the support and dedication they have given me and the Cottesloe Golf Club and I am even more proud of that than the awards. I would recommend any of them for any job they apply for in the future, but unfortunately they won't be allowed to leave."

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

2014 was always going to be a challenging year for Bourne and the Cottesloe crew. The year kicked off with the construction of two new holes right in the middle of another scorching Western Australian summer which put additional pressure on the remainder of the course. There was also the not too insignificant prospect of getting the course ready to host the 2014 WA Open in mid-October.

The principal focus initially was the complete reconstruction of the par four 12th, par three 13th and realignment of the 14th tee complex as part of the Graham Marsh course masterplan works which have been ongoing for a number of years. Starting in November 2013 and finishing in March 2014, this

section of the course was dramatically transformed, with the construction of two new greens, three new tee complexes, irrigation installation, bunker construction and turfing. Construction work was carried out by McMahons, overseen by Bourne's former TAFE colleague Justin Goodlife, with the Cottesloe crew completing the final trim, grassing and grow-in.

Of most significance were the works to the 13th which saw it transformed from a short par three with enormous safety issues to a long par three which plays 199m off the new Tiger tee. Nearly 1000m³ of sand was shifted left to create the new green complex which was increased in size from 390m² to 786m², while the number of bunkers was reduced from three to one. Similarly on the 12th, the green was increased from 472m² to 729m², nearly 11,000m³ of sand was pushed either side to level out a hill on the fairway and bunkering increased from 245m² to 781m².

Along with the normal hectic duties of following a construction crew, Bourne's team undertook the enormous task of revegetating hectares of land previously maintained as turf. Over the years Bourne has been trialling ways of reducing water consumption and has used mass plantings of native grasses in these out of play areas to help reduce water consumption.

"The changes to these two holes from old to new have been some of the most dramatic during the masterplan works at Cottesloe," says Bourne. "The amount of work involved was incredible, especially to do it in the timeframe we were presented with. You can see from the photos the difference between new and old is remarkable and the work completed not only by the contractors but by my staff was simply remarkable."

One of the hardest aspects of any course redevelopment works is maintaining the rest of the course at the same time. For Bourne to focus his efforts on overseeing redevelopment of these holes, he had to rely upon his tight-knit crew to take care of the rest of the course during the most challenging period of the year.

In addition to the redevelopment works and the usual course renovations of greens, tees and fairways, during this time Cottesloe also undertook to change over the block station fairway sprinklers to valve-in-head sprinklers to improve distribution uniformity. Cottesloe turf technician Rodney Sullivan custom-built a machine made up of old bedknives which was used to plough over 5.6 kilometres of wire into the ground to over 300 sprinklers.



2015 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award winner
Simon Bourne



Bare Patches in your turf?



Cottesloe Golf Club looking a picture for the 2014 club championships



CHANGING PRACTICES

With the role of superintendent changing significantly over the last decade, Bourne, like many of his superintendent colleagues, has also had to adapt. To this end Bourne has fine-tuned his day-to-day procedures so that he can be sure of delivering the desired product the club is chasing. Bourne has also changed the way certain areas of the course are maintained through different mowing techniques, dusting and minor green renovations, as well as applications of fertilisers and chemicals, particularly on the greens.

To get his crew to take more responsibility in their work and to ensure everyone is on the same page, Bourne has reinstated some old-school style recordkeeping to ensure all work carried out on the course during the week but mainly over the

weekend is completed correctly. Folders for both Saturday and Sunday contain a 'weekend sheet' explaining to those rostered on what work is to be completed, while a 'reticulation sheet' explains what will be watered, for how long the previous night and if there are any changes to be made for the following night. A 'completion sheet' is then filled in with what was done, if there were any problems on course, reticulation changes or any new areas of concern and general comments.

On a Friday Bourne will drive around the course with whichever crew member is on that weekend and inspect the greens and mark a dot where hole locations will be. Bourne leaves it up to his staff to choose the hole location with measurements then put on the hole location sheet. The drive around the course is also a great opportunity for Bourne

SMITH UPHOLDS CIT'S STRONG GRADUATE AWARD RECORD



2015 AGCSA Graduate of the Year
Alex Smith



It may have been the turn of Western Australian superintendents to dominate the two main AGCSA Awards in 2015, but it was the ACT that again provided the winner for the 2015 AGCSA Graduate of the Year Award, presented in partnership with Toro Australia.

Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) has developed an enviable reputation for producing some of this country's finest turf management graduates, with Alex Smith from Fairbairn Golf Club becoming the sixth student to add his name to that list in 2015 and the second in three years.

In what proved to be one of the tightest contests in recent times, Smith beat home a strong field that also included Graeme Eaton (Lismore Workers GC, GCSAQ), Rohan Janeway (Mandurah CC, GCSAWA), Shaun Bowden (Elanora CC, NSWGCSA), Jacob Burrige (Kooyonga GC, SAGCSA), Jason Whelan (Barnboughe Dunes, TGCSA) and Andrew Watson (Eastern GC, VGCSA).

Having initially undertaken a school-based apprenticeship in carpentry, a downturn

in that industry prompted Smith to take on an apprenticeship at Royal Military College Golf Club, Duntroon, Canberra in 2012. Under the guidance of course superintendent Chris Ganderton, Smith undertook his studies through CIT and upon completion successfully applied for the role of course superintendent of Fairbairn Golf Club which he started in March. Built by the Australian defence Force, Fairbairn Golf Club is located at the north-east corner of the Canberra International Airport.

"Winning the AGCSA Graduate of the Year Award has been a great experience," says Smith (22) who will now attend the University of Massachusetts' Winter School for Turf Management in 2016. "It has proved to me that hard work and some perseverance really does open doors to the possibilities of what you can do with your career.

"It has certainly inspired me to explore the potential of what I can achieve with furthering my education and experience in the industry, along with gaining the confidence to implement my ideas and strategies in my new role here at Fairbairn."



Cottesloe's new-look par three 13th and (below) how the hole looked before reconstruction. The green complex was shifted left to remedy significant safety issues and was more than doubled in size

to spend some one-on-one time with his staff to not only talk about the course and what's required, but just as importantly to talk about anything and everything whether work or life related.

From a turf management perspective, Bourne has also made some changes to the way his surfaces are maintained. For the first time last year, Bourne was given approval to undertake a regular greens dusting programme which has seen some real benefits. Bourne now dusts every two to three weeks and will also incorporate either a light verticut, mini tine (8mm), slice or roll, while during summer he will also apply wetting agents at the same time.

To improve Cottesloe's bentgrass and kikuyu surrounds, Bourne has changed from using a triplex mower to a fairway mower. To do this, some surrounds have been widened which has had the added benefit of making some great runoff areas to the backs and sides of the greens. The surrounds are out to the edge of the bunkers where previously it was rough height which stopped a lot of balls from going in the bunkers.

Bourne has also started to hand mow tees during winter. While not the most popular of practices among the crew – it works out to be around 8km per nine holes – it has assisted the turf dramatically by tightening up the sward and reducing wear. Cottesloe's bentgrass collars are also now cut with walk-behinds which is an 11km walk across 18 holes.

YEAR'S WORK GONE IN 10 MINUTES

In addition to the club championships held throughout August and September, in 2014 Cottesloe had the added pressure of hosting the 2014 WA Open in early October. While no stranger to preparing the



course for such events, the tournament itself would throw Bourne and his crew a massive curve-ball.

Bourne was extremely satisfied with how the course had presented for the club championships and with a three week gap until the Open was confident of being able to maintain that condition through until the tournament. The greens were given a bit of a rest – the rollers were left in the sheds for two weeks – and they were also given a mini-tine. A light rate of granular fertiliser the week before the club champs finished kicked in perfectly the Monday after and Bourne complemented that with a light liquid fertiliser mix (mainly iron) and Primo the week before the Open.

Fairways were only mown once a week which was reduced from five times a week during the club championships. That gave some welcome respite for the two crew members on fairway duty who Bourne calculates each mowed nine holes a total of 45 times in 10 weeks! With the fairways in good nick a week out from the Open, Bourne second guessed himself and against his better judgment decided to only go out with a fertiliser at half rates so as not to have the fairways looking too juiced up for the tournament. Unfortunately for Bourne, come the opening round the colour had disappeared which while unnoticeable to most was something that Bourne internally chastised himself for.



Some 35mm in 10 minutes had the Cottesloe course awash after the third round of the 2014 WA Open

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All bunkers needed repair with Bourne's crew working until 11pm Saturday to get the majority of the course back in play ahead of the final round of the 2014 WA Open

The tournament itself proceeded without issue until the closing stages of the third round. In the shed with five of his staff getting ready for their afternoon preps, a huge crack of thunder gave Bourne a sudden warning of things to come. With hardly any rain forecast Bourne was a little confused, but taking a quick look out the window at the black skies forming it quickly became apparent that all hell was about to break loose. The course proceeded to cop a torrential 35mm in 10 minutes after two major

storm cells merged right over Cottesloe, laying waste to the course and effectively ruining a year's worth of work in a matter of minutes.

"I had never seen anything like it in almost 20 years here and it destroyed the course," recalls Bourne. "Once the worst of it passed I went out to look around and just thought 'How on earth are we going to get all this cleaned up'. At this time it was around 4pm and I started to ring the other five guys who had the afternoon off hoping to get one or two of them to come in, remembering it was a Saturday. To their absolute credit they were all at the course within an hour.

"More than three quarters of the bunkers needed work done with about a quarter needing the bobcat to clean out debris washed into them from out of the bush. There was also debris all over the fairways which we had to rake up, the majority of it by hand. We started the clean-up at 4pm and finished 90 per cent of it by 11pm and we were back in finishing off the rest at 3am.

"The dedication and the pride my staff showed in their work was clear before the storm and showed in the way the place looked all year, but for them to drop everything and come in and give their all to clean the place up until late and then return just a few hours later was so impressive. I couldn't have been more proud of them." 🌱

STA GRADUATE WINNER WOOLLEY THE TOAST OF TASMANIA



STA National Sports Turf Graduate of the Year Grant Woolley



There was only one person more excited than Grant Woolley after he created a little slice of history for Tasmania when he became the state's first recipient of the STA National Sports Turf Graduate of the Year Award, presented in partnership with Toro. The first person to congratulate Woolley after stepping off the stage at the 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference in the Hunter Valley was his boss, Aurora Stadium head curator Bryan Dunn, who had journeyed up to see his charge become the fifth recipient of the award.

Like the AGCSA Graduate of the Year Award, Woolley topped what proved to be a very high standard field, beating home fellow state finalists Matthew Clark (Tweed Shire, STA NSW), Jake Hermann (D&D Curators, STA SA), Jonathon Perez (AAMI Park, STA Vic) and Matthew Lane (Scotch College, STA WA). For his efforts Woolley will now go on to attend Toro's Sportsground Forum in the US in 2016.

"What a great honour this is," says Woolley. "It is such a great privilege to receive this award especially against a talented bunch of fellow finalists. I'm going to take on board everything that I learn in the US and hopefully take my career to a new level."

Woolley, a father of two, has worked at Launceston's premier sporting facility for nearly six years. During this time Woolley has been fortunate to be part of a working environment under

Dunn that has strongly encouraged training and development which has allowed him to fast-track his understanding of turf management practices.

What stood out during his presentation before the STA judging panel was the diverse range of activities that Woolley has been exposed to and involved with during his time at Aurora. Aurora is the Tasmanian base for the Hawthorn Football Club which plays five AFL games there each season (four premiership and one pre-season). It is also home ground to two Tasmanian state league teams – North Launceston Bombers and Western Storm.

Cricket, which up until the summer of 2013-2014 had solely been played on the adjacent Invermay Park, came to the main arena in late 2013 with the construction of the state's first drop-in pitch overseen by Pitchcraft's Richard Winter. Woolley was involved in all aspects of this with the highlight coming when the ground played host to the Ricky Ponting Tribute match in January 2014.

"From hosting AFL through to being involved with building the first drop-in wicket in Tasmania, working at Aurora has been a huge learning curve," says Woolley. "It has been a privilege to learn from my experienced work mates as well as network with professionals in the industry such as Richard Winter. My presentation to the STA judging panel was based around the great range of work we have here and the challenges of maintaining healthy turf in Launceston's cold climate."

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Hartfield Country Club in Perth has made a commitment to minimise any detrimental impacts on the environment

Just the start at Hartfield

WORDS: NICK KINLEY WITH BRETT ROBINSON. PHOTOS: HARTFIELD CC

Hartfield Country Club capped off a great night for WA at the 2015 AGCSA Awards when Nick Kinley received the coveted Claude Crockford Environmental Award, sponsored by Syngenta.



2015 AGCSA Claude Crockford Environmental Award winner
Nick Kinley

“We’ve only just begun.” That was the assessment of 2015 AGCSA Claude Crockford Environmental Award recipient Nick Kinley on the work he and his team have achieved at Hartfield Country Club. In just two years since joining the Perth-based club as course superintendent, Kinley has overseen some significant improvements to the environmental management of the course, but there is still plenty more to come.

It’s amazing what can be achieved in just a couple of years when you have a dedicated superintendent and a club management willing to invest in and promote one of its most valuable assets. In Hartfield’s case it’s the surrounding environment and the AGCSA’s coveted Claude Crockford Award is a fitting testament to the work that has been achieved to date. For 34-year-old Kinley the award is not only due recognition for the work he and his team have put in, but also provides further impetus to take their efforts to the next level.

“This award is truly an honour,” says Kinley, who in March 2015 won the GCSAWA Environment Award at the WA Golf Industry Awards. “We are passionate about what we do at Hartfield and this award will certainly continue to inspire me towards improving the ongoing sustainability of the golf course. We do this in partnership with the local Shire of Kalamunda which has been a huge help. We are always working one-on-one with them to maintain the endemic bushland which is such a magnificent feature of our site.”

In accepting the award from Dr Henk Smith, Syngenta’s business manager for turf and landscape Australasia, New Zealand-born Kinley singled out a

number of people who have helped to shape his career and supported him in his endeavours at Hartfield. Kinley thanked superintendents Dion Warr, who took him on as an apprentice at The Vines Resort, Darren Wilson (Wembley Golf Complex) and Glenn Cross whom he served nine-and-a-half years under as assistant superintendent at Mount Lawley Golf Club before moving to Hartfield.

Kinley also singled out Hartfield chairman of greens John Forrest. Forrest, who heads up the turf education department at Challenger TAFE in Perth, has been a key figure in the WA turf industry for many years and has been a major supporter of Kinley’s work, along with Hartfield general manager Mick Smith.

“During my time at Hartfield I have been very grateful for the support and encouragement from the members right through to the general manager,” says Kinley. “One person I can’t thank enough is John Forrest, our chairman of greens. Everyone in the turf industry knows John and he has a wealth of knowledge, is passionate about Hartfield, is passionate about what I’m doing and the vision we have for the course.”

Indeed, the bestowing of the Claude Crockford Environmental Award has been very well received by the club with Forrest commenting: “The club is thrilled and very proud of Nick’s achievement. Since Nick has become Hartfield superintendent he has worked tirelessly in improving the facilities to meet the environmental standards required of golf courses today. His passion and enthusiasm is infectious, creating an environment for his young crew to respect and take an interest in creating a fauna and flora corridor in suburbia.



"Nick ensures that his staff understand the benefits of working on plant health first and encourages them to participate in training, with staff attending fertiliser wise and water wise training. Recently all the staff had training on dieback. There are areas on the course that have been enhanced by Nick's approach. Places close to trees where grass struggled to grow have been shaped and mounded not only to improve the grass but to protect the tree root systems.

"Winning the Claude Crockford award goes a long way to encourage Hartfield's members to appreciate what they have and play their role in looking after their golf course and the endemic bush land that if lost can never be replaced."

ENVIRONMENT FOCUS

Hartfield is very much a hidden gem of the Perth golf scene and along with having some of the state's best playing surfaces the layout is blessed with large pockets of treasured natural bushland.

From the moment you drive through the gate, Hartfield's natural bushland setting is apparent and the course is unique in that all 18 holes have areas of endemic bush remaining. The fairways are tree-lined and play an important role in how the course is played. While not a long course, at 6175 metres it is a strong test of golf which was demonstrated when it hosted the 2015 WA Amateur Championships.

The course is located on what is known as the Ridge Hill Shelf (soil formation) with pockets of deep sand and areas of lateritic outcrops that restrict drainage. These differing soil types can be recognised by the variation in flora and a vegetation description would be jarrah, banksia woodland.

Recognising the unique opportunity the club has to preserve and promote the natural strengths of its site and to improve its role in environmental stewardship, Hartfield, under the guidance of Kinley and with a very supportive management buying in, has embarked on a number of key projects in recent years. Among these are:

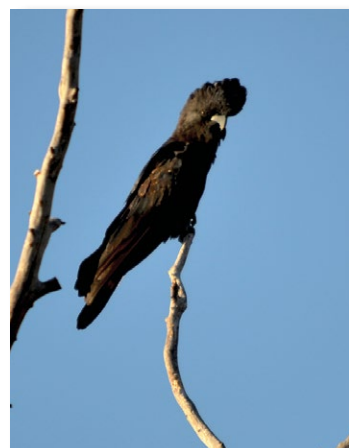
- Identifying dieback infected areas within the golf course boundary and treating these trees with phosphite injections to improve decline. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (dieback) is a disease threatening the natural bushland in Western Australia and Hartfield works very closely with the Shire of Kalamunda in enhancing and protecting the existing flora.
- Compiling a dieback management plan with further samples being analysed to identify more outbreaks. In the past two years mulches from offsite have been stopped unless it is clear there is no chance of dieback infected material being delivered. Signage is installed around infected bushland asking people to walk on paths and not to take buggies into the bush.
- Developing a list of dieback-resistant plants to assist in future revegetation programmes.
- Implementing vegetation removal programmes for invasive or non-endemic tree and plant species in the natural bushland. Many trees that are not from WA, especially eucalyptus species, are removed as saplings before their root development destroys the endemic bushland plants as they out-compete them for moisture.
- Implementing a defined line separating grass and native bush. The reason for this is to create a zone that non-selective herbicides can be used to stop grasses encroaching the bushland.
- Revegetation of many areas of the course, particularly around tees, with endemic plants. Revegetation is catered for in the annual budget to ensure continuing improvement of the Hartfield environment every year.
- Completion of a comprehensive study into endemic understorey plants to identify which species can be grown from seed or cuttings.
- The identification and management of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna. For example, the course has pockets of twinning leaved smoked bush (DRF *Conospermum undulate*). Recently the club accessed local



Above: In conjunction with the local Shire of Kalamunda, Hartfield has invested substantial effort into managing dieback

Above left: Planting in front of Hartfield's 12th tee, one of many areas around the course which have been cleared and revegetated with endemic plants

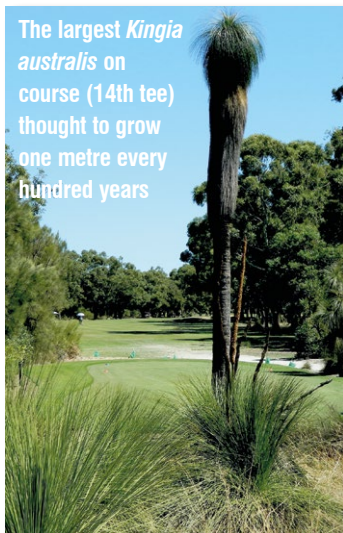
Hartfield Country Club provides a vital habitat for the rare Carnaby's black cockatoo and forest red-tailed black cockatoo (pictured)





◀ Above right: Known pockets of the rare twinning leaved smoked bush have been GPS marked throughout the Hartfield site

Above: Hartfield has a local rule that when Kangaroo Paws (green and red flowers) and Cats Paws (yellow) are in flower, the golfer must take relief so as to protect them



The largest *Kingia australis* on course (14th tee) thought to grow one metre every hundred years

government funding for weed control which allows a local community group (Green Army) to spend two days at Hartfield removing invasive annual grasses in an area where this rare species is growing. Hartfield's vegetation community also supports the habitat of several threatened bird species including Carnaby's black cockatoo and the forest red-tailed black cockatoo, as well as bandicoots.

- Collecting and growing native species of reed (*Meeboldina coangstata*) that appear naturally around the lakes on the golf course but cannot be grown from seed. Plants have been collected from around part of the lake on the 15th hole and split, with 500 plants grown for replanting at the local TAFE nursery.

In addition to the flora and fauna initiatives, Hartfield has also:

- Constructed a new, fully-bunded chemical storage facility, wash down bay and fuel storage area to remove environmental threats.
- Restricted vehicle movement and maintenance practices in out of play areas. Areas on the golf course that have been mowed or have vehicle tracks through them have been minimised to allow the natural regrowth from seed banks that already exist in the soil profile. Clear instruction is given to staff not to throw grass clippings



into the bush land, while care is taken when operating machinery close to areas known to be bandicoot habitats.

- Installation of 60 solar panels on the clubhouse roof to offset electricity costs.

BEST PRACTICE

Water management is also at the forefront of Hartfield's environmental focus. Water availability is one of the major concerns for all turf facilities in WA and Hartfield closely monitors its most precious resource. The water supply at Hartfield is drawn from six bores from two different aquifers – one a superficial aquifer (shallow), while the other is the Leederville Aquifer which is a deeper source. Hartfield has a water allocation that it must not exceed and water use figures are calculated weekly.

Irrigation efficiencies have been made during the 2014-2015 irrigation season by lifting over 300 sprinklers, increasing uniformity and reducing water use. Hartfield's latest tool to assist in water management is a water level probe that measures static water levels, draw down and then time it takes the aquifer to recharge and return to static water level. The amount of water drawn from each bore can be better managed and seasonal impacts monitored.

Nutrient fate is another aspect of course management that is closely monitored. All staff who apply fertiliser are trained and understand rates of nutrient. Phosphorus and nitrogen applications have been reduced while improving turf surfaces. Soil, tissue and water tests are conducted on selected greens and fairways. Part of the training has been focusing on understanding the analysis and interpreting that into application rates.

"At Hartfield, we have made a commitment to minimise any detrimental impacts on the environment," concludes Kinley. "It is agreed that the environment around the golf course is a key selling point in what is a very competitive WA golf market. Being water wise, fertiliser wise and improving the natural environment is all part of Hartfield's plan to show best practice in developing a flora and fauna wildlife corridor." 🌿



Native reed *Meeboldina coangstata* has been collected from around part of the lake on the 15th hole and split with 500 plants grown for replanting at the local TAFE nursery

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Harpenden Common Golf Club, UK



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Gary Madison, Head Mechanic,
Richmond Country Club, CA. USA



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Ulverstone Golf Club is situated on a large parcel of land and is routed through a large eucalypt forest which creates many management challenges for superintendent Mark Johnson. Pictured is the second looking back up the fairway from behind the green

Ulverstone Golf Club TAS

Routed through a tall eucalypt forest, Ulverstone Golf Club on Tasmania's northern coast is renowned for its well-maintained and picturesque 18-hole course. It has been a second home for superintendent and current TGCSA president Mark Johnson for the past 33 years and here he gives ATM an inside look at the course and his maintenance operations.



Superintendent: Mark Johnson.

Nickname: Johnno.

Age: 50.

Family: Married to Kerri (the love of my life) for 31 years, two daughters Jessica and Larissa and three grandchildren.

Years as a superintendent: Seven.

Association involvement: AGCSA member (seven years). Current TGCSA president, committee member for last six years.

Turf management career: I have been at Ulverstone Golf Club for 33 years, starting as an apprentice in 1982.

Turf management qualifications: Certificate III Turf Management. Awarded Tasmanian Apprentice of the Year upon completion.

Where in Australia is Ulverstone Golf Club and what is the town famous/known for? Ulverstone

Golf Club is situated beside the Leven River a few kilometres outside the town of Ulverstone. Ulverstone is situated on the north west coast of Tasmania between the cities of Burnie and Devonport, about 130km from Launceston. As the crow flies, Ulverstone is closer to Melbourne than Hobart. Ulverstone's population is around 15000 and the major industry in the area is agriculture.

Tell us a bit about your background and how you came to be a superintendent. Originally from Melbourne, the family moved to Penguin (located about 12km west of Ulverstone) while I was at primary school and today I still live in Penguin. I started my apprenticeship at Ulverstone Golf Club at age 16 and I'm still there 33 years later, the past seven as superintendent. I had no real intention of becoming a greenkeeper while at school, however upon reading the job advertisement for Ulverstone's



Half of Ulverstone's greens are sown with browntop and the other half Penncross. All contain a reasonable amount of *Poa* and all have been oversown with browntop which is ideally suited to Ulverstone's cool temperate climate

apprenticeship and being a sports nut I decided it would be pretty cool.

Give us an overview of Ulverstone Golf Club and some of its unique characteristics? Ulverstone Golf Club was founded in 1911 and is at its second site, the first being a nine hole layout in the heart of town. During the early 1960s, due to the desire for an 18 hole layout and the pressures of being in a public space in the middle of town, the current site at 'Alison' was purchased and Al Howard employed to design the course we have now. There were some stage openings during the 1970s with 18 holes officially opened in 1980.

The course is situated on a large parcel of land and therefore has no need for an out of bounds rule and there are no public roads or houses visible. It is very heavily tree-lined as the area before the course build was a forest of very large eucalypts.

What are some of the unique features about Ulverstone GC from a turf management perspective? The sheer size and amount of trees dictate much of what we do, with shade, lack of air movement and root invasion providing constant obstacles to growing healthy turf. While the trees are a challenge, they also frequently feature in comments from visitors.

Is Ulverstone an easy/hard facility to manage and has that changed during the time you have been superintendent? There are aspects of the course that make it easy to manage such as the lack of heat waves during the summer months, low to moderate golf traffic and no real issue with neighbours or public encroachment. The difficulties outlined previously with the trees and a period of dormancy during winter are things which make it challenging and are ever present.

Ulverstone superintendent Mark Johnson (left) and assistant Issac Jones. Johnson has been at Ulverstone 33 years, starting as an apprentice in 1982



The approach to the 3rd green at Ulverstone. Greens are hollow tined once a year and are groomed regularly and dusted monthly



Take us through your turf management operations there. What, if any, changes have you brought about in terms of managing the course during your time as superintendent and what other changes are you currently implementing or would like to implement? Dusting greens and the use of growth regulators are the changes I have implemented that are game changers in keeping the putting greens. I am currently considering more widespread use of wetting agents which I'm sure will help with our uniformity and water usage.

Any special environmental considerations that you have to incorporate into the management of the course? Not too many. With no neighbouring housing or public spaces we only really have to worry about our obligations to our own participants and the obvious issues with waterways etc.

What are some of the major challenges facing Ulverstone Golf Club both from a turf and club management perspective? From a turf management perspective, we have recently implemented a tree management plan which focuses on restoring the playability of the course to its original design. This involves removal of encroaching and undesirable trees and careful replanting.

From a club management perspective, the obvious challenge is the changing habits of golfers (i.e.: more interest in pay for play and less interest in membership). We have recently established a small driving range to add to our practice facilities, installed a restaurant and purchased more carts to help try to attract visitors and pay for play locals. We also have a few other things in the planning stages.

Outline any major course improvement works recently completed and/or highlight any ongoing or future works that the club is undertaking. We have started working through a plan to rebuild all the tee beds. Most of these were pushed up with bulldozers originally so we are re-levelling, resurfacing, improving irrigation and improving surrounds (i.e.: paths, aesthetics etc). We are in the planning stages for resurfacing the fairways which will involve re-making the surface, incorporating amendments and re-sowing. We are currently working out how much we can do at one time in regards to taking holes out of play. The club sees these and other improvements as a chance to make us a more desirable golfing destination.

Water is obviously a critical issue for any golf course. How is Ulverstone Golf Club faring in the water management stakes? Water is at the forefront of our future planning at the moment. We currently have a proposal on the table to increase our storage capacity (currently we only have a 9ML dam) and we are investigating other supply options both for short-term and long-term requirements.

The weather and climate is always a great leveller for a course superintendent. How has Mother Nature treated the course in recent times? At the end of January this year we had to cease watering fairways and reduce watering times for tees to make sure that we had enough water to keep the greens in good shape. With no significant rainfall until early May we just had to watch the fairways and tees

Ulverstone has started working through a plan to rebuild all tee beds. Most of these were pushed up with bulldozers originally so they will be re-levelled, resurfaced and have new irrigation infrastructure installed. Pictured is the 4th tee



deteriorate and hope to get some rain to green things back up before it became too cold.

Going by the scores during this dry period, a lot of our members enjoyed the extra run even if the lies were not so good. We have had a number of instances where wind storms have caused a lot of damage, one in particular where we had 90 trees uprooted, three of them landing on greens. It took about two years to get everything cleared and repaired back to normal.

The one product I couldn't manage my course without is... Slow release fertilisers have been a significant game changer in my time in the industry. The time saving and ease of management is why I wouldn't want to be without them.

What are some pros and cons of being a regional-based superintendent? I guess there is less pressure on the course due to the reduced amount of traffic, but that also means much less resources to play with due to having much smaller budgets.

Are expectations of course presentation and conditioning any less than that placed on your metropolitan counterparts? I don't think so. I think golfers always want things to be as good as possible although I do hear a lot of comparisons from members who have been to play at some metropolitan courses and had a pretty good time.

Do you have to be more resourceful as a regional-based superintendent? For me the use of volunteers is paramount to getting enough hours into the course and we need to have some clear priorities as there are always things we don't get to by the end of the week. Most of my admin work gets done at home after hours, but I'm sure I'm not Robinson Crusoe in that regard.

If you could change one thing about your job as a regional superintendent what would it be and why? I guess it refers to my last answer, more resources would be great.

How important are the relationships you have with other local course supers/trade reps? They are vital in my opinion. The knowledge and support available through networking at conferences and field days and through visits and phone calls can't be replaced.

What are some of the more unusual requests/things you have had to do as a superintendent of a regional course? We had a visit from a nearby property from an ostrich that made himself at home. When he was seen bathing in a bunker it was decided to enlist the help of some drinkers in the bar and ambush it, tie its legs and get it on the ute for delivery back to its paddock. A week later it was back with a mate!



Ulverstone has hosted numerous state and national events in recent times and is always highly commended for its course presentation

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◀ **Ulverstone has recently implemented a tree management plan which focuses on restoring the playability of the course to its original design. This involves removal of encroaching and undesirable trees and careful replanting**

What have you got in your shed? In the shed we have a Toro 5510, Toro Sidewinder, Toro 3250D, Toro HDXD workman, Toro Multi Pro spray unit, Toro top dresser, John Deere Gator, Smooth roll, Toro Z master, Ford 4110 tractor, MF 250 front end loader, International 444 tractor, Holden Rodeo dual cab, Ford courier flat tray, Yamaha quad bike, various implements – slasher, harrows, back blade, ripper, carry all, forks, roller – and the usual smaller stuff, chainsaws, brush cutters, edger, blower etc.

What's your favourite piece of machinery and what will be your next major purchase? The Workman, probably for its versatility. We use it as

a utility, spray unit, top dresser, etc. As for the next purchase, the rough mower is near its use by date and a new greens mower wouldn't go amiss.

Do you have any interesting pieces of machinery which have been manufactured out of necessity or any old pieces of equipment that you keep alive? The International tractor has had a hard life and plenty of repairs but it is the ideal vehicle for harrowing and slashing among the trees.

Favourite spot on your course? The 5th hole – it's a par three over the storage dam with a great view of the river behind the green.

Best advice you have received about being a course superintendent/greenkeeper and who gave it to you. The superintendent when I started here told me that I would get a lot of advice from the members and to just be polite and nod and don't take it all too seriously.

Most pleasing/rewarding moment during your time as Ulverstone Golf Club superintendent?

After one of the Australian Junior Girls Championships I received a personal letter of thanks and congratulations from the tournament director. It was very much appreciated. 🌿

AT A GLANCE – ULVERSTONE GOLF CLUB

Course specs: Ulverstone Golf Club measures 6112 metres. We have 10 hectares of cut fairway consisting of fescues, browntop, common couch and a fair percentage of *Poa annua*. There is 0.8 of a hectare of greens, half of which were sown with browntop and half with Pennncross. All contain a reasonable amount of *Poa* and all have been oversown with browntop – the browntop greens are a little easier to manage in our climate. There is around 0.7 of a hectare of tees, around a hectare of green surrounds and a lot of rough.

Members: 400.

Annual rounds: 17000 paid rounds (i.e.: comps and green fees plus social golf).

Major tournaments/events: The major tournaments Ulverstone has staged since I've been here include three Tasmanian Opens, the Tasmanian Amateur Championships several times (including 2014 and 2015), the Australian Junior Girl's Championships and Interstate Series (x4), Australian Senior Women's Championships and Australian Men's Interstate Series. We are scheduled to stage the Australian Junior Boy's Championships and Interstate Series in 2016 and we also hold a Pro-Am each year.

Annual course budget: \$200,000.

Staff structure: Superintendent Mark Johnson and assistant superintendent Isaac Jones. We normally have a third permanent but are currently 'between employees'. We have a terrific group of volunteers from all walks of life whom we use to their strengths and do all sorts from tree removal, bunker maintenance, mowing fairways, roughs, tees and surrounds and greens. They also assist with renovations and any general maintenance duties.

Climate: The climate is cool temperate with average January maximums at 21.6°C and minimums at 12.2°C and average July maximums at 12.8°C and minimums at 4.7°C. We don't get snow

but can certainly get numerous frosts during winter months and we manage to struggle to the low 30s for a few days during summer. Our average rainfall is approximately 1000mm, a large percentage of which falls during winter while January, February and March are often very dry.

Soil types: Most of the course is built on heavy clay type soils with some gravel content in most areas. Most greens are built on sand with the rest still being the original push-ups.

Water source and irrigation system: We have an easement to take water from a creek which runs past the southern end of the course and a nine megalitre storage dam. The course is situated beside the Leven River but it is tidal water and too salty to use (damn it). Irrigation system is a very old Rain Bird controller hardwired to greens, fairways have individual controllers, sprinklers are a variety of Toro pop-ups.

Cutting heights/regimes: Greens are cut usually six times a week at 3mm for most of the year and 3.5mm-4mm during winter and rolled at least once a week. Tees and surrounds are cut at 13mm twice a week for the warmer six months and once otherwise. Fairways are cut at 16mm twice a week during peak growing times, weekly at other times and seldom during winter. Roughs are cut at 65mm when required.

Renovations: Greens are hollow tined once a year and are groomed regularly and dusted monthly. All other areas are verti-drained with solid tines.

Major disease pressures and how you combat them: We generally only see dollar spot and winter fusarium, probably not warm enough for much else. These occur quite regularly with the period from September to December being the only time reasonably disease free. Management comprises a rotation of various fungicides during higher pressure times.

Website: www.ulverstonegolfclub.com.au.



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REELMASTER 5010-H BRINGS HYBRID TECHNOLOGY TO FAIRWAYS



Toro's new Reelmaster 5010-H boasts hybrid drive technology

Toro's all new Reelmaster 5010-H fairway unit with hybrid drive system technology was on display at the recent 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition. The industry's first and only fairway mower to feature a true hybrid drive through its patented PowerMatch system, the Reelmaster 5010-H utilises the power of a diesel engine in combination with a battery pack to supply over 40 horsepower when conditions require more power output.

For example, when hilly terrain and challenging mowing require more power than the 24.8hp Tier 4 compliant diesel engine can provide, the Reelmaster 5010-H sheds the cutting unit load from the engine to the self-charging 48-volt battery pack. If even more power is required, the battery pack boosts the engine power, giving the machine the equivalent of over 40 horsepower to provide consistent, productive and efficient traction and cutting performance.

"The new Reelmaster 5010-H boasts average fuel savings of 20 per cent when compared

to comparable 5-gang fairway mowers and significantly more fuel savings when operated in the economy mode," says Mark Johnson, senior sales manager golf equipment for Toro Australia.

"Alternative power technology is increasingly important to the industry and we're excited to be at the forefront of this movement. We are proud of the fact that we are able to offer the industry's first and only fairway mower with a true hybrid drive system, but we're even more excited about the numerous benefits it will bring to our customers."

The move from hydraulic to electric cutting units has also resulted in other benefits. First, the electric motors provide more precise control of both reel speed and clip rates, which translates into a more consistent cut quality and improved playability. Secondly, end users experience reduced maintenance downtime due to the elimination of the hydraulic components commonly associated with traditional cutting units. Over 100 potential leak points have been removed from the hydraulic system as a result of the move to all-electric cutting unit motors.

"We also have engineered a number of operator comforts into the Reelmaster 5010-H, by taking the best parts of the time-tested 5010 Series platform and integrating hybrid technology into the already popular fairway mower line," Johnson adds. "Operators and technicians alike will appreciate the easy-to-use integrated onboard InfoCenter display, which provides system alerts, service reminders, diagnostics and vehicle traction and cutting notifications."

The new Reelmaster 5010-H also features Plug 'n' Mow technology, which allows it to accept 5-inch (12.7cm) or 7-inch (17.7cm) diameter Dual Point Adjustment (DPA) cutting units in 8 or 11 blade configurations. Simply plug in the applicable cutting unit reel motors and the machine automatically makes the necessary adjustments.

For more information about the Reelmaster 5010-H fairway mower or to arrange a demonstration, contact your local Toro representative or visit www.toro.com.au.



FROM SCOTTS TO EVERRIS TO ICL

Everris (formerly Scotts), Fuentes, Nu3, Novapeak and F&C have now fully united to form a global leader in specialty fertiliser solutions. The transition to one global company with the name ICL Specialty Fertilizers was announced in early June, with the new company aiming to give growers and end users a range of benefits including an expanded product portfolio and stronger emphasis on innovation and product development.

ICL Specialty Fertilizers is focused on three primary segments – ornamental horticulture,

specialty agriculture and turf and amenity. CEO Karl Mielke explains: "ICL Specialty Fertilizers has developed a rich portfolio of products to serve the new needs of growers. Based on our experience and understanding of customer needs, we operate a dedicated distribution network for specialty fertilisers that includes an in-house highly professional and agronomic sales team and a wide chain of distributors worldwide. The recent alliance with Yunnan Yuntianhua will lead to an expanded product offering and also R&D projects to expand our offering to include new soluble PK fertilisers."

"We want to speed up the research and product development of our core technologies such as soluble and controlled release fertiliser technologies," continues Mielke. "We have also launched the development of new nutrient efficiency technologies and growth enhancers. In the ornamental horticulture and turf and amenity market we are committed to having a clear integrated plant and turf management approach and to support the growers and turf end users with a comprehensive portfolio of solutions."

The name ICL Specialty Fertilizers will gradually replace the former names on product packaging and in marketing and communications throughout the course of 2015.

NUTURF BLITZES WEEDS



Nuturf Australia has launched Weed Blitz Concentrate, a 100 per cent organic option for knockdown weed management. Based on an active derived from various pine oil fractions, Weed Blitz Concentrate is highly unique and forms its own class of chemistry.

When applied to plant foliage, the pine oil begins to strip the plant's cuticle causing the cell contents to spill out and as a result the leaf quickly collapses. Weed Blitz's mode of action is entirely physical so no mode of action grouping is assigned to this product, essentially making Weed Blitz a resistance-free herbicide.

"Due to the mode of action, Weed Blitz works extremely fast to kill existing weeds," says Nuturf's business manager Peter Schumacher. "The full kill typically occurs within a matter of hours, and on a warm day it can be observed in less than 1-2 hours. This rapid knockdown serves as another benefit for Weed Blitz as the weed population can be cleared up faster than with any other herbicide, making the application windows more flexible."

For further information about Nuturf's Weed Blitz Concentrate, contact your local Nuturf territory manager or phone 1800 631 008.

EVERRIS ADDS SEAMAX TO SPORTSMASTER WSF RANGE

SeaMax is the latest addition to Everris's Sportsmaster WSF range, a premium collection of water soluble fertilisers ideal for use on greens, tees, fairways and sports fields. SeaMax (4-0-12.4) contains water soluble seaweed sourced from Arcadian seaplants and TMax technology that is designed to enhance foliar and root nutrient uptake and improve plant health.

SeaMax is best used in a tank mix with liquid and foliar nutrition or to complement a granular fertiliser programme. Product advantages include:

- Premium high density Atlantic *ascophyllum nodosum* seaweed extract;

- Active seaweed content of 75 per cent for maximum application efficiency;
- Designed, developed and tested to enhance turf quality, colour and root growth;
- A perfect complement for low nutrient input programme. Feeds soil microbes, providing healthy soil environment for root development;
- 100 per cent water soluble, an ideal tank mix with wetting agents and plant nutrition; and

SeaMax is available in 1kg packs from your local Everris distributor. For more information visit www.everris.com

HUDNER JOINS NUTURF



Nuturf has appointed Darra Hudner (pictured) as territory manager based in Victoria. Hudner, who hails from the UK, comes to Nuturf from roles such as research facilities manager for the Sports Turf Research Institute based out of the Redlands Research Station in Queensland, along with a project management role during the preparation and delivery of both the 2014 FIFA Soccer World Cup in Brazil and the recent 2015 Asian Cup tournament in Australia.

Hudner can be contacted on 0438700939 or on email at Darra.Hudner@nuturf.com.au.

TORO TURF MASTERS FORUM HEADS ACROSS THE DITCH

The stunning scenery of the Queenstown region in New Zealand provided the backdrop for the 5th Annual Australian Toro Turf Masters Forum which was held in late April. The Turf Masters Forum enables superintendents from Australia, New Zealand and Asia to come together to discuss best practices and the challenges of turf management in the golf industry. It also gives participants the chance to network with other superintendents from courses of all sizes and discuss everything 'turf'. Additionally, attendees get product training on Toro equipment and irrigation products.

Royal Melbourne Golf Club course superintendent Richard Forsyth said: "I experienced wonderful hospitality, great networking, new product knowledge and sensational golf courses. The opportunity to view and discuss some of the new products now available, and others in development, was educational. To see the three golf courses in the area, and discuss the management practices of bentgrass and fescue, was a highlight for me."

According to Steve Marsden, course superintendent at the Royal Sydney Golf Club, the event provided great insight into what Toro is working on. "As an end-user, this is very exciting. It is great to see companies investing in product development that is signalled by the end user, and events like this obviously help facilitate this. Creating an event like this that brings turf managers together to provide feedback on product development is beneficial to both parties."

The Turf Masters golf tournament was held at the Millbrook Country Club, host to the 2015 New Zealand Open, and Jack's Point Championship Golf Course on the shores of Lake Wakatipu. Congratulations to Wayne Hensley from Terrigal Memorial Golf Club (NSW), winner of the Toro Turf Masters Cup.



The 5th Annual Australian Toro Turf Masters Forum was held in Queenstown in late April

STA AUSTRALIA



Celebrating with National Sports Turf Graduate of the Year Grant Woolley (second from left) in the Hunter Valley were (from left) Robert Rein (Toro), Bryan Dunn (Aurora Stadium), Tony Guy (STA Australia) and Laurence Bingham (Toro)

The Sports Turf Association of Australia was once again very grateful to participate in the hugely successful 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference held in the Hunter Valley during the last week of June. The event is a brilliant showcase for the entire Australian turfgrass industry and as usual so professionally hosted and organised by the AGCSA.

As in past years the whole four-and-a-half days of the turf conference was a truly amazing marathon experience of educational seminar and workshop sessions intersected with seemingly non-stop professional development opportunities with business and social networking engagements.

For me the standout presentation was at the very start of the conference. I was incredibly proud and very moved when **Mal Caddies** and **Scott Harris**, each STA presidents from their respective Queensland and ACT regions, courageously stood on the stage and gave very personal and at times emotional accounts of their ongoing struggles against skin cancer.

The entire audience were captured as they respectfully listened and bore witness to Mal's every word when he began describing firstly how it felt to be told that dreadful news and then the ensuing medical journey he and his family have endured. That morning Mal and Scott shared their story with **Jo Crotty** from Danger Sun Overhead and it proved a very sobering lesson that spoke directly to every delegate and it was amazing the number of stories that also emanated from the floor.

Although there were two very important messages delivered – protect yourself vigilantly against the damages of solar radiation and have your skin checked by health professionals on a very regular six monthly basis – the other highly valuable take away message was one of hope and affirmative action. What a way to start the conference. Wow!

This year, that friendly mood of support and positive attitude was felt throughout the conference and was clearly evident in the quality of each of the AGCSA and STA Graduate of the Year Award finalists. All 11 men were exceptional in behaviour and presentation. Congratulations to the winners, ACT's **Alex Smith** (Fairbairn Golf Club) and STA Tasmania's **Grant Woolley** (Aurora Stadium). Each state should be very proud of their respective ambassador.

My thanks go to all 'the people' which included all the delegates, speakers, exhibitors and event supports staff throughout the conference week who were absolutely brilliant and made the event such a memorable success.

For more information regarding events, activities and news for the Sports Turf Association, please visit our national page at www.sportsturf.asn.au and from there to all the states.

TONY GUY
PRESIDENT, STA AUSTRALIA

STA VIC



There have been plenty of changes in the STA Victoria office recently with new phone and postal contact details. STA Victoria can now be reached at 0439 089 005 while the new postal address is P.O. Box 1100 Sandringham, Vic 3191. Change is always a good thing and in order for STA Victoria to keep up with the times and better utilise the association's finances it was time to make some transitions.

Congratulations to STA Vic representative **Jono Perez** (AAMI Park) for presenting so well in the final of the STA National Sports Turf Graduate of the Year Award. Despite Jono not winning the award – that went the way of Tasmania's **Grant Woolley** – he should be very proud of his achievements. The organisers advised it was a close call with little difference between the finalists. Apprentices in

Victoria should get their thinking caps on for the 2016 Graduate of the Year Award as there is a great prize attached to the national award.

As this edition was going to print, STA Victoria's 2015 Sportsfield and Wicket Seminar was fast approaching (22 July). Due to last year's success, the 2015 event was again held at the fantastic AAMI Park. This year's seminar, sponsored by Globe Growing Solutions, included talks from industry professionals such as **Toby Lumsden** (City of Casey grounds co-ordinator), **John Shannon** (Melbourne Grammar School head groundsman) and AFL legend **Kevin Sheedy**.

PETER TODD
PRESIDENT, STA VIC

First, I'd like to express my gratitude to **Steve Jacobsen** for handing over the baton in regards to the role of NSWGCSA president. Steve has decided to take the jump into sales with Ventrac and has therefore relinquished his tenure as superintendent at Carnarvon Golf Club.

The NSWGCSA committee will also lose some long-standing board members this year with **Stuart Hall** (Asquith Golf Club) and **Matt Goodbun** (Newcastle Golf Club) standing down at the end of 2015, as well as **Ryan Fury** (Killara Golf Club). On a positive note, however, I have been overwhelmed by the interest from some really motivated superintendents from all over the state looking to fill those vacancies on the board for 2016 which I think bodes well for the years ahead.

Late April in the Sydney region saw 100kph winds and with rainfall nudging 400mm for the month the Bureau was calling it the storm of the century. Needless to say those so-called slower months through winter have been quite the opposite for most. I can only hope that the clubs most affected have been remunerated by their insurance companies and are now beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

NSWGCSA membership renewals are now set for the forthcoming year with some added benefits being included. This year there has been a small increase in fees, however, included in the membership package is an extremely useful Golf Course Management Manual. Included in this manual are budget forecasting templates and personal and course audit templates that can be used to improve your facilities and your team.

We will also be offering an environmental minimum requirements document which will include an environmental and WHS handbook as well as the minimum amount of safe operating procedure templates to assist our members in developing a basic environmental management system.

Although this will not make you completely compliant in the eyes of the EPA, it will go a long way to giving you assurances that if an event does happen you will be able to show a basic level of due diligence and compliance. In recent times it has become increasingly more apparent that every golf course has to be aware of their environmental responsibilities and adopting this system will provide you with a great starting point.

In the coming months the association will be running implementation seminars around the state in order to assist superintendents to set up their system and how to tailor it to their own facility and staff needs.

I would urge all members to take up this valuable offer for only \$225 and with it you will receive a pesticide application logbook and a NSWGCSA jacket. I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind all superintendents who are reading this that membership to the NSWGCSA for their apprentices is free of charge. It is imperative for the good of the industry that we encourage the future greenkeepers of this state to get involved and utilise the networking platform by liking our Facebook page.

STUART GILL
INTERIM PRESIDENT, NSWGCSA

PROGRAMME TO HELP IMPROVED ACCESS TO TURF CHEMICALS



A national programme to fast-track chemical registration and minor-use permits could provide a new range of much needed control options for turf producers and the turf-maintenance sector.

The Improved Access to AgVet Chemicals for Agricultural Industries programme is being undertaken by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and aims to evaluate herbicides and pesticides across all agricultural industries to see if label registrations can be completed more efficiently.

As part of the programme, Turf Australia undertook a process of finding out which chemicals and pesticides the industry deemed the most important for use across the production and maintenance sectors. Turf Australia then attended the AgVet Collaborative Forum armed with a list of priority chemicals for the turf industry.

"The priorities for our industry are around the control of wintergrass (*Poa annua*), Parramatta Grass and seeded grasses (mainly kikuyu) in other warm-season grasses," says Turf Australia New South Wales industry development officer Dave Raison.

The final list of five priority chemicals to the industry has changed over the course of the last year according to Raison. "It was a long process getting our top five together, and some chemicals which had

been previously high on the list were removed as they had, fortunately, been given registration by the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicine Authority (APVMA) in that time.

"In assembling our top five priority chemicals, we also included some older chemicals permitted for use in other industries – but not turf – as recent phytotoxicity and efficacy trials had shown them to be effective weapons for the industry's needs."

The forum brought together the RIRDC programme team, APVMA, Horticultural Innovation Australia (HIA), representatives from agricultural industries across Australia and chemical companies. Each of the industries put up five chemicals of priority, with over 700 listed at the conclusion of the day. For the turf industry, the workshop had plenty of positive outcomes.

"Of the five priority chemicals the turf industry put up, three were accepted to progress to 'minor use permit' stage and two were accepted by registrants as chemicals they would include to move to registered use in the turf industry," says Raison who added that HIA would now assist those registrants in advancing chemicals to the next stage. While the outcome had been positive for the industry, growers will need to wait until the minor use permits have actually been granted before they can use the chemicals. This is expected in coming months.

STA QLD



Golf Central, a state of the art driving range and golf entertainment facility near Brisbane airport, was the venue for the recent STA Queensland AGM. Superintendent **Ray Lawrence** does a great job looking after the Seashore paspalum putting greens, zoysia surrounds, 300 metre fairway and numerous grass tees and target greens.

This year's AGM saw a few changes in the make-up of the STA Qld committee, most notably the stepping down of one of our association's foundation committee members **Scott Wallace** (Ballymore) and our admin/social media whiz **Jarrold Bird** (Alan Border field). Both have been a huge part of the association's success and fortunately Jarrold will continue to keep our Facebook and Twitter sites ticking over. Also stepping down are **Callum Marsh**, **Brian Perrin**, **Sheldon Simmonds** and **Terry McPartland**.

Our new, and welcome, faces on committee, along with their new ideas and energy, are **Peter Cronin** (QSAC), **Peter White** (Parkland), **Brett Evans** (Nuturf) and **Dan Norton** (Austspray). They join **Mal Caddies** (president), **Kristy Pratsch** (secretary), **Matt Roche** (treasurer), **John Hagan** (education) and **Martyn Hedley** (general committee).

One of the first jobs of the new committee will be the organising of our upcoming STA Open Day to be held in August, the first event of the 2015-2016 financial year. Last year's event, held at John Paul College, was a great success with over 100 members attending and all of our STA Qld Partners displaying, presenting or demonstrating their wares. It's a perfect event to bring along your bosses or bean counters, if only to show them how professional and passionate our industry is. Stay tuned for details on this event!

Another major focus of the committee this year will be to increase our member base. We are an association for all greenkeepers and groundstaff, from state schools and clubs right through to major stadiums and across all turf sports. We also only cost \$65 for an individual membership, which is great value. So if you haven't re-joined from last year, just get on our website www.staqld.com.au and simply hit the 'Become a member' button and fill in your details. And if you have re-joined, it's great to have you back; make sure you encourage your fellow greenkeepers to join.

MARTYN HEDLEY
COMMITTEE, STA QLD

STA NSW



Iwould like to start by congratulating the AGCSA staff and acknowledging their hard work, long hours and commitment put in to the Australian Turfgrass Conference. The event was fantastic with many great presentations and the trade show was always busy.

It was great to catch up with so many fellow industry workers at the conference held in NSW

for the first time in many years and the Hunter Valley seemed to work well. STA was privileged to be involved in the Sportsfield Stream during the conference and we were really pleased with the attendance in the room for both days and also the involvement of the delegates during the sessions.

STA NSW Graduate of the Year, **Matthew Clark** from Tweed Heads, competed with four other candidates for the title of Toro Australian Sports Turf Graduate of the Year, but was unlucky this time with **Grant Woolley** from Tasmania ultimately winning. From all reports it was the toughest year for the judges as all candidates presented really well and were a credit to themselves and their state.

STA NSW has recently launched a new service – STA Turf Assessment. This service was developed as it was believed that there is a need for independent and affordable turf assessment services and we hope to be able to work with turf managers to achieve the best surface possible. Whether it is reviewing current practices, resolving specific problems or preparing turf for upcoming events, we are happy to work with the turf manager to get a great outcome. More details are available on the STA NSW website www.sportsturf.asn.au

ON THE MOVE

JOHN BERRY: Has departed Dunheved Golf Club, NSW after nine years to return to his native England.

STEVE JACOBSEN: Departed as superintendent Carnarvon Golf Club, NSW to take up a sales position with Ventrac Australia.

BOBBY LEE: From assistant superintendent of four-and-a-half years to superintendent Hawks Nest Golf Club, NSW.

DAVID MASON: From superintendent Riversdale Golf Club, Vic to superintendent Metropolitan Golf Club, Vic.

MATT MCLEOD: From superintendent Tocomwal Golf Club, NSW to superintendent Cobram Barooga Golf Club, NSW.

DAMIEN MURRELL: From superintendent Hawks Nest Golf Club, NSW to superintendent Easts Leisure & Golf, NSW.

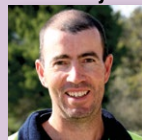
KIRSTEN SHUTTLEWORTH: From Royal Melbourne Golf Club, Vic to assistant superintendent Churchill Park Golf Club, Vic.

GLENN STUART: From superintendent Metropolitan Golf Club, Vic to superintendent Peninsula Kingswood Country Club, Vic.

ROB WEIKS: From superintendent Twin Doves Golf Club, Vietnam to superintendent Brookwater Golf & Country Club, Qld.



John Berry



Matt McLeod



Damien Murrell

CHRIS CHAPMAN
PRESIDENT, STA NSW

Usually warm temperatures combined with regular rainfall have made for ideal growing conditions in the Sunshine State as we nearly hit the halfway mark of winter. This has been a bonus for **Lincoln Coombes** and his crew at RACV Royal Pines Resort as they head towards their completion date of 20 August for the back nine redevelopment.

Work started on 7 February immediately after the Ladies Masters and at the time of writing they have holes 12-15 fully completed and solid turfed with Wintergreen couchgrass on tees and fairways and TifEagle on the greens. With the PGA confirmed from 3-6 December, Lincoln will be praying that the ideal weather conditions continue in his lead-up preparations.

Pat Pauli is also enjoying the good weather at his newly opened Maroochy River Golf Club. All reports are that Pat has the Graham Marsh design in mint condition and they are being swamped by the golfing public wanting to experience the new course, so much so that even the GCSAQ struggled to get a date locked in for the August AGM.

Continuing with our 'walk and talk' days for the year, 43 members, trade, groundstaff and some greens directors ventured up into the Sunshine Coast hinterland to walk the Maleny Golf Club. Superintendent and AGCSA member **Mick McCombe** together with course architect **Graham Papworth** gave us an insight into the trials and tribulations of constructing the front nine holes.

After viewing an AGCSA conference presentation by **Euan Grant** about Macrihanish Dunes on minimalist golf construction, the club took the mantra 'golf as it began' and with this philosophy they embarked on a mission to convince the local council and community that a community golf course was possible.



At a cost of about \$750,000 (with a \$450K input from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and donations from members) the construction has seen no earthworks on the rolling kikuyu fairways and minimal disturbance in building the kikuyu tees and Tifdwarf green complexes. The proposed revetted bunkers will also add a point of difference.

It is great to see that a common goal and a lot of blood, sweat, tears, time and dedication from both the superintendent and foundation members can produce such a fantastic community based course. The club is in discussion with the council to further develop the back nine holes over the next 12-18 months.

Upcoming GCSAQ events include the Northern Rivers Golf Day Open on 7 August at Oceans Shores Country Club. This event is open to all supers and ground staff, so if you are interested in playing RSVP by 3 August to superintendent **Shane Heaney** on 0417 225 135.

The 2015 AGM at Maroochy River GC will be held on 14 August and a month later **Phil Soegaard** will host us at Lakelands Golf Club for a Turf Industry Day (open to all sectors of the turf industry) on 14 September. Sponsors of our association will be given ownership of a hole for the day and we are hoping to create a great networking opportunity. If you would like to take part in this day please contact **Brent Robinson** on 0429 657 288.

Recent moves around the traps sees **Rob Weiks** return in a superintendent's role at Brookwater Golf & Country Club to oversee some course refurbishment as part of the \$550 million Dusit Thani Resort Development. **Mick Kelly** has also taken the reigns at Middle Ridge Golf Club in Toowoomba, while **Mick Roberts** has resigned from Nambour Golf Club to go and work with **Steve Millgate** at Beerwah.

Here's hoping the nice mild winter hangs around and that our fearless GCSAQ leader and president Charlie Giffard will make it back safely from his European sojourn to write the next report (**He's out of a job BT – Ed**).

More than 40 attended the GCSAQ 'walk 'n' talk' session at Maleny Golf Club in the Sunshine Coast hinterland with superintendent Mick McCombe

BEN TILLEY
TREASURER, GCSAQ

The new-look par three 14th at RACV Royal Pines Resort



STA WA held a successful irrigation workshop at Charles Riley Reserve in early May

Winter is the time of year when WA turfies look to the heavens for that long awaited rainfall. The season started with some promise when the metropolitan area received a healthy 65-70mm over a few days in mid-May but this was just a teaser as it took another few weeks before more substantial falls arrived. Although when it did arrive the temperature plummeted – like any farmer, us turfies are never happy!

If you were to think that we are a little over concerned about water and irrigation, you would be right. We're not only watching the skies but also the underground supply. The majority of Perth's commercially maintained green turf surfaces are irrigated by ground water. In the face of higher demands for residential land and diminishing resources of available water (whether by rainfall or aquifer), a number of like-minded socio-environmentally aware groups became concerned about an increasing threat to the existence of quality green space within our communities.

The STA WA, through the valiant efforts of the WA Turf Development Office, has been proactive in the establishment of a committee of these concerned individuals and organisation representatives as a coherent and focused advisory body called the WA 'Green Space Alliance'.

Recently this body successfully acquired a grant from the Western Australian Department of Sport and Recreation to help build a discussion paper on the value of green space in Perth. The aim of the discussion paper is to ultimately build a White Paper position statement on behalf of the alliance that can be presented to government at all levels to ensure that natural green spaces and places are retained for all, forever.

Doing what we can to educate the importance of managing this vital resource, on 6 May the STA WA held a successful irrigation workshop with around 35 in attendance at the Stirling Community Centre on the Charles Riley Reserve, North Beach. As part of the Western Australian Department of Water licencing regulations, commercial users need to carefully regulate the extraction of groundwater from the shallow aquifers that lie below their properties.

Licensed users are afforded set allocation amounts for annual consumption.

For the many turf managers across the southern half of WA this allocation has been generally categorised as 5000KL, 7500KL and 10,000KL per hectare per year. 7500KL is the most common allocation for general passive (amenity/ recreational) turf and 10,000KL for active sports field turf areas.

However, the vast majority of Perth's sports turf surfaces are grown on very free draining, calcareous sands and the production of quality sports turf surfaces can usually consume anywhere between 11,000 and 15,000KL per hectare per year. Hence the need for a structured and disciplined approach to designing and implementing an irrigation management plan utilising flexible budgets that can be adjusted daily to reflect environmental, climatic and turf health needs.

This calls for committed monitoring of all conditions and scheduling carefully timed applications of both chemical and organic amendments, adjuvants and surfactants in conjunction with grounds maintenance methods of aeration and thatch control.

CONFERENCE

In late June I was proud to be part of a small yet valued and committed contingent of delegates from WA attending the 31st Australian Turfgrass Conference in the Hunter Valley. Once again the AGCSA put together an incredible week of educational seminars and a wall-to-wall trade exhibition displaying an absolute plethora of grounds equipment and product.

Luke Cooney (Hale School), our 2014 winner of the National Sports Turf Graduate of the Year Award, was a special Toro conference guest and acted as a 'big brother' to the 11 state finalists in both the AGCSA and STA graduate awards. Although not successful, congratulations must go to our state finalist **Matthew Lane** who was an exceptional ambassador of our next generation of turfies.

While not as grand, but of equal importance, the next major turf event on the WA sports turf calendar will be the biennial WA Turf Seminar on 29 July at the Tomkins on Swan Function Centre. The seminar program hopes to provide an insight for growers and the turf maintenance sector into how the development of some new major stadium quality sports surfaces over the next three years will influence the future of the WA turf industry.

This will then be followed by our 2015 STA (WA) AGM to be held at the Challenger Institute of Technology, Murdoch Campus on Wednesday 5 August.

TONY GUY
PRESIDENT, STA WA

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* Compared to comparable 5-gang fairway mowers.



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*Jason Berkhout
2IC - Thurgoona Country Club Resort, NSW*

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