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MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

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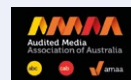
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COVER

RACV Royal Pines Resort: The remodelled par five 12th at RACV Royal Pines Resort. **Photo:** Brett Robinson.



LEAD STORY: The Aussie elite – 2015 Emirates Australian Open review

6

When Australia's only Masters champion Adam Scott comments that a golf course is "the best conditioned of any I have played this year" you sit up and take notice. When he's already played the likes of Augusta and St Andrews in that same year, such a comment takes on even greater significance. The Australian Golf Club was the venue for the 2015 Emirates Australian Open, the 100th staging of the nation's most prestigious golf tournament, and course superintendent Phil Beal and his crew presented a course befitting such an occasion. ATM editor Brett Robinson looks back at Beal's preparations, some of the personal challenges he had to overcome and ultimately the incredible adulations that came the club's way during and after the tournament.

FEATURES

A long way from home

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For UK-based golf course manager Kevan Glass, volunteering at the 2015 Emirates Australian Open was one of the most memorable experiences in his turf management career. For fellow volunteer, Cape Kidnappers superintendent Brad Sim, it was a return to familiar surroundings having spent a number of years at The Australian Golf Club as assistant superintendent. ATM caught up with both during the week in Sydney.



Cuch a cut above

18

A skilled turf equipment technician is one of the most prized members of any golf course maintenance operation. ATM catches up with The Australian's Josh Cuch who played a major role in helping to present the immaculate surfaces at the recent Emirates Australian Open.

Royal Pines shines

22

After two years of reconstruction, the full new-look 18-hole championship layout at Royal Pines got its first true test when it hosted the 2015 Australian PGA Championship last December. For course superintendent Lincoln Coombes it was the culmination of one of the most challenging yet rewarding projects of his 28 years in turf management. ATM editor Brett Robinson looks back on the back nine reconstruction and the tournament.

The tradition returns

32

Following a hiatus of seven years as the tournament travelled around the Melbourne sandbelt, the Uniql Masters returned to its spiritual home Huntingdale in mid-November. ATM looks back on the tournament which was the 26th overall and 8th in charge for course superintendent Michael Freeman.



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We climbed them as youngsters and built forts in them and once upon a time their wood was even used to make golf clubs! So how can trees possibly be bad for golf courses? Understanding the origins of tree use on golf courses will help solve tree problems on your golf course writes USGA Green Section director David Oatis.



GRASS-ROOTS WITH JOHN NEYLAN A Royal success

40

As project agronomist, ATM columnist John Neylan reflects on the redevelopment of RACV Royal Pines Resort and what made it a success and continues the discussion surrounding herbicide resistance and some initiatives being formulated to address this growing industry challenge.

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Contributors to Australian Turfgrass Management Journal Volume 18.1 (January-February 2016)

Phil Beal (The Australian GC); Barry Bryant (SAGCSA); Lincoln Coombes (RACV Royal Pines); Josh Cuch (The Australian GC); Idris Evans (The Western Australian GC); Michael Freeman (Huntingdale GC); Peter Frewin (AGCSA); Glenn Gibson-Smith (Riverside Oaks GC); Stuart Gill (NSWGCSCA); Kevan Glass (Brokenhurst Manor GC, UK); Tony Guy (STA Australia/STA WA); Dean Hardman (The Australian GC); Martyn Hedley (STA QLD); Hayden Mead (Kingston Heath GC); Steve Janssen; John Neylan (Turfgrass Consulting and Research); David Oatis (USGA); Brad Sim (Cape Kidnappers, NZ); Richard Stephens (Turf Australia); Ben Tilley (GCSAQ); Tim Warren (Links Lady Bay); Garry Woolard (STA Vic).

Opening up

We all know that the role of a golf course superintendent or turf manager has vastly changed over the years and it goes without saying that despite the immense satisfaction the job can bring, it is not without its pitfalls. The level of expectation placed upon turf practitioners is higher than ever before and the stresses that many now find themselves under can at times become all too much.

Over the years I have heard numerous stories second-hand of those who have been doing it tough, but rarely do you get someone who is willing to open up and share what they have been through. It was therefore extremely refreshing, albeit somewhat shocking, to hear the story of Phil Beal, course superintendent at The Australian Golf Club which would arguably rank as one of the highest profile golf clubs in the country.

Superintendent of the 19-time Australian Open host venue since 2010, Beal was guest speaker at a VGCSA meeting at Heidelberg Golf Club last September. His fascinating presentation primarily focused on the club's recent \$5 million course redevelopment under the auspices of Jack Nicklaus, along with his preparations for both the 2014 and 2015 Emirates Australian Opens. However, it was the story of his mental breakdown in the months after the 2014 tournament that left all 98 attendees speechless.

Without a hint of embarrassment or shame, Beal proceeded to talk openly and honestly about the nadir he experienced just a few months after riding the crest of a wave having successfully hosted the Open. To hear a man of Beal's calibre and stature talk about how painful it was and how completely helpless he felt going through such an ordeal was riveting. Thankfully for Beal he had an excellent support network of family, friends and work colleagues around him and immediately sought professional help which has helped him to bounce back from one of the most confronting experiences of his life.

In this edition, we recount Beal's story as part of our review of the 2015 Emirates Australian Open which he and the tournament crew again smashed right on the head. Just as he did at that VGCSA meeting, Beal was more than willing to share the story again in the pages of ATM as he knows (and he's right) that there are many more superintendents like him who are doing it tough and might be on the brink of what happened to him. He hopes that by telling his story it might prompt his colleagues to start opening up and seek help before it's too late.

In addition to Phil's story and extensive coverage of the three major tournaments late last year, this edition sees the start of a regular section where we look at minor project work. ATM has always covered major course construction or redevelopment works, but it's the small ongoing projects that superintendents conduct year round which are just as important for the ongoing improvement of their clubs.

Purely by coincidence, we have kicked off this section with a look at the recent tweaking of the iconic 15th green at Kingston Heath Golf Club. Just days after asking superintendent Hayden Mead to put pen to paper, it was announced that the club was named as host venue for the 2016 World Cup of Golf. The works saw the reinstatement of the famed back left pin position on Kingston Heath's most famous of greens which will get its first outing when the club championships are held this February. Some of the archive photos accompanying Mead's article, dating back to when the hole was altered by Alister MacKenzie in the late 1920s, make for fascinating viewing. If you have a minor project that you would like highlighted in the pages of ATM, don't hesitate to contact me. Enjoy the read.



Brett Robinson, Editor



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Associations converge on Canada for International Summit



I sit looking out the window at what can only be described as a very unusual sight for mid-January – snow and ice! I write this edition's Foreword Thinking while in Toronto, Canada attending the International Summit which is a gathering of golf course superintendent associations from across the globe, but more on that later.

From the news reports here I am reading Australia is again being savaged by Mother Nature. The USA and Canada are no different, although at the other end of the spectrum. There is widespread flooding in many areas and heavy snow and ice in others. The experience of walking home from dinner with snow, ice, wind and temperatures nearing minus 20 are certainly a stark contrast to the conditions I left in Australia.

Planning for the 32nd Australian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition continues. In the last edition of ATM I advised that **Mike Richardson** would be one of the keynote speakers at the event. Mike has unfortunately had to withdraw from the event which is a shame as we were looking forward

to welcoming him to the country. Perhaps another year.

I am pleased to advise that we have secured the services of another exceptional speaker and we will release his name closer to the date. This person has been a semi-regular visitor to Australia and he has spoken at a previous Australian Turfgrass Conference; I am sure he will not disappoint those that attend.

As mentioned earlier I am writing this piece from Toronto where I have been attending the International Summit. The summit is held every two years with the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) hosting in 2016. The event was held in conjunction with the 2016 Canadian Golf Course Management Conference which incorporated the CGSA's 50th anniversary celebrations.

The summit was attended by representatives from the Golf Course Superintendents' Association of America (GCSAA), British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA), Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Association (FEGGA), the AGCSA and the our Canadian hosts. Interestingly, the associations in attendance cover almost 90 per cent of the world's golf courses.

As with most events of this nature it is a great opportunity to discuss issues that are relevant to the industry on a global scale. This year also presented the opportunity for the associations to discuss individual strategic directions as the AGCSA, BIGGA and CGSA are all currently working on Strategic Plans. The common theme for all the associations was the need to change current activities to address new challenges within the market place. This is of particular importance with the need to embrace new technology and modify how we communicate and interact with the new generation of members.



GCSAA chief executive Rhett Evans discusses the association's Advocacy Program



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During the event **Rhett Evans** (GCSAA chief executive) updated all on the advocacy work that GCSAA do on behalf of their members in Washington DC. GCSAA has three full-time representatives on Capitol Hill to campaign on behalf of the members on pressing issues like water and chemical use and changes to immigration policy. This is certainly a great programme and while perhaps not possible in this country, member advocacy is the primary reason for an association to exist.

During the summit all associations in attendance had the opportunity to provide an update on their respective activities; interestingly, regardless of the size of the individual organisations, the problems expressed by each association were very similar. GCSAA will host the next summit in 2018 and it will be held in conjunction with the GIS which will be held in San Antonio, Texas.

The AGCSA Strategic Plan is nearing completion and the final document will be circulated to the membership once we have received some formal feedback from the respective state associations. The consensus at the State Presidents' Meeting held late last year was very positive but the AGCSA Board was keen for the document to be discussed formally at state level. Once we have received feedback from the states the document will be formalised and circulated to the membership.

I would like to thank all those that have made comment on the document; your input is greatly received. Having said that, I must say that in general the level of feedback on the document from the membership has been very poor. This is either an indication that all things are progressing nicely or there is genuine apathy among the membership. If it is the latter, it is a poor reflection on the membership.

I look forward to catching up when our paths next cross and please feel free to contact me at any time if you have an issue or suggestion; any feedback is greatly appreciated. 🌱

Toronto hosted the recent International Summit as part of the 2016 Canadian Golf Course Management Conference



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Peter Blain hand waters the 1st green after the second round

Phil Beal knew something wasn't quite right, but never expected what was about to come. Leaving work after a particularly stressful day in early February 2015 following a particularly stressful few weeks, he walked the 100 or so metres from The Australian Golf Club maintenance facility to his home and, in front of wife Sheena, broke down.

Here was a man, course superintendent of one of the most prestigious golf clubs in Australia, who a few months earlier was seemingly invincible. Standing next to 2014 Emirates Australian Open champion Jordan Spieth beaming with pride alongside his crew while they had their photo taken on the 18th green, Beal was, outwardly at least, a picture of contentment.

The plaudits had come thick and fast that week and Beal and his team had been lauded by tournament organisers, players, spectators and members alike for producing an outstanding product. Such was that high, it masked the warning signs of a tremendous fall that Beal was about to unwittingly take.

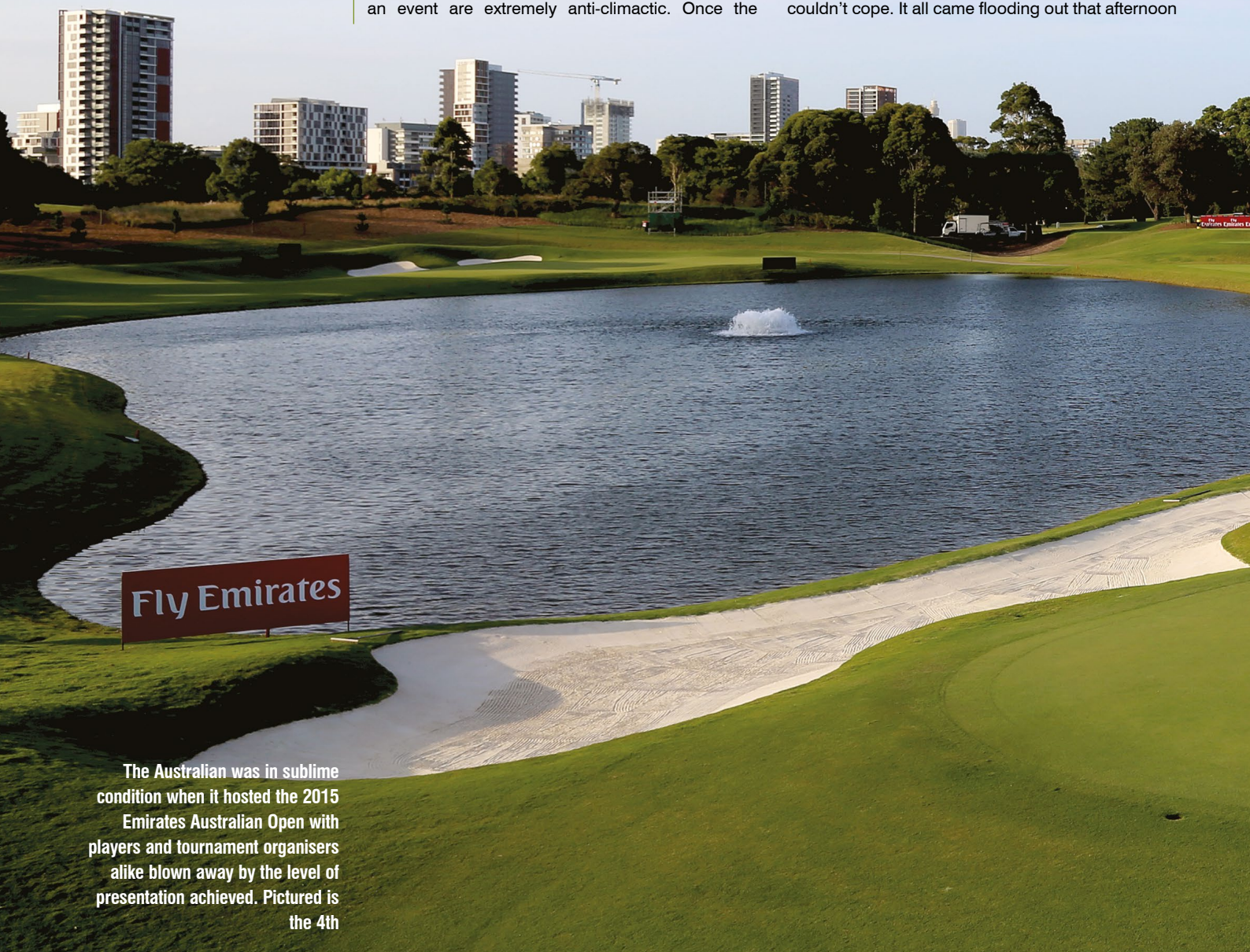
As any superintendent who has hosted a major tournament will attest, the weeks that follow such an event are extremely anti-climactic. Once the

circus has left town, the reality of day-to-day course maintenance kicks back in and it can be difficult to re-adjust.

For Beal, the 2014 tournament had been the first major Tour event in his career and thus he had invested a huge amount of time and energy to ensure his course was as near to perfection (there's that word) as he could get it. Having achieved that, Beal started to relax a little, whether consciously or subconsciously, and as any superintendent knows as soon as you start to do that it can all go downhill rapidly.

And so it did for Beal. Shortly after New Year the wheels started to fall off. Straight out of left field, all of a sudden Beal found himself losing turf on a number of greens. At a club such as The Australian where member expectations are far greater than most, the blowtorch was quickly applied. The fact that he had produced some immaculate surfaces for the Open just a few months earlier was but a distant memory. Right now, The Australian's greens were poor and Beal was in the firing line.

For the first time in his career Beal felt out of control and for the first time in his life he simply couldn't cope. It all came flooding out that afternoon



The Australian was in sublime condition when it hosted the 2015 Emirates Australian Open with players and tournament organisers alike blown away by the level of presentation achieved. Pictured is the 4th

in front of his wife, but as he'll tell you now, it's made him a far stronger person as a result.

"I think it (the breakdown) had a lot to do with last year and hosting the tournament," recalls Beal, sitting in his office last November as the second round of the 2015 Emirates Australian Open is underway. "I was so single-minded for so long about getting everything right for that tournament. Not that I knew it at the time, but the tunnel vision of the whole thing was not healthy – I was all about the tournament, about getting everything ready and about making sure it was all perfect.

"The tournament was such a success and for a period things were pretty good. I guess you start to get a little ahead of yourself. Then the reality hit that we had a whole summer ahead to contend with. Some issues then arose unexpectedly and we lost some turf on a few greens in January and I simply didn't cope with it very well. I didn't like the fact that I wasn't in control of the turfgrass; I had never lost turf like that before and I literally fell in a heap.

"The breakdown was incredible. It was amazing how I just could not put the puzzle together. I went into work the next day and sat down with CEO Rob Selley and told him exactly what happened. He was

brilliant and told me to get out of there and to go see my doctor.

"I was totally emotional and overwhelmed because I didn't understand what was going on. I do understand depression, I do understand stress and anxiety and I know how ruthless it is as I have seen it affect people close to me in the past. But I always thought I was pretty good and it just seemed ridiculous that it was happening to me. I'd had no episodes like this in the past, but the interesting thing is now having gone through this I probably did."

Beal went to see his regular GP who immediately prescribed him some strong sleeping tablets and ordered him to switch off from everything and go to bed for a couple of days. After that she put him on a course of anti-depressants and drew up a mental health plan whereby Beal could access 10 sessions with a psychologist bulk-billed through Medicare. Simply talking to someone about what was going on proved to be the ultimate release for Beal and helped him to process and deal with the most confronting challenge he has had in his life to date.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



The Australian's Gary Clark cuts the 18th green at 2.8mm

The Aussie elite

The Australian Golf Club was venue for the 100th staging of the Australian Open last November and superintendent Phil Beal and his tournament crew presented a course befitting such an occasion. ATM editor Brett Robinson looks back at Beal's preparations, some of the personal challenges he had to overcome throughout 2015 and ultimately the incredible adulations that came the club's way.

AUSSIE ACCOLADES



Defending champion Jordan Spieth: "It's one of the purest firm golf courses I've played."

Jordan Spieth, Adam Scott and Geoff Ogilvy paid The Australian Golf Club the ultimate compliment in the days leading up to last November's 2015 Emirates Australian Open. The trio were effusive in their praise of the superb conditioning of the 19-time Open host venue, with Ogilvy commenting that the course was "conditioned as well as any I've ever seen anywhere in the world. The greens are immaculate."

Earlier, World No.1 and defending champion Spieth, a two-times Major winner in 2015, commented that the course was "in even better shape than it was last year" and that it was "one of the purest, firm golf courses" he had played. Scott too was enamoured and along with liking the changes made during the recent \$5 million redevelopment, added that the course was "in the best shape of any golf course I think I've played this year".

Those were just some of the many plaudits that were directed the way of course superintendent Phil Beal and his tournament crew, comments that provided a tremendous boost especially considering the amount of work that went into preparing the course to such a level.

At the conclusion of their final round preparations, the crew were also addressed by Golf Australia chairman John Hopkins, tournament director Trevor Herden and The Australian captain Stuart Cox. All three were highly congratulatory of the crew's efforts with Hopkins telling them they had exceeded all expectations.

"Phil, Dave, the team – brilliant job. Last year I recall standing here and saying that you'd done an outstanding job that couldn't

be surpassed. The Australian Open is the showcase of Australian golf and you guys were responsible for showing not only how great golf in Australia is but how great this golf course is.

"I was terribly wrong. It turns out that you guys have surpassed yourselves which I thought was impossible. The players, in fact most people I've talked to, have been telling me that this is the best prepared golf course they have played on all year. And you know the courses these guys have played on – Augusta National and so many other great courses. That is high praise indeed.

"I know you guys have put in immeasurable hours, no doubt many more than you'll ever get paid for, but you get out of it what you put in and you guys have done a super effort. Every golfer in Australia looks upon what has happened here this week with



Golf Australia chairman John Hopkins: "You guys have surpassed yourselves"

pride and sees a wonderful team effort to showcase Australian golf.

"So I can't thank you enough, not only on behalf of the board of Golf Australia but on behalf of every golfer in the country that is watching this and seeing what is a superb layout that has been prepared to its absolute best. Thank you so much."

Added Cox: "I can't tell you how proud all 1100 members of The Australian are with what you guys have achieved here. You've surpassed all expectations and the club is thankful for what you have done for us."

JORDAN SPIETH

"Somehow I think (the golf course) is in better shape than it was last year. It's one of the purest firm golf courses I've played. There's not a blade of grass out of place on these greens - they're spectacular. They've done just a fabulous job."

GEOFF OGILVY

"(The course) is incredible. It's conditioned as well as any course I've ever seen anywhere in the world. The greens are immaculate - you feel like the first group out there every hole. They don't show any evidence that anyone else has been out there."

TREVOR HERDEN

"The golf course is outstanding. It's amazing, the players are all commenting on it. Obviously the course is another year older, the fairways have got a lot tighter. The grass is amazing. They've cored and sanded the fairways eight weeks ago, which is something very, very close to the time limit but if you've walked on them this week you'll see they're absolutely superb."

DARREN CLARKE

"Down here in Australia, as well as having some of the best golf courses in the world, you're renowned for having some of the purest greens in the world. We're always fond of blaming the greens if we can, but they're pure here so if you miss a putt it's got nothing to do with the green. I really enjoy coming here because you have some of the best turf in the world to hit off."

ADAM SCOTT

"The Australian has been one of the venues I've been looking forward to coming back to after last year. I really liked what they did here and it was showing signs of being in fantastic shape. Now it is in the best shape of any golf course I think I've played this year."

"Just talking to everyone around me about it – my wife, the boss, senior members of the crew, reps whom I knew well – and being totally open and honest and not hiding it was so refreshing," says Beal. "It was definitely all to do with work – I was under pressure and I simply wasn't coping. I was telling the psychologist about the way I did things and how I thought there was nothing wrong with that. But he was asking me 'Why do you do that?' and telling me 'That's not normal. That's not the way you should be living'. I'd been doing these things for many years. We started talking about perfectionism and there's obviously something in me whereby I can't bear to have things not quite right."

As well as talking and getting it all out, the psychologist also introduced Beal to the concept of mindfulness which is recognised as an effective way to deal with stress and anxiety. Leading up to his breakdown Beal admits that he would be talking to someone but his mind would be thinking of something totally different. Mindfulness teaches you to be fully engaged 'in the moment' and the techniques Beal has been given by his psychologist have proved extremely beneficial.

Not normally a big reader, ever since last April Beal has been reading five nights a week. While not addicted to reading, he has become addicted to getting to bed each night, opening up the book and training his mind to concentrate on what he is reading. If his mind starts to wander or get distracted, he then uses the techniques learned to bring his mind back on track. It has become such a pleasure according to Beal that as soon as he puts the book down each night he falls straight to sleep.

"It's ever so interesting if it wasn't such a painful ordeal to go through," admits Beal. "It has been a massive learning curve but I have definitely come



out of it a lot stronger. The scary thing is that when you go through something like this, you discover that there are a lot of people out there who have or are going through the same things and know exactly how you feel.

"It is so confronting, but if there's one piece of advice I would give to people it's talk to those around you and be upfront about it. If things don't feel right then they probably aren't. You need to confront it head on and even if you don't think it's happening, just go and see someone. There is help out there and I think everyone would benefit from some sort of therapy every now and then."

REFOCUSING

All the while battling his personal demons and regaining control of his life, Beal still had a job to do and on 31 March it was announced that the 2015 Emirates Australian Open was returning that November. Beal admits the anxiety levels rose a tad, but with an understanding boss and the unstinting support of his crew, not to mention his ongoing treatment and therapy, he knew he was in a much better position to deal with what was ahead.

The Australian superintendent Phil Beal suffered a major breakdown shortly after the 2014 Open. Through the unflinching support of those close to him and some professional help, he bounced back and was right on his game at the 2015 Open

The Australian Golf Club tournament crew for the 2015 Emirates Australian Open





With the extra year of maturity since the major course redevelopment a few years ago, The Australian's A1/A4 greens and Santa Ana fairways were at their prime for the 2015 Open

Drawing on the experiences from the previous year, Beal was able to steer the course to where he wanted heading into winter, although he did have to negotiate a few speed humps along the way. As if losing greens turf in the height of summer was bad enough, in March the course was hit aggressively by fairway patch. The newer turfed areas around bunkers and green surrounds on the 3rd and 4th holes and the massive fairway bunker in between 10 and 18 were badly affected, with Beal fertilising those areas heavily in an attempt to mask some significant scarring. Even with that, a few areas around bunkers had to be deemed GUR come the tournament.

Then on Anzac Day Sydney was hit by severe hail storms which trashed all of the bunkers, contaminating the sand. Over the course of the next few months all the sumps and drains were cleaned out and 1500 tonnes of fresh sand imported.

From a turf point of view, however, Beal was on track and he was very pleased with the way the surfaces went into and came out of winter. With the newer green and fairway turf from the redevelopment being that year older, coverage was

far greater and it was handling the wear and tear of every day play better.

After focussing heavily on the greens in the lead-up to the 2014 Open (and nailing them), for the 2015 Open Beal's attention turned to the fairways. While they more than held their own in 2014, there was too much grass on them for Beal's liking and were puffy in appearance.

To remedy that this time, at the end of September the crew scarified the Santa Ana couchgrass in two directions then topdressed heavily. That was followed up by a pretty intensive Primo programme, which Beal says provided the big difference this time around. Along with regular applications of iron products, Beal went out with Primo on three occasions – the first on 30 October at 500ml/ha and then a further two times at 300ml/ha in the two weeks leading up to the tournament.

By no means were the Penn A1/A4 bentgrass greens ignored and in mid-September they were cored with half inch hollow tines and topdressed. They were then regularly dusted up until three weeks before the tournament (a week less than the previous year), while Primo applications went out at 14 day intervals from around six weeks out, the last one being on 20 November at 300ml/ha. The tees, which had given Beal so much grief a year earlier, were also renovated at the start of September but not as aggressively.

About 2-3 weeks out from the tournament, the crew started to burn in lines on the fairways, tees and surrounds in readiness for the tournament. Fairways were cut daily from Tuesday the week before the tournament while the greens started receiving a double cut at 2.8mm (up from 2.5mm the previous year) on the Saturday once the tournament volunteers had joined the crew.

"It was really interesting to see how the course transformed," explains Beal. "We really didn't start fine-tuning everything until about 2-3 weeks out, but it was impressive just how quick the course came up to tournament level. It all came down to the work we had done earlier.

"We renovated the fairways pretty close to the tournament this time and topdressed heavily. There was literally sand all over the place which was a little bit controversial as we usually have the club championships through this period. We used less fertiliser than last year – we used iron products instead – but the big difference with the fairways was that I managed to get some Primo on them. Come the tournament they were very tight and you could hear the fairway reels screaming when they were cutting. We only had to cut fairways in the morning and even then it was more to tidy them up as we were hardly getting any grass off them.

"Across the whole course everything was more solid. That extra year of maturity really helped and there wasn't as much of a difference between the old and the new turf areas. In fact the new turf areas were much better, a lot less thatchy. We chased the

Josh Kelly shaves the 6th fairway. Three applications of Primo in the month leading up to the Open ensured the Santa Ana was extremely tight





surfaces quite hard the previous year and we had a few troubles, especially with the tees. While the greens were good they were fairly young, but this time they really handled the stresses we put them under a lot better.

"The only thing we did struggle with was fairway patch. We got smashed and it was really quite surprising how quickly it came in and distressing to see the level of scarring it left behind. It affected the newer turf areas more and I'm convinced it's got something to do with not having enough body in the soil. We upped our soil amendments and used a bit of trichoderma on fairways, surrounds and bunker banks to try and combat it, but it is still a major worry for us going forward."

SIMPLY THE BEST

Come the opening round of the 100th staging of the Open, the hard work that Beal and his crew had put in was broadly acknowledged and the accolades



that flowed from the players were quite extraordinary. When Australia's only Masters champion Adam Scott comments that a golf course is "the best conditioned of any I have played this year" you sit up and take notice, especially considering he'd already played the likes of Augusta National and St Andrews in the same year.

Scott's summation of the excellent course conditioning was mirrored by Geoff Ogilvy, Europe Ryder Cup captain Darren Clarke and defending champion Jordan Spieth (see more on what the players said on page 8) and such was the feedback that Beal couldn't get around the course during the tournament without being regularly stopped and congratulated by the members.

Above left: Clayton Pressley (left) and Chris Allen double team the 16th green

Above: The par three 15th gets prepped ahead of the third round. The A1/A4 greens were hollow cored in mid-September and dusted regularly up until three weeks from the tournament



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Along with the tightness of the Santa Ana fairways, Beal was most pleased with the way the greens handled the 40 degree heat during the opening round

New landscape areas on holes like the 14th continued to be a focus in between the 2014 and 2015 Opens

For a superintendent though, it's all about the turf and there were two aspects that pleased Beal the most – the tightness of the fairway surfaces and the manner in which the greens responded after what can only be described as a brutal opening round.

"I was very impressed with the overall look of the course when the tournament teed off, but I was most pleased with how the greens came through that



Thursday," recalls Beal. "It was a bit of a nightmare day. When you have near 40 degree heat and you've got greens that you know have just enough water in them to get them through, all superintendents know how on edge you can be.

"I was out there the whole day looking at the course and checking the greens on 10, 14, 15 and 17 but not being able to do a thing about them. I was waiting for them to do the wrong thing, but they didn't! We literally just gave them a splash with the hoses after that round and they popped back beautifully.

"I felt a lot more comfortable with the whole set up this year and what we achieved compared to the previous year. Being familiar with everything, whether it was to do with preparing the course or tournament set-up, I felt much more in control. Also, being a bit more patient with things and being more confident with the timing of everything. Last year everything felt a bit rushed whereas this year we had things ready a lot earlier and were able to keep the surfaces ticking over.

"The guys did a magnificent job and I couldn't have asked for anything more of them and the volunteers who came in for the tournament. The comments from the players were fantastic and when you have world class players like Jordan, Adam and Geoff making the comments they did, it really was unbelievable. It was great for the guys to hear those and it made them appreciate that they were involved in producing something that was very pleasing for some of the best players in the world." 🌱



2015 EMIRATES AUSTRALIAN OPEN – THE AUSTRALIAN GC

Superintendent: Phil Beal.

Assistant superintendent: David Smith.

Turf: Penn A1/A4 greens, Santa Ana couchgrass tees, fairways and surrounds.

Course set-up: 6619m, par 72.

Preparations: Greens started receiving a double cut at 2.8mm from the Saturday before tournament week. This continued until the Wednesday and Thursday when they received just a single cut due to the hot windy conditions. Saturday saw some greens triple and quadruple cut to get them to around 11.5 on the stimp meter. Fairways cut in the mornings at 10mm (along with greens surrounds) and tees walk-mowed at

8mm. Divotting, pitch mark repairing and handwatering greens at the conclusion of first three rounds.

Bunkers were hand raked both in the morning and afternoon but with different rakes. In the afternoon the crew levelled bases and used a coarse-toothed rake to put a good groove mark in them, before going out the following morning with a fine-toothed rake to provide the desired finish.

Weather: The Friday prior to the tournament was a scorcher – 43 – while the opening round saw temperatures hit 40 coupled with strong nor-westerlies. Beal had to station crew members on holes 5 and 13-16 to blow leaves

and debris off greens. Round two couldn't have been more of a contrast with early morning showers softening up the greens a touch. Overcast conditions persisted for the remainder of the tournament before clearing midway through the final round.

Did you know... The Australian's tournament crew not only had access to all areas as they went about their daily preparations, they also had their own spectator grandstand! A 'Greenkeepers stand' was erected behind the 5th green which backs onto the maintenance facility and became a popular hangout after morning preparations and for Sunday's final round.

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Kevan Glass was one of four UK course managers and greenkeepers to make the trip to Sydney especially to volunteer at the 2015 Emirates Australian Open

A long way from home

Kevan Glass and Brad Sim were among a 29-strong corps of volunteers that joined The Australian Golf Club crew to prepare the course for the 2015 Emirates Australian Open. ATM editor Brett Robinson catches up with both to look back on their highlights from the week.

Clayton Pressley, from Townsville's Lavarack Golf Club, gives a guide to fellow volunteer Chris Allen



Kevan Glass knew he was in for an interesting few weeks Down Under when he walked out of the Sydney International Airport terminal and smack bang into the middle of a 43-degree Sydney stinker. Hailing from the south coast of England, where 30 is considered extreme, it was somewhat of a rude introduction to Australian conditions. As he quips, the next time he'll likely experience that sort of heat is when he pulls a Sunday roast out of the oven!

Glass was one of 29 volunteers that converged on The Australian Golf Club the Saturday before the 2015 Emirates Australian Open last November, and one of four that made the journey from the UK just to be involved in the tournament. Also travelling half a world were Jimmy Butler (Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club), Iain Hardaker (Buckinghamshire Golf Club) and Chris Allen who returned to Sydney after volunteering at the 2014 Open.

Glass is course manager at Brokenhurst Manor Golf Club which is nestled half way between Bournemouth and Southampton in the middle of New Forest, Hampshire (Shane Warne territory as he is quick to point out). In the industry more than 25 years, Glass cut his greenkeeping teeth at the public

access New Forest Golf Club where he would spend the first 15 years of his career. It was then he moved to nearby Brokenhurst Manor as first assistant for two years before heading to Scotland where he joined the crew at Loch Lomond. Returning to the south coast, he re-joined New Forest for a short period before taking on his old role at Brokenhurst. Within a few months the course manager had left and he was appointed course manager, a role he has held for the past six years.

Brokenhurst Manor is a heathland/parkland style course designed by Harry Colt. It has a strong reputation for having some of the best surfaces in the New Forest region and 2015 saw the club celebrate its centenary. Glass manages a small crew of seven who prepare the *Poa annua*/browntop bentgrass surfaces for both member and green fee play.

Glass's opportunity to volunteer at the Open came via his presence on social media. Having been on Twitter since 2012, Glass (@brockram) started following senior greenkeeper and The Australian Golf Club's resident social media guru Dean Hardman (@DHardman77). It was while he was on holiday in Tunisia earlier in 2015 that Glass saw Hardman's post about Open volunteering spots on offer and having never visited Australia before thought it would be a prime opportunity to head south for the winter.

Volunteering was by no means a new concept for Glass. For four of the past five years he has been involved at The Open Championship, volunteering at Royal St Georges (2011), Royal Lytham & St Annes (2012), Muirfield (2013) and Royal Liverpool (2014). Unfortunately he missed St Andrews last year on





PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON



Cape Kidnappers (NZ)
superintendent Brad Sim (right), a former assistant at The Australian, teamed with fellow volunteer and former superintendent Craig Paget setting pins during the Open

account of his club's centenary celebrations. Within 24 hours of Hardman's post Glass had contacted The Australian superintendent Phil Beal and was duly pencilled in for the Open.

"I had always wanted to come to Australia and this was a perfect way to combine a bit of a holiday as well as experience a major tournament," says Glass. "It really was as simple as getting in contact with Dean on Twitter and it going from there. You just follow people randomly and you never know where it can take you. These sorts of opportunities are what make our industry so great and for guys starting out in the industry now it's a great way to get experience."

Aside from the oppressive heat, which mercifully abated the day after he arrived, Glass also had a swift introduction to the delights of Australian fauna. While used to a few inquisitive insects early morning

or late afternoon back home, he wasn't quite prepared for the thousands of companions joining him as he started cutting The Australian's fairway perimeters and aprons at five o'clock each morning.

"I can't say a bad thing about the place, but there were a few too many insects for my liking," laughs Glass, who in between tournament shifts during round three made a pilgrimage to the hallowed turf of the Sydney Cricket Ground. "I had never cut in the dark before so that was a bit of a challenge, but what I couldn't get over were the millions of flies! There were a couple of times I had to turn off the lights on the Reelmaster, stop and reverse back because I couldn't see, there were so many flies. All part of the Aussie experience!"

There would be a few more learning curves for the Englishman as well. Having never worked with warm-season grasses before, his initial

Glass rakes the large fairway bunker on the par five 5th





◀ Above: Geoff Tandy (pictured), along with crewmate Richard Mathers, was one of two volunteers to make the trip to the Open from Victoria Golf Club in Melbourne

Above right: Gunnedah's Ian 'Chop' Elphick carves it up while giving the thumbs up



pronunciation of 'couch' grass (as in what you sit on to watch TV) drew more than a few laughs from the resident crew. Cutting fairways and aprons at the same height was also a new practice given that back home there is a 5mm difference. What impressed him most, however, was the extremely high level of conditioning achieved which more than matched the Open venues he has worked on in the past.

"The course was immaculate and the attention to detail amazing," says Glass, who was also part of the bunker and pitch mark crews in the afternoons. "Before I came here I wasn't sure what sort of level the course or presentation would be, but it was as good as anything I have seen at the Open Championships. These guys achieved everything they do at a Major event, if not more.

"It was a really interesting time. Getting to know about the different techniques they used, getting to know a bit more about couchgrass and their practices maintaining it, water usage, fertiliser regimes, the flora and fauna. The bunkering too! I couldn't believe how much work had been put into them, but the level of finish and consistency was incredible. I was able to take away so much."

FAMILIAR SURROUNDS

While The Australian proved a totally new and rewarding experience for Glass, for fellow volunteer

Brad Sim the 2015 Open was somewhat of a homecoming. Between 2010 and 2012 Sim was Beal's right-hand man at The Australian and played an instrumental role in the lead-up to and during the initial stages of the club's \$5 million course redevelopment.

It was midway through the Jack Nicklaus redesign, which Sim had been a key proponent in selling the concept to members, that an opportunity came up which he couldn't turn down. Steve Marsden had just been appointed superintendent at nearby Royal Sydney and his job at the stunning Tom Doak-designed Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand's was advertised.

Having worked at sister course Kauri Cliffs as a foreman between 2003 and 2006, as well as stints overseas at The Els Club (Dubai) and The Grove (London), Sim duly put his CV in and beat home 100 other top flight candidates for the job. Open week last November marked his third anniversary in charge at Cape Kidnappers and his return to The Australian for the tournament was his first since leaving.

"It has been amazing to come back and see the course for the first time since the redevelopment," says Sim, who also brought across with him Cape Kidnappers assistant Ryan Trembath to volunteer. "I didn't get to see the finished product which



Lismore Workers GC superintendent Josh Straub goes to work on the 3rd



Cape Kidnappers assistant superintendent Ryan Trembath joined boss Brad Sim in making the trip across from New Zealand for the tournament

was disappointing, but to get back and see what the boys have achieved gives me a great deal of satisfaction.

"My two years at The Australian were so rewarding. When I first arrived I could see the potential that the place had and together with Phil we put in a lot of work to help convince the members that the redevelopment was the path to take. Fortunately they agreed and I got to be involved in most of the greens construction and bunker work before going to Cape Kidnappers.

"Projects like that are all about the finishing and the finer details and the guys really exceeded all expectations. Unfortunately I missed last year's Open because of an operation but saw how good it was then on television. So to see the level of finish and presentation they've got it to this time – how tight the surfaces are, how impressive the landscaping is – it is a real credit to the guys."

While Glass and Sim had to cross oceans to volunteer for the Open, Beal was also able to call on some expertise a little closer to home. South Australia-based superintendent Andrew Hutchings (Blue Lake Golf Links) and Sanctuary Cove assistant superintendent Brock Agnew made trips interstate for the week, as did Joshua Straub who is a couple of years into his stint as superintendent at Lismore Workers Golf Club. One of the industry's great characters, Ian 'Chop' Elphick from Gunnedah Golf Club, was also present for week and ensured there was some riotous banter in between shifts.

Sums up Glass on the volunteering experience: "I couldn't help but be impressed with the way Phil's crew worked in with the volunteers. Obviously they

had spent a lot of hours planning everything to get the course to where it was and the way they were so welcoming to all the volunteers was fantastic.

"We were looked after tremendously. Even just simple things like Phil going around to all the guys with some fruit while we were working out on the course; it made you feel like you were part of the team. Everyone likes to feel responsible for something and that's what you were made to feel like, that you were an important part of the team. It was a cheerful, happy working environment and the level of detail that was achieved really proves that.

"Most of all I loved how laid back it all was. You were given a job and trusted to do it – there was no one looking over your shoulder, yet everyone was focused on producing a great product. It was a great mentality to have; I wish it was more like that back home. The experience was everything and more than what I thought it would be and I will definitely be coming back." 🌱

2015 EMIRATES AUSTRALIAN OPEN VOLUNTEERS

Brock Agnew (Sanctuary Cove G&CC), **Chris Allen**, **Paul Andrews** and **Peter Coonan** (Royal Sydney GC), **Liam Ash** (Monash CC), **Daniel Breadmore** (Hillview GC), **Jimmy Butler** (Royal Mid-Surrey GC, UK), **Sam Butler** (The Cut GC), **Mark Dickinson** (Mosman Park GC), **Ian Elphick** (Gunnedah GC), **Jake Ferguson** (Hartfield CC), **Kevan Glass** (Brokenhurst Manor GC, UK), **Iain Hardaker** (Buckinghamshire GC, UK), **Daniel Hendrie** (Toronto CC), **Andrew Hutchings** (Blue Lakes Golf Links), **Brock Jeffries** (The Vines GC), **Richard Mathers** and **Geoff Tandy** (Victoria GC), **Jake Needs** (Bermagui CC), **William Norris** (Royal Canberra GC), **Craig Paget** (Nuturf Australia), **Clayton Pressley** (Lavarack GC), **Joshua Straub** (Lismore Workers GC), **Brad Sim** and **Ryan Trembath** (Cape Kidnappers, NZ), **Joshua Thomason** (Brisbane GC), **Steve Blain**, **Jeff Jenson** and **Dennis O'Toole**.



Glass: "The course was immaculate and the attention to detail amazing"



PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

Cuch a cut above

A quality turf technician can make or break maintenance operations at any golf club. ATM editor Brett Robinson catches up with The Australian Golf Club's Josh Cuch who played a major role in helping prepare the immaculate surfaces presented at the 2015 Emirates Australian Open.

Grinding reels and setting bedknives on fairway units and walk-behind greens mowers couldn't be further removed from working on the 2000 horsepower diesel engine of a Huon-class Minehunter, but for former Navy recruit Josh Cuch it has grown into something he now has a passion for.

For the past 18 months Cuch has been the turf equipment manager at The Australian Golf Club and ask any of the maintenance crew, including superintendent Phil Beal, and they'll quickly tell you that the superb surfaces produced for the last two Emirates Australian Opens were in no small part due to Cuch's efforts.

Formerly from Adelaide, where Cuch now finds himself is a world away from when, as a 17-year-old, he took on a four year apprenticeship as a marine technician in the Royal Australian Navy. Learning everything from fitting and turning, welding, wood work and fibre-glassing, Cuch would spend 12 years in Her Majesty's service, including five years working aboard the Navy's fleet of Minehunters.

By his own admission, in 2012 he decided to "grow up" and together with his partner Katie moved back to Adelaide where they bought a house and decided to renovate. It wasn't long after his arrival that he saw a job listed for a turf

equipment technician at Royal Adelaide Golf Club. Thinking how fantastic it sounded – fixing a broken mower every now and then in between doing up his house – he duly applied and was appointed by superintendent Nathan Bennett.

Setting foot inside the Royal Adelaide maintenance facility for the first time, Cuch's earlier impressions of the job were quickly shattered. Working at one of Australia's elite private clubs, Cuch had a very swift introduction to the challenges of golf course maintenance and to this day he is extremely grateful not only for the break he was given but for the support given to him by Bennett and the club. He was also fortunate to befriend Kooyonga turf technician Andrew Sekulitch who would provide him with a wealth of advice and knowledge. As well as that support, Cuch also had his Navy background to thank in helping him to adapt to what was a vastly different role.

"It took a little while to adjust to, but being in the Navy taught me to adapt to new things and understand different ideas," explains Cuch. "I was fortunate to do a broad range of things during my time in the Navy which left me open to learning new things. It's easy to get too comfortable and I have always tried to learn new techniques and I'm lucky I have been able to do that."

"It was certainly a change. Learning things like grinding and the many variables that come into play – the machinery, the turf – was a bit of a process to get to grips with, but I liked the fact that there was not one set way of doing things. Maintaining cut was the biggest learning curve and I'm still learning

about longevity of reels and bedknives and the best techniques to keep them sharp over a period of time. I'm lucky I had that time at Royal Adelaide to develop my skills and it was great of Nathan to invest that time in me."

After two years in Adelaide and with his partner wanting to move back to Sydney, Cuch came across a similar role advertised at The Australian Golf Club. After doing some homework on the club, Beal and his maintenance operations, Cuch applied and just two months out from the 2014 Emirates Australian Open joined the crew.

Not only did he have the prospect of getting all machinery in prime nick for the Open – the club's first since the \$5 million course redevelopment – Cuch had the substantial task of setting up new systems and processes. Cuch's Navy training kicked in again and while it was another steep learning curve he managed to get through his first major tournament relatively unscathed, even if he did have to camp the week inside the workshop.

"When I arrived here, the machinery condition and maintenance facility was far from where I wanted it to be," recalls Cuch. "I have that government mentality where everything is over-maintained so coming from that background I was quick to make a lot of changes. The Navy taught me the importance of doing things right and attention to detail."

"I worked some long days for the month or two leading up to that Open and then for the week of the tournament I brought in a camp bed and slept here



Far left: After 12 years in the Royal Australian Navy, Josh Cuch has carved a successful career as a turf equipment technician, with stints at Royal Adelaide and now The Australian Golf Club

Left: 'Allenby's rake' takes pride of place in Cuch's workshop office

in the office. I needed to do that to get to a level I was happy with. I felt like I was chasing my tail a fair bit and we had a few issues with machinery set up, stuff that I wasn't expecting or overlooked. But it made me aware of the things I'd have to be on top of come the next tournament."

With a successful 2014 Open out of the way, Cuch wasted little time in making the necessary adjustments to his side of operations. One of the first things he did was reorganise the maintenance facility to house the club's fleet better as well as spending a few thousand dollars on tarpaulins (when he first arrived a vast amount of machinery was stored uncovered outdoors due to space restrictions). With the support of Beal he turned over a lot of old machinery and also upgraded the workshop's hoist and grinding equipment.

The biggest change made, however, was to general record-keeping. Beal now has full and quick access to meticulously kept maintenance

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The superb surfaces produced for the last two Emirates Australian Opens have been in no small part due to Cuch's meticulous efforts in the workshop

logs as well as all manner of schedules, everything from servicing to grinding and greasing. Cuch also took the time to document where his hours were being spent, everything from planned maintenance, reactive maintenance and general admin. By doing so, and with all the other changes made, he was able to achieve a significant reduction in reactive maintenance.

With those cornerstones in place, and the lessons learned from the previous Open, Cuch was in a far better position heading into last November's tournament which he also painstakingly planned for well in advance. Top of the list was getting his planned maintenance and grinding schedules locked in early. Then in the weeks before the Open he called on the assistance of long-serving and since retired Toro service mechanic Barry Nudd who came in for a week to knock over his reactive maintenance requirements. The end result was a far smoother tournament experience.

"This Open was fantastic compared to the previous one which was full on," says Cuch. "This year I think we hit the nail on the head. All the hard work had been done in the lead up, so when the actual event was on we had already won in some respects. If you're chasing your tail when a tournament is on that's when problems arise.

"I definitely learnt a lot from the previous year in terms of adjustments and mower set up and just ensuring that everything was checked and double checked – every nut and every bolt. I didn't want anything to go wrong.

Cuch inspects the cut on The Australian's tight Santa Ana fairways



"The only thing that happened this time was on the Tuesday when we brought one of the fairway units in for grinding we picked up a couple of reel bearings that were out because I had been running the machines with minimal grease in the lead-up to the Open. I was expecting to do more grinding, but everything was razor sharp and with the Primo applications that Phil put out the surfaces were so tight that we were hardly cutting any grass."

Just as a superintendent's role has evolved over the years, the role of a turf technician has also changed significantly, especially at a club as well-resourced as The Australian. No longer just servicing the course machinery, Cuch is also responsible for dealing with fleet maintenance schedules, turnover schedules, reporting to committees and ensuring that records are up to date. Then there's the age old task of trying to school the crew into properly looking after the equipment, but given that Cuch stands at an imposing 6'5" there are few who dare return a machine in different condition to the one it had left the maintenance compound in.

Along with his bold frame comes a bold personality that has endeared Cuch to all at the club. Along with fine-tuning his mechanical skills, 12 years in the Navy also nurtured a pretty wicked sense of humour and you only have to walk into his office to see that.

During the second round of the 2014 Open, Robert Allenby famously snapped a bunker rake in two after copping a bad lie in one of the greenside bunkers while audibly cursing the greenkeeping staff in the process. Cuch duly got hold of both pieces of the rake and had the temerity to ask Allenby to sign them! He then had them mounted and framed and it now takes pride of place on his office wall. That aside, it's his skills with the tools in hand and his attention to detail across all areas of his operations which has made Cuch such a valuable asset in the eyes of Beal.

"Josh has been instrumental in setting up his workshop and putting in place service schedules and machinery replacement plans for the coming years," says Beal. "The club has installed a new Foley grinder since his arrival which has improved the accuracy of all the cutting, with Josh implementing a system for the grinding which is efficient and keeps down time to a minimum.

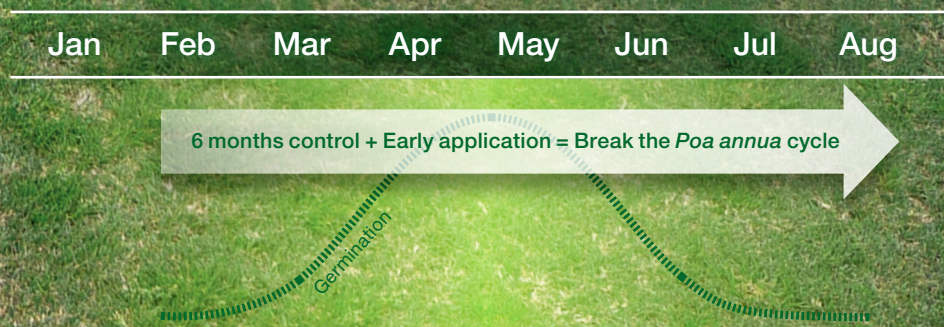
"The club is in the process of upgrading the maintenance facilities over the next year and Josh has played a big role in the design process. He went to USA last August and visited various different facilities to gain ideas and talk to the superintendents and equipment managers about their procedures. Josh has been fully involved with the architect meeting and also meeting with the board to ensure the club gets the best outcome possible.

"The next few years will be important for The Australian maintenance department to grow into its new facility and Josh will be an integral part of its success." 🌿

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TM

The 2015 Australian PGA Championship tournament crew with superintendent Lincoln Coombes far right



PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

Two years, two PGA Championships, two Ladies Masters, one very different look. The 2015 Australian PGA Championship signalled a new era for RACV Royal Pines Resort as Graham Marsh's revamped course was given its first full tournament outing. ATM editor Brett Robinson looks back on the redevelopment and tournament with superintendent Lincoln Coombes.

Royal Pines shines

Lincoln Coombes cuts a pretty relaxed figure at the best of times, but last December there was more than a noticeable air of calmness about the RACV Royal Pines Resort course superintendent. The 2015 Australian PGA Championship may have been about to tee off, but as the pros completed their last minute preparations on the practice green late on tournament eve, Coombes could afford himself a contented smile.

Two years earlier though it was a different story. The first of five contracted Australian PGAs was about to descend, but it wasn't that which was causing Coombes some sleepless nights. It was the fact that a few months later one of the most ambitious course redevelopment projects ever seen in Australia was about to break ground, signalling a new era for the popular Gold Coast resort.

Speaking to ATM in Volume 16.1 (Jan-Feb 2014) about the forthcoming redevelopment shortly after a successful 2013 PGA, Coombes commented: "It's hugely daunting. I don't think there's too many people that would have the experience of what we

are about to go through and even now we are still thinking how it will pan out. When you think of all the challenges – the short time frame, solid turving all surfaces, not to mention the weather here – there will be some interesting times ahead, but with a bit of luck in two years' time we'll have a great story to tell."

Coombes should add clairvoyance to his list of skills. After two years of dramatic transformation in between hosting three Australian PGA Championships, the fully remodelled RACV Royal Pines layout successfully hosted its first tournament last December. From the flat, benign track that it once was, the Gold Coast now boasts one of the most challenging layouts going around and it made for fascinating viewing as the professionals attempted to navigate their way around.

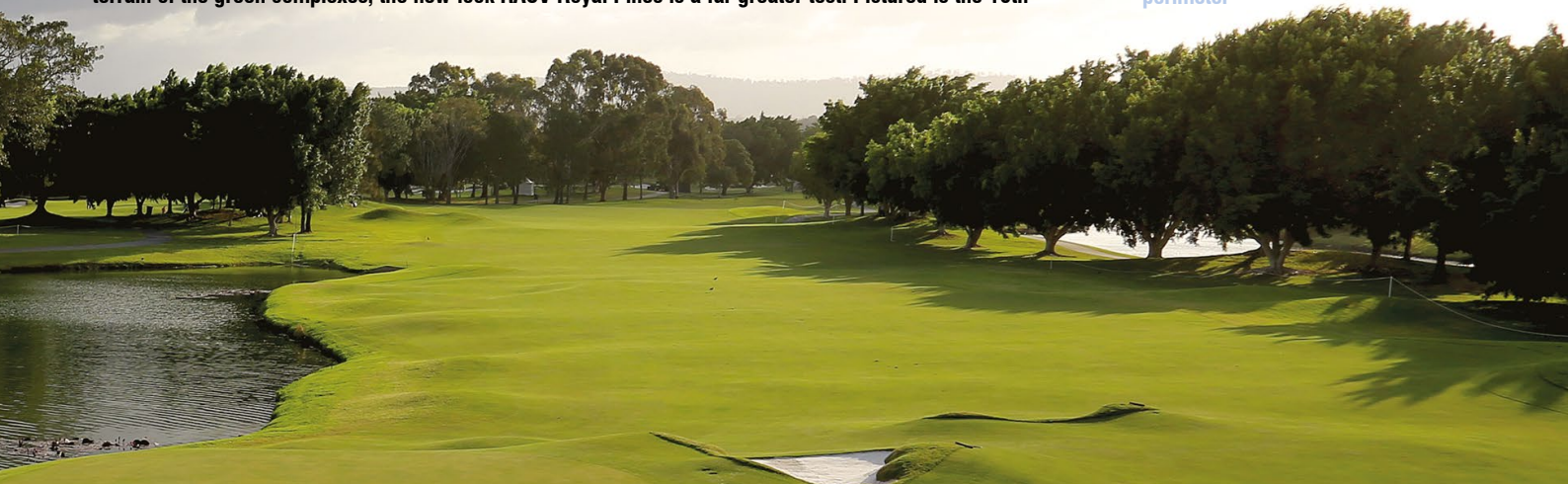
To get to last December has been the ultimate in juggling acts for all involved in the project, but none more so than Coombes, assistant superintendent Greg Jager and the crew. Having to grow-in two solid-turfed nines each year, get them prepared to



From the increased strategic nature of the course, the significant reduction in bunkering, to the mountainous terrain of the green complexes, the new-look RACV Royal Pines is a far greater test. Pictured is the 10th



Paul Osborne cuts the 11th fairway perimeter



tournament level within a matter of months, achieve consistency between the old and new surfaces and all the while maintain 18 holes for general play, has been a monumental effort. So when Nathan Holman sank his par putt on the first playoff hole last December, the whole crew deserved to reflect for a moment on a job well done and give themselves a bloody good pat on the back.

"It has been an amazing project to be involved with," reflects Coombes. "When you look at what's happened here over the past two years – a full 18-hole redevelopment and hosting four major PGA and ALPG tournaments – it's been an unbelievable experience. Sure, there were days during the project when all you wanted to do was get on a bike and pedal off into the sunset, but looking back I think I took it all in my stride. I was certainly a lot more comfortable leading into this tournament than last year's. Even the wife noticed it!

"It has been great to be part of this and see what Graham Marsh has come up with. For me it was such a huge learning curve. I got a tremendous understanding of the many processes, whether it was dealing with local government, what the construction guys had to contend with, managing acid sulphate soils, engineering, solid turfing – the list goes on.

"What made the project were the people involved. We had some good people on board, guys like (project agronomist) John Neylan and (project manager) Rangi Campbell, and having Graham on the ground a lot of the time along with senior designer Marcus Lane meant things went really smoothly.

"It has also been a very rewarding experience for the crew who have been fantastic. Everyone chipped in and played their part and without a good bunch of guys this project would never have finished to the level that it has. During the second year it was really noticeable that the guys were asking more questions and taking a greater interest in the construction. They've been here and seen it evolve and they're very proud of the finished product and now want to present it in as best condition as possible."

LIKE CLOCKWORK

After the relatively smooth manner in which the front nine works unfolded between the 2013 and 2014 PGAs, there was always the fear that such a good run, especially with the weather, wouldn't translate to the second nine. With more earthworks required, in particular on the 16th, not to mention managing the maturing surfaces of the front nine

The completion of the back nine works signalled the end of the two-year redevelopment of the RACV Royal Pines championship course. Pictured is the new-look 12th green



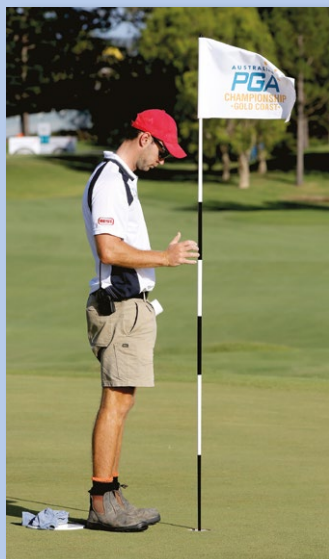
Clancy Hyde (foreground) and volunteer Jean Camillie-Cezard double roll the 18th green on the afternoon of the Pro-Am

and maintaining them along with the third nine for general play, 2015 was always going to be the most testing year of the project.

As it transpired, the weather did come into play

more on the second nine, with principal contractors Ertech losing between a week and 10 days due to rain. However, those delays were more than made up for in other areas thanks to streamlining processes, learning from the experiences gained on the front nine and a little help from Mother Nature. As Coombes admits, he actually enjoyed the second year more than the first and by the time the final greens – 11 and 17 – had been handed back to him and the crew three months out from the tournament, he could scarcely believe the project was near completion.

"Everything seemed to go really quick and I felt that we were more on top of things," says Coombes. "You learn from your experiences and mistakes and while we didn't make many during the front nine works, we were more on the ball, especially in terms of timings and making sure there wasn't a mad rush come the tournament. Right from the start everything seemed more advanced. The previous year Ertech had a lot of set up work to do, but this



Brisbane GC assistant superintendent Peter McNamara sets the pin on the 8th

Sanctuary Cove volunteer Michael Woods rolls the 16th green



2015 AUSTRALIAN PGA – RACV ROYAL PINES

Superintendent: Lincoln Coombes.

Assistant superintendent: Greg Jager.

Tournament crew: 26 (including Coombes and Jager). To assist with the grow-in of the back-nine, Coombes had seven contract staff brought on for a 10-week period up to and including the PGA. Tournament volunteers included Peter McNamara and Jean Camille-Cezard (Brisbane GC), Rory Williams and Jake Tobin (Lakelands GC), Blake Mulcahy (The Glades) and Michael Woods (Sanctuary Cove G&CC).

Additional tournament machinery came courtesy of Ben Cavanagh (Toro), while Paul McLean (superintendent Sanctuary Cove) loaned an extra roller. Paul Spencer from Greenway Turf Solutions (GTS) supplied the crew shirts for the tournament, while Paul Bevan, Mick McMahon and Keith McKenzie (GTS) kept them fuelled with a BBQ breakfast each morning.

Turf: TifEagle hybrid couchgrass greens, Wintergreen couchgrass tees, surrounds, fairways and roughs.

Course set-up: Played 6734m par 72. Back nine 192m longer.

Preparations: In order to achieve consistency between the older front nine and new back nine greens, cutting regimes were different in the lead-up to and for the duration of the PGA. Ahead of Wednesday's Pro-Am the back nine greens were double cut with triplexes at 3mm and rolled, while the front nine were given just a single cut and roll. Following the Pro-Am the front nine were left untouched while the back nine were given a single cut and double roll.

Prior to the opening round all greens received a single cut and roll, with the back nine greens single cut and double rolled at the conclusion of the round. For the remaining rounds, the front nine greens were single cut and rolled, back nine greens single cut and double rolled, with the back nine cut and rolled in the afternoons. The Wintergreen fairways were cut daily at 10mm and tees and collars at 6mm.

Weather: Hot and humid early in the week with 4mm of rain during the Pro-Am. Thursday saw heavy showers affect the early groups with strong southerly winds gusting up to 60kph buffeting the course for much of the day. Clear and windy conditions thereafter.

Did you know... Channelling Rod Pamplung's incredible 10-under final round at The Australian Golf Club the week before, NSW professional Rhein Gibson took the honour of setting the new course record around the revamped RACV Royal Pines layout. Coming off a horror 79 and starting his second round with back-to-back bogeys, Gibson shot 9-under in 10 holes to finish with an 8-under 64. The round included two eagles and he completed the back nine in just 29 shots!

time around they were able to come in straight after the Ladies Masters and crack on with it.

"From a greenkeeping point of view, I think what made it easier was that once the turf went down we caught a break with the weather. We did lose some construction days because of wet weather, but because we had that moisture in the ground, combined with some good warm growing conditions, the turf took a lot quicker this time around.

"The other big difference was that we didn't stress the greens as much. Last year we pretty much jumped on them straight away with the rollers and it probably put the TifEagle under a bit too much pressure. At last year's tournament you could see areas where the turf hadn't settled and still make out the sod lines on some greens.

"This year we let them sit for 7-10 days before we really started to give them a bit of love. We waited until the sods were almost growing over the top of each other before putting the walk mowers on at 8mm and slowly bringing them down to 5mm. Over winter we had the covers out more to keep the warmth in the ground and made sure we went out with a preventative fungicide as well after getting caught out last year.

"We did a lot more dusting this time around which was one of the smartest decisions we made. The more we did, the better the surfaces became. We did a couple of hand topdressings early to firm



the surface up before putting any machinery over them, which is something we didn't do last year. Last year we just rolled and rolled and while it definitely gave us a decent surface, it didn't allow the sod to mesh in as well, whereas with the topdressing this year it did.

"By the time the tournament came around I think the back nine greens were probably in much better shape than the front nine were at the same time the previous year. They certainly looked a lot healthier and the turf more vigorous. I was very impressed with the way the TifEagle responded and while it requires a little more work from a dethatching

The new-look par three 16th forms part of a now very challenging closing set of holes at RACV Royal Pines



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For RACV Royal Pines superintendent Lincoln Coombes (top) and assistant superintendent Greg Jager (above), the redevelopment has been one of the most challenging yet rewarding projects of their careers

and grooming perspective the surface you get is excellent.”

FINE-TUNING

From an input perspective, Coombes kept things relatively similar for the grow-in of the back nine. Together with project agronomist John Neylan (see his column, page 40 – ‘A Royal success’ – for his thoughts on the redevelopment – Ed), Coombes was able to devise and tweak fertiliser and dusting regimes, dethatching programmes and grooming practices as well as chemical applications to ensure the TifEagle and Wintergreen surfaces got the attention they needed. Having a second pair of learned eyes proved extremely valuable according to Coombes and went a long way to achieving better surfaces in the second year of the project.

“We were very lucky to have John on board as our agronomist,” says Coombes. “I guess one of the main challenges I had was myself. At times I wanted to push it and do more to the surfaces, so it was good having someone of John’s experience to provide some perspective. He was a calming influence.”

“What we found with this site is that the more moisture you have in the soil, the better the surface

can be. It’s not like when I was down in Victoria where you can dry them out and get them hard and fast. Up here the moisture helps to fill in the pore space and locks the sand in which gives you a firmer surface.

“Our inputs didn’t really differ that much from the first year, it was more that we managed the timings better I think. About eight weeks out from the tournament we went out with a carbon coated urea with trace to give the grass a kick and then four weeks later went out with a granular on fairways and tees at 250kg/ha to spark everything up for the tournament.

“Over that same eight week period we also went out with three applications of Primo at 800ml/ha mixed with a foliar fertiliser to keep the colour up. Primo played a big part in our preparations tee to green trying to tighten up the surfaces as much as possible. We also worked in conjunction with Bayer to devise a fungicide programme.

“One thing that I was very mindful of after last year was not to put too much fertiliser out. Because it was so dry last year we were chasing growth, so we went out with three granular applications. Problem was when the rain finally came, just before the tournament, they took off.

“With the greens, in the end we had to separate the front and back nines because of wear and tear; the front nine needed a bit more fertiliser to pump them up due to the traffic they had across them. I’m not sure of the numbers but it seemed the front nine got a lot of golf as people wanted to play the new-look holes.

“We were able to dethatch and dust more on the back nine obviously because they weren’t in play and at times we were going out at -2 almost every fortnight, ripping into them and trying to get as much sand in there as possible.

“We couldn’t do as much on the front nine due

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

The front nine TifEagle greens, such as the 8th pictured here being rolled by David Pank, settled nicely in between the 2014 and 2015 PGAs and were heavily patronised by golfers





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Tournament drawcard Brandt Snedeker (right) certainly won't forget (or would rather forget) his visit to the Gold Coast for the 2015 PGA Championship. A 12-over opening round on the new-look RACV Royal Pines Resort cost him any chance of making the cut. To add insult to injury, the scorers didn't have room for +12 on the scoreboard

From the increased strategic nature of the course, the significant reduction in bunkering, to the mountainous terrains of some of the green complexes, architect Graham 'Swampy' Marsh's redesign of RACV Royal Pines has certainly created plenty of discussion throughout the industry.

Regardless of whether you like or dislike the new look, it tested the mettle of the very best at the 2015 Australian PGA Championship with only three players – eventual winner Nathan Holman and playoff counterparts Dylan Frittelli and Harold Varner III – finishing even par. In all, the average round for the tournament was 75 (three over) with just 18 eagles recorded. There were 1844 bogeys compared to 1065 birdies, 310 double bogeys and 71 triples or worse.

Tournament headliner Brandt Snedeker showed just how treacherous the course could be, imploding spectacularly with an opening round 12-over 84. To his credit he didn't blame the new-look course or surfaces, but rather poor shot selection and execution. Remarkably a week later in the US he was holding the Franklin Templeton Shootout trophy aloft with playing partner Jason Dufner!

In the lead-up to the 2015 PGA Marsh penned his thoughts on the remodelling, saying that the redesign was "an attempt to level the playing field". He wrote on the PGA website: "Whilst from the outset it was not my intent to make the golf course demonstratively more difficult, it was certainly my intent to craft a design that would bring more of the field into contention.

"Prior to construction commencing in 2013, my evaluation of the old Royal Pines layout was that it offered far too much advantage for the long



PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

hitters and precious little opportunity for the more competent ball strikers to exhibit their skills. Quality shots were not rewarded and power hitting was being given a free pass. The excessive out of play shallow bunkering was the main culprit. Previously the course devoted 2.2 hectares of area to bunkers. The redesign reflects only 0.9ha of space to sand; less than half, yet far more challenging for the skilled golfer.

Swampy's beast

The vastly different look to the RACV Royal Pines championship course was a major talking point when the 2015 Australian PGA Championship returned to the Gold Coast last December.

"The Royal Pines redesign is an attempt to level the playing field. The explicit goal is to bring players of lesser power back into the game by offering them the chance to excel with superior shot making and distance control. The power hitters must now master their direction from the tee and control the tempo of their swing to finesse their iron shots to the many subtle pin placements the putting surfaces have to offer. Failure to do so will result in balls being repelled from the putting surfaces thus making birdies more difficult to accumulate.

"The redesign is by no means an attempt to take the long hitters out of the game. It is simply putting them on notice that to score well on Royal Pines they must show far more aptitude than in the past. They will always have an advantage, but it will not be dictated by length alone."

A ROYAL STATEMENT

While the players now have to take a vastly different approach to their course management, the same is also true for superintendent Lincoln Coombes and his maintenance crew. With barely a bit of flat ground left, it was certainly noticeable the extra time and attention required to prepare the undulating surfaces that the course now boasts.

As well as having to factor in extra man hours to prepare the course, some of the existing equipment in the RACV Royal Pines maintenance facility will also need replacing, with Coombes looking to favour the use of smaller more manoeuvrable units to maintain the surfaces. Despite these ongoing challenges, Marsh's layout has quickly grown on the crew and Coombes is looking forward to watching the surfaces mature in the coming years.

"One of the things I enjoyed most about the project was that Graham was on site quite a bit and through talking with him I've been able to get a better understanding from an architect's and player's point of view on the strategy of a hole. It's not all about aesthetics and playability. For instance I told him I didn't like the look of the 14th from an aesthetics point of view, but after he explained the strategy behind it you can start to appreciate it.

"Marsh has really made a statement here. Holes 1-9 are like a gentle build-up. There's a nice flow to them, no real trouble, with the exception of the short par four 8th which is a bit of signature hole. But as soon as you make the turn it's on.

"Ten is a beast now. The green has two plateaus and a big gully through the middle, with deep bunkering and heavy swales. Eleven is a powerful par four which 90 per cent of the time plays into the wind. The 12th green has been pushed closed to the water with the surrounds turf shaved at fairway height right down to the water. The 13th is so much more difficult with the water now coming more into play off the tee and it played as the hardest hole in December.

"But 15 through 18 are the real monsters and provide a very testing finish. Hopefully the members and green fee players will enjoy the new look, but they'll need to make sure they know their limitations and choose wisely from which set of tees to play off."



The increased undulations around the new-look layout have created a new set of challenges for course maintenance



From the flat, benign layout it once was, RACV Royal Pines now rates as one of the toughest championship tests in the country



Ryan Pantic shaves the TifEagle on 18 at 3mm following the Pro-Am



One of the ongoing challenges facing Coombes will be Wintergreen encroachment in the greens

From left, Andrew Nichols, Darrin Robinson and Cameron Brunt prep bunkers on the 15th



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

to them being open for play, but it was noticeable how they settled down over the past year. The mounds and swales are starting to find their own levels and with a lot more dusting and dethatching and general wear and tear from golfer traffic the grass really hardened up.

"The only aspect that I wasn't really happy with was leaving our run too late topdressing the Wintergreen. Last year we had the luxury of being able to use the sand stockpiled from the old greens, but this time around there was nowhere near as much. I had to get an out-of-budget cap-ex to get in about 900 tonnes of sand, but we weren't able to get it all out before the tournament due to time constraints. That said, the fairways presented really well and will only improve."

One of the main challenges Coombes faced in the lead-up to the 2014 PGA was getting consistency between the new front nine TifEagle greens and the 20-plus year old existing 328 surfaces of the back nine. That proved to be a relatively easy accomplishment, but in 2015 much more work was required to get consistency between the two sets of TifEagle greens.

Heading into tournament week there was a noticeable difference in speed, anywhere from six inches to a foot, and as a result the back nine greens

came in for a lot more attention. While the front nine greens got a single cut and roll in the morning, the back nine greens were cut and rolled, sometimes twice, in both the morning and afternoon.

Despite that, the players were extremely complimentary of the surfaces presented and the negligible difference in speed come the opening round. South African Dylan Frittelli, who went on to contest the three-way playoff eventually won by Holman, summed it up best: "It's in tremendous shape. I thought it's amazing for the course to be in such good shape, given that it's only virtually been open a (few days). The greens were true and were very similar to the front nine. Often you find the greens would be firmer as soon as they're built but the greens are pretty consistent from nine to nine and speed-wise as well they're very good. The fairways are wonderful."

Adds Coombes: "What I did like this time more was that the players were able to get more purchase on the greens. Last year because it was so dry in the lead-up to the tournament, I think we lost a little bit of that on the newer greens. This year the players were able to check the ball a little better rather than the ball bouncing through."

BEING THE BEST

With the redevelopment now complete and three successful PGAs under the belt, by no means is the hard work over at RACV Royal Pines. As well as two more contracted PGAs, the new championship layout is expected to get a hammering as golfers descend to tackle Marsh's new beast. As Coombes rightly predicts, the next 12-18 months will be a critical period as the new surfaces mature and the crew switch back into full-time maintenance mode.

Some of those challenges are already forefront in Coombes' mind. Couch encroachment in the greens is top of that list and he was very surprised at how quickly the Wintergreen spread into the back nine greens compared to the front nine, probably due to the better growing conditions in the second year of the project. Weed control in the roughs will also be a focus. The earthworks disturbed the soil and as a result a lot of nutgrass has come through, with Coombes devoting significant man hours already to cleaning up the roughs.

"It's going to get pretty hectic around here and we'll have that age old problem of golfers wanting to play the championship course in championship condition," says Coombes. "And they won't want us out their dusting and renovating the surfaces all the time. Two weeks after the PGA we were straight into renovating the third nine as well and we'll start concentrating on getting those holes in good condition again and bringing them up to a comparable level. For now though we've got a fantastic base to build on with the new championship course and the aim is to turn this place into the best golfing facility on the Gold Coast, if not Queensland." 🌱

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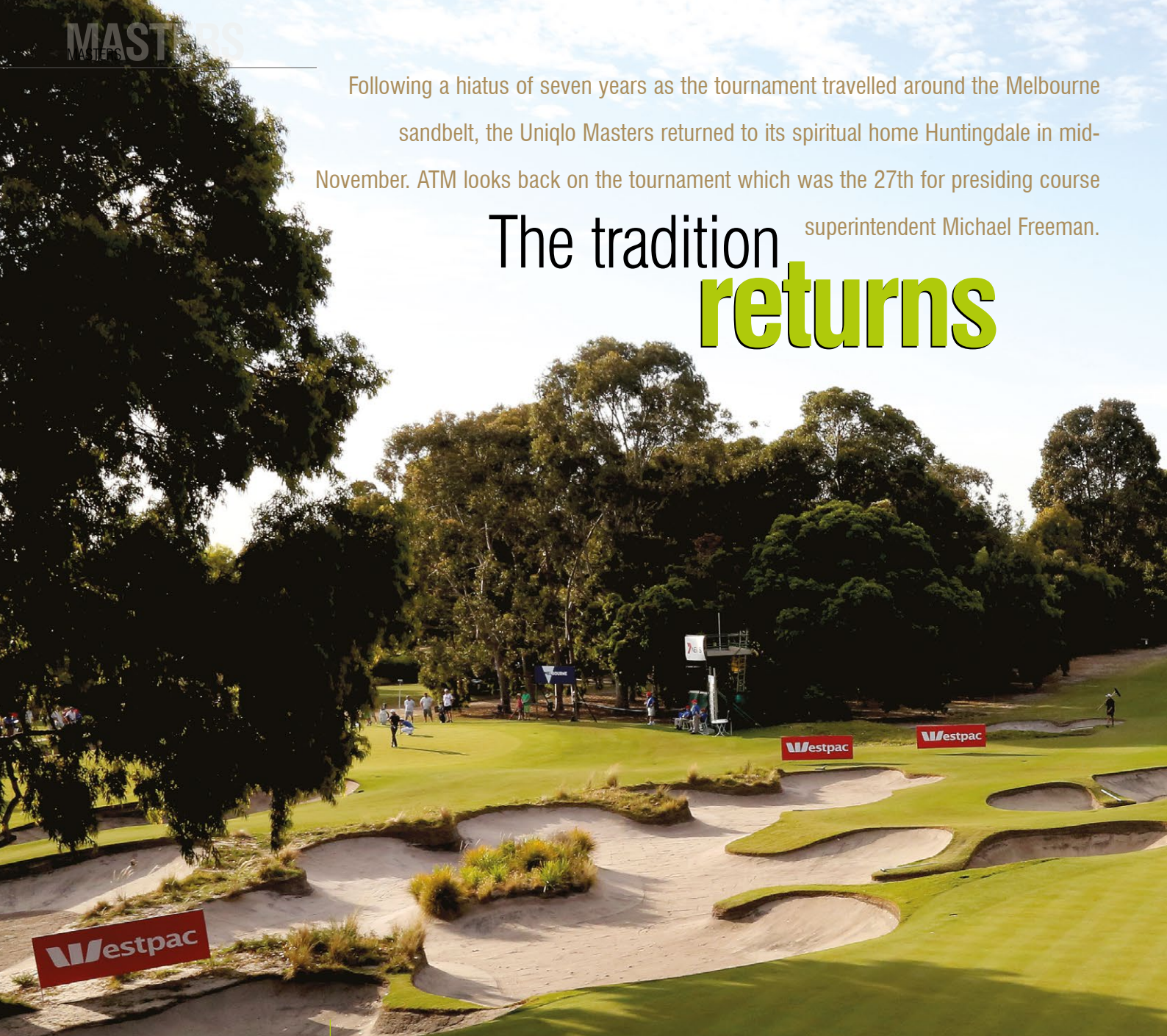


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Following a hiatus of seven years as the tournament travelled around the Melbourne sandbelt, the Uniqlo Masters returned to its spiritual home Huntingdale in mid-November. ATM looks back on the tournament which was the 27th for presiding course

The tradition superintendent Michael Freeman. returns



Ash Hockin cuts the 13th green. The 1020/Crenshaw/Poa greens were maintained at 2.5mm



PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

First rule of being a golf course superintendent – always expect the unexpected. It's an occupational hazard that most are accustomed to, so when Huntingdale Golf Club superintendent Michael Freeman boarded a plane bound for the UK early last July, he knew that something was bound to 'crop up'. Problem was he didn't quite count on it happening the very first day.

No sooner had he landed in Glasgow for a three week bucket-list sojourn around some of the great links courses of Scotland and Ireland with a group of fellow Melbourne superintendents, than an email landed in his inbox informing him that Huntingdale had been chosen to host the 2015 Uniqlo Masters.

After seven years travelling around Melbourne to the likes of venerable sandbelt counterparts Kingston Heath, Victoria, Royal Melbourne and Metropolitan, tournament owner IMG wanted to bring the tournament back to its spiritual home. The

only catch was the tournament date was less than four months off.

Having been at Huntingdale since 1982, it's fair to say that the prospect of hosting the Masters, what would be his eighth as superintendent, didn't exactly faze Freeman. Nevertheless, over the next few weeks as he took in some of the worlds' best courses, including 2015 Open Championship venue St Andrews, the mind was slowly ticking over in the background as to what he and the crew would need to do once he returned.

As any Melbourne superintendent will tell you, getting a course up for a tournament in November relies not just on good course management and experience but a fair dose of luck as well. With the first part of that equation locked in, it was all down to Mother Nature and despite having ruined many a tournament lead-in in the past, this time around she literally shone on Huntingdale.

Huntingdale assistant superintendent Justin Crowe handwaters the 12th green after the opening round which saw Adam Scott fire a 7-under 64



The 2015 Masters was superintendent Michael Freeman's 27th and eighth in charge



Tools of the trade. Who said bunkers were a hazard?!

A MUCH-NEEDED BREAK

When IMG announced in 2009 that after 30 years residing at Huntingdale the Masters was on the move, there was a certain sense of emptiness felt by all at Huntingdale, especially Freeman and his crew. Having been the stage for so many memorable moments over the years, watching the players striding down the fairways of Kingston Heath was unusual, notwithstanding the huge galleries that descended to watch Tiger Woods make his now infamous appearance.

It would be a further six years before the Masters would make its return to Huntingdale, but according to Freeman it was a much-needed break. Not only did it give the club the opportunity to build a spectacular new multi-million dollar clubhouse, it also afforded Freeman and his crew the ability to focus on improving some of the weaker parts of the course, in particular the plantation areas.

Main photo: Despite being given just over three months' notice to host the 2015 Uniqlo Masters, Huntingdale Golf Club was in superb nick. Pictured is the short par four 8th

2015 UNIQLO MASTERS – HUNTINGDALE GOLF CLUB

Superintendent: Michael Freeman.

Assistant superintendent: Justin Crowe.

Tournament crew: Twenty five. In addition to the Huntingdale crew of 15, eight additional paid tournament staff from Metropolitan, Woodlands, Kingston Heath, The National, Settlers Run, Green Acres and Corowa golf clubs and two unpaid volunteers from Peninsula-Kingswood.

Turf: 1020/Crenshaw bentgrass/*Poa annua* greens, Santa Ana couchgrass fairways, tees and surrounds.

Course set-up: Played 6346m, par 71. 10th played as a 436m par four.

Preparations: Greens double cut (brushes down and rolled every morning at 2.5mm, average 11.5 on the stimp meter. Fairways striped up and cut at 12mm morning and afternoon. Tees triplex cut at 8mm and surrounds double cut with walk-behinds at 6mm. Bunkers hand groomed every morning, faces broomed and bases raked. Greens hand-watered in the evening if required.

Weather: Melbourne's weather was at its mercurial best. Hot, gusty north-westerly winds early in the week meant moisture management was critical. Course received 1mm rain overnight Wednesday and Thursday and 4mm of rain late Friday afternoon which took the fire out of the greens. Saturday and Sunday saw blustery south westerlies and temperatures in the high teens.

Did you know... Huntingdale's Irish intern Gavin Stone and apprentice Harry Mackley (both pictured on page 38) had the additional responsibility of capturing the crew's tournament preparations on video. Using Go Pro cameras attached to a number of machines, the resulting footage will be used to create a video for club members showing what goes into preparing the course for such an event.



Metropolitan Golf Club's James Cocker was one of a number of additional staff brought in to assist with Masters preparations

The seven year gap between tournaments enabled the Huntingdale crew to undertake substantial revegetation works around the course, with a heavy focus on carries such as the 3rd pictured here



"It was a funny feeling when the tournament left here, but it was nice to have that break," reflects Freeman. "If you had the tournament once every two or three years it would be ideal, but having it every year is quite a challenge. You get over one and then you start thinking immediately about the next one. Back then we were also doing some remodelling of the course so we really didn't get a chance to catch our breath at times.

"I think we all enjoyed the break but the biggest beneficiary was the course. With the tournament being away for seven years we were able to tweak a few greens, remove some bunkers and pay close attention on improving our native vegetation. When

you host a tournament like the Masters, those out of play areas get trashed which was always one of my key frustrations with the event. So to be able to focus on them without having the impact of the tournament has made a big difference.

"We instigated a master plan for the revegetation work and in conjunction with (Melbourne-based golf course construction company) SJM we concentrated heavily on the carries, striping them right back. Huntingdale is a tight track so we had to plan it carefully, but the works we have undertaken on the likes of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 12th and 17th have improved the course out of sight.

"I'm in love with it and it was something that Huntingdale was lacking, especially when you compare us to the likes of Royal Melbourne, Kingston Heath and Victoria who have done some outstanding work in recent years. We had the greens complexes and the bunkering, but we wanted to incorporate more of that sandbelt style vegetation into the course and I think we have been able to do that very successfully."

CATCHING A BREAK

As for the playing surfaces, in the intervening years the 14th and 17th greens were reworked in conjunction with the club's appointed architect Martin Hawtree to remove some of the severe undulations that were out of character with the rest of the course. In addition to this, fairway bunkers on 16 and 18 were removed, the former to increase the landing zone off the tee for members, while the opening to the long par three 5th was widened by tweaking the greenside bunkers.

Upon official announcement in August 2015 that the tournament was returning, the Huntingdale crew also hastily embarked on works to extend the practice tee which was completed mid-September. It was then a very quick lead-in to the tournament and thankfully for Freeman the weather was on his side for once.

Getting couchgrass fairways to fire for a November tournament relies heavily on a warm spring and despite a very cold Melbourne winter and coolish September, October was one right out of the box. Mean maximum temperatures were three degrees above the norm (the nearby Moorabbin BOM station recorded a mean for the month of 24.3 degrees) with six days over 30 and a couple of 38-plus days thrown in to boost soil temperatures nicely. Rainfall was unusually minimal – around 15mm compared to the long term average of 68mm – but the ensuing 43mm that fell across the first 10 days of November couldn't have been more perfectly timed.

"We got lucky," admits Freeman. "October was a huge blessing – it was warm and dry and without it our preparations would have been a lot more difficult. Trying to get the course up for a November tournament is always a challenge, especially fairways, but October got us off to a flyer and once

we had that base with the Santa Ana we were able to steer them to where we wanted with some low rates of Nitro Iron. The club was very supportive too and we were able to limit the amount of guest and reciprocal rights play in the lead-up which assisted us greatly."

While preparations for the fairways went relatively by the book, Freeman made a bit of a departure when it came to Huntingdale's 1020/Crenshaw mix bentgrass greens. Along with a lighter, more frequent dusting regime, Freeman went out with Primo for the very first time.

"It's something I had wanted to try for a while," explains Freeman. "Compared to the newer bentgrass varieties, the older 1020/Crenshaw mix can be grainier. Given most of the professionals are playing regularly on the newer varieties, they tend to notice it a lot more and sometimes question why there is a difference. So I wanted to trial the Primo to see if we could fine the leaf up and improve the surface.

"We went out with three applications at low rates in the two months before the tournament. We also upped the frequency of our dusting programme. We brought in about 38 tonnes of kiln-dried sand and in the three months beforehand we went out with frequent light applications using pedestrian rather than mechanical spreaders which worked very well.

"There's a lot of *Poa* in our greens too so we didn't do anything regarding its control given we



Stewart MacFarlane rolls the 8th green ahead of the opening round


"(Huntingdale) is in excellent condition. I've played this golf tournament every year from 1993 right through to 2008 and I've always enjoyed Huntingdale. The condition of the golf course this year is lovely.

Hopefully the tournament can continue here." - JOHN SENDEN

had such a short run into the tournament. We didn't renovate either. The focus was to try and get the best and most consistent surfaces as possible and I think we achieved that."


CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

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Spending some quality time with dad, Settlers Run assistant superintendent and Masters volunteer Stewart MacFarlane, while hand watering the fourth green was young Ella (2). You're never too young to learn the fine art of greenkeeping



Huntingdale crew member Patrick McCarthy makes his first pass down the 6th fairway ahead of the second round

A golf course maintenance crew is very much like a family and at the 2015 Uniqlo Masters the Huntingdale 'family' were front and centre as the tournament returned after an absence of seven years.

Masters a family affair

Main photo:
Huntingdale's par five 6th



A family of Australian wood ducks provided some temporary comedic relief after they chose to cut across the 7th fairway as the Huntingdale crew went about their second round preparations



Tim Walsh (left) and Ash Hockin put the finishing touches to the 18th green

PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON



Gavin Stone double cuts the 12th



Huntingdale apprentice Harry Mackley is a picture of concentration cutting the 6th approach

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

TRADITION CONTINUES

Huntingdale has always had a knack for producing memorable finishes and the 2015 tournament would prove no different. Despite a blistering opening round 7-under 64, tournament drawcard Adam Scott had to be content with fifth place as Peter Senior went on to claim his third Golden Jacket with a four round total of 276 (8-under).

With it Senior completed the Triple Crown of victories in his 50s, having won the 2010 Australian PGA Championship aged 51 and the 2012 Emirates Australian Open. He also became the oldest Masters champion, surpassing Gene Littler who was 50 when he won the tournament back in 1980. All up just 16 players finished under par for the tournament with the consensus being that Huntingdale played tight and hard.

"We were thrilled to have the tournament back," sums up Freeman. "It was a busy six weeks for the crew. We had the club championship qualifiers

before the Masters and then for two weeks after the tournament we had the club championship finals. So the guys pulled some long hours.

"The great thing about having the Masters back was hearing some of the comments from the players that they loved being back at Huntingdale. It's great that the tournament has been around the other sandbelt courses in recent years, but to me this will always be the home of the Masters. I think there is no better venue in Australia for this tournament – you can walk through the front gates and the holes are right there. It's an enjoyable course to watch golf.

"Getting a course ready for a major tournament and getting it to its peak is always a tough challenge but one that I really enjoy. In some ways it was like getting back on the horse and to see the level we got the course to, given we only had a few months, was very pleasing and a real credit to the outstanding crew that I have." 🌱

Far right: Andrew Bath (left) and Jackson Sylvester (right) groom one of Huntingdale's many classic bunkers

The 18th a hive of activity ahead of round one





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The project to redevelop RACV Royal Pines was ambitious in many ways. However, with good planning, excellent management and good personnel it was successfully completed

A Royal Success



ATM columnist

John Neylan

looks back at

what made the project to redevelop RACV Royal Pines Resort such a success and continues the discussion about herbicide resistance in turf.

The revamped RACV Royal Pines Resort championship golf course hosted the 2015 Australian PGA Championship from 4-7 December and was the culmination of an ambitious but ultimately successful two year reconstruction project. I was fortunate to be the project's agronomist and it has been rewarding to look back and reflect on the agronomic challenges and review what made the project a success.

When I was first introduced to the project and the timeframe in particular, my first reaction was that it was going to be incredibly tight, assuming that everything went well. The project not only had to deliver nine holes each year including tees, fairways and greens, the surfaces also had to be prepared to a level to host one of Australia's largest professional golf tournaments.

On any golf course project there are various agronomic challenges and with the RACV Royal Pines site there were several including;

- Acid sulphate soils;
- Very fine textured soils that get wet with minimal rainfall;
- High soil salinity;
- Grassing (solid turfing) greens so that they could be prepared for a tournament with minimal preparation time; and
- The extensive grow-in and maintenance that had to be managed by the course staff.

The soils on the fairways presented a significant challenge, particularly the acid sulphate problem. Acid sulphate soils (ASS) are generally saturated with water, almost oxygen-free and contain microscopic crystals of iron sulfide minerals. ASS are safe and harmless when not disturbed, however, if they are dug up or drained they come into contact with oxygen where the pyrite reacts with oxygen and forms sulfuric acid. The sulfuric acid can then cause damage to the environment and to buildings, roads and other structures. The ASS had to be mapped and during the construction any soils that were being excavated had to be tested, amended with lime and tested again before approval could be given for placement.

The soils on the fairways are classified as stiff to very stiff silty sandy clays that have a very low infiltration rate and turn to mud with only a few millimetres of rain. The process of cutting, filling and shaping inevitably breaks down the fragile soil aggregates and on-going compaction control is crucial in managing the turf on these soils.

Graham Marsh Golf Design (GMGD) has done an extraordinary job in shaping fairways and

The new-look par three 16th required substantial earthworks



providing as much surface drainage as possible to compensate for the lack of soil permeability. The construction of the front nine benefited from several months of very dry weather. However, in 2015 there were frequent rainfall events (total of about 1500mm for the year) throughout the construction that challenged the contractors and the timetable. Ertech, as the principal contractor, was able to manage through these inconveniences and was generally able to focus on other areas while the wet areas dried out.

The greens provided the greatest challenge due to the short time frame between post-planting and tournament preparation. The nature of the project was such that all turf areas required the use of solid turf with the greens being the most critical area. The timeframe of the project did not allow for the successful stolonisation of greens and developing a suitable putting surface in-situ.

The greens grass had to be grown on the same sand that the greens were constructed from and grown in and maintained as if it was being prepared for play. This required a considerably higher level of inputs compared to the normal turf growing process. Twin View Turf prepared a purpose built turf nursery that was stolonised with TiffEagle hybrid couch in mid-December 2013 with the first turf harvested and laid five months later. After some initial teething problems with the laying process the works were undertaken to a very high standard.

Murphy's Law did intervene very early in the project when the original turf grower selected for providing the turf for fairways and surrounds went into liquidation. As a consequence, the turf production operation was shut down immediately and the contract for supply of turf effectively torn up. A new turf supplier had to be sourced at very short notice and fortunately Allenviue Turf was able to deliver the required turf for the project.

The grow-in and maintenance phase of the project was the responsibility of RACV Royal Pines course superintendent Lincoln Coombes and his staff. Once the turf was laid it was then handed over to the course staff to grow it in and then to work towards preparing the surfaces for the Australian PGA in December. While it was a considerable challenge for the staff as they continued to maintain 18 holes open for play, it was the best thing that could have happened to the project. While construction contractors are capable of the grow-in process, there is no doubt that the eye for detail that the course staff have minimises the opportunities for setbacks and is better able to keep the process on track, particularly with a tournament at the end of the process.

I have to congratulate Lincoln, 2IC Greg Jager and the staff for the excellent job that they did. Over the pre-planning and construction/grow-in process they had to deal with the extra traffic on the remaining 18 holes, the grow-in and preparation for two Ladies Masters and two Australian PGA events.



Lincoln had a very clear focus on what was required and was quietly confident throughout the project that the time challenges could be met. At the end of the day the best construction techniques can be employed, however, the greenkeeping makes it what it is.

With any major project there are always lessons to be learnt and these are a few of my observations as to what worked;

- At the top of the list is a good project manager. The RACV contracted the services of Rangi Campbell of local project management company Ocean Park Consulting. Rangi ran a very well organised ship and was able to deal promptly with the myriad of issues that cropped up and provided the essential link between client, consultants, course architect and the contractors. This may seem to be a no-brainer, however, on a complex project such as this clear, concise and prompt directions are crucial.
- Consistent with the above, good planning and logistics is essential when the timeframe is so tight.
- Lessons learnt in year one of the project were used to refine the process of construction in year two. In particular, the coordination of works, maintaining a continuity of work (despite the weather), managing sub-contractors and the clean-up process.

Graham Marsh Golf Design (GMGD) has done an extraordinary job in shaping the Royal Pines fairways and providing as much surface drainage as possible to compensate for the lack of soil permeability

Key figures – from left Rangi Campbell (project manager), Lincoln Coombes (RACV Royal Pines superintendent) and John Neylan (project agronomist)





The greens provided the greatest challenge due to the short time frame between post-planting and tournament preparation. The nature of the project was such that all turf areas required the use of solid turf with the greens being the most critical area

Right: Figures 1 and 2. *Poa annua* seed head presence in the kikuyu (top) and couchgrass (bottom) plots. The results indicate a substantial seed bank at each site with total numbers as high as 18,000 seedlings/m²

Below: To not only grow-in the new holes, maintain 18 other holes and then prepare the championship course for the PGA in such a narrow time frame is testament to superintendent Lincoln Coombes and his crew's dedication and skill



- In the turf maintenance process there is always some anxiety related to developing playing surfaces and doing too much too early (e.g.: lowering cutting heights, dusting etc.). I was very much guilty of that and I certainly learnt that you can afford to allow the turf to settle in and establish a good root system before preparing playing surfaces. Lincoln exhibited his excellent greenkeeping skills and patience to nurture all of the new surfaces.
- Whether we like to admit it or not, the weather plays an enormous role in the outcome and providing challenges. In year one the weather was extraordinarily dry (until the week before the PGA!) and made it very difficult to develop the roughs and to revive high traffic areas. In year two the rain events also affected the maintenance of the greens turf (e.g. frequency of cut, growth and thatch development) and some of this turf required extra coring and sanding to maintain consistency.
- Matching the performance of the greens for both nines in each year was a challenge with the TruFirm and the FieldScout TDR300 being important tools in managing the consistency.

The RACV Royal Pines project was certainly ambitious in many ways, however, with good planning, excellent management, a good contractor and expert personnel overseeing the key elements, the project was successfully completed.

POA ANNUA SEED BANK

Poa annua continues to be the number one weed problem in both warm- and cool-season grasses, particularly in temperate climates. Its survival and persistence is to a large degree due to the seed bank that is readily established in *Poa annua*-dominated turf. Over the past 12 months colleague David Nickson and I have been undertaking pre- and post-emergent herbicide trials for the control of *Poa annua* funded by the Sports Turf Association (Victoria) and during this project we have also examined the *Poa annua* seed bank.

By way of background it is extremely valuable to review the ground-breaking research of Dr Mary Lush of the Turf Research and Advisory Institute (Victoria) in the late 1980s. Dr Lush's work (titled 'Biology of *Poa annua* in a temperate zone golf putting green - a) The above ground population; and b) The seed bank.) provided an excellent insight into why *Poa annua* is such a persistent weed. Lush (1988a) noted that in comparison with other populations of *P. annua* (non-turf areas) and other grasses, seed production rates and seedling and tiller densities in intensively maintained turf are high (e.g. 270,000 tillers per square metre).

Each tiller is capable of producing a flower head and therefore seed, though she also noted that most tillers died without flowering. *P. annua* inflorescences that are severed from the plant on the day of pollination can ripen viable seeds (Koshy 1969) so each spring inflorescence probably produces between 2 and 3 viable seeds. It doesn't take much effort to work out that every *Poa annua* flowering tiller that establishes will rapidly add to the seed bank. Lush (1988a) calculated that the annual seed production is likely to be between 150,000 and 675,000 seeds per square metre in a *Poa annua* dominated turf.

Further work undertaken by Lush (1988b), where the seed bank was measured, the *P. annua* seed numbers reached their peak in mid-to late spring. At the peak, there were 168,000 seeds/m² averaged across a bentgrass/*Poa annua* golf green with a maximum of 210,000 seeds/m² in an individual quarter of the green. After a pulse of germination seed numbers declined to a base of about 30,000

Figure 1: Distribution of *Poa annua* seeds in a Kikuyu sportsfield.

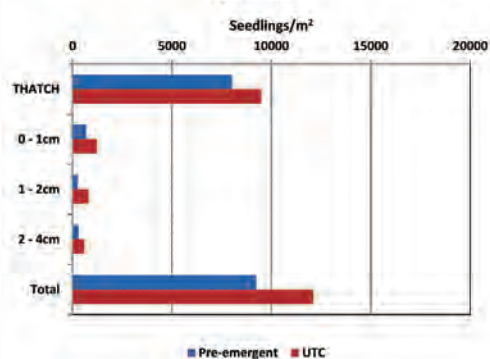
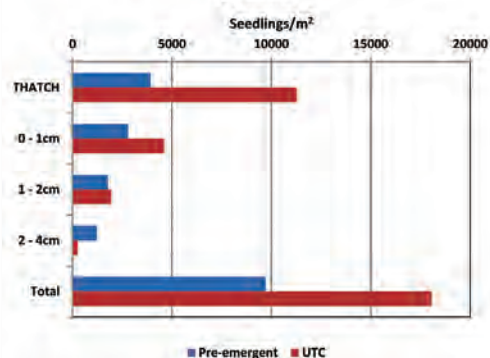


Figure 2: Distribution of *Poa annua* seeds in a Couch sportsfield.



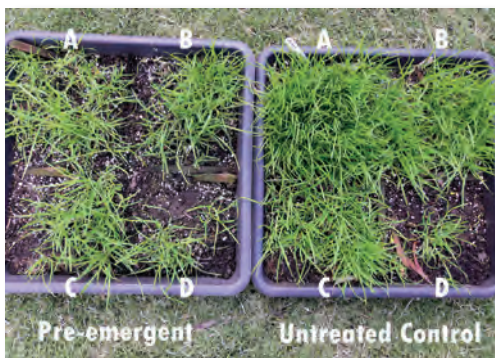
seeds/m². Most of the 30,000 seeds populating the green from the end of summer until the next spring were assumed to have persisted from preceding pulses of flowering.

The persistence of the seeds was not caused by innate dormancy but is enforced or induced dormancy caused by seed burial. Lush (1988b) stated that 78 per cent of the seeds that carried-over to winter were buried in the thatch and soil beneath the region of current growth.

In the research that David Nickson and I have undertaken there were two sites used to study the seed bank. The trial sites used for the evaluation of pre-emergent herbicides were sampled by taking 50mm diameter cores to a depth of 5cm from the plots (couchgrass and kikuyu) previously treated with oryzalin as well as the untreated control.

Four samples were taken from each plot with a total of 24 cores taken. Each core was separated into; thatch layer, 0-1cm layer, 1-2cm layer and the 2-4cm layer. The sections were broken up and planted into trays and watered. At two and four weeks after planting, the *Poa annua* seedlings were counted. The results are detailed in Figures 1 and 2.

The results indicate that there is a substantial seed bank at each site with most of the seeds in the thatch layer which is consistent with the work of Lush (1988b). The total seed numbers were as high as 18,000 seedlings/m². The results from the couch site demonstrated a significantly higher seed



The difference between the pre-emergent plots and the untreated control indicates that over time the use of pre-emergent herbicides could be expected to reduce the seed bank. A = thatch layer, B = 0-1cm layer, C = 1-2cm layer and D = 2-4cm

reserve in the untreated control compared to the plots treated with pre-emergent herbicide.

The difference between the pre-emergent plots and the untreated control indicates that over time the use of pre-emergent herbicides could be expected to reduce the seed bank. These results demonstrate the ongoing regenerative potential of *Poa annua* and clearly not all seeds germinate in the same time period. This long-term seed reserve needs to be understood if a suitable management programme is to be implemented.

From this work, the use of pre-emergent herbicides is critical in the management of *Poa annua*, particularly in warm-season grasses. Where there is a high population of *Poa annua* and it is possible to control these established plants, it has to be followed up with a pre-emergent almost immediately if control is to be successful. 🌱

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HERBICIDE RESISTANCE – THE INDUSTRY’S SINGLE BIGGEST AGRONOMIC CHALLENGE

In ATM Volumes 17.1 and 17.2 I wrote on the issues of herbicide resistance and the ramifications for the turf industry. While conducting the pre-and post-emergent herbicide trials research in conjunction with the STA Victoria, it has become even more apparent that the Australian turf industry is facing an ever-increasing problem with herbicide-resistant *Poa annua*.

As I reflect on turf management over the past 12 months I believe that this is the single biggest agronomic challenge we have. Unfortunately as an industry we are doing very little about it. The approach is more

about finding another chemical or silver bullet that will solve our problems.

Turf management is a very tiny subset of the broader agricultural and horticultural industries and they are also facing the challenges of world-wide weed resistance to herbicides. As a consequence there is dedicated research being undertaken to tackle this issue. Industry colleague Jyri Kaapro (Bayer Crop Science) made me aware of the Australian Herbicide Resistance Initiative (AHRI) who are research leaders in herbicide resistance and its management in cropping systems. Their mantra is “More crop, less weeds – sustainably”.

The organisation is located at the University of Western Australia and director Professor Stephen Powles is an international authority on all aspects of herbicide resistance in plants. Their website (<http://ahri.uwa.edu.au/>) is well worth a visit to gain a broader global view of herbicide resistance and some of the research being undertaken. They also produce an easy-to-read e-newsletter with the latest research in herbicide resistance.

An off-shoot of the AHRI has been the establishment of WeedSmart (www.weedsmart.org.au). Australia’s agricultural sector has united to establish WeedSmart, an industry-led initiative to enhance on-farm practices and promote the long-term sustainability of herbicide use. This initiative involves all areas of the agricultural industry including commercial organisations, researchers, government, consultants and growers. The purpose is to ensure weed management is at the forefront of global farming practice.

As I noted in my article in ATM Volume 17.1, “As a turf industry all sectors have a role to play. The herbicide manufacturers, the distributors, turf

managers and agronomists all need to have an input. We also need more research into the effects of combinations of herbicides, pre-emergent vs early post-emergent control and whether particular weed biotypes are resistant”. The WeedSmart programme is a model that the turf industry should be following, however, unfortunately nothing has

happened and as an industry we continue to plan for today and not the long-term.

Jyri Kaapro made me aware of the Diversity Era programme (<http://members.diversityera.com/>) which is an online course conducted through the WeedSmart initiative. I

recently completed the Herbicide Resistance 101 programme which I would rate as one of the best pieces of education I have undertaken in many years.

There are two key tenets of the education programme as follows;

- “We acknowledge that the era of herbicides only is over”; and
- “Herbicides will continue to be an important part of weed control into the future, but alone they are not the answer”.

This philosophy is absolutely applicable to the turf industry. The course covered the two major topics of target site resistance and non-target site resistance. The modules are presented by Professor Powles who delivers very complex mechanisms in a simple and easy to understand fashion.

This information puts into context how as an industry we have rendered many *Poa annua* control herbicides almost useless. I recommend this programme to everyone interested in understanding how herbicides do and don’t work. I also consider this to be an outstanding topic for the Australian Turfgrass Conference.

Getting back to what we are going to do as an industry, colleagues David Nickson, Daryl Sellar, Jyri Kaapro and I have put together a detailed survey related to *Poa annua* control in warm-season grasses. This has been done in an effort to take the first step of understanding the size of the problem. With the assistance of the AGCSA and AGCSATech this survey will be shortly distributed and we will be looking for industry wide support to fill out the survey.

- John Neylan



It is becoming increasingly apparent the Australian turf industry is facing a growing problem with herbicide-resistant *Poa annua*

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Right tree, right location

Understanding the origins
of tree use on golf
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course writes USGA Green
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We climbed them as youngsters and built forts in them. We enjoy their fruit, their foliage, their autumnal colour and once upon a time their wood was even used to make golf clubs! So how can trees possibly be bad for golf courses? In order to gain a thorough understanding of the problems that trees pose to turfgrass and golf courses, it is important to first understand a little about the history of tree usage on golf courses.

In the US, for instance, golf's popularity exploded between 1910 and 1940, the so-called golden age of course architecture. Most of the early architects came from Europe, or learned their craft there, so their experience was primarily with links courses which generally are devoid of trees.

Several famous architects commented or wrote about trees. The following A.W. Tillinghast quote, from the book titled "The Course Beautiful," encapsulates his opinion of trees used as backdrops behind greens: "... in the case of a green played directly beyond the slope of a hillock and sharply defined against the sky. Barren of any nearby object, such as a tree for instance, the distance of the shot to the green is much more difficult to judge with accuracy than it would were there a tree or two standing forth. All players of ability will bear witness to the baffling length to a naked green, but few actually realize how much more readily the estimate of the eye would be flashed to the brain if sight should fall simultaneously on a lone tree and its neighboring green."

Other architects stated their feelings more bluntly. Walter Travis flatly stated that, "trees have no place on a golf course", while Harry Colt called them "fluky and unfair hazards." Then there was Max Behr who stated, "It goes without saying that trees lined to hem in fairways are not only an insult to golf architecture, but the death warrant to the high art of natural landscape gardening."

The doyen himself, Alister MacKenzie, also fell into the camp of architects who held no great love of trees; "Playing down fairways bordered by straight lines of trees is not only unartistic but makes tedious and uninteresting golf. Many green committees ruin one's handiwork by planting trees like rows of soldiers along the borders of the fairways."

With such an inauspicious beginning, it is curious that trees have become such an integral part of so many golf courses and that golfers have so highly prized them for years. In the 1920s to 1940s golfers and course officials wrote many articles extolling the virtues of planting trees and shrubs along fairway corridors and around greens to 'frame' them.

Some of these articles described early golf courses as being 'barren'. Other articles suggested that golfers would enjoy tree plantings and that their beauty might take golfers' minds off poorly played golf shots. Others advocated the planting of fast-growing trees, possibly mixed with slower-growing trees, to achieve quicker effects. Others advocated planting evergreens to avoid the expense and annoyance of removing leaves in autumn. Many addressed the beauty of nature and the importance of adding trees and ornamental plantings for aesthetics. Few if any articles addressed the need or desire for tree removal. Thus, many well-intentioned course officials made it their mission to fill golf courses with trees and ornamental plantings, despite the fact that early golf course architects held little love for them.

A. W. Tillinghast beautifully commented on the tree-loving passion some golfers displayed: "I find that our citizenry, throughout the land, are tree lovers. As a matter of fact they are so violent in this adoration that they 'get in my hair', for as much as I like trees myself I am not above sacrificing a few

Above: Tree populations are extremely dynamic and if trees are an important and desired component of your golf course, developing and continually updating a tree-management programme is critical for long-term success



every now and then if it is the only way to salvage a golf hole....I sometimes take my very life in my hands when I suggest that a certain tree happens to be spoiling a pretty good hole. The green committee chairman is like as not to glare at me as though I had recommended that he go home and murder his wife." Clearly, there was conflict regarding trees from golf's earliest days.

It was acknowledged early on that turfgrass shaded by trees struggled, and that certain turfgrass species were better suited to treed areas. However, the negative effects trees have on turf did not seem to attract much attention during the early part of the century, and golfers' strong desire to plant trees and 'beautify' golf courses won out over the protestations of golf course architects. Many courses created 'tree' or 'course beautification' committees whose specific mission it was to plant trees, and golf courses everywhere were methodically planted with trees and ornamentals.

In addition to turfgrass health and playability, it appears that the importance of trees also superseded the importance of course architecture. Eventually, many golfers came to believe that trees were a hallmark of fine golf courses.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

In the US at least, one key historical event – thousands of American elm trees dying from Dutch elm disease in the 1960s and 70s – probably fuelled the problem. In response to the devastating tree loss, some panicked and rapidly filled the voids left in tree stands with fast-growing tree species. In an attempt to have the greatest impact in the least amount of time, often more trees were planted – often in areas closer to play – than were removed.

In doing so it created a host of problems that would take decades to fully realise. The most basic mistake was that golf, course architecture, strategy and turfgrass health all took a back seat to the importance of planting trees and ornamentals. At some courses, every open location became a potential planting site, and trees were often planted with no purpose other than to fill voids. The goal frequently was to line every fairway and surround every green. The original architectural design intent was forgotten or ignored, as was the value of having open views and vistas.

It is important to note that golf courses are ideal sites for tree growth and development. The water and fertiliser that are regularly applied to maintain turfgrass often benefit trees just as much or more than the turf. Because of this, and partially due to the lack of competition from other forms of vegetation, the growth rate of trees on golf courses is nearly double what it would be in a natural forest environment.

The effects of tree root systems, which vary with tree species, also were not thoroughly understood. Some species have tap roots whereas others have fibrous root systems. Furthermore, tree roots usually extend far past the drip line, extending outward one or more times a tree's height depending on the species. Thus, tree roots have access to a large reservoir of moisture and nutrients, allowing trees to effectively compete against turf for these resources. Ultimately, tree root systems can have a significant impact on turf.

Even with ideal conditions, trees grow slowly. Usually, the decrease in sunlight penetration and air circulation from a few years' growth are not very significant. However, over a longer period of time (25-50 years) tree growth can have an extraordinary impact on turf health, playability and aesthetics.

Properly located trees of desirable species often developed into specimen trees that enhanced aesthetics and playability with minimal negative impact on turf. Unfortunately, vast numbers of trees were poorly planted – often too close together – leading to stunted, deformed specimens that were unable to reach their full genetic potential.

The difference in a golfer's perceived difficulty of a golf hole with and without a backdrop of trees is remarkable. Once a backdrop is removed, a green looks smaller, the topography comes alive and the hole looks much more challenging

While trees can be a pleasing addition to a golf course, they are not an essential component. Individual trees should be evaluated pragmatically and without emotion based on specific criteria, the most important of which should be the impact on turf health





PHOTO COURTESY OF IDRIS EVANS

Complicating shade issues, the position of the sun in the sky – and likewise the shade pattern cast by trees – dramatically changes throughout the year. Sun angles must be carefully accounted for to accurately assess the impact of shade from trees on specific turf areas

The impact trees had on playability was even more severe. Bunkers often were surrounded with trees, reducing their intended visual effect and making recovery nearly impossible. Trees that obscure obstacles, hazards and intricate topography of key architectural features hide the vital design elements that make golf holes memorable.

Poorly located trees forced golf holes out of alignment by narrowing playing corridors and reducing lines of play. Perhaps most significantly, courses that implemented extensive tree-planting programmes created situations where offline shots were severely punished and recovery options were eliminated or greatly diminished.

Open, rolling topography may look barren to some, but there is much for golfers to observe and appreciate in an open golf landscape. Intricately designed putting green and bunker complexes are a prime example. Trees that surround a green shrink a golfer's perceived size of the landscape, so the green actually looks larger than it is. Conversely, the same green without a backdrop of trees looks much smaller. Eliminating a backdrop of trees can increase the psychological difficulty of a golf hole. Placing trees further away from greens also helps highlight topography and other strategic features. For years, golfers did not attach importance to the visual effects of topography and openness on playability.

In short, at courses where indiscriminate tree planting occurred, designs that had once encouraged thoughtful, imaginative play were gradually transformed into one-dimensional, penal designs; courses that once felt expansive were transformed to small-feeling, claustrophobic golf courses. But watching trees grow is like watching a clock, so their impact went unnoticed for years.



Couchgrass poorly performs in shade and is much more susceptible to wear injury and winter damage in the absence of sufficient sunlight

Another curious event occurred while the trees were growing – turfgrass cutting heights steadily were lowered on greens, tees and fairways. The perceived importance of putting green speed escalated with the introduction of the USGA Stimpmeter in 1978, so as the trees gradually grew taller, the cutting heights got lower, dramatically increasing stress levels on turf. At many golf courses, the lines on the graph of tree growth and cutting heights began to converge in the 1980s.

AN AWAKENING

USGA agronomists and other experts began to identify and discuss golf course tree problems in the 1980s, but convincing courses to remove trees was an uphill battle given golfers' love affair with trees. Success required that long-held beliefs about the importance of trees and their impact on playability and course difficulty be countered, and golfers' innate love of trees often brought into play a strong dose of emotion.

As trees on golf courses continued to grow and cutting heights continued to get lower, problems with turf health and playability became epidemic in the 1990s and 2000s. Exacerbated by golfer demands for better turf and playability, many courses simply could not sustain reasonable turf health and playability. Turf loss, as a result of inferior growing environments, became commonplace. Trees also had a major impact on maintenance budgets, though their effects were not recognised until much later.

The path to helping courses identify and solve tree problems was paved by education. Courses began to address tree problems, but only grudgingly so at first. Many golfers feared that removing trees would make their courses too easy and look barren. Many golf courses initially took baby steps by removing 10-20 trees or so per year but this had little impact on the overall problem.

Due to extensive tree-planting programmes and years of growth, massive tree-removal programmes were necessary at many courses. Fortunately, golfers' tolerance of removing trees increased with the identification of tree problems and the recognised benefits of the solutions. As each story unfolded of how courses dealt aggressively and successfully with tree work, it became easier to convince other courses of the need for tree work.

The realisation and understanding of necessary corrective actions was aided greatly when well-



known and highly rated courses embarked upon extensive tree-management programmes. It helped even more when their rankings improved as a result of the work.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

There is no denying that trees can serve many valuable functions on golf courses and, when used appropriately and in moderation, they can be used to great benefit. From an environmental standpoint, trees effectively sequester carbon while providing food, cover and habitat for wildlife. From a practical standpoint, trees are valuable for screening unwanted views and can provide separation where needed. Aesthetically, the natural beauty of a specimen tree offers extraordinary appeal. Trees also can be used to impart strategy.

However, trees are stealthy thieves. When budgeting, most only consider the cost of purchasing and planting trees. Planting a single tree starts a chain reaction of expenses that can absorb resources for 50 or 100 years or more. Multiply those expenses by the number of trees – 100, 1000, or 10,000 – and trees can become a large and very long-term financial commitment.

TREE MANAGEMENT

Perhaps the most significant point to remember is that tree populations require management, and while trees can be a pleasing and useful addition to

a golf course, they are not an essential component of all courses. Thus, individual trees should be evaluated pragmatically and without emotion based on specific criteria, the most important of which are their impact on turf health and reliability and playability. When reviewing particularly controversial trees, it is helpful to ask the question, "If there were no tree there now, would you add one?" In many cases, the answer is "No!"

Similar criteria should apply to proposed new plantings in order to avoid repeating past mistakes. Remember, trees that have little impact on play as saplings may narrow golf holes and block shots from teeing grounds or around greens once they mature. If new plantings immediately come into play, they may be in the wrong location long term.

When trees are removed, avoid the all-too-common mistake of rushing to immediately replace them. Areas of golf courses are visually transformed when old trees are removed, and it can take time for golfers to become accustomed to the more open look. Waiting a year before deciding whether or not to replace trees is an excellent policy.

The list of golf courses that now have implemented tree-management programmes is a long one, but it is a mistake to think that a programme – once implemented – is finished. Trees are constantly evolving and adjustments and updates to management plans should be regularly made. Some golf courses develop tree inventories



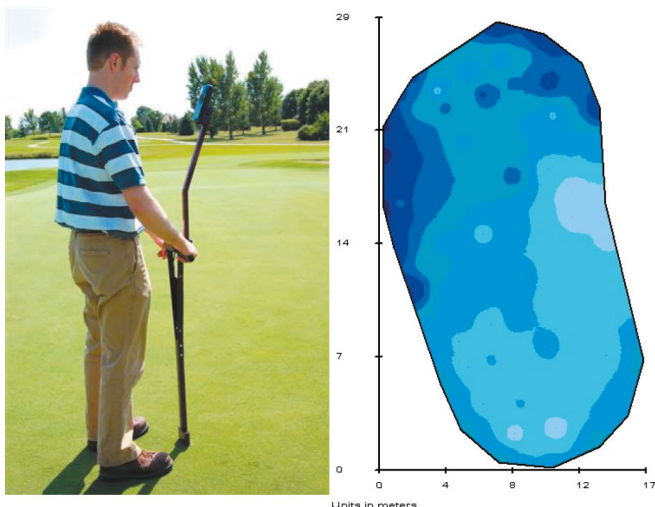
There are few things more majestic than a properly located specimen tree. Pictured is the impressive *Eucalyptus regnans* planted by the Queen Mother in 1927 behind the 9th green at Frankston Golf Club, Vic

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Species with aggressive surface roots make for very poor playability and can be very damaging to golfers, golf carts and course maintenance equipment.

so as to better track the health, diversity, age and projected life span of their trees. Here are a few critical points to keep in mind as you consider existing and proposed tree plantings on your golf course:

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

There are many criteria to consider when evaluating tree plantings, but the most important is location. Tree canopies shade turf, reducing its vigour and can block air circulation, increasing disease pressure and reducing turf's ability to cool itself. Turf that does not receive adequate light and air movement is less vigorous and more susceptible to stress, traffic injury and disease. Adding insult to injury, reduced light also limits turf's ability to recover when problems occur. Furthermore, tree root systems compete with turf for moisture and nutrients.

Complicating shade issues, the position of the sun in the sky – and likewise the shade pattern cast by trees – dramatically changes throughout the year. Sun angles must be carefully accounted for to accurately assess the impact of shade from trees on specific turf areas. You may be surprised to know that shade is even important during the winter when turf is dormant. There is a strong correlation between winter shade and winter injury for both warm- and cool-season turf.

NOT ALL TREES ARE CREATED EQUAL

There are both appropriate and inappropriate tree species for use on golf courses and in fine turf areas, so choose tree species wisely when developing a tree-management programme for a specific location. There always are exceptions, but usually it is wise to rely on tree species that are indigenous to your geographic area.

Observing which tree species are performing well on your course or in the surrounding area also can provide valuable clues as to what trees might be successfully used at your facility. It is extremely important to consider longevity, diversity and susceptibility to disease and insect pests when selecting tree species. Having species with varying potential life spans also can be beneficial, but avoiding short-lived tree species makes sense in most situations.

Species with aggressive surface roots make for very poor playability and can be very damaging to golfers and course maintenance equipment. Fast-growing species generally have softer wood, may

sucker when damaged or pruned, and are more susceptible to storm and wind damage.

Some species are notoriously messy – dropping leaves, branches, fruit and bark – so it also is important to contemplate the debris factor and tree placement during the evaluation process. Messy trees in out-of-play areas may not be an issue, but when they are located near tees, greens, fairways, or bunkers they can annoy golfers and increase maintenance costs. Branching habit is another critical factor to consider.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Golf courses that have trees must manage them to safeguard their investment in both trees and turf. Proper tree management will ensure that trees remain an asset that enhances a golf course rather than liabilities that threaten it.

Plenty of decisions about trees on golf courses are relatively easy, like the decision to remove a diseased, structurally damaged tree that is located in a high-traffic area and shading a putting green. Other decisions are extremely complex because they require the knowledge and imagination to envision how trees will grow and develop and what their impact on turf health, aesthetics and playability eventually will be.

It is the rare individual that has an in-depth knowledge of trees, insect pests and diseases, sun position angles, turfgrass requirements, and golf course architecture and playability; however, this is the knowledge required to effectively evaluate golf course tree populations, solve current tree issues and prevent future tree problems. Engaging consultants that have specific knowledge in each of the appropriate areas is good practice.

Tree-management programmes invariably involve removing trees, but planting better-adapted, more appropriate trees also is an important part of many tree-management programmes. The goal of an effective tree-management programme should be to continually improve and upgrade tree quality. Many of today's tree problems could have been avoided if courses concentrated more on tree quality than on tree quantity.

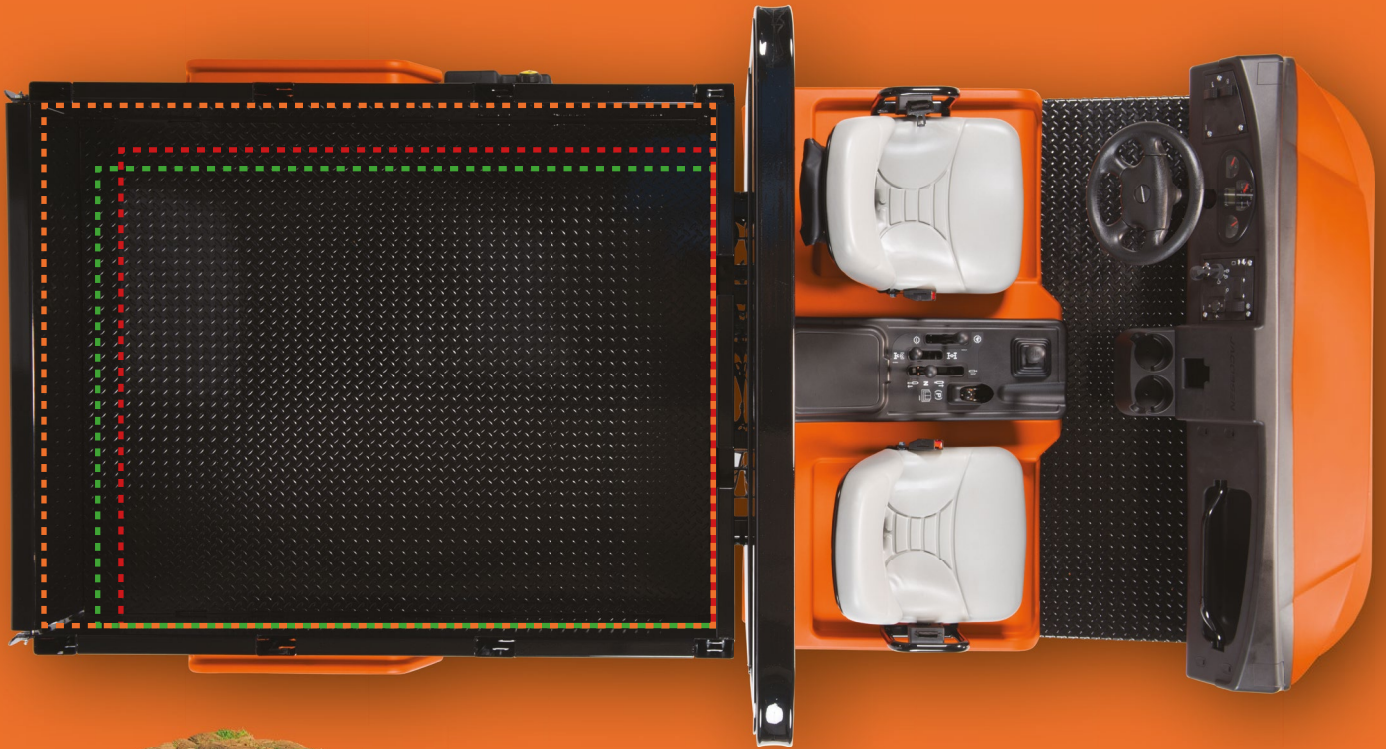
Tree populations are extremely dynamic and if trees are an important and desired component of your golf course, developing and continually updating a tree-management programme is critical. Just keep in mind that trees are not appropriate on all golf courses or in all locations.

Furthermore, it is easy to plant a tree; almost anyone can do it. Although dangerous, also just about anyone can cut a tree down. The trick is to plant the right tree in the right location so that it adds to aesthetics and the golf experience without detracting from turf quality, playability or the bottom line. Remember, trees are not valuable just because they are trees; trees are valuable based on their species, health, form, structure, location and function. 🌱

Some tree species are notoriously messy so it also is important to contemplate the debris factor and tree placement during the evaluation process



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Kingston Heath 15th

This edition sees the start of a regular section featuring minor project works being undertaken by AGCSA members and their crews around the country. First up, ATM stops by Kingston Heath Golf Club which will host the 2016 World Cup of Golf.

Right: A 60m² area of turf on the back left of the green was lifted, with 60mm of sand/thatch removed in the deepest section tapering back to 20mm to reinstate the pin position

Above: In November 2015 Kingston Heath staff made minor adjustments to the course's famous par three 15th green to reinstate the back left pin placement

Course: Kingston Heath, Melbourne.

Superintendent: Hayden Mead.

Summary of works: To reinstate the back left tournament pin position on the iconic par three 15th hole.

The 15th hole at Kingston Heath is well known as the signature hole of the famed Melbourne sandbelt course. Originally a short par 4 of approximately 200 metres when the course opened in 1925, in 1926 Dr Alister MacKenzie suggested transforming it into a par three of about 155m. By 1930 this work had been completed.

At the time, the good Doctor was quoted: "I would suggest that the fifteenth hole be changed and that it be converted into an iron shot of somewhat similar character to the famous Gibraltar hole at Moortown, England. This will have the effect of

slightly shortening the sixteenth but I think it will at the same time make it a better hole." No argument there!

Today, the 15th green still has the most dramatic undulations of any green at Kingston Heath. Pin positions, however, are very limited as MacKenzie would have never dreamt of having green speeds at 13 feet!

The 'tournament' pin position was traditionally at the back left of the green. This required a treacherous shot over the famous 'Bertha' bunker. When the green was reconstructed in 2005 from push-up style greens to the USGA method, this pin location was lost. This was due to the slope from back to front being too great to have a hole location in this area. When the green was re-constructed, it is believed additional soil was placed in the back left corner so the rear of the green could be seen



from the tee. The green had about 330 millimetres of sand over the entire green except for this back left corner which had up to 400mm.

The club wanted to reinstate the pin position and after discussions with the club architect and looking at the previous surveying of the green, it was decided to reduce the severity of the slope from the back of the green to the front in the back left corner. After detailed surveying, it was proven the pin position could be reinstated with no disturbance required to the drainage layer. It was approved by the general committee for this work to be done in November of 2015.

Points were marked out on the green where the slope needed to be reduced to be able to have the plateau that was originally there reinstated. About 60 square metres of A1 creeping bentgrass turf was lifted with 60mm of sand/thatch removed in the deepest section tapering back to 20mm. This allowed for a slope of only two per cent from the rear of the green to the front of the plateau, which is a lesser slope than a lot of the available pin positions currently on other greens.

The turf was then relayed and some minor bunker work was also completed at the same time. The hole was kept out of play for two weeks. The pin position will be used for the first time in February during Kingston Heath's club championships.

Although it was a simple project for the course staff to do – all up it took just four days to complete – it was a significant decision by the club to carry out this work on such an iconic golf hole.

Editor's Note: If you have any minor project work that you would like featured in ATM Journal, contact editor Brett Robinson on (03) 9548 8600 or email brett@agcsa.com.au

Kingston Heath's 15th 'Plateau' hole. The top photo was taken in 1928 shortly after it was redesigned by Alister MacKenzie. The bottom two photos, from in front and behind the green, were taken 1931



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The Links Lady Bay, SA

Ranked 81st in Golf Australia magazine's latest top 100 Australian courses list, Links Lady Bay is regarded as one of South Australia's best courses outside of Adelaide. ATM catches up with course superintendent Tim Warren.

Links Lady Bay on South Australia's Fleurieu Peninsula was designed and constructed by Graeme Grant, Jack Newton and John Spencer in the late 1990s. Pictured is the 18th

Superintendent: Tim Warren (39).

Nickname: Rabbsy.

Family: Married to the long-suffering Kate. Kids Sophie (12) and James (10) who are both very competent at changing holes!

Years as superintendent: 18.

Association involvement: AGCSA (18 years), SAGGSA member of 11 years and current committee member. VGCSA member (2005-2011).

Turf management career: Yarrowonga & Border Golf Club (apprentice 1994-97); Penola Golf Club (superintendent 1997-99); Millicent Golf Club (superintendent 1999-2001); Mount Gambier Golf Club (superintendent 2001-05); Horsham Golf Club (superintendent 2005-2011); Adelaide Shores (superintendent 2011-2014); The Links Lady Bay (superintendent 2014-present).

Qualifications: Cert IV Diploma in Turf Management, Cert IV Diploma Frontline Management.

Where in Australia is The Links Lady Bay?

Links Lady Bay is located about one hour south of Adelaide on the Fleurieu Peninsula, near the township of Normanville.

Tell us a bit about your background and how you got into turf?

I grew up in Nathalia in northern Victoria and left school in Year 11 (the story goes that I left the Year 12 enrolment form in the bottom of my school bag and missed enrolling!) I guess I was drawn to turf because of my love for football, cricket and golf. I started working the summer holidays at Nathalia Bowling Club and with the encouragement

of the greenkeeper I soon realised it would be a great career to pursue. I managed to get an apprenticeship at Yarrowonga under Mike Swanwick and the rest is history.

My first superintendent posting was at Penola Golf Club in south east SA straight after completing my apprenticeship. I was just 21 and thrown in the deep end as I was managing the course by myself along with a group of member volunteers. It was all manual irrigation, Poa greens and I reckon I lost about nine of them in my first summer due to disease. It was an excellent grounding and I reckon I learnt more in the 18 months there than I have anywhere subsequent. It really was sink or swim.

You were at Horsham Golf Club when the 2009 Black Saturday fires hit. Does that day still haunt you?

I spent seven wonderful years at Horsham and absolutely loved the course. It was a great track and it was just heartbreaking to see how much devastation the fires caused. Every time you see or hear of a bushfire, the memories of Black Saturday come flooding back. Looking back, that 2-3 month period after the fires was incredibly hard, but the way the crew rallied around and just got on with the job was incredible and a testament to their dedication to the club and profession.

You moved to Adelaide Shores after Horsham, a high turnover public access course in Adelaide. How much of a departure was that and what did you learn? It was a great three years at Adelaide Shores and very good for my career. Being part



The Links Lady Bay crew (from left) Peter Andersen, Ben Wallis and superintendent Tim Warren. Absent is Wayne Francis

of such a big and diverse organisation I learnt a whole different skillset as to what I had previous. You had the traditional role of managing the golf courses, but you also had the added challenges of being in a middle management position of a large organisation and dealing with HR, finance and admin departments. It was a real juggling act and you had to ensure your time management was spot on. Forward planning was also critical and you were constantly reviewing and reassessing where you were at with your course management. I may not have been on the tools as much as previous roles, but I came away from Adelaide Shores with a host of new management skills which has been invaluable.

You've recently taken the reins at Links Lady Bay. How did that job come about and why did you decide to head back to the country? After three years at Adelaide I was looking for a change, one that would most importantly fit in with the family. The Links Lady Bay job came up and with the new ownership there they had started spending a bit of money (e.g.: capital expenditure on machinery, new cart paths etc) so thought I'd apply. It's a great track and as soon as I walked it for the first time I knew I could turn up to this office every day. I'm really enjoying the lifestyle and getting back involved in a smaller regional community, as is the family.

Give us an overview of Links Lady Bay and some of its unique characteristics? Links Lady Bay was designed and constructed by Graeme Grant, Jack Newton and John Spencer in the late 1990s and measures 6400m. The course is built on a fairly grand scale – big greens (approx. 1.5 hectares including a double green – 13th/16th) and 128 bunkers which have an unkempt natural appearance, something a bit unique here in SA. The two nines are distinctly different and there are a few blind and semi-blind tee and approach shots which make it a fun course to play.

Is it an easy/hard facility to manage? What's

the most challenging aspect? Links Lady Bay is easily the most challenging course that I've had to manage due to issues we have with water quality and availability, the wind, the size of the course and staffing levels. We currently have a crew of just four and since October we have been without our leading hand Wayne Francis who is battling some serious health issues.

Our major challenge is water and the different water sources of varying quality. The front nine is predominately irrigated from a storage which is supplied through storm water, river, shallow aquifer and winter overflow from the recycled water storage. Salt levels are quite high (around 1400ppm) with low nutrient levels which has our management geared towards leaching of salts, gypsum applications and spoon-feeding through foliar applications of nitrogen and potassium.

The back nine greens by contrast are irrigated with Class B recycled water which has elevated levels of nitrogen and phosphorous as well as bicarbonates. Salt levels are moderate (800ppm). The management of this side of the course has us focusing more on growth regulation through the summer as well dealing with accumulated salts. I put an emphasis on the promotion of a healthy root



Since arriving at Links Lady Bay, Warren has upped the frequency of Vertidrainning greens through summer to help leach salts and encourage deeper root systems

Irrigation and water management is an ongoing challenge at Links Lady Bay due to varying water sources and quality, an ageing irrigation system and the wind

CONTINUED ON PAGE 57



AT A GLANCE – LINKS LADY BAY, SA



Course specs: Santa Ana couch tees (one hectare) and fairways (11.5ha). Greens (1.5ha) are a bentgrass blend of Crenshaw, Pennlinks and SR 1020. 1.5ha of cool-season approaches/surrounds and 2.5ha of semi-irrigated practice fairway. Links Lady Bay has 128 bunkers with only seven accessible by our SandPro, the rest hand-raked.

Members/Rounds: 200/20,000.

Major events: Over the past 12 months Links Lady Bay has hosted the Golf SA Open Mid-Amateur, Golf Australia Interstate Boys Teams Championships, Golf SA Senior Championships and The Links Lady Bay Pro-am.

Annual course budget: \$375,000 including wages.

Staff: Tim Warren (course superintendent), Wayne Francis (senior greenkeeper/leading hand), Peter Andersen and Ben Wallis (greenkeepers/groundsmen).

Climate: Normanville's Mediterranean climate is fairly similar to Adelaide's, however, with its location on the Fleurieu Peninsula we are subject to strong winds throughout the year. In winter the winds are predominately from the south west off the sea and summer we are subject to strong south easterlies. Normanville's average summer temperatures range from a high of 28°C with minimums of 16°C. As with Adelaide, we are not immune to regular heat waves with temperatures in the low 40s experienced. Winter average temperatures are 15°C with 7°C minimums. Average rainfall for Normanville is 532mm.

Soil types: Greens and tees all constructed from native sand, push up construction. Majority of fairways are constructed from native sand with fairways 4 and 5, in the south east corner of the course, more of a sandy loam profile.

Water sources: Two water sources supply the course irrigation. The Links receives approximately 120 megalitres per annum

of Class B recycled water from the District Council of Yankalilla waste water treatment plant. This is pumped from the plant through to a 50ML lined holding dam situated on the back nine. The second irrigation source is from a 45ML dam located on the front nine which is supplied from a combination of storm water, a pumping licence from the Yankalilla River and shallow water table seepage. Our annual water usage is approximately 120-140 ML.

Irrigation system: Rain Bird Stratus Central Control decoder system. Tees are a block system with Eagle 700s and 750s. Greens are valve-in-head Eagle 700s and 750s and fairways have valve-in-head 900s and 950s. The system is starting to show its age with the replacement of decoders an ongoing issue and the control system is due for an upgrade, however, for the age of the system it's fairly reliable. The pump sets have been recently upgraded to Lowara multistage units equipped with Hydrovar controllers.

Cutting heights/regimes: Greens are cut three times per week with heights ranging from 3mm from spring through to the end of autumn and 3.5mm through winter. Heights are taken down to 2.5mm for major events. We try and get at least one roll on greens per week to assist the firming and smoothing of the putting surfaces. Tees are cut once a week due to growth been maintained through the use of growth regulators; approaches and collars are cut at 10mm twice a week if staff levels allow. Fairways are cut on an as needs basis, usually fortnightly through the growing season at 10mm.

Renovations: Since starting at The Links we have undertaken a single greens renovation last spring. This consisted of a 5/8" hollow tine at 32mm x 50mm spacings, topdressing using our native sand and then a 12mm solid tine Vertidrain to seven inch depth with a three degree kick. My predecessor, Ian

Links Lady Bay is one of the most challenging courses that Warren has had to manage due to issues with water quality and availability, the wind, the size of the course and low staffing levels

Putland used to undertake the renovation process in house, however, we decided to move away from this practice and engage contractors Glenelg Turf Ace. Overall, I'm satisfied with most of the aspects of the renovations, however, we will need to fine-tune timings and fertiliser rates for next year to improve recovery time.

One aspect that was disappointing was that the greens dried out a little too much the week before renovations as we were trying to stress the *Poa* out as much as we could. That, however, came back to bite us with areas on the back nine greens becoming severely hydrophobic which restricted their recovery.

The aim for this summer was a fortnightly dusting programme of the greens, however, due to lack of staff and other maintenance issues cropping up this programme has been reviewed. Greens are being dusted fortnightly January to April and needle tine Vertidrain in January and March to promote root growth and the leaching of salts.

Major disease pressures: I deliberately went into my first winter with no preventative fungicide applications with the view of waiting and seeing what happened. Thinking with our exposed site we wouldn't have too many issues, I was quite surprised by how much winter fusarium affected the greens and collars – I now know for next year! Even though we are exposed to the wind, through June and July we receive a lot of days of blustery, skippy showers coming off the sea where the greens just don't have a chance to dry out leading to fusarium outbreaks.

In summer, our main pressures are from brown patch and if we have a bit of humidity, dollar spot. I have the attitude of running with a preventative fungicide programme through summer as we are always under the pump; I don't want to be chasing disease in what is already a busy time of the year.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

system and in conjunction with regular needle tining and gypsum applications throughout the growing season we also apply kelps and biostimulants combined with wetting agents.

The irrigation system is not without issue. During construction of the course budgets were fairly tight and that is reflected in its design. The key areas of concern are the two water sources, with an uneven draw down of supply and the differences in water quality influencing turf growth across the course, while winter storage capabilities are deficient. Mainline pipe diameters aren't great enough to allow an efficient watering window and many of our fairways lack sprinkler heads to counteract the prevalent winds.

What changes have you made to course management since starting there? The biggest difference has been treating the two nines almost as separate golf courses due to their differing water sources. It's challenging but we have to do that, so we have two different rates of PGRs, different nutrition programmes etc. We have also upped the frequency of Vertidrainings greens through summer to help leach salts and encourage deeper root systems, which has really paid off. As a result we have reduced the amount of hand watering required and the incidence of hydrophobic areas. We have also focussed a lot on presentation, keeping the place as tidy as possible and controlling the things we can control; simple things like getting new flags and course furniture for instance.

Outline any major course improvement works recently completed or coming up? The fairways (along with tees) underwent a major renovation in November for the very first time. The fairways were scarified with 3mm tungsten tip blades then Vertidrainaged with 7/8" hollow tines at 65mm x 65mm spacings. This was followed up with an application of a poultry/cow manure compost rubbed down into the core holes with a follow up application of wetting agent and renovation granular fertiliser.

The renovations weren't without issue with stones being present after rubbing in of cores. The stones were a combination of limestone brought up through the coring process on certain fairways as well as operator error from our contractor spreading the organics. On loading his spreader he ran the loader bucket clean across the compacted gravel hardstand which it was stockpiled on.

After some stressful trial and error, Nathan Bennett from Royal Adelaide GC generously lent us his Toro Rak-o-Vac which was kindly transported down by David Rogers from Glenelg Turf Ace before Christmas. By utilising this machine, we removed at least 95 per cent of the stone material and were able to get the fairways back down to 12mm before the New Year, a great result considering how much there was.



A fortnight after the renovations, the fairways received an application of a 50/50 blend of DAP and potassium nitrate 31-20-38 at 100kg/ha giving an actual N rate of .3kg/100m² and an application of a prilled urea at 80kg/ha to ensure a quick recovery leading into our busy Christmas/New Year period. They recovered well and overall I think it was an exercise worth doing. However, it's disappointing to see that they are now starting to stress out considerably due to the need to wind back the irrigation because of a dwindling water supply (we are currently using just 4ML a week over the whole course).

Elsewhere we have an ephemeral creek – Salt Creek – that runs along the back of the course. In conjunction with the State Government's Natural Resources Management we will be rehabilitating the waterway, removing feral olives and boxthorn, slashing the creek line and replanting with riparian species. Respected golf course shaper Ronny Nyhuis, who built this place with Graeme Grant and lives just a few doors down from our shed, will be undertaking this work in late summer/autumn.

The weather and climate is always a great leveller for a superintendent. How has Mother Nature treated the course in recent times? When I started here they said it would get windy during summer and after last summer I thought they must have got it wrong. How wrong was I! This January has been unbelievable. I don't think I've seen a windier place than here. I'm lying awake most nights wondering why I even bothered putting the automatics on. It's at the point now where I'm putting knockers on upwind of greens! We are forever shifting sand around in bunkers too and we found an old bunker rake buried about a foot under the sand in one we recently repaired!



For the first time last November the Links Lady Bay Santa Ana fairways underwent a heavy renovation to which they responded very well

Due to strong winds the Links Lady Bay crew is forever shifting sand around in bunkers. Recently they found an old bunker rake buried about a foot under the sand!



Links Lady Bay hosted the Golf Australia Interstate Boys Teams Championships last autumn to great acclaim

Built on a grand scale, the Links Lady Bay greens total 1.5 hectares in size (including the 13th/16th double green) while there are 128 bunkers, only seven of which are accessible by a Sand Pro



The one product I couldn't manage my course without is... PGRs, whether its Primo or Paclobutrazol, followed half a head back by wetting agents. With the wind and the native sands here (the sands are very fine and once they dry out are very hard to re-wet) you need to have a bit more moisture in the profile – sometimes up to 40 per cent. We don't have the staff to be out hand watering all the time so you have to cover your back.

You have been both a metro and regional super – what's your preference? That's a hard one to answer and to be honest I still don't know. The metro guys are certainly under a lot of pressure to produce day in and day out and the expectations are greater, but for the most part they have the resources at their disposal to do the job. Country guys certainly feel the pressure and a lot of the time it's the pressure we put on ourselves because we want to present the course as best we can but we simply don't have the resources. Sometimes you have to step back and give yourself a reality check and only do what you can do and that can be hard.

Do you have to be more resourceful as a regional-based superintendent? You have to think outside the square a lot more. You have to maximise the use of local resources and you're always recycling everything you can that's around the shed. I've got an engineer mate around the corner who has done

a bit of work for us and recently made a tow behind hose reel out of some old parts we had lying around the shed – the guys think it's great.

Any unusual requests/things you have had to do as a regional super? Aside from battling bushfires and locust plagues, at Horsham we had a channel run past the course which supplied the town water. We had an influx of this fresh water into our dam one day and a week later we had dead carp everywhere. I usually pride myself on getting stuck in and doing most things, but I pulled rank that day and sent down the apprentice and another staff member – no way was I fishing dead carp out of the dam!

What have you got in your shed? Mainly red. Triplex 3150 petrol (tees), 3150 and 3250 diesels (greens), Reelmaster 6700D (fairways), Groundsmaster 3500D rotary decks (surrounds), two Groundsmaster 328s (roughs), HDX Workman with Multi Pro sprayer, SandPro, Tru-Turf rollers, Vertidrain 7212, new 38hp New Holland boomer front end loader, tractors.

What's your favourite piece of machinery and what are you hoping will be your next major purchase? Without a doubt the HDX Workman with Multi Pro sprayer – fantastic machine. I'd like to replace a couple of the old utility vehicles and triplex mowers.

Best advice you have received about being a course superintendent/greenkeeper and who gave it to you? Some would say I've been given plenty of advice over the years but choose to ignore most of it! At my first superintendent posting at Penola, one of the members, Jock Agnew, could see that I was putting a lot of effort into areas outside of the major playing surfaces and he told me all that mattered was what was at the end of the fairways.

And I think it was Martyn Black who came up with the other gem – 'If you haven't lost turf, you're not having a go!' You've got to push the boundaries a little bit; it's too easy being conservative.

Most rewarding moment during your time at Links Lady Bay? Probably the Golf Australia Interstate Boys Teams Championships last autumn. The way the course was presented and how everything came together was fantastic and the feedback we got from all quarters was sensational. It was the best the course has been in my time here and it showed to the members the potential the place has with some extra inputs.

Editor's Note: At the time of this edition going to print, long-serving Links Lady Bay leading hand Wayne Francis was still recovering from a major health scare. In October 2015 he suffered a heart attack and shortly before Christmas had further complications. The AGCSA and ATM wishes Wayne a speedy recovery. 🌱



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AGCSA TO PARTNER INAUGURAL GOLF BUSINESS FORUM



"Given that many of the AGCSA's members, including current Board member Darren Wilson (Wembley Golf Complex), are employed in the sector that the Golf Business Forum event is targeting, it was seen as a great opportunity to promote the AGCSA," says AGCSA chief executive Peter Frewin. "Golf participation in the public/private/green fee sector accounts for a very large percentage of overall golf participation and if this part of the industry is strong it can only be of benefit to our membership."

The two-day event will be held at the Melbourne Park Function Centre. An exhibition space will feature industry suppliers and facilitate small-scale workshops as well as work and meeting spaces. Leading industry participants and content specialists from inside and outside the golf industry will discuss the issues facing today's golf business, including:

- Sport and golf-specific participation trends and initiatives;
- Customer engagement and building loyalty;
- Marketing, pricing and managing an online presence;
- Retail best practice and competing with the off-course and online retailers;
- The future of the game and how to grow golf in all its forms;
- Case studies of successful operations and business models will be highlighted, including Moore Park Golf (Sydney), Yarra Bend Golf (Melbourne) and Wembley Golf Complex (Perth).

Feature presenters confirmed to date include:

- Lodewijk Klootwijk (chief executive of the European Golf Course Owners Association);
- Jay Karen (CEO of the USA National Golf Course Owners Association);
- Tony Hallam (chairman, Yarra Bend Golf);
- Kim Ellis (CEO Centennial Parklands – Moore Park Golf);
- Paul Fairweather (deputy general manager research and information – Australian Sports Commission); and
- Danny Bowerin (senior strategy consultant – Repucom).

To keep up to date with the event's latest news and speaker announcements, visit golfbusinessforum.com.au or connect via LinkedIn and Twitter (#golfbiz2016). Registration for the Golf Business Forum will open in early 2016.



The inaugural Golf Business Forum to be held in Melbourne in July 2016 is expected to attract Australia's largest ever gathering of golf facility owners, operators, industry leaders and business partners

The Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association is partnering what is expected to be one of Australia's largest gatherings of golf facility owners, operators, industry leaders and business partners – the inaugural Golf Business Forum.

To be held in Melbourne over two days (25-26 July, 2016), the Golf Business Forum is the brainchild of Guy Chapple and Andrew Davies from WellPlayed Golf Business Consultancy, working with key industry groups and suppliers.

"In recent years, WellPlayed's project work has required us to circulate amongst many public-access golf facilities, including some of Australia's busiest sites," says Davies, Golf Business Forum director and former owner of Eagle Ridge Golf Course on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. "We have seen industry-leading innovation, as well as many facilities struggling with issues around capital investment and business strategy.

"It quickly became apparent to us that there was a genuine desire amongst these people to connect with other facility operators, owners and the broader golf industry. Historically the industry hasn't engaged very well with the public-access side of the market, and the Forum is a key opportunity to change that."

The event has attracted the support of the industry's leading suppliers and organisations including platinum partner MSL Solutions (owners of software solutions and golfer websites Micropower, GolfLink and iseekgolf) as well as Club Car and Toro. Many industry organisations have committed to the event including foundation partner Golf Australia, the PGA of Australia, Parks & Leisure Australia, the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects and the AGCSA.



JACOBSEN'S FUTURE TURF MANAGERS' INITIATIVE COMES TO AUSTRALIA

The AGCSA is joining forces with Gold Partner Jacobsen to bring the company's highly successful

Future Turf Managers' Initiative programme to Australia.

Recognising the importance of preparing golf course maintenance personnel to take on the role of superintendent, course manager or assistant,

Jacobsen has successfully developed and runs the FTMI across many countries. Together, the AGCSA and Jacobsen will now offer this highly successful training opportunity to 10 Australian course maintenance staff with applications now being accepted.

The inaugural Australian FTMI will be held during the 2016 Australian Turfgrass Conference in Melbourne and will comprise an intensive two days of seminars, talks and workshops covering subjects such as communications, budgeting, team management, CV writing and interview techniques, networking and career development. Sessions will be presented by keynote speakers, established and respected superintendents/course managers (mentors) and other industry professionals.

Karen Proctor, Jacobsen's international marketing and communications manager, says the company is excited about bringing the FTMI to Australia: "As one of the major players in the global turf care sector, we feel that we have a responsibility to support the industry for the benefit of everyone. That's why we are so committed to supporting the provision of quality education in all regions around the globe.

"We began the Future Turf Managers' Initiative in the UK some four years ago and have now had over 80 young greenkeepers through the programme. Over 20 per cent of the delegates have since been promoted, so we know that it works. We have now

rolled this out in Portugal and New Zealand with plans to introduce it in Italy in 2016 and Scandinavia in 2017."

Adds AGCSA events and education manager Simone Staples: "The FTMI has been designed to provide practical tools and guidance to help assist candidates with their career aspirations through this interactive, professional development programme. Working with qualified trainers, mentors, AGCSA and Jacobsen staff, participants will leave the FTMI with a clear understanding of what the future holds and a realistic overview of the expectations that come with their climb up the management ladder."

For more information about the FTMI and to apply for this wonderful opportunity, visit www.agcsa.com.au/future-turf-managers-initiative-ftmi. Applications close 31 March 2016 with the 10 successful delegates to be announced in mid-April.

SYDNEY 'LIFT AND LOAD' SERVICE FOR USED CHEMICAL DRUMS

drumMUSTER is proud to announce a new recycling service for chemical users being offered by JK Plastics. Established in Sydney in 2011 and working with drumMUSTER since August 2014, JK Plastics is offering a 'lift and load' service to assist the turf and horticultural industries in the Sydney Basin, including golf courses, sportsgrounds, council parks and gardens, dispose of their empty ag-vet containers.

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TORO

JK Plastics, which has worked with drumMUSTER since August 2014, is offering a 'lift and load' service to assist the turf and horticultural industries in the Sydney Basin



Turf Equipment's Jordan Ormsby (centre), flanked by Ray Grech (left) and Mike Foskett (right) of Jacobsen



To participate, chemical users must have at least two open top intermediate bulk containers (IBCs) – one for 20 litre containers and a second for smaller containers. Each IBC should contain 35–80 drums respectively. If you do not own any IBCs, please contact drumMUSTER regional consultant Vernon Keighley to find out how you can get them.

When IBCs are full, users then contact JK Plastics on 0416 146 675 or email belinda@jkplastics.com.au to register a pick-up. The IBCs are then lifted onto the back of a flatbed truck and replaced with two empty IBCs. All ag-vet containers presented to JK Plastics must have their lids off and be triple rinsed.

Stuart Martin, course superintendent at North Turramarra Golf Club, has been participating in drumMUSTER for two years and has noticed a

steady increase in the amount of drums being returned in his area. He now employs the 'lift and load' service on a regular basis.

"We started with two IBCs and are currently up to six. We are a major collection point in the North Shore, with three other golf clubs and various chemical users bringing their drums to us for collection by JK Plastics. I encourage others in the Sydney region to take advantage of this wonderful service."

To learn more about the drumMUSTER programme and the 'lift and load' service visit www.drummuster.com.au.

TURF EQUIPMENT NEW JACOBSEN DISTRIBUTOR FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AGCSA Gold Partner Jacobsen has appointed Turf Equipment SA P/L as a distributor for South Australia. Turf Equipment SA is a new distribution company owned and operated by Jordan Ormsby of Golf Car Solutions, the distributor of E-Z-GO and Club Car golf cars, based at Marleston, SA.

Golf Car Solutions was established in 2002 and over the past 13 years has become South Australia's largest golf car supplier. Managing director Ormsby, older brother of European Tour professional Wade Ormsby, says he is excited about the new arrangement.

"I would like to thank Jacobsen for the trust that they have put in me and Turf Equipment SA for the opportunity to represent their brands," says Ormsby. "I am really excited about the future here in South Australia and believe that the 20 years I have had in the golf industry will assist in growing these brands – Jacobsen, Ransomes and Dixie Chopper. Over the years we have built great relationships with many of South Australia's golf courses and councils, so moving into the turf machinery industry will be a great challenge and one we are looking forward to."

Turf Equipment SA can be contacted on (08) 8297 7500 or visit www.golfcarsolutions.com.au.

INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS



BELL CHIMES AT NUTURF

AGCSA Gold Partner Nuturf Australia has appointed **Adam Bell** to the role of territory manager based in Victoria. Bell (pictured) is well known to turf managers in Victoria as an experienced account manager and turf practitioner. As well as servicing the turf industry for the past five years, Bell had stints at RACV Cape Shank, Camperdown Golf Club and Peterborough Golf Club. He can be contacted on 0438 700 939 or by email Adam.Bell@nuturf.com.au.



STUART STARTS WITH LIVING TURF

Former Royal Sydney Golf Club assistant superintendent **Cameron Stuart** (pictured) has joined Living Turf as a technical services manager. Having worked in the turf industry his whole life, Stuart started his career on the family turf farm in Canberra. From there his career progressed from

a sports ground traineeship at the Institute of Sport in Canberra to Royal Sydney Golf Club where he spent a decade on the senior management team.

In between, Stuart accumulated a wealth of international golf turf experience at clubs including Los Angeles Country Club and Pinehurst, however, he maintains that preparation for events such as Australian Opens, Davis Cup Tennis and Australian Croquet Championships are career highlights to date.

"We are thrilled to have Cameron join our team and confident about the impact he will have on the expansion and sophistication of product and service developments, along with the support he is set to provide to our sales team and their clients," says Living Turf managing director Rob Cooper. Stuart can be contacted on 0409 905 474 or by email cstuart@livingturf.com

If your company has any new appointments or announcements, contact ATM editor Brett Robinson brett@agcsa.com.au



PARTNER RECOGNITION PROGRAMME

Support those organisations who support your association

Thank you to all the partners who help the AGCSA provide members with the greatest programmes and services the industry has to offer.





A few weeks after successfully hosting the 2015 NSW PGA Championships, Riverside Oaks west of Sydney was recovering from major flooding



Moruya Golf Club on the NSW south coast was under water for the third time in six months after heavy rain in early January. Pictured is the 16th in flood

All superintendents and turf managers were on high disease alert and undertaking major clean-up operations after what can only be described as a horror start to 2016. By the 7th of January it was already being announced as the state's wettest January on record with many areas recording between 300-400mm over a few days. At the very least clubs should be spending less than normal on town water with onsite dams being full.

The meeting of state superintendent association presidents during the 2015 Australian PGA Championship on the Gold Coast was productive where issues and resolutions that affect other states were discussed. This useful information was further reviewed at the new NSWGCSA Board's first meeting. The new board has an impressive mix of new and experienced abilities, and all are focussed on improving the services the association provides. The meeting saw all board members appointed with a portfolio as follows:

- **President:** Stuart Gill (Terrey Hills G&CC) – Environment;
- **Vice-president:** Steve Harris (The Vintage GC) – Field days;
- **Treasurer:** Russell Fletcher (St. Michaels GC)
- **Committee:** Mal Harris (Northbridge GC – education), Shane George (Links Shell Cove – newsletter), Nathan Bradbury (Eastlake GC – newsletter), Justin Bradbury (Bonnie Doon GC – environment), Shane Herring (Camden GC – membership), Mark Schroder (Liverpool GC – field days), Leon Hennessy (Cromer GC – sponsorship) and Alison Jones (admin/environment)

With social media becoming one of the greatest networking tools, we have now set up our Twitter account and will be continually updating this and our Facebook page. Please follow and 'Like' us in order to keep abreast of what we are doing.

EDUCATION NEWS

McLeod Training has been appointed by State Training as the RTO to take over the Landscape Construction Certificate III from the now-liquidated

Active Training. The major difference is that State Training will be assisting McLeod Training with funding, therefore the 'completion payment' of \$2500 will not be charged by the trainer. There will be a transfer of enrolment fee of \$700 which will include up to five units, \$140 per unit thereafter. So if a participant has only five units left before completion they will only need to pay \$700, six units will cost \$840 and so on, however, if they have four units left it will still cost \$700.

TAFE NSW is offering a 12 month traineeship pathway for students undertaking AHC40812 Certificate IV in Sports Turf Management. 2016 fees under Smart and Skilled have been released and all fees for trainees undertaking an applicable course have been capped at \$1000. The normal fee for students who have completed Cert III is \$3210, the Cert IV being their second post-school qualification. The implications of this are:

- An apprentice who successfully completes their apprenticeship (TAFE and on the job component) and transitions into the Cert IV traineeship within three months would be liable to pay the traineeship fee rather than the second qualification fee;
- The completion of the apprenticeship may be after the full four year term or by the early completion pathway available to employers;
- There may not be any incentives for the employer (the incentive is the much lower course fee) although some payroll tax benefits may apply;
- The employer will have to go through the sign up process with an AAC and will be responsible for providing on the job Cert IV level training during the 12 month traineeship period;
- We enrol into Certificate IV each semester which allows some leeway regarding organisation of the traineeship to align with course commencement.

NSI Ryde is also going to offer a combined Certificate III in Parks and Gardens and Sports Turf Management qualification via part-time evening delivery in 2016. The course will be delivered on Tuesday and Wednesday nights (5.30pm-8.30pm) for two years.

THE YEAR AHEAD

So far we can confirm two events in the 2016 calendar. The Annual Ambrose Golf Day will be staged at The Vintage Golf Club from 9-10 May, which for the first time will include a small trade show and machinery demonstration. The Rube Walkerden Day and NSWGCSA AGM have been booked at Terrey Hills Golf & Country Club for 15 November.

STUART GILL
PRESIDENT, NSWGCSA

Adelaide has been very dry and hot with about half of the days in December over 35 degrees and only about 10mm of rain. At Mt Osmond we have only had 50mm for the last three months and given we are normally one course which receives higher rainfall in the region, most other courses that rely on rainfall to top up their irrigation reservoirs are struggling big time.

In early December we held a meeting at the Tanunda Pines Golf Club in the stunning Barossa Valley. A few got up early and played nine holes of golf, before host superintendent **Damien Mangelsdorf** welcomed a small group in the clubhouse with coffee and scones. Damien then took us on a course walk discussing various aspects of the course and his maintenance practices, with particular interest regarding his water supply from a nearby winery. After an informative course inspection we had a BBQ lunch at the maintenance shed. Many thanks for those who attended and to Tanunda Pines, Damien and his staff for a great day.

The big news in Adelaide recently was the announcement that the city will host the Australian Women's Open for the next three years, starting with the 2016 Open to be held at The Grange Golf Club from 18-21 February. Royal Adelaide will host the event in 2017 to coincide with its 100th anniversary celebrations and Kooyonga will host in 2018.

TURF AUSTRALIA

Most turf growers and curators are well aware of the many benefits of turf including its ability to control erosion and sediment. However, many people outside the turf sector are not aware of turf's inherent benefits.

One way to help those who are not aware of these benefits is to ensure new projects (including residential and industrial developments, road building and/or mining) refer to and/or stipulate the use of turf. For that to happen, an Australian Standard is needed in relation to the use of turf as an erosion and sediment control measure.

In December 2015, and after several turf levy funded projects, Turf Australia was informed that Australian Standards will now start the process for developing an Australian Standard for the use of turf as an erosion and sediment control measure. This is great news and will result in a larger market for turf and an increase in the widespread understanding of turf's many benefits.

TURF LEVY UPDATE

As a result of an extensive levy compliance project, Turf Australia has identified 54 potential businesses (35 in NSW, seven in Queensland, two in SA, seven in Victoria and three in WA) which are not registered with the Department of Agriculture – Levies to pay



Due to the Open, our scheduled February meeting at Thaxted Park Golf Club has been pushed out to March with The Grange superintendent and SAGCSA secretary/ treasurer **Richard James** inviting SAGCSA members to inspect the West course on the Tuesday of the Open. This will be a fantastic opportunity for members to see The Grange at its best in tournament mode and we thank Richard for allowing us to have a sneak peek at his preparations. More details regarding the Thaxted Park visit, where we will inspect some of the recent works carried out and hear about the nine-hole upgrade about to be undertaken by **Neil Crafter**, will be forthcoming.

On behalf of the SAGCSA we wish everyone a happy, safe and prosperous 2016.

BAZZ BRYANT
PRESIDENT, SAGCSA

The Grange's West Course will host the 2016 Australian Women's Open from 18-21 February



SAGCSA members visited Tanunda Pines in the Barossa Valley for their final meeting of 2015

the turf levy. Twenty five of those 54 have been identified as a high priority for Department of Agriculture – Levies to ensure they get on the books.

For almost 10 years now most growers have together been investing in essential research, development and marketing to help the whole industry grow and prosper. They have been doing this through the Turf Levy, which must be paid by all growers who produce and sell more than 20,000m² of turf in a year.

Turf Australia and the Commonwealth Government expect all businesses that should be paying the Turf Levy will do so – honestly, openly and fairly. Growers that purposely avoid paying the levy are exploiting the other growers that do. All turf growers should be aware that payment of the levy is compulsory and non-payment, or underpayment, is illegal and attracts penalties.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact **Keith Tolmie**, Department of Agriculture – Levies on (02) 8334 7138 or email keith.tolmie@agriculture.gov.au.

RICHARD STEPHENS
BUSINESS & INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER, TURF AUSTRALIA



The start of a new year always seems to hint at a promise of possibilities and what could/would be. Although I get older and the turn of the years seem to come around all the much faster, that feeling of renewal at the start of each year remains.

Looking back over the past year we often only see the bumps and lumps that made us stumble or struggle harder than we believed we should have. We then label the success or failure of an entire 12 months of daily accomplishments according to those isolated bumps.

This kind of selective editing is a funny thing, especially when you operate within a supportive work team. In this case each person will often highlight a differing bump over the year as being the more memorable, and believe it or not those memories are often of other teammates' successes more than our own perceived failures. Fortunately it's not the other way around otherwise we would end up blaming and criticising each other all the time while thinking that we are always right. Not much of a team that I would want to work in.

But when the team is running on the positive

rather than the negative and the prevailing attitude towards the approaching bumps is one of support and empowerment, there is that underlying daily promise we make with each other that it can be a truly fun place to come to work each day.

In many ways it is that positive competitiveness that helps inspire the team towards always improving. It still needs honesty as well as being open to new influences and ideas to keep the wheels moving in the same direction. But that is really not as painful as some would think. It just takes a little bit of trust and a lot of wishing for the best.

I like to think that these principles of building a team also apply to our efforts towards establishing a national body of the Sports Turf Association. It's now a new year and there is definitely a feeling of a promise of possibilities in the air that the Sports Turf Association, Australia team, which is all of us really, are going to have a truly positive and empowering year.

TONY GUY
PRESIDENT, STA AUSTRALIA



Luke Cooney (left) and mentor Scott Wallis during their visit to US Cellular Field, home to the Chicago White Sox MLB team

A YEAR TO REMEMBER FOR GRADUATE AWARD WINNER COONEY

The 2014 recipient of the Sports Turf Association's Graduate of the Year Award, Luke Cooney, has looked back on his past 12 months as a truly remarkable and unforgettable experience, having visited many hallowed sports grounds in the United States.

The award, sponsored by Toro Australia, recognises outstanding graduates and provides opportunities to enhance personal development, professionalism, career progression and heightened turf industry skills. As part of the award, Cooney attended the Toro Sports Fields & Grounds Forum in Australia and the US.

Having completed his apprenticeship at the University of Western Australia, Cooney started his career as a cricket curator at Perth's oldest independent boys' school, Hale School, before recently joining the arena management team at Etihad Stadium in Melbourne as a turf tradesman.

"From that surprise early morning email when I was in Brazil at the FIFA World Cup to now, it has been an incredible 12 months as the 2014 Turf Graduate of the Year," says Cooney. "The opportunities I have experienced have opened up so many doors and enabled me to meet the legends of the turf industry, those who curate the famous stadiums of Australia and the US. It has also solidified for me that I made the right career move in joining the turf industry."

The US trip included visits to some of the world's most renowned sports fields including Petco Park, Qualcomm Stadium, US Cellular Park, Soldier Field and Wrigley Field.

"I was fortunate enough to spend the day with a legend of the US turf industry, Steve Wightman, in San Diego," reflects Cooney. "I then spent two weeks with Amy Fouty, sports turf manager at Michigan State University (MSU) and her athletic field operations crew. MSU is a powerhouse in college football and basketball and boasts some of the most incredible athletic facilities. We also spent a night with Roger 'The Godfather' Bossard at US Cellular Park (home of the Chicago White Sox) and watched the Sox and New York Yankees take to the field."

The recipient of the Turf Graduate of the Year award is also given a mentor who assists in career development and advice on industry-related topics. As his mentor, Ballymore Stadium ground operations manager Scott Wallis accompanied Cooney on his trip, one he says has been the highlight of his 20 years in the turf industry.

"Travelling to America with Luke was not only a unique experience for him, but also an amazing career highlight for me," says Wallis. "During our trip, we bounced ideas off each other and discussed technical turf issues among other things. Our professional relationship and friendship will continue in the years to come."

The pair attended the Sports Fields & Grounds Forum at The Toro Company's headquarters in Minnesota. The forum is attended by representatives from universities, councils, municipalities, sports stadiums and colleges from around the US. The programme included roundtable sessions and product testing and demonstrations.

The Sports Turf Association (WA) toasted the end of 2015 on 16 December during an enjoyable afternoon at Ascot Raceway. This is one event that all members make an effort to attend and it is a great time to renew acquaintances with long-time colleagues. The venue was ideal, sitting right next to the verdant track as the horses thundered past. **Cameron Sutherland** and his team at Perth Racing deserve our continued praise as they have performed an amazing reformation of the courses under their care. As is often the case, this quality will be quickly accepted as the norm and memories of the past condition and standards are all too soon forgotten.

Last November the STA WA hosted the annual WA Turf Industries Awards night for graduating turf students of 2015. This year's celebration was held at the very welcoming Hartfield Country Club in Forrestfield. As part of the evening host superintendent **Nick Kinley** shared his Power Point presentation outlining all the work that he and the Hartfield team had employed over recent years towards implementing sustainable land management practices and improving the club's overall environmental stewardship of the course and its surrounding environment.

When Nick described the extensive plans established towards the protection of sensitive indigenous plant and animal habitats, it was no surprise that he was the worthy recipient of the 2015 AGCSA Claude Crockford Environmental Award.

Thanks to the ever-generous patronage of Baileys Fertilisers, we were once again able to enjoy having well-known WA media personality **Verity James** perform her duties as MC for the evening. Verity's confidence and professionalism immediately had the more than 80 guests and graduating turf students at their ease and ready to enjoy a relaxed and familiar night. After all the apprentices and night class Cert III and IV students were presented with their certificates, the selected award recipients were celebrated. This year's winners were:

- **Michael Giambio** (Meadow Springs CC): Best Apprentice Award (Bayer Shield), presented by Danny Hambleton (Globe Australia);
- **Matthew Kempton** (Collier Park GC): Lecturers Award, presented by Terry Sellick (Lawn Doctor Turf Farms); and
- **Jayden Pickering** (City of Kalgoorlie/Boulder): WA Sports Turf Graduate Award (CH Bailey & Sons Perpetual Shield, presented by Genevieve Bailey (Baileys Fertilisers).

Some weeks prior to the awards night, the STA WA executive committee met and during the discussion regarding organisational requirements for the event, I raised the idea that we should look at presenting a new award category of 'WA Turf Industry Person of the Year'. When I made



Above: 2015 WA Turf Industries Awards winners (from left) Jayden Pickering, Matthew Kempton and Michael Giambio



Left: STA WA and STA Australia president Tony Guy (right) was presented the inaugural WA Turf Industry Person of the Year at the 2015 WA Turf Industries Awards

the suggestion it was greeted with some hesitant agreement and sidelong glances about the room.

Little did I know at the time that the clever clogs about the room had already been discussing the same idea among themselves. And so it was that after the students had received their awards, **Darren Kirkwood**, chairperson of the Turf Growers Association of Western Australia, started reading out an abridged version of my own life story and CV to everyone in the room.

It was an incredible honour and quite humbling to be presented the inaugural WA Turf Industry Person of the Year. I was especially proud to receive this award amongst many of my respected industry colleagues and friends.

Writing this it seems easy to say that 2015 came and went with amazing swiftness, but a more sober reflection would see that it contained many very busy days, weeks and months, each very worthwhile as their individual challenges were met and fulfilled. Throughout it all I am ever appreciative of the superlative support from the whole STA WA executive committee and membership as a whole.

Most of all, I thank **Eva Ricci** (WA Turf IDO) for her steadfast hard work and dedication towards building a resilient and sustainable green environment for the community and WA turfgrass industry. With these champions by my side I look forward to no doubt another 12 busy and challenging months.

TONY GUY
PRESIDENT, STA WA

ON THE MOVE

SIMON BLAGG: From assistant superintendent Roseville Golf Club, NSW to assistant superintendent The Lakes Golf Club, NSW.

LUKE CRAWFORD: Appointed superintendent Horizons Golf Resort, NSW.

NEIL GRAHAM: From superintendent Melville Glades Golf Club, WA to superintendent Mandurah Golf Club, WA.

BRENDAN HANSARD: From superintendent Twin Creeks Country Club, NSW to superintendent Kew Country Club, NSW.



RODGER HARKIN: From Thirteenth Beach, Vic to superintendent Clifton Springs Golf Club, Vic.

MARK HARKNESS: From 3IC Victoria Golf Club, VIC to assistant superintendent Peninsula Kingswood Golf Club, Vic.



ASH HOBSON: From assistant superintendent Cape Wickham, Tas to assistant superintendent Thirteenth Beach, Vic.

STEPHEN MALLYON: From assistant superintendent The Lakes Golf Club, NSW to foreman Royal Sydney Golf Club, NSW.

DANIEL STACK: From assistant superintendent Links Hope Island, Qld to assistant superintendent Brookwater Golf & Country Club, Qld

The Christmas/ New Year period has seen some warm weather coupled with some nice summer storms to keep most courses looking flush through the holiday period. Here at Headland Golf Club we have seen the annual influx of tradie Christmas parties come and go without too much carnage to the course, excepting the annual magic trick of the disappearing flag and pole from the 18th green!

Field day activity during January and February has been put on hold as we move into the New Year and autumn renovations. One proposed event for early 2016 will be a visit to the new base for the collection of warm-season turf plots combined with a machinery 'come and try' day. Entry fees for the day will be donated to help support the maintenance of this one-of-a-kind resource, available to all those in our industry.

The Queensland Golf Industry Awards will be held on 10 March at Jupiters Casino and nominations are now open for the four categories – Superintendent's Achievement Award, Turf

STA VIC



STA Victoria is committed to continuing its support of educational programmes for the sports turf industry. Applications for the STA Victoria Sports Turf Graduate of the Year are currently being processed with the final interviews to be conducted on 22 February. This award is designed to recognise students who have excelled in their studies whilst also identifying potential leaders in the sports turf industry.

The winner of this award will go on to represent the association in the final of the STA National Sports Turf Graduate of the Year Award, presented in partnership with Toro Australia, to be announced at the 32nd Australian Turfgrass Conference.

STA Victoria is also a strong supporter of sports turf training throughout the state and currently sponsors a number of college awards such as 'Outstanding 1st Year Apprentice' for individual TAFEs. As part of a recent review, we would like to extend this support to all colleges and would be happy to discuss potential sponsorship of one of their award categories from their turf training programmes.

In other news, STA Vic rolled out its new website recently, so please get on and have a look at it as we are always trying to improve the services that we provide. We are also asking all members to please send through an update of member details and contact details to [Jan Fenton vic@sportsturf.asn.au](mailto:Jan.Fenton@sportsturf.asn.au)

Key events for 2016 include the March Seminar (date and venue TBC), the STA Vic Sportsfield & Wicket Seminar at AAMI Stadium (20 July) and the hands-on Cricket Curator Seminar to be held in

Apprentice of the Year Award, Environmental Award and Assistant Superintendent's Recognition Award. Please consider nominating for these awards; application forms have been emailed to all members with follow up emails to continue.

With the population growth of the Sunshine Coast expanding at an exponential rate, more and more development (and more tradies) is changing the face of the area with a recent announcement of the redevelopment of Peregrine Springs Golf Course to accommodate a growing population.

Finally, firmly entrenched North Lakes Golf Club superintendent **Ben Marshall** has been prised away to join Toro in a state sales role, replacing **Ben Cavanagh** who continues to move onwards and upwards. I hope Ben Marshall's phone works better than Ben Cav's! I hope your upcoming renovations run smoothly and I look forward to seeing you at our next field day.

BEN TILLEY
PRESIDENT, GCSAQ

early September (date and venue TBC). On behalf of the STA Vic Board we would like to wish everyone a healthy, happy and prosperous 2016.

GARRY WOOLARD
COMMITTEE, STA VIC

STA QLD



Happy New Year to all! Hopefully a great Christmas and some downtime was enjoyed by all of our members. As far as our association goes this would be the quietest time of year, but as far as work goes this would be our busiest time, whether it's due to renovations, spray programmes, storm clean-ups or just keeping on top of growth. So there are generally no field days scheduled for summer. However, event planning for 2016 is well underway.

Our first event will be our Education Day in March followed by our AGM in May. This year we are also looking at possibly joining forces with the GCSAQ on a bus trip to the Bonville Turf Conference in May. A new look STAQ website is also in the pipeline so keep an eye out for that too. We look forward to seeing you at one, or all, of our events in 2016.

MARTYN HEDLEY
VICE-PRESIDENT, STA QLD

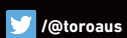
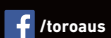
A Toro Multi Pro 1750 sprayer is shown from a rear three-quarter view, operating on a lush green golf course. The operator, wearing a white protective suit, is seated on the machine. The sprayer has a large white tank and a long, black boom with multiple nozzles that are spraying a fine mist onto the grass. The background features a line of trees and a clear sky with soft, golden light, suggesting early morning or late afternoon.

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- Richmond
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- Tuggerah Lakes
- Virginia
- Wyong

New Zealand

- Akarana
- Auckland
- Cape Kidnappers
- Carrington
- Clarke's Beach
- Formosa
- Grange
- Hamilton
- Howick
- Huapai
- Jacks Point
- Kaitaia
- Karori
- Kauri Cliffs
- La Pointe
- Mangawhai
- Matarangi
- Muriwai
- Napier
- New Plymouth
- Omaha Beach
- Omokoroa
- Onewai
- Pauanua Lakes
- Russley
- Sherwook
- Taupo
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