

AUSTRALIAN

ISSN 1442-2697 www.agcsa.com.au

Turfgrass



VOLUME 24.4 JUL-AUG 2022

MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

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National Turf Industry Awards



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Published by the Australian Sports
Turf Managers Association (ASTMA)

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COVER STORY INSIDE THE 150TH

8

Cameron Smith’s stunning victory at the 150th Open Championship at St Andrews in mid-July was one for the ages. There to witness a slice of Australian sporting history were four superintendents from Down Under – two Aussies and two Kiwis – who had the unique privilege of joining the St Andrews Links crew to prepare the Old Course, golf’s most sacred and loved turf.

Cover: Open Championship winner Cameron Smith holds aloft the Claret Jug after his dramatic one shot win at St Andrews in July.
Photo: The R&A.



PHOTO: STU GIBSON/BRAND TASMANIA



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The long wet

“This is a whole lot worse than COVID.” That was the opening line by Golf Management Australia chief executive Paul Vardy in an update sent to association members in late August. He was quoting the sentiment of many golf club managers along Australia’s eastern seaboard about the horror run of wet weather in 2022 and the massive disruption it was having to business.

I’m sure if you were to ask any superintendent or sports turf manager in New South Wales and Queensland what’s worse – rain or COVID – the majority would be echoing those sentiments.

The extent of the impact was graphically highlighted in the recent release of GolfLink competition round figures for July 2022. With courses and facilities continually closed and unplayable for lengthy periods after further heavy rain and flooding in July, the figures for NSW and Queensland were, by Vardy’s own admission, “brutal”. Rounds were down nationally in July by 12.4 per cent (on 2019 benchmark levels), but in the biggest market, NSW (including the ACT), rounds were down 40.2 per cent. In metropolitan NSW, rounds were down by a staggering 63.5 per cent on July 2019 levels and less than a third of the last two years, while in regional NSW rounds were down 24.1 per cent.

One superintendent who knows all too well how frustrating the situation has been this year is ASTMA member Mark Spraggs. The ex-pat Kiwi and current NSWGCSA Board member oversees Forster Tuncurry Golf Club’s Tuncurry course, a coastal 18-hole layout just north of the township. In a normal year the mid-North Coast course would average 1.2 metres of rain, but by the end of July it had already surpassed 2.1m. After deluges earlier in the year, further rain in July (more than 12 inches over a 24-hour period) saw the course flooded and closed for five weeks, with water simply not being able to get off the course due to a shallow water table. Aside from the club’s irrigation lakes, the Tuncurry course normally has no water hazards at all, but this year large sections of the course have remained under water for weeks and months at a time. Anecdotally, locals say the water table hasn’t been this high in the township since the 1970s!

“What a winter it has been,” Spraggs told the ASTMA’s e-newsletter ‘The Cut’ in late August. “The course was closed for five weeks from the July floods in order to clean up. We had a 9-hole composite course open for three weeks and last week were able to open up 18 composite holes, although four were playing considerably shorter. They have all lost at least 200m in length as the water on these holes still sits above the playing surface some eight weeks on.

“The issue we have is the water table. I managed to get some good size pumps and hoses from Mid Coast Water and we pumped a couple of the lakes dry, only to return the next morning to find them back where we started before pumping! The water is gradually going down slowly as we are pumping daily into vegetation areas and higher sitting fairways. Income is still affected as some golfers refuse to play until they can send their scorecards in for handicapping. The course we have set up is too short and has not been graded to allow for that.”

Similar stories are prevalent right up and down the coast and if the recent Bureau of Meteorology forecast for spring 2022 is anything to go by, the situation doesn’t look like improving any time soon. The Bureau’s three-month climate and water outlook for the September to November period is for above average rainfall for the eastern two-thirds of Australia. Combined with existing wet soils, high river levels and near capacity water storage levels (South East NSW is currently at 99 per cent) it means there is an elevated flood risk for eastern Australia. And with a 70 per cent chance of La Niña reforming this spring, which increases the chances of above-average rainfall for northern and eastern Australia, it’s not the sort of outlook most superintendents and turf managers will be looking forward to, especially after a challenging 12 months.

Finally, it was great to catch up with everyone for the first time since Brisbane 2019 at this year’s conference in Melbourne. In this edition we look back on some of the highlights of the week, among them the launch of the ASTMA’s Women in Turf Strategy. We also profile the winners from this year’s National Turf Industry Awards and highlight the incredible work they have accomplished. With the cricket season not far off – including a World Cup being played on our shores – and the tournament golf scene almost back to normal, the months ahead are set to be one where our sports turf facilities and crews will once again be in the spotlight. Let’s just hope the weather plays its part. Enjoy the read...



Brett Robinson

Brett Robinson, Editor



Melbourne conference delivers, strengthens GMA relationship

In late June, the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre played host to the largest turf management event in the Southern Hemisphere – the 2022 Australian Sports Turf Management Conference and Trade Exhibition. Across four days, a record of over 2000 people come through the doors and took part in the various education streams, walked the trade exhibition and caught up with colleagues from across the country and overseas that they had not seen in several years due to COVID restrictions.

In what one delegate noted as “*The best event I’ve been to in eight years of attending*”, the conference and trade exhibition provides the industry an opportunity to continue personal and professional development. In a first for the ASTMA, this year’s event was combined with Golf Management Australia (GMA) to bring course management and operational teams together to share learnings and to assist in strengthening relationships.

While there were some bumps along the road in terms of aligning the two events, the organisation and outcomes of the conference and exhibition were very well received. A note of thanks must go to the team at the GMA and undeniably the ASTMA team led by the diligent work of events and education manager **Simone Staples**. To quote another attendee, “*The organising bodies should all be congratulated on an outstanding conference. Given the crazy few years we have all been through, you guys nailed it.*”

My thanks must also go to the huge number of delegates, exhibitors and visitors that made their way to the event, along with thanks to our trade partners and exhibitors who continue to support the conference and education opportunities across the industry.

While those who attended have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback on the event, speakers, education sessions and associated activities, there were a few areas that the association has noted where improvement for future events can be made. Among these are areas such as ensuring consistency of themes and aligning sessions, working through timings to maximise opportunities to attend sessions and continuing to offer substance and variety in session topics, content and speakers.

This year’s conference also included the 2022 National Turf Industry Awards, highlighting some incredible achievements in the profession across the last 12 months and the emerging talent coming through the ranks. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate all of the nominees and winners this year and acknowledge once again their continued dedication and hard work.

The National Turf Industry Awards continue to gain prominence with a continuous increase in both the number and quality of



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nominations received and the support from state associations in recognising and awarding their winners. More details and highlights of the 2022 award winners is included in this edition from page 22.

WOMEN IN TURF STRATEGY

Although released in the weeks leading up to the conference, during the Melbourne event the ASTMA officially launched its Women in Turf Strategy. Designed to assist in attracting more females into the sports turf management industry and further support those already in the profession, the strategy outlines a series of initiatives and programs that the ASTMA will be delivering over the years ahead.

With a current participation rate of 1.4 per cent of the workforce, there is more that the industry needs to do to encourage increased female participation and attract new talent. Coupled with a series of other support programs to be outlined later in the year to address workforce and labour challenges, it is hoped that the Women in Turf Strategy will develop the foundations for increased awareness of and participation in the profession and strengthen the emerging talent taking up sports turf management apprenticeships. You can read more about the Women in Turf Strategy on page 14 of this edition.

LABOUR CHALLENGES

In late May and early June the association undertook an industry survey to understand the challenges and impacts of the current labour and resourcing environment. We thank all those who provided their feedback, with the findings assisting in shaping the advocacy discussions underway with various levels of government to bring additional support to the industry. The survey outcomes are covered in more detail on pages 18-20 of this edition.

FORWARD FOCUS

Looking ahead to the priorities and approach for the ASTMA moving toward 2023, our focus remains on the priority areas of education, attracting and retaining talent into the industry and recognition. A pressing concern is the

need to continue support for the industry and states in relation to education, with the availability of training and qualifications impacting the industry. This impact is being felt sharply in some areas and is a concern that warrants immediate attention, particularly in regions that do not currently have access to any specialised sports turf management education.

As announced to members at the ASTMA Annual General Meeting held in Melbourne during the conference, the association is in the process of supporting these areas, particularly South Australia, through finalising the requirements to apply to deliver sports turf management training and for apprenticeships to remain available.

As the association has previously stated, we need to do more at both ends of the employment chain to address these growing challenges. As well as attracting new workers into the industry and supporting turf managers through the initial years of their apprenticeship, we need to do more in the middle. We need to actively work through retaining qualified staff and keeping the skills in the industry and ensure we continue to drive and promote recognition and awareness of the industry.

More information will be announced to members and the industry on the ASTMA’s approach to support and progress education and employment in the months ahead as the delivery of our strategy progresses.

NEW PRESIDENT

Finally, congratulations to **Ben Tilley** (CSTM), superintendent at Headland Golf Club in Queensland, who at the AGM was elected as the association’s new president. Ben replaces **Peter Lonergan** who has stepped back onto the general committee after a second stint as president over the past two years.

Ben joined the ASTMA Board in 2020 and has a storied career that spans some four decades. He has been superintendent at Headland since 2007 and prior to that was an assistant at Twin Waters Golf Club and superintendent at Beerwah Golf Club. Ben is a multiple ASTMA award winner and also played a major role on the GCSAQ committee over an impressive 16-year period, holding most positions including two years as president.

Speaking after his election as ASTMA president, Ben noted: “I’m really excited to be president of the ASTMA and hopefully continue with the great work that Peter Lonergan and all the ASTMA Board and staff have done before me. We have a great team and I want to pay back to a great association that has been very good to me both personally and professionally. We have a lot of great initiatives to continue to develop and I’m looking forward to being a part of that.”

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Best on ground

ATM showcases some of the best social media images from around the industry in recent months.



MAT GOGGIN

"The 18th has been seeded. I can't wait to see the fescue spread out over the site. The ribbons of green will be a spectacular visual, not to mention a firm and fast playing surface."
(With irrigation installation progressing well, seeding has commenced at the highly-anticipated 7mile course development near Hobart. Photo by Lukas Michel.)



ALLIANZ STADIUM

"First run on the @AllianzStadium turf. Thanks to the World Champs @Aussie7s for coming out to the Evergreen Turf farm to put our new surface to the test!" *(Australian women's 7s rugby squad members Sariah Paki, Madison Higgins-Ashby and Bienne Terita test out the new Allianz Stadium turf at Evergreen Turf's production farm prior to harvesting.)*



JEFF POWELL

"Wee bit frosty in Ballarat this morning!"

(Ballarat in Victoria is no stranger to winter frosts and they make for some rather stunning images, as snapped by Ballarat Golf Club superintendent Jeff Powell and his drone.)



GEORGE CROWE

"First cut at the new Sydney Football Stadium. Three weeks before opening weekend."

(After nearly four years of redevelopment, the new-look Allianz Stadium gets its first cut ahead of its grand re-opening on 2 September.)



GERRI O'CALLAGHAN

"Sunrise over Sandy #nofilterneeded." (Looking across the Himalayas putting green at Sandringham Golf Links in Melbourne at a beautiful winter's sunrise captured by superintendent Gerri O'Callaghan.)



Cameron Smith became just the fifth Australian and first since Greg Norman in 1993 to win the Open Championship this past July

Inside the 150th

Cameron Smith's victory at the 150th Open Championship at St Andrews in July was one for the ages. There to witness a slice of Australian sporting history were four superintendents from Down Under – two Aussies and two Kiwis – who were part of the St Andrews Links crew preparing golf's most sacred turf.

PHOTO: THE R&A

It will be one of those moments that Luke Partridge and John Mann will look back on in the twilight years of their turf management careers and still pinch themselves.

Having just secured a stunning Open Championship victory on the Old Course at St Andrews, Aussie professional golfer Cameron Smith made his way down the stone stairs in front of the iconic clubhouse to collect the coveted Claret Jug. As he stepped onto the sprawling expanse of hallowed links turf between the 1st tee and 18th green, the St Andrews Links greenkeeping team, who had prepared the stage for his triumph, formed a guard of honour. Among those applauding the laid back Queenslander, who had just become

the fifth Australian in history to win the Open and the third to do so on the Old Course (joining the likes of Peter Thomson and Kel Nagle), were fellow countrymen Partridge and Mann.

For the previous two weeks the Manly and Metropolitan golf club superintendents had the unique privilege of being part of the 43-strong greenkeeping team preparing golf's most sacred turf for the tournament's 150th anniversary. They were joined by two New Zealanders – long-time friends Simon Forshaw, superintendent of Jack's Point in Queenstown, and former Royal Sydney superintendent-turned-consultant Steve Marsden – as part of a select group of just seven international volunteers to join Old Course manager Gordon

McKie's team. Other volunteers came from Finland, France and the USA.

The Antipodean contingent arrived in St Andrews at the start of lead-in week and over the next 14 days not only got a ringside seat to Smith's historic victory, but a greenkeeping lesson that few will ever experience. Having familiarised themselves with the course courtesy of McKie and St Andrews director of greenkeeping Sandy Reid, the quartet were given their duties and sent on their way. As well as being involved in a range of general course maintenance activities (mowing, bunker prep, hand-watering, divotting and hand-weeding) throughout their two weeks on site, they were also assigned specific tournament roles. Partridge and Marsden were on tees and



was a huge focus across all areas of this year's tournament, whether it was ferrying officials and players around using a fleet of electric cars, having a smaller than usual greenkeeping contingent or the manner in which the course was prepared each day. For McKie and his team, it was a chance to showcase how golf can improve its green credentials and be a force for good in the face of climate change and other environmental issues.

For the first time in the tournament's history, triplex mowers were used to mow greens instead of traditional walk-behinds. Eight fully electric Toro eTriflex 3370 Greensmaster mowers cut the 2.6 hectares of greens at 3.5mm. Normally the greens on the Old Course would be double cut by a greenkeeping team as large as 24 using petrol-powered walk-behinds. Starting at 4.30am, that number of staff was required in order to get the greens ready ahead of the first tee time at 6.30am. In an article by the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) in the lead-up to the tournament, McKie said the Open gave them the perfect platform to show the golf industry that things could be done differently.

"People watching on television would see a great golf course that looks fantastic, but how sustainable is that? We asked how we could prepare the greens in a more sustainable way and the only option was to use triplex mowers. We can cut those 24 greenkeepers down to eight and that's an important message because we're all under pressure in terms of staffing numbers. I've said to fellow greenkeepers, if we're using ride-ons for an Open Championship, then it's good enough for club championships too.

"(Going electric) has always been a big focus for us and as soon as we could we wanted to go that way with as many vehicles

green surrounds mowing, Mann was part of the fairway team, while Forshaw assisted the course set-up team.

"It was an amazing experience and one I will never forget," reflects Mann, who only started as superintendent at Metropolitan Golf Club in May after shifting across from Commonwealth Golf Club. "It is a privilege to spend any time on the Old Course, but to help prepare it for the 150th Open Championship took things to a whole different level."

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

While Smith's back nine 30 on Sunday was the lowest score over a closing nine holes by a winner in Open history, the 150th staging also boasted a number of other firsts. Sustainability



150th Open Championship winner Cameron Smith poses with the St Andrews Links tournament crew. Australian superintendent volunteers Luke Partridge and John Mann are immediately to the right of Smith, with New Zealanders Steve Marsden top row right (with hat) and Simon Forshaw second row far right (also with hat)

PHOTO: THE R&A



PHOTO: SIMON FORSHAW

For the first time in the tournament's history, fully electric triplex mowers were used to cut greens

as possible. I never thought we would get to this stage, but if a triplex produces the same conditions and the same surface that a pedestrian mower would with fewer staff and no fuel emissions, it's a great message."

For this year's Open, each green received an initial single cut in the morning. Once that was completed, staff waited for The R&A agronomy team, led by Richard Windows (head of sustainable agronomy) and Adam Newton (Championship agronomy manager), to measure green speed before confirming with Grant Moir (director of rules and responsible for course set-up) whether the green received a second cut. Averaging across the tournament, greens 1, 2/16, 3/15, 4/14, 9 and 17 were double cut, while greens 5/13, 6/12, 7/11, 8/10 and 18 were single cut.

"The greens were cut lower than previously seen at other links courses in the UK where they can sometimes be 4mm-plus," says

Mann. "This was at the request of The R&A who wanted to achieve tournament speeds of 10-11 feet solely by mowing without the need for rollers. They believed this gave them the most control over speeds and reduced fluctuations from green to green. I think this was born out of the 2015 Open on the Old Course when play was suspended Saturday because balls were blowing around on greens. I was told that a roller has not been used in Open Championship preparations since 2015! Each mow gave an increase of six inches."

Greens were hand-watered during the Championship week when required, with no overhead irrigation applied. Moisture readings were taken each morning and evening by R&A staff using a Pogo device, with greens moisture ranging between just 5 and 10 per cent. Greens firmness readings were also taken morning and evening using a Clegg Hammer. Early in the week, firmness readings

were in the order of 130 gravities, but come the start of the tournament readings were over 150 gravities. And it wasn't just the greens that were firm – fairway measurements were also taken and in some cases were in excess of 160 gravities.

Greens were cut most afternoons, based on green speed and clipping yield, while on most holes the cups were cut the evening before and painted the morning of play after greens mowing was completed. No plant growth regulator was used, with the double green of 7/11 at the most risk of having golf balls move under windy conditions. As a result, this green had a slightly higher level of fertility compared to the others in case conditions became windy. With more active growth, green speed could be easily reduced if required based on its higher growth rate.

While electric triplex mowers were used on the greens, the sustainability focus also translated across to the other units used for tees, surrounds and fairways. A fleet of six Toro 5010-H Reelmaster Crosstrax hybrid units kept the fairways in trim at 8.5mm, while six Toro eTriflex 3360 Greensmasters were used each morning to cut tees and green surrounds at 7mm.

A FEW CHALLENGES

The beauty of links golf is that it is heavily dictated by the elements and in the weeks leading up to the tournament the crew had a few challenges. Windy conditions the week before the Championship caused significant movement of the course's fine bunker sand which is mined from the adjacent beach.

One of the very first jobs the Open volunteers were given was to go out and re-level all the bunkers. Sand had blown into piles against the revetted bunker faces (a common occurrence there) and once re-levelled the bunkers were then hand-



PHOTO: LUKE PARTRIDGE

To negate the impact of wind, The R&A agronomy team used a tunnel device when taking Stimp meter readings



PHOTO: LUKE PARTRIDGE

Steve Marsden (left) and Luke Partridge (right) were part of the six-person green surrounds and tees mowing crew



PHOTO: STEVE MARSDEN

As part of the course set up crew, Jack's Point superintendent Simon Forshaw was able to get a full appreciation of the Old Course's unique landscape

watered morning and evening to keep the sand in place. Mann notes that on one particular day all 110 bunkers were hand-watered on three separate occasions!

Thankfully the wind died down for the tournament and bunker maintenance returned to normal. A crew of eight were assigned to present the Old Course's famous hazards, among them the 10-foot deep Hell bunker, Shell bunker, the Coffins, the Seven Sisters, the Principal's Nose and the Road Hole bunker.

Other challenges the crew faced included some flare ups of fairy ring on a few of the greens, as well as managing public foot traffic on the course. One of the unique aspects of the Old Course is that it is usually closed for play on Sundays (except during tournaments). When it is closed, the course is open to the public as a park where they can enjoy a walk or have picnics. With the course closed for two weeks in the lead-up to the Open the local population took full advantage, with one woman causing a brief moment of concern after pushing a stroller across the Road Hole (17th) green!

Much of Europe was also experiencing heatwave conditions in and around the time



PHOTO: SIMON FORSHAW

A crew of eight tended to the Old Course's 110 bunkers

of the Open and the appearance of the Old Course turf certainly showed that. Record temperatures were recorded at St Andrews the Sunday prior to the Open teeing off, with the prevailing warm and dry conditions browning the fescue fairways and surrounds off nicely. For the tournament itself, temperatures were much milder and meant McKie and Reid had full control over how the course played and presented.

One noticeable difference this year were the roughs. A dedicated rough management plan implemented over the past three years, which saw large areas of rough roped off to protect them, ensured a tougher test for the world's best golfers. The 17th hole for instance had a much tighter feel as the rough was a lot thicker, with the ropes to protect these areas staying in place right up until the week before the tournament.

"It was proper links golf," reflects Mann on how the course played for the Open. "It certainly presented dry, firm and fast with very little difference between the firmness of the greens and fairways. The biggest challenge for me was visibility when mowing fairways. With six of us cutting fairways, I don't think I would have filled my catchers collectively for the whole two weeks! It was a similar situation for Luke and Steve – they were lucky to get a quarter of a catcher of clippings after cutting 18 tees and green surrounds."

SPECIAL MOMENTS

While it was the first Open experience for Partridge, for Marsden, Mann and Forshaw it was by no means their first rodeo. Marsden and Mann had been spectators at previous Opens but this was their first time working as part of the tournament crew. As Marsden

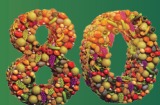
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PHOTO: LUKE PARTRIDGE

No pressure... Partridge hand-waters the famous 18th green. Greens moisture levels were between 5-10 per cent

notes, it was the “most meaningful” of all his Open visits and he had the added privilege of staying with former St Andrews director of greenkeeping Gordon Moir and his wife Pauline for the duration of the tournament.

To coincide with the tournament, Moir, the current president of BIGGA, also released a book – ‘*St Andrews – The Greenkeeper’s Tale*’. Covering some 407-pages, Moir’s extensive memoir looks back on his time in charge of the famed links with particular focus on the three Open Championships he hosted and the many memorable moments behind the scenes.

For Forshaw, being part of the crew at July’s Open continued his tradition of working at Opens which began back in 2006 at Royal Liverpool. In the years since he has also worked at Carnoustie (2007) and Royal Lytham and St Annes (2012) as part of the BIGGA volunteer contingent and was a spectator when the Old Course hosted the Open in 2015. He has also been a regular visitor to St Andrews over the years and played the course on a number of occasions.

Forshaw’s role with the course set-up team this year gave him a greater chance to study more closely the many unique elements which make up the Old Course. Whether it was soaking in the history and tournament atmosphere or marvelling at the green shapes and ground contouring in the early morning or late afternoon sun, Forshaw came away with a



PHOTO: SIMON FORSHAW

The wonderful contouring of the Old Course surrounds

new-found appreciation of its iconic status.

“If the Old Course isn’t golfing heaven, then I don’t know what is,” says Forshaw. “It had always been a lifetime dream for me to work at St Andrews and although waiting for the green light with all the COVID delays was testing, it was more than worth the wait. It is an unbelievable feeling standing there on the 18th green with The R&A building behind you, looking down the 1st and 18th holes towards Swilcan Bridge with the famous Road Hole and Jigger Inn in the background.

“The course is just so unique. With seven double greens and green sizes that are over 2400m², you really get a feeling of how big everything is yet how well all the complexes tie in together. The green shapes and contouring are incredible, some of the best I have ever seen, and it’s easy to see why the Old Course has been such an inspiration for so many great architects over the last 150 years.

“The other big highlight for me was getting to work under Sandy and Gordon with all their knowledge and experience from previous Opens. It was Gordon’s third Open Championship at the Old Course, while Sandy had many years’ experience hosting Opens at Carnoustie before moving across a few years ago. Their knowledge and appreciation of history really shone through too. On our course tour they pointed out so many interesting things, like Old Tom Morris’s house which overlooked the 18th green and the story of how the 18th green was built on what used to be part of the town’s graveyard and that bones were found in the ‘Valley of Sin’ when Old Tom built it!”

ICING ON THE CAKE

For Partridge, the trip to St Andrews could not have come at a better time. Like many Sydney and NSW superintendents, the past year has been a grind as they close in on what will

likely be their wettest year on record. Manly Golf Club has suffered through multiple flood events and prolonged wet periods which have resulted in the course being closed for 80 days in eight months. A trip to the home of golf to volunteer for the Open was not only a great learning experience but also something of a welcome respite. He also timed the trip very well for another reason.

“It was a massive honour and privilege to have been able to play a small role in preparing the Old Course for the 150th Open,” sums up Partridge, who just days after arriving back in Australia became a father for the first time. “It was my first time at St Andrews and I couldn’t have been more impressed. It was a surreal experience to head out and prepare the oldest and most prestigious surfaces in golf each day. The maintenance crew, led by Gordon and Sandy, could not have been more welcoming to myself and the other volunteers.

“For Cameron Smith to come home as the eventual winner was the icing on the cake. We were fortunate enough to be inside the ropes on the 18th green when he sunk his birdie putt to win and stood in his guard of honour on his way to collecting the Claret Jug. It was a personal and professional bucket list trip and my last hurrah before my wife Kim and I welcomed our first daughter (Evie Rae) into the world on 5 August. Cutting it fine I know!”

Editor’s Note: ATM thanks all four superintendents who provided their recollections of their Open experience for this article and to BIGGA for allowing publication of excerpts from the 3 July 2022 article titled ‘*The Open is an opportunity to sell greenkeeping to the world*’. Partridge and Mann wish to thank Toro Australia and their respective clubs (Manly and Metropolitan). Forshaw wishes to thank Toro USA and their NZ agency Parkland Products. All four acknowledge the St Andrews Links Trust, Gordon McKie and Sandy Reid for the opportunity afforded them. 🍷



PHOTO: STEVE MARSDEN

Mann, Partridge and Forshaw enjoy a cleansing ale at the famous Jigger Inn adjacent to the Road Hole (17)

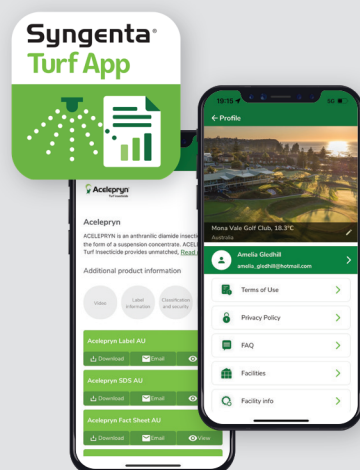
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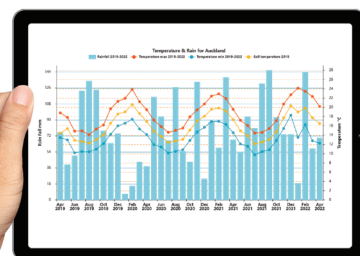
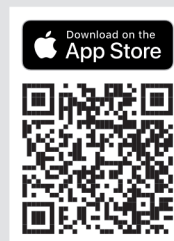
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An industry-first trade recognition and pathways initiative, the ASTMA's Women in Turf Strategy has been developed in response to the disproportionately low number of females within the Australian sports turf management industry

Breaking the grass ceiling

ATM outlines the ASTMA's Women in Turf Strategy initiative that was officially launched at the recent Melbourne conference.

At the 2022 Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Melbourne, the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA) officially released its Women in Turf Strategy which is designed to address current challenges in workforce participation and staff retention across the industry.

This industry-first trade recognition and pathways initiative has been developed in response to the disproportionately low number of females within the sports turf management industry. As highlighted by the 2022 Sports Turf Management Labour Resourcing Survey, females continue to be underrepresented, making up only 1.4 per cent of qualified trade workers.

The Women in Turf Strategy and associated initiatives will be informed by research, consultation and be data-driven to support initiatives that increase the appeal of sports turf management to women, improve career pathways in workplaces and maximise vocational outcomes and increase the representation of women in a non-traditional trade. It is designed to strengthen relationships between industry, employers, schools and women's networks to ensure the best outcomes are delivered for women currently in, or seeking a career in, turf management.

"Looking back on it, the appeal for change started with a series of conversations I've had across the past 18 to 24 months with various influential and leading females in the industry who are supportive and, in a very real sense, the driving force behind why we developed this strategy," states ASTMA chief executive Mark Unwin.

"It should be noted that it is not only females who have been instrumental in the development of this concept, as I've had a number of male members over the same time discuss with me the concept and the need for the industry to become more diverse.

"The consistent theme in all of these discussions was simple – the need for the industry to become more open and find ways to encourage and attract more females into the trade and for the association to develop a strategy to deliver it."

ADDRESSING DIVERSITY IN SPORTS TURF MANAGEMENT

Resultingly, the development of the ASTMA's Women in Turf Strategy was an outcome of these discussions in addition to a tremendous amount of work over the past 12-18 months and the collaboration of many people across the sports turf management industry.

The Women in Turf Strategy establishes the framework for the ASTMA to develop a long-term approach to support female sports turf managers, the establishment of a pathways initiative to increase the number of females in the industry and a program of sustainable support and skills development to drive diversity and inclusion.

The Women in Turf Strategy focuses on two target areas:

- **Attract:** Initiatives that will attract more females into the industry through pioneering new and innovative ways to increase participation of women in sports turf management; and
- **Retain:** A strategy to retain apprentices and qualified female turf managers through experience and opportunity, expanded vocational training and support initiatives.

At just 1.4 per cent of the current workforce, the diversity rate is relative to, however below, that of comparative industries worldwide, where in Canada, Europe, the United States and New Zealand women represent between 4-7 per cent of the industry workforce.

Limited awareness of the trade as a viable career option has led to shortages in skilled and trade qualified female turf managers, resulting from a disproportionately low number of females undertaking an apprenticeship in sports turf management. Compounding this is the fact that women face a range of barriers inhibiting their choice to participate in trades.

"The development of the Women in Turf Strategy brings together both the values and the interests of the association," continues Unwin. "In isolation, the case for gender equality does not need to be made – it is patently obvious. However, regrettably, it is not universally observed and the sports turf management industry still has much to learn and a long way to go.

"We have observed many industries embrace diversity and equality as a matter of course, however, it is likely no surprise to anyone that the turf management industry lags behind comparable trade occupations. Currently, females make up just 1.4 per cent of qualified sports turf managers – and it's time that this discrepancy be addressed."

TAKING ACTION TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

Through the development of the Women in Turf Strategy, the ASTMA is committed to ensuring women have full access to opportunity and choice, are valued for their diversity, skill and abilities and recognised for their contributions.

"We want our industry to be considered among the leaders in the support for females in trade occupations, and one that will promote the value of gender equality and the importance of developing vocational pathways for women and supporting them as they progress in their careers," notes Unwin.

Female participation in the trade workforce is crucial, as females play a vital role in addressing skills shortages in key industry areas and occupations. Through the Women in Turf Strategy, the ASTMA will work with key industry stakeholders, trade partners, employers and advocacy groups to enhance trade qualification uptake and training opportunities for women.

The strategy will focus on three pillars of action to redress the gender imbalance in sports turf management. These are:

- Establishing the strategy as an advocacy platform to ensure trade pathways for women are informed, accessible and supported from beginning to end;
- Implementing strategies to increase awareness of gender diversity in workplaces to assist facilities and managers to support female employees;
- Supporting existing female turf managers in career development and improve opportunities to support women to undertake a career in turf management.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

At the industry launch of the Women in Turf Strategy in Melbourne, Unwin espoused the



The Women in Turf Strategy focuses on two target areas – attracting more females into the industry and retaining them through expanded training and support initiatives

importance of the strategy to the ASTMA and noted that achieving the desired outcomes of the strategy will require a significant amount of support from members and the industry.

“Strategies are important, as they guide what we do. But they don’t in themselves achieve what we want to achieve,” states Unwin. “We as an association will be judged not so much by the eloquence of the strategy, but more so by our ability to implement it. We are determined to bring the entire industry – our members, apprentices, trade partners and the broader sport and recreation industry – to help us on our journey to implement these objectives. It will take a concerted effort from all sectors in the industry.”

Underpinned by a series of actions and initiatives that are to be rolled out in 2022 and 2023, the Women in Turf Strategy outlines several objectives for the ASTMA to deliver, linked to achieving the three pillars of action to redress the gender imbalance in sports turf management. Among these are:

Increase the appeal of turf management to raise female participation.

- Increased awareness of the benefits of a career in sports turf management;
- Improved exposure of trade qualification pathways for women; and
- Greater visibility of female sports turf managers as ambassadors within the industry.

Facilitate change to remove cultural and societal barriers.

- Greater numbers of women taking part and completing vocational education training for turf management;
- Development of skills that lead to a career in turf management; and
- Increased awareness of diversity across facilities and workplaces in the industry.

Support women’s learning to increase vocational and development opportunities.

- Increased volume of females undertaking trade apprenticeships in sports turf management;



- Stronger career development networks between education, employers, trade partners and women in the industry; and
- Reduced cultural, access and diversity barriers that deter women from entering the trade.

“Our ability to deliver on this strategy is important and stems from our ability to give validation to the need for our industry to understand the importance of equality and provide opportunities and support to members to get behind the strategy,” says Unwin.

“Equality is a virtue in its own right; though it is also fundamental to the industry development and growth objectives that we have set as part of our Strategic Plan over the next three years.”

INITIATIVES TO DRIVE CHANGE

The next 18-24 months will see a variety of initiatives delivered as part of the Women in Turf Strategy. Designed to engage with members, work for the whole of the turf management industry and involve government and advocacy groups, the strategy details a series of initiatives that the association will focus on to attract and retain females in the industry. These include;

- **Educational Pathways Program:** A program designed to increase awareness to females of career pathway options for Year 10-12 students to a school-based apprenticeship in turf management.
- **Regional Industry Engagement Program:** Create connections between sport and recreation facilities and secondary schools to promote future career pathways for females while at school.
- **Certificate II and school-based apprenticeships:** Supporting Certificate II and apprenticeships allowing Year 10, 11 and 12 female high school students to start a pre-apprenticeship program.
- **Careers advisory networks:** Partnering with advocacy groups and employment networks to provide career advice and resources to promote women in sports turf management as a career.
- **Mentoring and support:** Implement a mentoring network for females undertaking an apprenticeship and to support existing females in the turf management industry.
- **Networking opportunities:** A program of educational seminars in each state to support and develop a network of females in the turf management industry.
- **Increase skills:** Providing work experience programs, opportunities and scholarships to females in the turf management industry to further their skills, knowledge and professional development.

Through the Women in Turf Strategy, the ASTMA will support existing female turf managers in career development and improve opportunities to support women to undertake a career in turf management

- **Partners, industry and community:** Engaging trade partners, employers, facilities and organisations to offer employment, training, support and opportunities for females in the industry.
 - **Trade skills and pathways programs:** Partnering with government departments and agencies to leverage skills development and establishing new trades pathways for women.
 - **Government engagement:** Working with governments to develop/upgrade facilities to ensure modern and accessible workplace infrastructure for women.
 - **Advocacy organisations:** Partnering with community, state and federal advocacy organisations to educate, encourage, recruit and retain more women in turf.
 - **Workplace training:** Establishing short and targeted inclusivity and diversity training for employers.
 - **Registered training organisations:** Supporting RTO's to deliver supportive and flexible delivery models of education.
- More information on the ASTMA Women in Turf Strategy is available on the association website (www.agcsa.com.au). Turf managers who are interested in staying up to date with its initiatives, or getting involved with the strategy, are encouraged to register their interest. 📞

WOMEN IN TURF STRATEGY MELBOURNE LAUNCH

The ASTMA's Women in Turf Strategy was officially launched at a special session held during the Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Melbourne on 23 June 2022. The launch event featured a number of guest speakers, among them Dr Nikki Vincent who was appointed as Victoria's first Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner in September 2020.

Also giving presentations were Sandringham Golf Links superintendent Gerri O'Callaghan about her journey through the ranks, while Tiffany Cherry, head of female engagement at Golf Australia, talked about her role and hopes for the future of female participation at all levels within the golf industry. The launch featured a panel of leading women in turf including O'Callaghan, former Toro Australia

senior national marketing manager Elise Willemssen, Hunter Industries' sales manager Lynne Watts and Jacobsen's APAC regional sales director Karen Proctor.

"The launch event was exactly what we were hoping for, perhaps more," says ASTMA chief executive Mark Unwin. "The level of interest in the program was fantastic to see and it was standing room only as we outlined the strategy and what the association will be working through over the months ahead."

"It is encouraging to get such positive comments from attendees that the approach we are taking is well supported. There is a genuine level of engagement from right across the industry to ensure we are actively working to attract more females into the industry and also to support those that are currently undertaking apprenticeships or working as qualified turf managers. The concept moves now from developing a strategy into actioning it and we look forward to keeping the industry updated on a range of initiatives over the months ahead."

Speaking at the launch of the ASTMA's Women in Turf Strategy were (from left) Dr Nikki Vincent, Karen Proctor and Gerri O'Callaghan



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Stretched to the limit

ATM reviews the findings of the 2022 ASTMA Labour and Resourcing Survey which has shown that nearly 50 per cent of turf management facilities across the country are reporting significant staff shortages.

Australian businesses are facing an acute labour crunch. With the unemployment rate falling to 3.5 per cent in June 2022 – the lowest rate in 48 years (see Figure 1) – the jobs market is the tightest it has been since 2008. Australia shut its international borders in March 2020 and saw its first drop in population since 1946, from an annual growth rate of around 1.5 per cent before the COVID-19 pandemic. Australia then recorded negative net migration in each quarter from June 2020 through to mid-2021, during which time 97,000 people permanently left the country.

Queried on the impact to Australian businesses, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' head of labour data, Bjorn Jarvis, commented: "The large fall in the unemployment rate reflects more people than usual entering employment and also lower than usual numbers of people becoming unemployed. Together, these flows reflect an increasingly tight labour market, with high demand for engaging and retaining workers, as well as ongoing labour shortages." (ABS, July 2022)

While the fall in unemployment has been hailed as a sign of economic resilience, it has also created a big problem for sectors reliant on the flow of labour, among them agriculture, horticulture, transport and logistics.

During May and June 2022, the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA) undertook a labour and resourcing survey of its members to understand the situation currently facing turf managers. The survey data will be used to highlight these issues to facilities and various levels of government in the hope of attracting additional support.

In order to look forward to determine areas of focus and develop solutions for turf managers struggling to find staff, it is important to look back and understand some of the factors that led the country to be in this position, as therein lies several possible warning signs and solutions.

MIGRATION FREEZE IMPACTING SKILLED WORKERS

Professor Jeff Borland, a labour market economist at the University of Melbourne, says

the current shortage is particularly acute in sectors that rely more heavily on temporary migrants, with food trade and preparation, hospitality, agriculture and qualified trades workers among the jobs that had the biggest growth in vacancy rates.

In a newspaper article in The Guardian he noted: "There are vacancies everywhere, but in particular occupations this was supercharged by the withdrawal during COVID-19 of temporary visa-holders, who made up a high proportion of the workforce in those sectors. Demand for labour was 'very strong', driving an increased vacancy rate 'across all occupations and industries'."

In response to a combination of supply chain issues and labour shortages, the Australian Government has made a range of temporary entry visa policy changes over the last six months to try and address the issue for businesses. For example, in November 2021, the (then) Morrison Government announced it would open international borders for a range of temporary and permanent entry visa types from December 2021. While this

At an average of 18 per cent below desired full-time staff, labour shortfalls are being experienced right across the sports turf management industry



Strategies that focus on employee retention are a short-term solution for turf managers when it comes to dealing with labour shortages

Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) Subclass 482 Visa holders will find it easier to apply for permanent residency, with skilled workers who are nominated by their employer able to apply to live and work in Australia permanently. The change will also apply to Subclass 187 Visa holders with an occupation on the Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL). Following a concerted effort over the last 18 months, sports turf management ('362311 - Greenkeeper') remains on this list.

The various pathways for skilled workers to enter Australia are about to rise by more than 30,000 places, following the Federal Government outlining an intention to push for a renewed focus on permanent residency pathways to combat insecurity posed by rising levels of temporary migration.

However, the new Labour Government, elected in May, has inherited a migration program still grappling with the impacts of the pandemic and has said addressing visa backlogs is a priority.

ASTMA chief executive Mark Unwin says more must be done to help businesses access skilled labour across the industry: "With such a large member base, we're really hearing the impact of labour shortages across the industry. For an industry that is short on qualified tradesmen and women to begin with, that impact is really magnified.

"Adjustments to the visa pathways and available places are welcome, but we would like to see more work done to streamline the application process for businesses, as it remains unnecessarily difficult for applicants or facility managers to undertake.

"We would also like to see further investment by governments in training and upskilling the current workforce. Finding skilled workers is a challenge and we would like to see more skilled people in the workforce and support mechanisms in place to help businesses attract new apprenticeships and traineeships."

So while there is some good news on the horizon, the pain being felt by turf managers and facilities in the short-term must be addressed by a different solution.

PAY RATE REMAINS A KEY ISSUE

Professor Bob Breunig, a public policy economist at the Australian National University, noted in a recent article in The Guardian newspaper that employers failing to pay rates higher than award minimums will experience workforce shortages. "Many of these industries have relatively rigid award settings," he stated. "People say, 'Here is the award wage, that's what we pay', then they are surprised when they can't get workers in a tight market."

Breunig noted the four sectors he highlighted with the biggest vacancy rates all had "rapid turnover, have been impacted by limiting temporary workers and all pay relatively low wages". On the topic of salary in industries struggling to find workers, Breunig said the challenge for these industries was to "improve the productivity of their workers through education and training, and that they should value and pay them more."

He argued that many Australians get university degrees and not enough get vocational training relative to the number of jobs 'in trades'. "Normally you'd think that offering higher wages in trade jobs should attract more people to them, but that doesn't seem to be happening. Employers have to invest in retention, compensation and training."

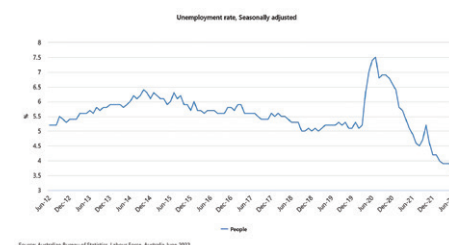


Figure 1: Australia's unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted, has fallen to a near 50-year record low

announcement had a short-term impact on arrivals, industry bodies and advocacy groups raised the notion that these changes did not go far enough, nor impact the most critical industries directly.

Visa grants to skilled temporary entrants in the December 2021 to March 2022 period were 6056 compared to 3823 in the December quarter of 2020. For a country facing a gap of about 440,000 job vacancies, the minor adjustments to temporary and permanent entry visa types had little meaningful impact to assist industries and facilities already short on staff.

In early 2022, the Federal Government announced further policy changes to attract more temporary entrants to Australia and to retain skill stream provisional visa holders, extending certain Skilled Regional Provisional Visas (Subclass 489, 491 and 494) by three years, assisting with around 10,000 skilled regional workers.

July 1 2022 saw additional changes announced, with skilled workers offered new pathways to permanent residency and more places for working holidaymakers.

TABLE 1. LABOUR SHORTFALLS

	Current FTE*	FTE Shortage	% Shortage
Members			
<1000	7.0	1.8	25%
1000-1200	10.9	1.6	12%
>1200	16.8	2.6	15%
Annual Fee			
<\$2500	6.8	1.7	24%
\$2500-\$4000	10.4	2.0	18%
>\$4000	20.1	2.5	9%
Area			
Metro	10.8	2.0	17%
Regional	8.0	1.7	21%
TOTAL	9.7	1.9	18%

Source: 2022 ASTMA Labour and Resourcing Survey. *FTE: Full-time equivalent

IMPACTS ON THE SPORTS TURF MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY

Echoing the sentiments from Professor Breunig, the 2022 ASTMA Labour and Resourcing Survey found that nearly 50 per cent of turf management facilities across Australia are reporting a material labour impact, due primarily to wage competitiveness and suitability/experience of applicants.

Addressing the issue of reasons for staff shortfalls (see Figure 2), survey respondents indicated that the top three reasons for their current gaps in resourcing were due to:

- Salaries/wages offered in other industries;
- A lack of suitable experienced applicants;
- Unreasonable salary/wage expectations.

It is worth noting that also rating highly were challenges associated to the industry that impacted or can be addressed by salaries and wages, those being:

- Local geographic cost of living pressures;
- Undesirable working hours/conditions; and
- Location (remote/regional).

In summarising findings of the survey at the 2022 Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Melbourne in June, Blunden described the sentiment relating to the current recruitment challenge as being much worse compared to pre-COVID times.

At an average of 18 per cent below desired full-time staff (see Table 1 above), labour shortfalls were experienced across the country, with the majority of facilities describing the current situation as 'worse' or 'much worse' than 2019. Such sentiment was being felt more at metropolitan facilities with larger budgets and staff counts as opposed to smaller facilities or those in regional areas.

WHAT CAN TURF MANAGERS DO ABOUT THE SITUATION?

Blunden highlights "a mix of potential solutions as a critical factor in the short-term, driven by a focus on staff retention". Employee retention promotes the health and success of an organisation. The time, stress and cost of hiring and training new employees are significant and turnover can have a negative impact on business outcomes. High employee

turnover brings about multiple problems including high costs, knowledge loss and low productivity.

Blunden found that turf managers who were focussing their strategies on employee retention were the ones having the most success when it came to dealing with current labour shortages. Such strategies include:

- Offering a better work-life balance;
- Offering higher salaries/wages/hour rates;
- Offering facility benefits (e.g. gym membership, golf membership); and
- Offering more training opportunities.

Expanding on the opportunities available to turf managers, Blunden outlined various approaches that were recurring themes throughout the survey:

- **Adjust expectations:** Communicate priority activities, how much people will work, how much they need to be paid;
- **Pricing:** Adjust budgets, increase subscriptions to cover added costs;
- **Balance:** Finding a better work-life balance for people, pay competitive wages;
- **Culture:** Have an enjoyable culture that makes people want to be at the club and be part of the team;
- **Communication:** Clubs are letting members/players/staff know better than ever before what they're doing and through this they can better manage expectations.

- **Other:** Sign-on bonuses, employee housing, employing family members of existing employees, players or members.

Blunden's takeout from the survey is clear. Businesses and industries across Australia are facing the same challenges as the sports turf management industry is right now. There are some medium-term approaches to the overall labour market that may help in addressing some of the issues being faced, however, "retention remains crucial".

"I agree with Jeff's sentiment on this," adds Unwin. "A loss of a staff member from a small team, materially impacts the facility and all other team members dramatically. Being one or two staff down simply increases pressure across the team. It's unlikely that simply decreasing presentation or standards will be acceptable, so the pressures are often shared across the team to increase output or hours to make sure players or members continue to receive quality facilities. That can only last so long – as working hours increase, work-life balance decreases, resulting in more pressure, fatigue and staff burnout."

A SHORT-TERM APPROACH

Blunden was succinct in his advice to turf managers at the conference when discussing a short-term approach – communicate.

"It is really critical that turf managers communicate to management about the impacts that staff shortages are having, or going to have, at their facility. Outline clearly the staff numbers and hours available, match them against the tasks that are required and how often they are undertaken and work through the plan to make sure the hours and tasks align. If there is a gap, make sure you are actively communicating about what changes may need to be made or what tasks may need to be done less frequently.

"Ensuring you have the facts aligned on tasks, there may be areas you can identify where cutbacks can be made to ensure staff are not working beyond their limits. This may be able to provide a new baseline to work from while actively recruiting and training staff."

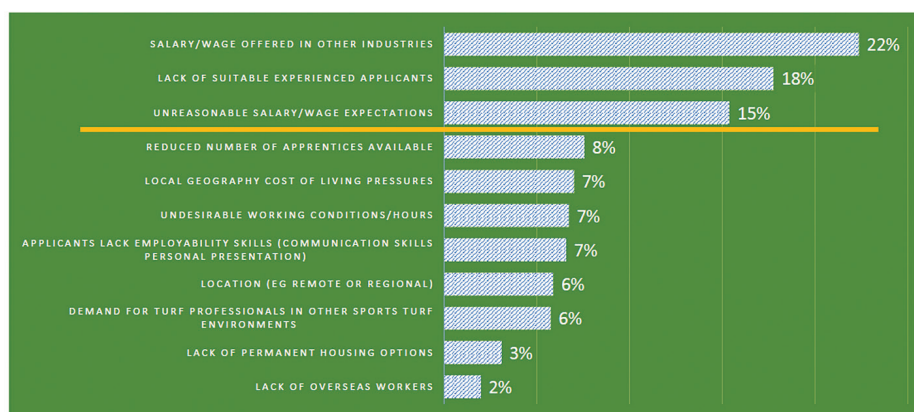
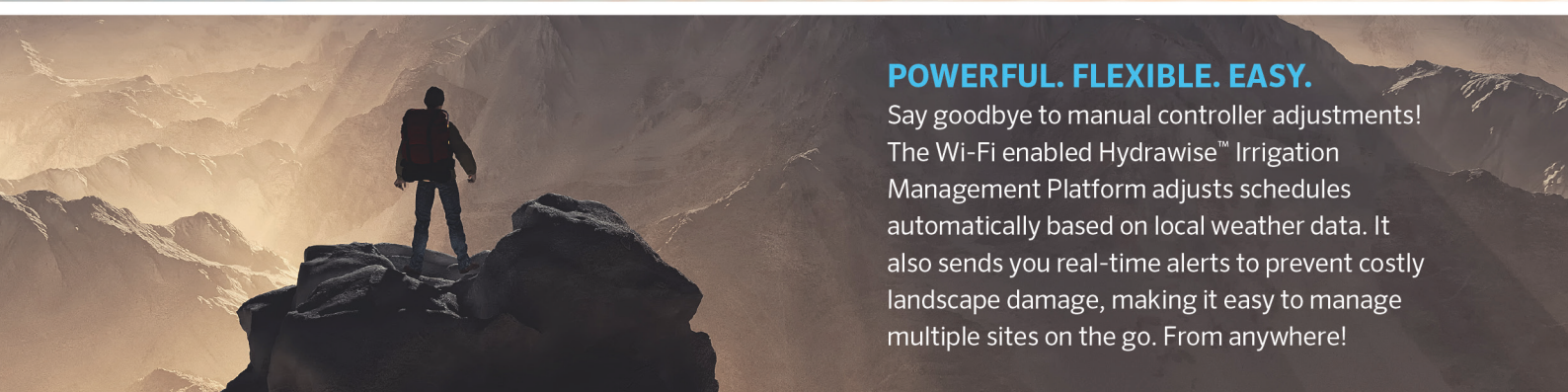
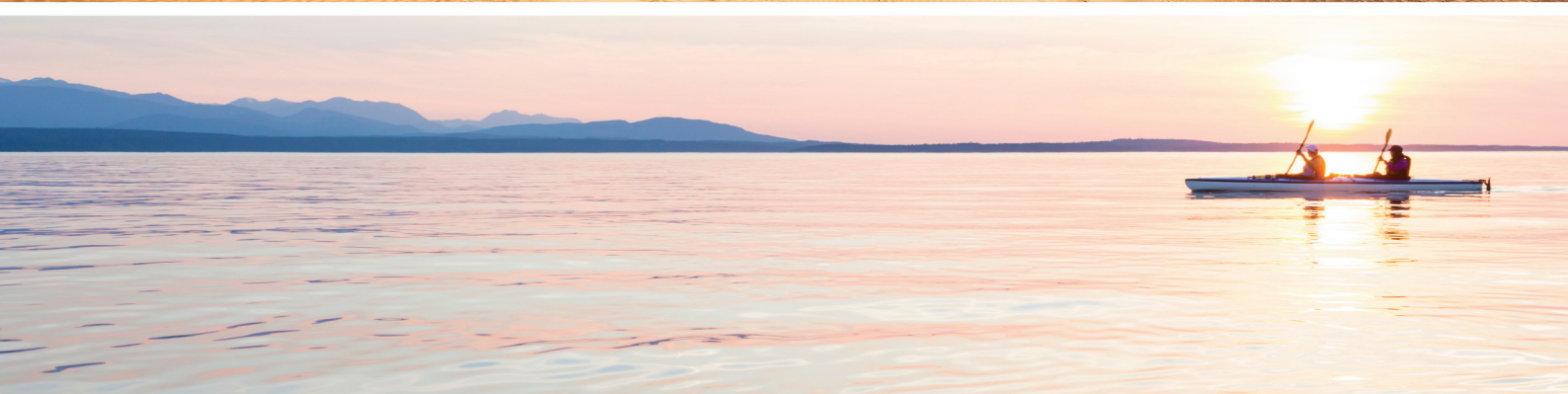
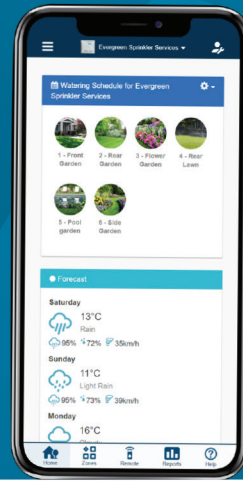


Figure 2: Salary and wage related issues, as well as a lack of suitable experienced candidates, topped the list of reasons why turf management facilities were currently experiencing labour shortfalls

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Opportunity Knox



Of all the winners at the recent National Turf Industry Awards held in Melbourne, few could doubt the significance it meant for one particular superintendent. As John Forrest and Brett Robinson write, winning the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award was the culmination of many years hard work and dogged perseverance for Busselton Golf Club's Lance Knox (CSTM).

Winning a national award as a golf course superintendent is significant, with many competent supers throughout the country eligible and worthy of claiming the honour each year. However, when Lance Knox (CSTM) heard his name read out as recipient of this year's ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, sponsored by Bayer, it meant something that little bit extra.

To say the Busselton Golf Club superintendent of four years was shocked is a gross understatement. As he stood on stage and spoke to nearly 400 of his industry counterparts you could see the emotion. His

few simple words – “*I love my job and I love this industry, thank you.*” – spoke volumes.

There was a reason for that emotion. When looking into Knox's background and the pathway he has taken, a story of perseverance and determination can be discovered. The journey was not without a lot of self-analysis and many doubts. But ultimately, Knox's story is an example of why turf managers are a special breed and how their love and passion for what they do is beyond the call of duty.

A LONG ROAD

Born and bred in Perth, Knox was first introduced to golf course maintenance when he completed work experience stints

at Hartfield Country Club and Hillview Golf Course at the end of Year 11. Although no opportunities in greenkeeping arose, he still harboured ambitions of becoming a greenkeeper so enrolled in the Certificate II in Horticulture course at Midland TAFE.

Despite completing that in six months, he couldn't find any apprenticeship opportunities afterwards so took on a casual job as a picker and packer in a warehouse. Knox would do that for the next three years and by the age of 20 had progressed to be stock controller manager. When he was knocked back after asking for a pay rise, Knox decided to post out 20 resumes to golf courses around the Perth area, but nothing was forthcoming.

Left: After winning the GCSAWA Superintendent of the Year Award earlier in the year, Busselton Golf Club's Lance Knox was bestowed the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award in June

Knox's father, who was a glazier, encouraged him to get a trade behind him and he was duly offered a traineeship through Jason Windows. Just as it looked like a career as a glazier was beckoning, out of the blue Knox received a phone call from then Hartfield Country Club superintendent Tim Chape who happened to be looking for a groundsman. Knox didn't need to think twice.

An interview followed and a week later Knox took his first steps in a greenkeeping career at Hartfield. It was 2004. An apprenticeship opportunity eventually arose, but being slightly older the wages made this path unaffordable. Knox therefore enrolled in the Certificate III in Sports Turf Management at night and on Monday evenings attended classes at Mt Lawley Golf Club which were being taken by resident superintendent Glenn Cross. After 12 months the classes stopped due to low numbers and Knox had to work through a mixed mode including on the job training which played a major role in completing the remaining units.

In the summer of 2009, then Hartfield superintendent Ashley Howse appointed Knox as irrigation technician. Located at the base of the Perth foothills, Hartfield experiences hot dry summers and howling dry easterly winds, meaning the irrigation tech role is one of the most important on staff. It was a challenge Knox enjoyed and he worked alongside then 2IC Rohan Farrow to ensure Hartfield's surfaces were at their best during the height of Perth's unique summer period.

When Farrow became superintendent in 2010, Knox unofficially took on the 3IC role and was put on salary due to the long hours we were working and the extra responsibilities that came with being a senior member of staff. Farrow then moved on and Knox applied for the superintendent's role which would eventually go to current-day superintendent



Members comment regularly that the current state of the course is the best it has been for years, a testament to Knox's pursuit of turf management excellence in his four years as Busselton superintendent. Pictured is the 13th

Nick Kinley who was then the assistant at Mt Lawley. It was great experience and a defining one for Knox as he discovered he wasn't quite at that level yet and needed to develop his skills, knowledge and experience further.

ON THE MOVE

After 11 years at Hartfield and applying for 21 positions without success, it was time to look further afield. It was by no means an easy decision as Knox had made close friends with several of the staff members at Hartfield and together as a team they were all like-minded in producing an excellent golf course.

Living in the same area near Hartfield for 31 years also made it difficult to shift, but an opportunity would present itself as assistant superintendent at Margaret River Golf Club about three hours south of Perth. Working under superintendent Mark Lewis and with just three-and-a-half staff and tight budget constraints, it was a great learning environment for Knox. Together the small team produced a well-presented golf course and Knox was further able to hone his skills.

In 2016, former boss Farrow had become the acting superintendent at Mt Lawley, one of the leading golf clubs in Perth. That provided Knox with an opportunity to head back to the city after 12 months at Margaret River as one of two foremen – Knox was irrigation technician and fellow foreman Alex Proudfoot was spray technician. Being a high-profile course with a lot of expectations and larger budgets, Mt Lawley was another great learning experience.

Throughout this time, Knox's aim of becoming a superintendent had not diminished and he was still actively applying for jobs without luck, but at least he was getting the odd interview. The Certificate IV in Sports Turf Management appealed to him and he duly undertook the course to add more technical and management knowledge to his already broad practical skill base.

The course included units on costing projects, planning and implementing chemical use programs, maintaining WHS processes, developing soil health and plant nutrition programs and assessing and monitoring weed, pest and disease control programs among



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As part of a course masterplan adopted in 2020, over the past two years Knox and his team have worked incredibly hard to tick off a number of course improvement projects, including greens reconstruction

a wealth of others. The course also included three Diploma in Sports Turf Management units relating to collecting and managing data, managing trials and/or research material and developing workplace policies and procedures for sustainability. Knox describes the benefits of undertaking the 18-month Certificate IV course as "massive" and the best preparation he could have had for what the future held.

FROM LOW POINT TO HIGH POINT

To that point of his greenkeeping journey, Knox had experienced six different superintendents who all had different ways of managing and running golf courses. He could see what worked and what didn't work and he learned a lot from not only the superintendents but the skilled and knowledgeable staff around him, many of whom had become good friends.

In October 2017, the Dunsborough Lakes superintendent position came up and this time he secured an interview which he was over the moon about. However, a call on the eve of the interview telling him the job had been filled was almost the final straw. Gutted and

totally disillusioned, Knox's immediate thought was to leave the industry as he entertained thoughts of never being able to realise his goal of becoming a superintendent.

Thankfully, it would be the many relationships that he had built on his journey that would ultimately steer him on a different path. Tom Tristram, Nick Kinley and Scott Hawkins, all greenkeepers and friends he had made over the years, gathered around him, lifted his spirits and rekindling his determination to succeed.

It was about a year later, in October 2018, when Lance received a call from Jonathan Leach, then the superintendent at Busselton Golf Club located 218 kilometres south of Perth. Due to health issues he had been experiencing, Leach had a full-time position as leading hand initially, stepping up to 2IC for a few months possibly permanently. Knox replied that he was interested but was not sure about going back down south again.

After having sent him his resume and cover letter, Knox called Leach and it quickly transpired that things had changed. The acting

superintendent, who was the 2IC, said he did not want the superintendent job long-term and then Leach informed him that he was resigning and was going to recommend him for the position. In what seemed like a whirlwind, the club agreed to the appointment and on 27 November 2018 Knox officially started his new job as superintendent of Busselton Golf Club. Finally, the opportunity to do what he had dogmatically set out to do over a 14-year period had finally come to fruition.

KNOX'S PATCH

Knox believes in karma, or simply put, 'you reap what you sow'. All those earlier setbacks and dark times created a steely determination to show those who doubted or could not see his ability what he was capable of. Settling in was a smooth process as the course was in great condition and then 2IC Nick Leeder had an in-depth knowledge of the course. Leach and many others in his well-developed network of industry contacts were also only a phone call away for advice if he needed it.

Knox felt prepared and excited that now he could put his stamp on a course. His approach was to keep things simple and that any changes would be implemented slowly and in small manageable increments. On the same day that Knox started at Busselton, so too did new general manager Ross Davis. A new team was instantly formed and over the past four years the club has gradually chipped away at various improvement works both on and off the course.

Ground staff levels were increased from five to six which has enabled Knox to make small yet continual improvements to the course rather than just simply maintaining it. Knox oversees a team which includes new assistant Jamie Brown, three ground staff and one apprentice. Knox is always looking to help his staff to progress in their careers and has a strong belief in training apprentices, aiming to always have a minimum of one on the crew.

Prior to Knox's appointment as superintendent, the club was very much focussed on maintenance tasks with little thought paid to future requirements. In 2020, a purposed course masterplan was developed to keep Busselton one of the premier golf courses in the southwest region of the state. As part of that plan, over the past two years Knox and his team have worked incredibly hard to tick off a number of projects. Among those have been...

New bentgrass nursery: In September 2020, a new bentgrass nursery was constructed in an area behind the 14th green. The new 650m² nursery was levelled, 150mm of fresh



One of the biggest recent projects at Busselton Golf Club was the construction of a new maintenance facility which opened in June 2021

clean sand added, new irrigation installed and then seeded. The first lot of turf was harvested after 12 months and used on the 4th green construction project (read more below).

17th green construction: To remedy significant couch encroachment issues, the 17th green was completely stripped, 300mm of fresh sand was imported and the green reshaped as close as possible to the original design. Completed in-house by Knox and his team, construction and grow-in took 16 weeks with the green opened in late January 2021. The new green is just under 600m² with a 500mm bentgrass collar to counter any couch encroachment.

10th green extension: While the 17th green was in construction, a plan was hatched to use some of the good turf from the green to extend the top back tier of the 10th green. That tier had decreased in size over the years and was eventually extended by about 50m² to enable more pin placements.

Greenside bunker redesign: Greenside bunkers on holes 6 and 8 were redesigned and reshaped. On the 8th, the gap between the two greenside bunkers was increased from 4m to 8m and adjustments made to the slope and lip on the left-hand side bunker. On the par three 6th, the face on the left greenside bunker was reduced. With years of sand splash into the face and outside the bunker, it had caused a big mound on the edge of the green. The bunker face was reduced by 500mm, making the front of the green more visible from the tee.

New maintenance facility: Perhaps the biggest of the improvement projects, at the start of 2020 the club began investigations into an upgrade of the maintenance facility.



Knox is thriving in his first superintendent role and enjoying putting his stamp on the course

The result was an 18m x 27.5m, 495m² shed with three large roller doors for easy access, a separate workshop area and a closed off fertiliser storage area with its own access roller door. The design also had every machine with their own parking spot to help with efficiencies during morning preparations. The facility officially opened in June 2021.

4th green construction: In November 2021, Knox and his crew carried out a full reconstruction of the 4th green which had major couch encroachment issues and had shrunk in size to just 290m² over time. Construction took only eight weeks from soil removal, adding fresh sand, shaping the green and turfing with bentgrass from the club's nursery. The green opened for play on 6 January 2022. The green was increased to 400m² and extended to the right. During

construction both bunkers were reshaped with the contours of the new green surface and the left-hand bunker reduced from 100m² to 60m² to increase the gap between the bunkers from 8m to 12m.

1st green extension: With the 4th green completed, a decision was made to utilise the remaining 140m² of nursery turf to extend the front half of the 1st green and to lower the bunker face by 1m so the front portion of the green would be visible. About 100m² of bentgrass was laid which has enabled several extra pin placements on the front of the green.

ENVIRONMENT, RESOURCE FOCUS

In addition to the course improvements, environmental best practice remains a core value at Busselton. The club is bordered by the Vasse River which runs alongside the clubhouse, four holes and the driving range for about 2km, creating a delicate environment.

The club receives treated wastewater from the Busselton Wastewater Treatment Plant which supplies around 90 per cent of the club's irrigation requirements. As such, the club must adhere to strict guidelines around its usage, with annual environment reports required. The club needs to be compliant on a number of levels, in particular nutrient loading rates of nitrogen and phosphorus which must not exceed licence targets. A Recycled Water Quality Management Plan (RWQMP) is regularly reviewed and updated, while an internal audit of the recycled water supply system and RWQMP must be conducted every two years.

In 2018, the club also embarked on a Water Efficiency Project for the irrigation system. It had been noted that distribution uniformity (DU) needed attention and that such a project would establish practical and

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Improving distribution uniformity of sprinklers on tees and fairways has made a big difference to turf quality

achievable targets for water efficiency and to develop best practice guidelines for water use.

A main concern was the DU on all the tees and fairway stations and the many different nozzle selections in a lot of the Rain Bird 700 rotors. With almost 800 on site, the decision was made to have all nozzles the same in every sprinkler. This change has made a major difference in uniformity and there has been a noticeable reduction in hydrophobic areas on tees and fairways. In two years, the club has replaced almost 300 nozzles and fixed about 200 sprinklers around the course.

Another change was adjusting the Rain Bird Falcon rotors used on green surrounds and rough banks. Many had been adjusted in the past to rotate 360 degrees which wasted a lot of water. Around 50 were adjusted back to 180 degrees to only irrigate areas needed.

The irrigation system also had a dosing pump in the main pump station but it had never been installed correctly and caused issues every time it was used. That has now been rectified and Knox can regularly use it to inject wetting agent into the irrigation once a week which has again made a noticeable difference to known dry areas in summer.

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

All of the above achievements and improvements led the GCSAWA to bestow Knox their Superintendent of the Year Award, sponsored by AFGRI Equipment, at their Margaret River Conference in early April. That qualified him for the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award and in putting forward Knox as their representative GCSAWA president Shane Baker noted:

“Since becoming the superintendent at Busselton, Lance has turned the club around immensely with his passion and dedication to his work and staff. He has shown that you don’t need big staff numbers or a big budget to produce a great golf course. Under his own initiative, Lance has set up regular get-togethers with fellow supers and general managers in the southwest region of the state, to help bring together those clubs and then pass on any ideas and concerns they might have to myself and the GCSAWA committee.

“I regularly use Lance as an example when talking to apprentices about doing what it takes to get ahead in the industry. Lance moved away from his home and job to the country twice to gain valuable experience and he says he wouldn’t be where he is now without taking those risks.”

Adds Busselton general manager Davis: “The club was proud to nominate Lance for the award. Even with a limited budget, Lance has proven time and time again that his dedication to excellence and positive approach in terms of taking on tasks that most clubs outsource has meant that his staff and volunteers have bought into the projects to ensure a well thought out and comprehensive plan with every task undertaken.

“Lance has produced the highest standards of turf management over a long period of time and the results are testament to his pursuit of excellence. Members comment regularly that the current state of the course is the best it has been for years.”

Hearing such feedback is music to Knox’s ears and just reward after a character-building journey. If you ask Knox was it all worth it, the broad smile that he is well-known for appears across his face followed by a definite and very positive nod – it certainly was! 🙌



Knox (centre) with representatives from ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award sponsor Bayer at the National Turf Industry Awards night in June

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Pamplin produces



One of Australia's leading and long-serving curators, Marcus Pamplin, was honoured at the National Turf Industry Awards when he collected the ASTMA's Excellence in Sportsfields and Grounds Management Award in June.

Professionalism and passion. Ask any of the many staff that have worked under Marcus Pamplin during his 31-year turf management career what characteristics he is most known for and those two would be unanimous every time. From his formative days in Geelong, Victoria, through to his time at Manuka Oval in Canberra and to the past 14 years in charge at Blundstone Arena in Hobart, Pamplin has constantly strived to produce the best, regardless of what challenges have been put in front of him.

In the same year where he got to experience what many would describe as the pinnacle of any curating career – an

Ashes Test – Pamplin's journey was officially recognised when he was bestowed the 2022 ASTMA Excellence in Sportsfields and Grounds Management Award, presented by Toro Australia. Announced at the National Turf Industry Awards during the Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Melbourne, the accolade was just reward for a career which has seen him rise to be one of the country's most pre-eminent curators and a senior and valued member of the Australian curating fraternity.

The dossier that accompanied Pamplin's award nomination and endorsement by the Tasmanian Sports Turf Managers Association stretched to nearly 7500 words. In all fairness,

it probably just scratched the surface given the achievements Pamplin has notched up throughout a storied career to date and, in particular, during his time at Blundstone Arena.

Since arriving there in 2008, Pamplin has continued his commitment of constantly making improvements to the venue's turf infrastructure and facilities. Such changes have enhanced the venue for all the sporting codes that use it, including first-class and international cricket for men and women, AFL, men's and women's Tasmanian State League (TSL) football and the wider Hobart community.

Blundstone Arena is the primary training facility for the Tasmanian Tigers men's and women's cricket teams in all age groups as



PHOTO: STU GIBSON/BRAND TASMANIA

The headquarters of cricket in Tasmania, Hobart's Blundstone Arena has been home to head curator Marcus Pamplin since 2008

Reconstruction of all practice wickets:

Blundstone Arena has two separate practice wicket facilities – the Church Street and Derwent Street nets – which total 41 pitches. All wickets have either been totally reconstructed from the base or significantly excavated to eradicate thatch and layering. The wicket blocks had to have compatible soil which matched with the existing soil to prevent it from peeling off in layers.

In a bold move, Pamplin altered the playing surfaces from couchgrass to ryegrass, as there is little to no window for couch to grow and have a normal renovation each season because of the workload and weather. This proved to be an excellent move as it now allows for training all year round.

Reconstruction of all run-ups in the practice facilities:

In order to cope with the excessive workload, all practice wicket run-ups were changed from a heavy loam to sand base. The Derwent Street area now has a reinforced profile to enable it to cope with high traffic. As it's only 180m² between the two eight-wicket tables, wear on the practice pitches not in use becomes an issue as they are part of the bowler's run-ups. This results in an area that requires high maintenance, so covering with tarps, careful watering and good management of grass is needed.

The Church Street practice facility has a much larger area of 700m² with a profile mix of 75 per cent sand and 25 per cent loam blended to enable moisture and nutrient retention. It is covered in Legend couchgrass and has been established for 12 years now and still drains very well and copes with the heavy wear it receives.



2022 ASTMA Excellence in Sportsfields and Grounds Management Award winner Marcus Pamplin

well as the Hurricanes BBL and WBBL teams. Pamplin and his team have over 300-plus training sessions for all levels each season, making it one of the highest workloads of all first-class venues in Australia. Cricket training begins in June under a marquee (more on that below) and finishes in March.

Blundstone Arena is a multi-purpose venue and during winter is home ground for the Clarence Football Club. The club has four teams (men and women) which train three times per week. They also play nine home games (four per day), plus TSL finals. Over the last 11 years, AFL side North Melbourne has made Blundstone Arena part of its home fixture and plays four games at the venue every year. Pamplin's extensive experience in maintaining AFL grounds prior to his appointment at Blundstone Arena means the oval is always prepared to the high standards expected by the AFL. Pamplin's job is made harder given that it has a permanent wicket table in the centre.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENTS

During his time at Blundstone Arena, Pamplin has implemented several innovations which have helped to improve safety, efficiency and provide an advantage for the Tasmania's high-performance cricket teams. They include:

The 'Marquee': In perhaps one his most innovative assignments, Pamplin installed a 60m x 25m marquee over the Church Street practice wickets to enable the men's and women's Tasmanian Tigers teams to train on turf pitches throughout winter. Blundstone Arena was the first ground in Australia to use such a marquee to ensure access to training nearly all year-round and has become an integral part of the pre-season for cricketers over the past five years.

The marquee has a clear plastic roof to let in light and side panels which open for air movement. The marquee has altered pitch preparation, fertilising and spraying applications. A major renovation of the practice pitches is not required once it is removed. Instead, staff prepare the whole block at both ends like one big pitch. This allows the staff during the pre-season to bring up pitches quicker as they require less rolling. The grass is kept longer at 15mm to cope with the wear, which also adds pace. Three pitches are prepared for each practice session and are rotated to a new set after nine days. This helps mitigate the damage over the pre-season and reduces the extent of the renovation before the cricket season starts in October.

Safety upgrade: In addition to the marquee, Pamplin upgraded the existing netting on the practice pitches to a safety-based system to reduce the likelihood of players getting hit. The introduction of T20 cricket over the past 12 years facilitated the need to change to a safer system as players are now hitting the ball at very different angles and with more force, which means the ball has more chance of escaping the netting. Pamplin came up with idea of making individual pods which have lane nets sewn into the roof net. These are all on pulleys which can easily be pulled across to new wickets.

Oval reconstruction: Pamplin's greatest challenge of his tenure to date was overseeing a complete reconstruction of the oval in 2012 to help improve playability for winter sport. The outfield was stripped to remove the existing thatch layer and *Poa annua* seedbank, before 1500 tonnes of fresh medium to coarse sand was then spread and a mix of Derby Extreme and RPR ryegrasses hydroseeded. A new Rain Bird irrigation system was also installed. The wicket table was excavated to a 100mm depth to remove the existing thatch later with compatible fresh clay imported and compacted before being oversown with ryegrass.

The improvement in the cricket pitches was initially slow in the first 12 months as the clay had to settle down in a short time frame. Pamplin wore the negative press as the table was performing exactly as he had predicted and he knew that it would eventually settle down. Since 2013, the cricket pitches have been of an excellent standard for all cricket.



Pamplin is committed to developing his staff. Recently he has had two female staff join the team – assistant Sam Butler (second from left) and apprentice Kelsey Lovell (third from right) – which has enhanced team dynamics

The clay can now be compacted evenly without the surface peeling away, with every pitch in the 10-wicket square presenting consistent bounce and pace.

The pitches and outfield, which are rated by the umpires and captains after each game of the season, have been consistently rated either first or second for T20 matches since the BBL started in Australia. Similarly, in the Sheffield Shield and WNCL ratings, the pitches have regularly been in the top performing grounds since the reconstruction.

Improvements to WHS: COVID restrictions over the past two years provided Pamplin the opportunity to write up new or update safety procedures. Pamplin identified future projects for proposal such as a new wash-bay, waste disposal and chemical storage area, which will hopefully be given approval from council later this year. He also encouraged his 2IC to source a simplified method of conducting

pre-checks on equipment. This process is now done through an app and all the machinery has now got an isolation lock to minimise the risk of accidents to employees.

Other projects and innovations: Pamplin has also developed a wicket cover with small bunding on the corners with a funnel which drains water straight off the cover into the sub-surface drainage. This enables water to get away quickly due to the fall of the wicket table and there is less water to take off the covers when folding them up. This results in less time delays and improved safety for groundstaff as they are easier to pull off given they are not weighed down by water.

Another innovation which Pamplin has been heavily involved in is developing underground heating in the practice pitches which will hopefully be approved this season. This will involve using hydronic piping to generate heat in the clay, which will help to dry

out the profile. Pamplin hopes that this could help new wicket squares settle down more quickly after construction. Ryegrass would also germinate quicker and it would help couchgrass break dormancy during spring.

TO THE RESCUE

With COVID restrictions causing huge impacts on sports scheduling over the past two years, being flexible and able to host anything at very short notice has presented a new and unique challenge for Pamplin and his team. In Blundstone's case, local footy ceased meaning there was no play throughout the winter. Cricket Tasmania, as the only professional team in the state, took precedence over Clarence Football Club and it meant that Pamplin and his staff found themselves in the extraordinary position of preparing centre wickets for practice from June to August. The marquee was also in use five days a week.

Once the cricket season started, Blundstone Arena was chosen as a primary hub for teams to train and compete out of. This meant long, exhausting hours for the team. The hubs didn't stop this past season either as Blundstone Arena hosted the start of the WBBL, with seven games in nine days including two weeks of training at the venue. During winter Blundstone Arena was also on standby for AFL games. Instead of normally hosting four North Melbourne games, Blundstone Arena also hosted two extra games with only a week's notice.

The real feather in the cap, however, came at the start of 2022 when Blundstone Arena was given the opportunity to host the final Ashes Series Test, a first for Tasmania. Pamplin's hard work and consistently high ratings were ultimately rewarded when Cricket Australia made the decision to shift the fifth match of the series to Hobart after Perth was unable to host due to COVID restrictions.

Pamplin and his team were only given four weeks' notice to prepare a wicket worthy of hosting an Ashes Test. What made things more challenging was that COVID impacted his team to the point where, at one stage, Pamplin was the only member of the curating team at the oval to prepare not only the Test wicket but also the practice pitches. In the end, with help from curators around Tasmania, the



Pamplin is always looking to innovate. For the past five years a 60m x 25m marquee (above) has been erected over the Church Street practice wickets to enable training over winter. Pamplin has also developed a cover with bunded corners and funnel (right) to help remove water quickly and directly into the arena's sub-surface drainage



curating team succeeded in hosting a highly entertaining spectacle. **(Read 'History in Hobart' – ATM Volume 24.1 p16-22 – Ed).**

Being able to act as a hub and provide elite facilities at the drop of a hat for these major matches and competitions drew widespread praise, with Cricket Australia's head of cricket operations and scheduling Peter Roach lauding Pamplin and his team. Providing a testimony as part of Pamplin's award nomination, Roach commented:

"The COVID years have thrown many schedule curveballs to our cricket curators around Australia, and particularly the women's and men's Big Bash League competitions. In the 2021-22 season, Marcus and his team were, on short notice, able to expertly deliver early-season WBBL matches in a hub environment, which included a far larger than normal load on match and practice facilities. The venue was able to maintain its very high standards throughout this increased load.

"The flagship event though for Tasmania was securing and delivering at short notice the final Ashes Test. Marcus and his team produced a terrific pitch for the day-night Test (his first day-night Test pitch) that met all expectations of players, fans and broadcasters. Cricket Australia had full confidence that Marcus would be able to deliver these events and he did not let us down.



PHOTO: CRICKET TASMANIA/TWITTER

Pamplin and his team have continued their excellent recent record of producing great pitches in domestic cricket

"These 'extra' events were on top of the normal load of matches at Blundstone Arena. Marcus and his team have continued their excellent recent record of producing great pitches in domestic cricket and it is fair to say that in recent years the pitch ratings for matches at Blundstone Arena are at least the equivalent of any venue in the country.

"Marcus and his team in recent years have also been able to pioneer the preparation of turf pitches in the winter under a marquee for

Tasmanian squads to utilise. This advancement has allowed Tasmanian teams to be more prepared, with it being no coincidence that for the first time ever a Tasmanian women's team won a national title in 2021-22."

ALWAYS ADAPTING

As noted earlier, Pamplin has now been involved in the industry for 31 years. During that time he has had to adjust his techniques to suit different grasses, profiles and climates.

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PHOTO: CRICKET TASMANIA/TWITTER

Pamplin's exemplary work ethic and attention to detail means Blundstone's surfaces are always at their best

He has prepared cricket pitches in three different states and the way he prepares pitches now is totally different to when he first started out all those years ago in Geelong.

Pamplin has had to adjust his preparations to suit different types of clay and grass species. He is a conservator of grass so that it will survive the rigors of rolling and play over a season, especially coming into football season. Instead of cutting the grass lower for different formats of cricket, he now leaves the grass longer and grooms more frequently, so the plant is still alive and has a better opportunity to recover. His rolling has changed a little since going from couchgrass to ryegrass, with the weight increased as the week progresses to help the ryegrass survive and recover.

Looking after different outfield profiles and grass types on multi-sport ovals has always been challenging but enjoyable for Pamplin. At Blundstone Arena, Pamplin faces the additional challenge of renovation within a very narrow timeframe (just 4-5 weeks) in between transitioning the oval from football to cricket. Hobart's cool weather reduces the speed of ryegrass germination, so to enhance the seed

strike Pamplin pre-germinates it in a seaweed extract, fungicide and wetting agent to break the husk. His team then broadcasts the seed into core holes and then topdresses. This process is followed by oversowing with a Blec seeder and ensures that the field is ready for the first cricket game of each season.

To keep the outfield draining freely, Pamplin is a great believer in air movement. He reduces thatch in the oval by regularly coring or grooming throughout the year. The oval is usually dusted every 2-3 weeks with sand, ranging from one to three cubic metres, which has helped to keep thatch levels manageable. In addition, Vertidrain to a depth of 150mm every 2-3 weeks has always been a strong part of Pamplin's program. To break the 150mm pan, the depth of Vertidrain is increased in autumn and spring to 250mm deep to help improve infiltration and air flow.

Pamplin has always been vigilant in soil testing of the outfield and wicket tables. This has resulted in applications of balanced granular fertilisers applied on the outfield around 10-12 weeks apart. The applications are applied to coincide with prominent fixtures

to ensure maximum show. The outfield also has applications of liquids at the tail-end of the granular window. The outfield's soil profile is a calcareous sand, so the pH is high. To lower the pH, an acidification product is applied which alters it to a more manageable 7.5.

These tight timelines are part and parcel of the profession and every renovation is the same whether for the pitches or outfields. During COVID, Pamplin and his staff had to be ready at any time to prepare for a game. Hosting training and games in winter posed difficulties so Pamplin and his team made opportunistic spray applications, taking into consideration training, safety and the weather.

As well as a heavy workload, one of the other main challenges Pamplin and his team faces is keeping on top of *Poa* in the outfield. After the oval reconstruction in 2012, it was only a matter of time before the *Poa* crept back in. Initially, a program of paclobutrazol, ethephon and trinexapac-ethyl was applied during the year and ethofumesate at spring renovation. The team had varying degrees of success just by following the label recommendations of application frequencies.

Pamplin then came across an article on using Growing Degree Days to control *Poa* and reached out to David Worrall and Dr Henk Smith of Living Turf to get more information. For the past 6-7 years, staff have been following this method successfully, with only a few stubborn biotypes persisting in areas.

GRATITUDE

In accepting his excellence award at the National Turf Industry Awards night, Pamplin was quick to pay tribute to all the staff that had worked under him over the years and also gave special mention to his wife and family who have enabled him to do something he loves, despite the time it often takes him away from them.

"There have been a lot of people who have put a lot of effort into what we do," Pamplin noted. "I have had a lot of young teams over the journey of my career and I couldn't have asked for a better bunch of people to work with. They have been terrific; they put their heart and soul into it, have so much pride in their work and it makes your job as a curator a lot easier. I've always had a young crew and I love watching them grow and develop and enjoy having a laugh with them along the way. I wouldn't swap it for anything.

"To my family – my wife and kids – thank you. They don't see you for long periods of time due to the workloads we have, but they are always there with you and I could not do what I do without their support."

The feather in the cap for Pamplin came in January when Blundstone Arena was chosen to host the fifth and final match in the 2021-2022 Ashes Series



PHOTO: JESS OAKENFILL/BRAND TASMANIA

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Planting and Maintenance

Seeding Rate	Oversowing: 500 g/100m ² Establishment: 800 g/100m ²
Germination	5-10 days
Mowing Frequency	3-7 times per week
Nitrogen Required	Low
Endophyte Enhanced	No

NTEP 2015 Turf Quality

At all locations	1-9 (9 best)
777	6.4
Macdonald	6.3
Barracuda	6.1
Luminary	6.0
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Through a range programs and initiatives introduced over the past four years, Glenelg Golf Club in Adelaide is establishing itself as an advocate for biodiversity and sustainable golf course management practices

Glenelg's dynamic duo

Glenelg Golf Club created a slice of history at this year's National Turf Industry Awards by becoming the first South Australian club to win the ASTMA's coveted Claude Crockford Environmental and Sustainability Award.

Monina Gilbey is the first to admit that golf or golf courses were never on her radar. Having carved out a successful career as a biodiversity, vegetation and environmental expert over a 20-year period, in mid-2018 she applied for a role as a vegetation officer at Glenelg Golf Club on the Adelaide Sandbelt. The position had been created by newly appointed superintendent Tim Warren (CSTM) who could see the enormous potential the site had to make a positive statement about



sustainable golf course management. He just needed someone with the expertise and passion to help him realise that and in Gilbey he would ultimately find a kindred spirit.

Four years on and to witness the path that both Warren and Gilbey have taken Glenelg down is something quite unique in Australian golf. The journey to date – as both will tell you

they have merely scratched the surface – was acknowledged at the highest level when the duo received the ASTMA Claude Crockford Environmental and Sustainability Award at this year's National Turf Industry Awards.

Creating a little slice of history in the process, Warren and Gilbey became the first recipients in the award's 27-year history to hail from a South Australian club. Gilbey also became the first woman to receive the award in 12 years, emulating the feat of Jodie Grainger who won it for her work as an environmental officer at Yering Meadows in 2010.



PHOTOS: MONINA GILBEY

Warren and Gilbey took the unusual step of nominating jointly for the Syngenta-sponsored award as together they have worked hard to implement a number of environmental programs and take the club on a literal journey of discovery. With their unique individual skill sets, as well as their combined knowledge and experience in environmental sustainability, Warren and Gilbey have helped to build a profile for Glenelg Golf Club which is becoming nationally recognised across the sports sector.

"This (award) is a great honour for the Glenelg Golf Club and validates the hard work that we have done over the past four years which will act as a springboard as we continue with our course enhancement project," said Warren in his award acceptance speech. "For those who know me and my background, this has always been a passion of mine. I have always thought the management of a golf course is not just tee to green, rather it's everything within the boundary.

"Wherever we can promote biodiversity and environmental stewardship, it just holds our industry in such a good light. As course custodians we have that responsibility to portray our industry in the best possible light and this is the perfect way we can do it.

"I'd like to thank the support of Glenelg Golf Club, particularly the management and committee, who have backed us in with the work we have done. We have copped a bit of flak from some sectors of the membership who haven't quite understood where we are going, but I think we are winning them over with some of the great work we are doing. I also must thank Monina. I come up with what I think are some crazy ideas at times, but Monina takes them on board and makes them even crazier and we are getting some great results."

DRIVING CHANGE

Glenelg Golf Club is a group one private club located just to the south of Adelaide International Airport. It boasts a membership of over 1400, with the 19-hole course routed



ASTMA Claude Crockford Award winners Tim Warren (course superintendent) and Monina Gilbey (biodiversity manager)

through 49 hectares of land. The course has 12 water bodies, some of which form part of the club's aquifer storage recovery (ASR) system, while the course also houses areas of remnant plant populations.

Warren arrived at Glenelg in May 2018 with an already extensive golf course management CV behind him. That included stints as superintendent at Mt Gambier, Horsham, Adelaide Shores and Links Lady Bay, as well as a short period as senior assistant at The Grange prior to shifting across to Glenelg. Gilbey, a newcomer to the sport of golf, would start just a month later and in the years since teaming up they have established themselves and the club as advocates for sustainable golf.

When Warren took over as superintendent there was no vegetation officer and vegetation management was of low priority. Many native plants were weeded or sprayed and there was no chance for remnant plants to regenerate. Since that time Warren has now built an experienced three-member vegetation team, with Gilbey being elevated as the



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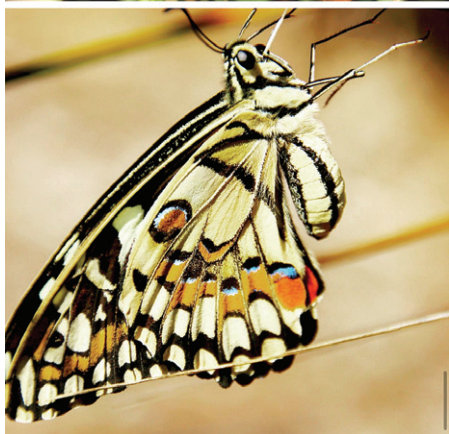
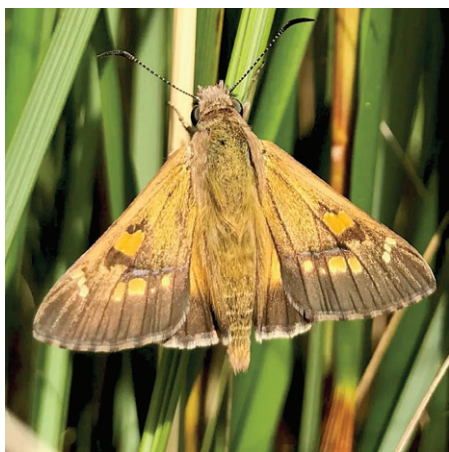
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club's biodiversity manager in January 2020. Members are now noticing the huge difference that dedicated and careful vegetation management makes to course presentation. Remnant plants are now regenerating and new plants that haven't been seen before are being found around the course.

Gilbey has a rare and valuable talent for engaging those around her. Armed with knowledge and an infectious personality, her enviable expertise paints her as a quiet authority on information about her surroundings. Time and again she finds common ground with members and in



Gilbey is assisting programs to enhance and protect populations of the rare yellowish sedge skipper (top) and chequered swallowtail (bottom) butterflies

doing so recruits them to achieve outcomes beneficial to all.

Warren's enthusiasm for these projects and his desire to contribute to local biodiversity, as well as demonstrate that golf courses can give back to the community, has led to the success of all of these projects. His patience and diplomacy when interacting with members, in addition to his informative 'Super's Desk' updates, has helped to engage them as the course progresses on its environmental sustainability journey.

Together, Warren and Gilbey have shown true commitment and drive to protect the biodiversity of the Glenelg Golf Club site and encourage members and staff to become interested in the club's many environmental initiatives. They have instituted a wide range of biodiversity and sustainability programs which are demonstrating the significant positive impact that golf courses can have on the environment, particularly within an urban setting. What follows are some of the many projects Glenelg has embarked upon in recent times...

Warren and Gilbey's vision was to undertake an environmentally sustainable course enhancement plan and return areas to their naturalised sandy origins. Pictured is recent works to Glenelg's 8th hole

Indigenous plant preservation: In Adelaide, some of the last remaining remnant indigenous plant populations are found on golf courses. These plants are not only integral to habitat for local fauna, but need to be protected now before they become extinct. Last year, Gilbey embarked on an ambitious project to establish a plant ark where seeds and cuttings from rare and vulnerable indigenous plants found at some of the Adelaide Sandbelt courses can be shared and preserved at all of the clubs.

The project, entitled 'Establishing a plant preservation partnership and creating habitat connectivity on Adelaide's sand dune golf courses', received a Green Adelaide Grassroots Grant of \$100,000 over a three-year period. The project aims to create habitat corridors between Adelaide's four group one clubs – Glenelg, The Grange, Royal Adelaide and Kooyonga – connecting over 250 hectares of land. The project also aims to plant over 15,000 plants throughout the courses, while Trees for Life, which is also involved in the project, will develop a master list of plant species at the golf courses and carry out a range of educational workshops.

Gilbey has also been working closely with Green Adelaide to help conserve the rare sticky daisy bush (*Olearia passerinoides* ssp. *glutescens*). Last August the club planted a number of these on the course, which had been grown by the South Australian Seed Conservation Centre. The club is now caretakers of this rare plant and it has provided a great opportunity to add another plant species to the course and play a significant role in the conservation of a rare native plant.

Over the last four years, Warren and Gilbey have also turned the clubhouse garden into



Over the last four years, Warren and Gilbey have turned the clubhouse garden into an entirely indigenous garden, with plants only requiring watering during extreme weather

an entirely indigenous garden, with plants only requiring watering during extreme weather. During the spring of 2021 there were many positive comments on the range of colour and insects which were attracted to the wildflowers, flowering bulbs and shrubs.

‘Grazing the Course’ dinner: To help Glenelg members learn more about the club’s indigenous plants and promote sustainable agriculture, Gilbey worked with Glenelg member and native foods chef Andrew Fielke to create the ‘Grazing the Course’ dinner. The five-course meal used plants harvested from the golf course and was served with paired wines. It is thought to be one of the first golf course wild food degustation dinners in the world and was extremely well received.

During the dinner, former SA Minister for the Environment and Water, David Speirs, gave a speech on the importance of golf course biodiversity. He then encouraged Gilbey to apply for the Green Adelaide Grassroots Grant for the plant preservation project and visited the course after the grant had been awarded.

Revegetation and vegetation management:

Course enhancement works will see the removal of a number of trees, some of which are weeds. An almost five-to-one replacement will lead to an increase in Glenelg’s tree canopy and shrub planting will continue to provide an urban refuge for a variety of fauna, provide some shade as temperatures increase and reduce the heat load of the local area.

Warren and Gilbey have also been experimenting with ways to reduce overgrown reeds and *typha* (which chokes and sours the water) in the club’s various water bodies. They have experimented with cutting and swabbing, cutting and burning and recently engaged Mechanical Vegetation Services to cut back the *typha* to underneath the water level in two of the club’s water bodies. It is hoped that the water courses can be cleared up and be restocked with more suitable plants that filter the water and provide habitat.



Gilbey (centre) has been working closely with Green Adelaide to help conserve the rare native sticky daisy bush, with a number planted on the course last August

Fauna preservation and enhancement:

Gilbey has become the golf club liaison for Green Adelaide and Ento Search (an insect research company) for the rewilding of the yellowish sedge skipper. This tiny and rare butterfly was last seen in metropolitan Adelaide back in 1985 at the Adelaide Airport. The butterfly’s much-loved food and home of thatching grass (*Gahnia filum*) had disappeared due to urban and horticultural development and so the butterfly did too. Work is being done to monitor and promote local populations of this endangered species, with Gilbey assisting in habitat planning and planting, releases and follow-up inspections of the skipper larvae.

Together with Green Adelaide’s Matt Endacott, Gilbey has also been rescuing chequered swallowtail caterpillars from wasp predation and raising them at home before releasing them on the golf course and in areas surrounding the course.

Elsewhere, Gilbey has provided support to an insect survey on the course, the first extensive insect study to be undertaken in Adelaide. Specimens from the study will be donated to the South Australian Museum to form baseline information for any future studies. The survey has found that, at times, the course has had more insect diversity than natural areas.

Quarterly bird surveys have been conducted at Glenelg by a local ecologist for more than 10 years. Gilbey always takes time to walk around with the ecologist to help with the survey and learn more about the birds visiting the course. The club also recently hosted an Anabat device for a University of Adelaide bat study. The study recorded four different bat species, among them a ‘little forest bat’ which is not usually found in non-forested areas or on the Adelaide Plains.

Beehives: A member donated a hive and bees and Gilbey has since become a registered beekeeper and can now catch spring swarms or rescue bees from irrigation boxes. Honey produced by the Glenelg Golf Club hives is sold in the front office, while Gilbey uses some of the honey to make promotional hand soaps.

Controlled burns: Discussions between Warren and Gilbey with vegetation staff from other courses led to experimenting with controlled burning. Ecological burning reduces dead biomass – and green waste fees – and helps plants regenerate. It is thought that the yellowish sedge skipper may have a connection to carbon, or freshly burnt *Gahnia filum*, so burning may increase their habitat.

Water management: Glenelg’s ASR system has now been in operation for a number of years and has proven to not only reduce the club’s reliance on mains water and prevents the nearby airport from flooding if the local creek overflows, but also creates habitat for frogs, fish and birds. Warren has also been working with local government authorities for

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Some of Glenelg's water courses have been cleared of reeds and typha, with the aim to restock them with more suitable plants that filter the water and provide better habitat

approvals to store Class A Water on site. He has negotiated a 50ML contract which will ensure that the club has two months of water as a back-up for the bores and ASR system.

Waste management: Glenelg is currently working on improving its on-course waste management procedures to reduce landfill and is investigating a compost system from the tonnes of food scraps produced by the kitchens.



QR codes and course collaboration: A QR code system has been introduced in recent times for machinery pre-start checks. This program has been expanded to use QR codes to reduce paper use (and time) by using web-based forms, fuel logs and safety data sheets (SDS). QR codes are also now used on course to help members and visitors with local rules. Warren and Gilbey are planning the utilisation of these and other paper saving technologies – as well as interpretive signage – to inform members and visitors of the importance of the club's plants and urban biodiversity.

Gilbey has also worked with Royal Adelaide and The Grange to help them introduce QR code pre-start checks and online SDSs. She has also developed a Course Operations Risk Register which has been shared with the other courses. The three courses have now established an inter-course admin group which shares materials.

Community outreach, promotion and social media: The SA Office of Recreation, Sport and Racing (ORSR) invited Gilbey to attend a panel on 'Clubs of the Future'. As part of the panel she spoke about the environmental programs and future ideas for Glenelg Golf Club, with an article on the club's environmental activities featuring on the ORSR website.

As part of the habitat connectivity project, Gilbey plans to involve schools and the local council in the project by donating plants grown in the club's nursery. Plantings in between the golf courses will help to strengthen the efficacy of the habitat corridors.

Through Gilbey's active work to promote the club through social media networks, the club has developed a reputation as one which values the natural environment. The variety of photos from regular 'Wildlife Wednesday' posts, to sunrise photos and thanking volunteers, has been recognised by the ORSR as an example to all sporting clubs that social media posts can be more than purely turf management or delivery of the sport. Through social media, connections with organisations

and people outside of golf have also been made which has helped the club become involved in various projects and garner support from a broader range of stakeholders.

Course enhancement project: Running in conjunction and complementing all the above work is Glenelg's course enhancement project. The project addresses the club's ageing irrigation infrastructure – which is overwatering rough and other areas, leading to many weed issues – as well as safety problems, bunker ingress and egress and economic and environmental issues.

One of the main issues is the reduction of irrigated rough which will reduce chemical and resource inputs. Naturalised rough also gives the club the chance to create more areas of indigenous vegetation, connecting vegetation pockets and creating more wildlife corridors. Introducing new irrigation will also ensure that water is used more efficiently and effectively.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Such a synergistic approach to course and environmental care makes Warren and Gilbey stand out as visionary, cross-platform enthusiasts, whose best environmental practice benefits the Glenelg Golf Club brand and adds value for its members.

"It has been an honour to win the award and to have our work recognised by the industry," sums up Gilbey. "Since winning the award we have been overwhelmed with congratulatory messages. As Tim has been in the industry for many years, a number of colleagues have seen the award win as evidence of his passion for environmental projects since starting in the industry.

"We thank our committee of management for supporting our environmental endeavours and standing their ground when we have faced membership controversy, such as the decision to have native plants in our clubhouse garden and our conversion of managed rough to naturalised rough.

"Our main objective is to make our club more environmentally and economically sustainable to ensure future members have not only a financially viable club, but one which minimises its effect on the environment and contributes to local biodiversity.

"The habitat connectivity project will increase habitat for threatened small bird species and the plant preservation project will ensure that our indigenous plants are protected for future generations. This project also helps to promote the importance of golf courses to local biodiversity and change the misconception that golf courses are wastelands or wasted land."

"Wherever we can promote biodiversity and environmental stewardship, it just holds our industry in such a good light." – Glenelg Golf Club superintendent Tim Warren

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Lynwood Country Club in Sydney's west has endured four extreme flood events in the past three years, the most recent this past March



Team efforts

The field of nominees for the ASTMA Sports Turf Management Team of the Year Award was perhaps the strongest of any category at this year's National Turf Industry Awards. Given what two teams had experienced over the past 12-18 months, the judging panel could not separate them.



It has been an exceptional as well as extraordinary past 12 months for turf facilities around the Australia. Dealing with the vagaries of Mother Nature is what makes turf management one of the most challenging professions around and in recent times she has truly tested the resilience and fortitude of many turf managers. As the industry has witnessed, over the past two years the eastern seaboard of Australia has had to contend with a series of extreme weather events which have had a significant impact on many turf facilities.

After much deliberation by the judging panel, in light of the challenges thrown at two teams who put forward nominations for the ASTMA Sports Turf Management Team of the Year Award, sponsored by Nuturf, it was simply impossible to separate them. In just the second year of the award being bestowed, it was decided that the course management teams at Meadowbrook Golf Club in Brisbane (superintendent Luke Helm, CSTM) and Lynwood Country Club in Sydney's west (superintendent Nathan Ball) would be jointly acknowledged.

Both winning teams have had to endure the worst that the weather can throw at them and on multiple occasions. Both have seen their courses laid to waste by some of the largest flood events in their club's history. Despite being knocked down on numerous occasions, both teams, led by experienced

and determined superintendents, resolutely took up arms and undertook a mountain of work to get their courses back up and operational in the weeks and months post-flood. It took a huge amount of physical effort and mental strength to do so, but they accomplished the task without fuss, guided by a steadfast desire to get their facilities back open and playable as soon as practical.

LYNWOOD COUNTRY CLUB, NSW

Lynwood is an inland links-style course set within close proximity to the banks of the Hawkesbury River to the west of Sydney. Sitting among farmland (many of them turf farms) and natural water ways, Lynwood resides on 96 undulating hectares and boasts wide open fairways that are shaped through a large wetland system. While Lynwood has a strong, loyal membership, the course is open to the public and superintendent Nathan Ball and his team strive to provide championship quality surfaces at a price point that allows everyone to enjoy the course.

Over the past three years, Lynwood has been devastated by four major flood events which have caused a significant amount of damage to the 18-hole course, driving range and surrounds. Despite the setbacks, the course maintenance team has not only repaired the course, but with every repair improved the course and its presentation to a higher standard.

For many, this repeat devastation would demoralise and demotivate a turf management team, but the Lynwood crew became stronger when challenged by adversity. The dedication, devotedness and continued enthusiasm the team has demonstrated is unparalleled despite having to re-establish the golf course on multiple occasions. Over that period they have undertaken:

- The removal of tonnes of silt, debris and rubbish deposited by the floodwaters;
- Re-establishment of 35 putting surfaces;
- Repair work on 20 hectares of couchgrass fairways on four separate occasions;
- The repair of 55 bunkers on three separate occasions, including the removal of 150 tonnes of contaminated bunker sand and importing of clean bunker sand, re-establishing drainage lines and shaping of all bunkers; and
- Locating and repairing in excess of 100 irrigation faults.

In 2021, Lynwood hosted the Jack Newton Junior Golf State Championships, a commitment that was made prior to the floods, with the event occurring just six months after a devastating flood that left 18 putting surfaces in need of complete re-establishment. Knowing the significance of the event for Lynwood's membership, and particularly the junior golfers, Ball and his team worked tirelessly to have the course ready for the championship. Pleasingly, the course was re-established to the highest standard despite reservations held by many.

RECOVERY FOCUS

Following every flood, the objective of Lynwood's maintenance and management team is to return the course and playing surfaces to a playable standard as soon as possible and then continue to improve the surfaces to achieve championship quality.



Lynwood Country Club superintendent Nathan Ball

This was successfully done after the flooding in 2020 and 2021 and is currently being undertaken again following the March 2022 floods. This year's flood was about 1.5m higher than the previous year, which meant water also got into the maintenance facility and driving range hut.

Lynwood's repair program involves:

- Removal of debris from the site (this includes pressure washing silt layers off putting surfaces);
- Stripping putting surfaces and preparing the surface for seeding;
- Implementation of a seeding program; and
- Reinstating the playing surface.

Since Lynwood's first major flood event, there have been many techniques tried and tested, in addition to lessons learnt that have since been shared with other course maintenance teams who have been through similar circumstances. In the industry, the devastation experienced by Lynwood is well known, as is the emerging and exemplary skillset of the turf management team. Throughout the adversity they have faced, they have developed some specific maintenance techniques and innovations to ensure the optimal recovery of their bentgrass greens and couchgrass tees and fairways.

Greens surfaces: Lynwood's first major flooding event occurred in February 2020 and while the course was under water, several strategies were already being discussed at length to ensure the club had explored every option possible. These ranged from a full reconstruction of all putting green complexes and turf cutting an organic layer, to re-levelling the sub-base. However, due to the financial impact on the club, the maintenance team was required to come up with a more cost-effective option that would result in the reinstatement of the putting surfaces.

The team was able to reach out to superintendents from across the world using social media, which enabled discussions and exploration of leading restoration strategies. Following conversations with superintendents from Canada and the United Kingdom, a program was created that would see verticutting, scarifying and aeration practices used to remove as much dead organic matter as possible, followed by seeding directly into the profile. The results were incredible.

Once strong germination was achieved, a mix of ferti-spraying and granular feeding was implemented for 30 days, before cutting could begin and spraying practices reintroduced. Since the pilot restoration program in 2020, this technique has been implemented successfully now for three years. Practically, this program has seen the course able to open within four months of flooding in 2020 and 2021 and as this edition of ATM was going to print a 16-hole temporary course (with 10-12 bentgrass greens) was scheduled to be reopened on 31 August 2022.

Couch surfaces: Couch is an extremely resilient grass, however, a program was created and implemented that involved silt removal using an FDS dethatcher to break

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Ball reached out to superintendents across the globe to investigate best practice surface restoration strategies in a quest to get the course back open once floodwaters had receded

up the silt, blowing silt off the surface and then brushing surfaces with a Ventrac fitted with a power broom attachment. Nutrition applications (Swift Grow at regular intervals) were then applied, while heights of cut were increased to 18mm before being slowly brought down as turf strength increased.

Presentation of Lynwood's course has improved following each flood, however, further improvements have been achieved due to a change to organic liquid fertilisers to attain a more uniformed couch surface on tees, green surrounds and fairways. A healthy plant, together with improved machinery maintenance practices, has seen a huge improvement in course aesthetics.

TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION

Without doubt, the biggest strength of the Lynwood maintenance team is the camaraderie and shared commitment of the team. Their work ethic is second to none, with every staff member bringing a positive 'can-do' attitude to their work. Despite experiencing four floods in three years, coupled with COVID-19 lockdowns, the team has shown incredible resolve and strength to overcome all setbacks while staying task-oriented.



Clear, concise and frequent communication to members has been an important strategy to ensure they feel engaged in the club while the course is being restored. Several strategies have been implemented:

- Weekly member emails – members receive a weekly email updating them on course recovery, pro shop offerings etc;
- Weekly video updates – light-hearted weekly updates by club captain Dan Holmes, together with the likes of Ball and general manager Matt Bailey, have been very well received by members.
- Member information nights held every three months.
- Friday night 'Super Pin' competitions held every Friday during course closure which have been a huge success.
- Volunteer days – this has given Ball and the maintenance team the opportunity to access additional labour and allows them to engage directly with Lynwood members. Having members on course has given them the opportunity to show first-hand the extent of the damage that multiple floods have caused, giving the members a better understanding of the work being undertaken and needed to return their course to its usual high standard.

- A number of additional promotions have also been presented to members to encourage greater patronage at the club in order for the golf community to continue to come together. Additionally, a membership renewal promotion has been launched to reward renewing members for their continued loyalty and support.

Upon receiving the award in Melbourne, Ball singled out the efforts of his crew to overcome what has been an extremely challenging period but one which has also galvanised them: "This award goes to a team that I look forward to working with every day, regardless of how the course is," commented Ball. "They have endured four floods in three years, but they turn up every day, they don't whinge and just get on with the job at hand. With each event that we have to come back from, they gain more experience. They know what to do and just turn up and do it. We simply couldn't do it without them. Hopefully we can have a period now of no rain so we can do what we are best at and provide quality playing surfaces for our members and guests."

MEADOWBROOK GOLF CLUB, QLD

Much like Lynwood, Meadowbrook Golf Club is a member and public access 27-hole golf course, driving range, function and food and beverage facility located in Logan, 20 minutes south of the Brisbane CBD. The course, which has been in its current location for the past 34 years, sprawls across 88 hectares of Logan River floodplain.

Originally from Sydney, Luke Helm has been course superintendent at Meadowbrook for the past four years. He completed his apprenticeship just down the road from Lynwood at Rum Corps Barracks Golf Club, before spending a year at Ashlar Golf Club then accepting a role of assistant superintendent at Windsor Golf Club. Moving to the Gold Coast, he worked on a turf farm before getting a role at Colonial Golf Club as assistant before taking on his first superintendent posting at Meadowbrook. Helm currently oversees a crew of eight which comprises assistant superintendent Jay Bramich, apprentices Lindsay Mottershead, Lance Woodham, Noah Hansen and Jack Wojcicki, labourer Cameron Small, machinery operator Grant Chapel and mechanic John Storey.

After drought like conditions dominated Helm's early days at Meadowbrook, the past 20 months have been the exact opposite. Helm and his crew have now experienced 12 flood events in that time, ranging from minor events where six holes have been impacted through to whole of facility inundation.

With each flood event at Lynwood, Ball and his crew improve their knowledge and methodology to assist with the reinstatement of playing surfaces

After each flood, the Meadowbrook Golf Club team has painstakingly reinstated the course back to its original condition every time

As was written about in ATM's extensive coverage of the Brisbane floods this past March (ATM Volume 24.2 – March-April 2022), Meadowbrook is one of a number of golf courses that reside on a floodplain of the Logan River. Slacks Creek, a tributary of the river, wends its way along the course's eastern boundary. Despite being protected by levee banks, the course is expected to flood perhaps once a year, but the past 20 months has seen unprecedented flood events.

Helm had thought the worst of the floods had occurred in March 2021, however, 12 months on and he and the crew found themselves cleaning up after the highest flood event in the club's history in late February/early March 2022. Twenty-nine of Meadowbrook's 30 greens went under, with the lowest parts of the course near the creek remaining metres deep under water for nine days.

The driving range, new coaching centre and mini-golf complex all went under as well, with water lapping at the steps of the clubhouse. Recent reconstruction works on greens and preparatory work for upcoming greens and fairway works also sustained irreparable damage.



That wasn't the end of it either. In late March, just as the course had been reopened less than a few weeks, the whole lower half of the course, including six greens, went under and 18 holes were cut off. Then, in mid-May, Meadowbrook went under again after more than 200mm fell on the course over a week. This time 21 greens went under water for more than a couple of days, with major silt deposits being left on the greens.

After each flood event they have had to endure, Helm and his crew have diligently rolled up their sleeves, put on their gumboots, grabbed shovels and squeegees and painstakingly reinstated the course back to its original condition every time. Through their hard work and unstinting effort the course has been brought back quickly every time to enable a passionate and active membership to get back playing. For a club that relies on

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For a club that relies on green fee play as well as the driving range for revenue, it is vital that Meadowbrook is reinstated as quickly as possible after each flood event

green fee play as well as the driving range for revenue, it is vital that the facility is reinstated as quickly as possible after such events.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

One of the biggest advocates of Helm and the Meadowbrook course maintenance crew is club director Tom Linskey who was delighted to hear they had been nominated for a national award. In a testimony to accompany their nomination, Linskey wrote:

“For most of the golf courses on the east coast of Australia, the past two years have been extremely difficult, particularly for those built on floodplains like Meadowbrook. We expect floods – one a year would be too much, but manageable – but 12 serious floods in 18 months is another thing altogether!

“My family and I had to ‘repossess’ our golf course mid-2017 after a debacle caused by Logan City Council sent our tenants bankrupt. The whole facility, but particularly the golf course, was virtually derelict. The maintenance staff had left. The machinery was

ancient and unmaintained. The golf course had been mown but not maintained, so all in all not a very inspiring place for Luke to start his superintendent career. The good thing was the only way forward was up!

“Within two years Luke had already transformed the golf course despite his small team of seven to look after 27 holes. This included a new large driving range, brand new 18 hole mini-golf course and extensive works to the clubhouse surrounds. Then we switched into a ‘re-construction phase’ out on the course just in time for COVID to hit. Luke and his team had undertaken the construction projects on top of the normal, full-on maintenance because they were excited about it and all wanted to be involved in the process. Their productivity was outstanding and the results were transforming the golf course.

“Then COVID, the Queensland version thereof, hit and the State Government decided golf could be played with reasonable social distancing, while at the same time sending everyone home from work. Meadowbrook had



As soon as Meadowbrook’s greens are cleaned off, they are aerated and given a follow-up renovation with mini-tines and applications of amendments and sand

over 300 players per day, every day, for many months. Try maintaining your golf course when every day is fully booked plus complete your ongoing construction works!

“The organisational skills developed by Luke and his team were amazing and everything worked like clockwork... until the rains came and returned, and returned, and returned again! Through it all Luke and his merry men have shrugged their shoulders and started again and again and again. What they have achieved with a small team, limited equipment and a modest budget is quite remarkable. The admiration our members, our clients, our suppliers and our management have for these guys is immense.”

Like his Lynwood counterpart, Helm also paid tribute to his team at the National Turf Industry Awards dinner, saying that it was a privilege to have won the award and for his team to be recognised for their endeavours: “It has been a tough few years for us, but we just keep rocking up,” stated Helm. “I can’t thank my team enough – they are an incredible bunch of guys. We are all good mates and we haven’t lost a staff member in over two years. We are a very tight knit group and we wouldn’t have been able to achieve what we have without that. This award is for them and for everything they do to support me and the club.” 🙌



Luke Helm (third from right) and members of the Meadowbrook Golf Club crew were on hand in Melbourne to celebrate their award with Andrew Melville from award sponsor Nuturf (third from left)



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*ASTMA Graduate of the Year Award recipient
Jon Christmass is the current 3IC at Lakelands
Country Club in Perth*



Graduating with honours



ATM profiles up and coming sports turf managers Jon Christmass and Pat Dewhirst who topped this year's field of Graduate of the Year Award finalists at the National Turf Industry Awards.

Just as Western Australia and South Australia dominated two of the major categories at this year's National Turf Industry Awards, they also laid claim to the two top sports turf management graduates. In the final two awards handed out in Melbourne, Jon Christmass, the current 3IC at Lakelands Country Club in Perth, was adjudged the ASTMA Graduate of the Year, while South Australian Cricket Association curator Pat Dewhirst was named the Sportsfields and Grounds Graduate of the Year. Both awards were again sponsored by Toro Australia.

Christmass topped a strong contingent of finalists which included Angus Lingard (Bermagui CC), Nick McClymont (Headland GC), Jack Parker (Oatlands GC), Declan Bayly (Mt Osmond GC), Mack Blazely (Launceston CC) and Caleb Johnson (Commonwealth GC). This year's field very much represented the next generation of turf managers, with Parker the son of legendary former SCG curator Tom and McClymont the son of incumbent Twin Waters Golf Club superintendent Garry.

Christmass becomes just the third graduate from WA to win award in its 27-year history and the second from Lakelands Country Club. He arrived at Lakelands in 2018 just as the club was embarking on masterplan works to redesign and rebuild the golf course, most of which was completed in-house. In addition to developing his knowledge of usual course maintenance tasks, Christmass was also exposed to wide variety of turf management works, including rebuilding and growing in greens, tees and bunkers, plus irrigation installation and general earthworks. Such a solid grounding saw Christmass recently elevated to the 3IC role.

Dewhirst became the 12th recipient of the Sportsfields and Grounds Graduate of the Year Award since its inception in 2011. In doing so he created a little slice of history by becoming the first sportsfield graduate from South Australia to win the award. Dewhirst headed home a quality field that included Zach Evans (Parliament House), Coen Marwick (City of Albany), Dom Pelusi (The Gabba), Sue Wise (Landscape Solutions/Macquarie University Sports Fields) and Scott Nicholson (Warrnambool Racing Club).

Like some of his graduate counterparts, Dewhirst got his first taste of the turf industry through his father who owns and runs his own turf and landscaping business. Such exposure fast-tracked Dewhirst's skills and put him in good stead when applying for an apprenticeship with the South Australian Cricket Association (SACA).

Since taking on his apprenticeship in December 2018, Dewhirst has been based at SACA's Karen Rolton Oval/Park 25 precinct. Undertaking his Certificate III studies through Urrbrae TAFE, upon successful completion late last year Dewhirst was elevated to a full-time position as curator under grounds manager Trent Kelly. For the past five months (April-August 2022), Dewhirst has been on secondment in Darwin at DXC Arena (Marrara Cricket Ground) which is the home of Northern Territory Cricket. During his time there he has been a part of the facility team preparing wickets and the venue for T20 tournaments.

In the weeks after the awards night, ATM caught up with both Christmass and Dewhirst to see what winning their respective awards meant for them and their careers.

ATM: What was your reaction when you were announced as the Graduate of the Year Award recipient?

Jon Christmass (JC): I was surprised and honoured to be announced as the winner. There were some great candidates from all around the country and I was truly humbled to receive the award.

Pat Dewhirst (PD): My initial reaction was shock! I think I emphasised this at the start of my acceptance speech by saying 'Struth!'. According to my boss Trent Kelly, who was sitting next to my mother Sue on the night of the awards, she screamed, probably in joy and shock all at once. Fortunately I didn't hear her and I think I'm glad that I didn't!

ATM: What does winning the award mean for you and your career?

JC: It means a lot to me and also to my club. It shows recognition for all the hard work we have put in and the results we have achieved. I feel the award highlights my skills and potential as a sports turf manager and may help me with any future opportunities that may arise.

PD: The award means a great deal to me. It took a couple of days to really sink in that I had become the national award winner in my field. In that time I was able to reflect and appreciate all the work that had been done over the course of my apprenticeship. For my future in sports turf, it probably brings along many more opportunities which will help with my development in the industry.

ATM: Now that you have won the award, what are your future plans?

JC: I plan to keep learning and growing as a sports turf manager. I am looking forward to furthering my studies and will be aiming to complete my Diploma if it is offered in the future. I would also like to volunteer at some larger events to gain more exposure, learn



The ASTMA Graduate of the Year Award finalists with Laurence Bingham and Elise Willemsen from sponsor Toro

from some of the leaders of our industry and expand my network of contacts.

PD: You could say that I have already ticked one box which was to travel to different destinations to work having being in Darwin for the past few months. Now that the world has opened up again, the potential to experience how the turf industry operates in different parts of the world would be amazing to witness. I would also like to complete the Diploma.

ATM: What were some of the highlights during your apprenticeship?

JC: The major highlight has been to look back at all the hard work our team has put in and to see and hear from our members and visitors how much the club has improved and how much they enjoy playing there. We have also been following an environmental plan which has seen an enhanced focus on protecting our natural ecosystems and reducing our artificial inputs, which is something I am very passionate about.

PD: Definitely the biggest highlight was hosting the Sheffield Shield hub in October/November of 2020. Due to the impacts of COVID-19 around Australia at the time, it made it difficult for the state teams to travel without having to isolate. Hosting the hub was a great buzz for me, especially seeing high profile Australian cricketers playing at Karen Rolton Oval/Park 25. It did come with many challenges and heavy workloads, but with the help of casual workers and our full-time staff we were able to successfully complete the hub.

One of the major projects during my apprenticeship was the redevelopment of three cricket pitch squares at Park 25. One of those redevelopments included a sub-continent red clay pitch which we were able to source the soil from our own park. Being exposed to such projects and experiences gave me a greater understanding of what it takes to plan, implement and execute such works.



Sportsfields and Grounds Graduate of the Year Award winner, SACA's Pat Dewhurst

ATM: What has been the biggest thing you have learnt about the industry during your apprenticeship?

JC: I have learnt that to be a successful sports turf manager is to be a jack-of-all-trades. From being an agronomist, a machine operator, an irrigation technician, a mechanic and weatherman through to being a competent communicator and manager, it is a truly dynamic role that constantly keeps you on your toes. I have met so many great people within this industry and it has been awesome to see that so many are there to lend a helping hand or happy to share their knowledge.

PD: The biggest thing I've learnt is the opportunities that the industry provides and the amount of knowledgeable people that are willing to help. Then there is the variety that the profession offers, whether that's within the job itself on a daily basis or working at the amazing range of first-class sports turf facilities around the country.

ATM: Talk about some of the mentors/bosses you have had and the role they have played in your development.

JC: I have been fortunate to have worked under two superintendents – Eric Dennis and

Rob Sorensen – who have had a massive role in my development as a turf manager and given me the knowledge and confidence to back myself in. I have also learnt a great deal from my TAFE lecturer Jeff Austen. Even though I have now completed my studies, he has made it clear that he will always be there if I have any questions in the future.

PD: I have been very fortunate to have had some amazing mentors and bosses throughout the early stages of my life and apprenticeship. My father Brett ran his own turf business from home and he ingrained in me the importance of work ethic which I have carried throughout my apprenticeship. My two bosses – Trent Kelly and Jake Pavlich – have taught me so much about the turf industry and exposed me to so many different aspects of it. They each have their own ways of approaching certain situations and I have learnt some great skills from them both. I also can't forget the rest of the team at SACA who along the way have had a major influence.

ATM: What do you like most about the sports turf management industry?

JC: I love spending my days outside and not knowing what the day may bring. It's those days when the sun is shining, the course is looking great and people are smiling that keep you coming back for more. It is truly a highly enjoyable and satisfying industry to be a part of and I am extremely grateful for that.

PD: I definitely love the lifestyle of the job. Even in the early days starting work with my father and being outside, I knew this was something I wanted to continue to do. I also enjoy the different aspects of the job – chemical applications, irrigation, cutting and the variety of practices that can be implemented to produce an optimal surface.

ATM: Finally, anyone you'd like to thank?

JC: Along with Eric, Rob and Jeff, I would like to thank Lakelands Country Club for taking a chance on me and making all of this possible, as well as all of my team and fellow TAFE students. I'd like to thank the GCSAWA and ASTMA for their support and the opportunities that have arisen to further my development, as well as Toro for sponsoring the award and their support of the industry. I'd also like to thank my family and my partner Amy for always being there through this incredible journey.

PD: First, I'd like to thank my mother Sue who has always supported me throughout my life and encouraged me, and my father Brett who has been a significant influence on my work life. Most importantly, everyone from SACA – I am so fortunate to be part of such a great organisation. And lastly, NT Cricket and everyone involved there – the past few months I have been in Darwin has been a wonderful experience and helped me to progress my turf knowledge and management skills. 🌱



The Sportsfields and Grounds Graduate of the Year Award finalists with Laurence Bingham and Elise Willemsen from award sponsor Toro

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PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

Melbourne memories

ATM looks back at the 2022 Australian Sports Turf Management Conference held in Melbourne in June.



The Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA) wishes to sincerely thank all delegates, major conference sponsors, trade exhibition partners and trade exhibition visitors for the highly successful 2022 Australian Sports Turf Management Conference held in Melbourne in late June.

After a number of years in the making, and with a global pandemic thrown into the mix, the combined ASTMA and Golf Management Australia (GMA) conference was hosted at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, with more than 2000 attendees coming through the doors across the week. With border restrictions easing earlier in the year, a huge contingent from Western Australia ventured across to Melbourne, while a number also travelled from New Zealand to attend.

In what proved to be a great success, the opening Plenary on Tuesday was a combined session for both ASTMA and GMA delegates, with a full hall for all talks. The Plenary featured

presentations from Canadian golf industry guru James Cronk, Paralympian Dr Jessica Gallagher, The R&A's head of sustainability Chris Gray, trend forecaster Michael McQueen and body language expert Dr Louise Mahler. The opening day culminated with the guest appearance of Melbourne Storm coach Craig Bellamy who talked about some of the tenets that have helped him develop a winning culture over many years in the NRL. As an interesting side note, Gallagher, who spoke about her upcoming appearance at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, would go on to win two gold medals in the velodrome.

Wednesday and Thursday saw ASTMA and GMA delegates break off into their various education streams, with the two-day trade exhibition running concurrently and generating a huge amount of foot traffic. A panel session involving ASTMA and GMA members was also held on the Wednesday and included superintendents Dave Mason (CSTM, The Brisbane GC) and Patrick Casey

(CSTM, Kalgoorlie GC) who joined with Gray and general managers Peter Busch (Green Acres GC) and Gavin Burt (Lake Karingup CC). Facilitated by ASTMA and GMA chief executives Mark Unwin and Paul Vardy, the panel discussed a range of current issues, with staffing and labour one of the key topics.

Following on from that Jeff Blunden also discussed the results from the recent ASTMA Labour and Resourcing Survey and some of the short-term strategies superintendents and turf managers can employ to combat current staff shortages. *(Read the survey summary and key 'take home' messages on pages 18-20.)*

The conference was also the platform for the official launch of the ASTMA's Women in Turf Strategy. In front of a packed room, delegates heard from a range of leading female figures in the sports turf management industry as well as Victoria's Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner Dr Nikki Vincent. *(Read more about the launch and the Women in Turf Strategy on pages 14-17.)*

Local turf managers also featured prominently within the Golf and Sportsfield streams. Superintendent Hayden Mead spoke about the present development of Kingston Heath's new par three course, while Blundstone Arena's Marcus Pamplin looked back on what was a hectic 12 months in Hobart which culminated in January's Ashes Test. Pamplin's presentation was nicely timed given that earlier in the week he was bestowed the ASTMA's Excellence in Sportsfields and Grounds Management Award at the National Turf Industry Awards dinner. *(Read more about Pamplin's award, pages 28-32.)*

Former Oaks Cypress Lakes superintendent Craig Molloy (CSTM), who in the weeks after the conference moved to Barwon Heads Golf Club in Victoria, teamed with PGA of Australia chief executive Gavin Kirkman and PGA tournament director Nick Dastey to talk about The Players Series (TPS) concept. They discussed working with the respective clubs and superintendents to host these events, before Molloy recounted the significant challenges faced when they hosted the inaugural TPS Hunter Valley event.

Racing Victoria tracks and facilities manager James Cataldo and capital works manager Paul O'Callaghan also presented a session on their turf management works, strategies and projects. Racing Victoria is the governing body of thoroughbred horse racing in Victoria and with more than 550 race meets held annually, the state's many racetracks need to be at their best.

Bruce Macphee, John Neylan, Jarrod Hill and Peter Manning combined to provide a comprehensive four-hour workshop on sports turf drainage. Together they broke down some of the key points involved in understanding, planning and managing drainage projects and



More than 90 companies and organisations featured during the combined ASTMA and GMA trade exhibition held across the Wednesday and Thursday of the Melbourne conference

the importance of getting the fundamentals correct. Other workshops held during the conference focused on leadership, management, communication as well as the ins and outs of managing assistants and 2ICs.

To conclude this year's conference, ASTMA and GMA delegates combined again to hear the remarkable story of another Paralympian Curtis McGrath who relayed his journey of resilience and determination after losing both his legs while serving for Australia in Afghanistan.


Running concurrently through the week was the Technicians stream, with turf equipment technicians enjoying a mixed program that included off-site visits as well as education sessions at the convention centre.

"From the volume of positive feedback we received, everyone shared the sentiment that

it was an outstanding event," says ASTMA's Unwin. "With the huge volume of attendees across the event, it was a great opportunity to bring turf managers from all over the country and overseas to continue learning, networking and to share experiences with each other."


"As one turf manager noted to me, the conference really is the flagship event for the industry and it's a great result to have a record number of attendees after a challenging few years for the industry. From an association perspective, the collaboration and discussions between the groups was exactly what we were hoping for and presents us the opportunity to continue building on this into the future."

While the ASTMA was able to conduct its conference on the Gold Coast last year, albeit hamstrung by border closures, it was the first time since 2019 that the GMA was able to

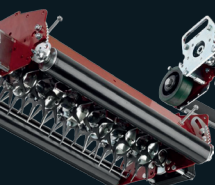


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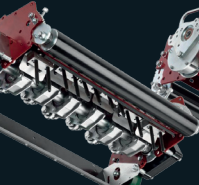
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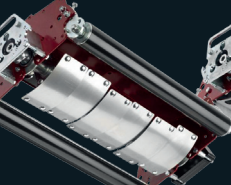
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2022 ASTMA Golf Championship winner Shaun Page tamed the brutal conditions at Huntingdale GC

hold its annual event. It was also the first time that they had joined forces with the ASTMA to conduct a combined conference and according to Vardy it was a great success.

"It was such a great feeling to be back together after extended isolation," says Vardy. "Who can put a value on the re-connections, new connections and the buzz when we cross pollinate ideas with fellow delegates, speakers and corporate partners. Our collaboration with the ASTMA was well received and a very positive experience. The ASTMA staff were great to work with and GMA staff learnt a lot."

At the conclusion of the Melbourne event it was announced that the 2023 conference will return to the Adelaide Convention Centre for the first time since 2011 from 19-22 June. The ASTMA is currently working through feedback from this year's delegate survey which will help frame planning around next year's event.

As Unwin notes in this edition's Foreword Thinking column (page 4): "While those who attended (this year) have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, there were a few areas that the ASTMA has noted where improvements can be made. Among these are areas such as ensuring consistency of themes



James Cronk wasn't peckish but used this prop as a way of illustrating the importance of customer service



Melbourne Storm coach Craig Bellamy revealed the tenets that have helped him develop a winning culture over many years in the NRL



Launceston Golf Club superintendent Scott Reid blasts out of a Huntingdale bunker

and aligning sessions, working through timings to maximise opportunities to attend sessions and continuing to offer substance and variety in session topics, content and speakers."

PAGE MASTERS HUNTINGDALE

Southern Golf Club assistant superintendent Shaun Page (CSTM) created a unique slice of history at the start of the conference week when he collected the 2022 Toro ASTMA Golf Championship played at Huntingdale Golf Club. Host superintendent Michael Freeman and assistant Damien McCartan had promised a stern test on the former Australian Masters layout and the full field which teed up certainly got that with the course having a slope rating of 136 for the day.

In what proved to be a war of attrition for many, it was Page who navigated the conditions and the course the best. Playing off a handicap of three, Page overcame



In the weeks after her Plenary session talk, Dr Jessica Gallagher won two Commonwealth Games gold medals

some tricky pin locations and blustery northerly winds to prevail by a commanding five strokes, one of the biggest margins in the championship's history. In doing so he also took the mantle of becoming the first assistant superintendent to claim the Toro Red Jacket since the ASTMA moved to its new membership category structure in 2020.

Teeing off on the 1st hole, Page shot a five-over 77, comprised of a two-over front nine and three-over back nine. Page was a model of consistency despite the tough conditions, finishing with 11 pars, six bogeys and a fine birdie on the par five 10th.

ASTMA Board member Dave Thomson (CSTM, Bermagui Country Club) wound back the clock to shoot an 82 off a five handicap to finish in a tie for second with defending champion Jordan Sherratt (South Lakes GC). Sherratt, who won last year at Coolangatta and Tweed Heads GC, began his title defence



The victorious Queensland team of Mick Pascoe, Peter Fraser, Jason Lavender and Daniel Stack



Body language expert Dr Louise Mahler was one of the most popular presenters on the opening day

on Huntingdale's tricky par four 17th (number two index) and put himself under the pump immediately with a double-bogey. Another double on the par five 6th was a further setback, although the highlight came with back-to-back birdies on holes 10 and 11. Former Red Jacket winner Anthony Toogood (Seven Mile Beach) and Cory Budden (The Sandhurst Club) finished one shot back on 83.

Josh Lacey, who just prior to the conference had shifted from Maryborough Golf Club to Sanctuary Lakes, won the Nett trophy. The three-handicapper won with 77 on a countback from Thomson. Lacey's back nine of 39 – he and Page were the only two players to break 40 on the back nine – saw him claim the trophy after Thomson's corresponding 42.

Lake Karrinyup's Fraser Brown (CSTM) also belied the tough conditions to post

a remarkable 39 points and collect the Stableford trophy. Playing off a 23 handicap, his round included two four-pointers, with 20 points posted on the front nine and 19 on the back. Next best was Mt Warren Park superintendent Jason Lavender (CSTM) with 33 and Kenton Boyd (Shotmakers) 30.

In a decision that will no doubt require a steward's enquiry over in Perth, Brown wasn't among the four-man Western Australia team named for the State competition. Going into Huntingdale aiming for a third state title in a row, Brown's absence proved costly as the WA side could only manage a third place finish.

In the end it was the Queensland team comprising of Lavender, Daniel Stack (CSTM, Windaroo Lakes GC), Mick Pascoe (CSTM, Noosa GC) and Peter Fraser (CSTM, Hervey Bay G&CC) who edged out the Victorian team headed by Page.

The longest drive prize went to scratch golfer Ben Hallam from Tea Tree Gully GC who also claimed shot-of-the-day honours after holing his approach shot for eagle on the 467m par 5 7th. Rod Tatt (Lakelands CC) took home the nearest the pin prize on the 3rd, while twos were managed by Pascoe and Budden on the 15th and Brendan Brown and Lee Sutherland on the 3rd. 🏌️



Lake Karrinyup's Fraser Brown posted a superb 39 points to prevail by six in the Stableford competition



Maleny GC superintendent Mick McCombe (right) and a fellow delegate engage during the Plenary session



Conference MC Andrew Daddo hams it up



Business was buzzing during the trade exhibition



Sanctuary Lakes' Josh Lacey may not have liked this tee shot but he would eventually claim the Nett title



Dr Louise Mahler literally had delegates singing her praises at one stage



Course design – an agronomist's view

Peter McMaugh AM ruminates on golf course design and some of its modern pitfalls.

The evolution of the game of golf has a long and varied history. Whether it originated in the low countries of Europe across the channel from Scotland or whether it originated in the Scottish seaside towns, is a question that I don't think anyone can truly answer. The one thing that is quite certain is that it was (and I hope always will be) a recreational pursuit, that is, a 'game'.

Time and the evolution of society, along with the inevitable changes in both equipment used to play the game and the multitude of different sites developed for playing the game, has put golf on a social pinnacle in the sporting world. For many, especially in the USA, what club you belong to determines your social status. There the clubhouse has become not only almost as valued an asset as the course, but perhaps in many cases an

even more valuable expression of the wealth and social status of its members. With the advent of television and the exposure of the game to a much greater passive audience of potential players, there has been a transition from golf as a nice recreational sport to golf as a business.

Last year's 200th anniversary of the birth of Old Tom Morris and his personal legendary role in the development of the modern golf era, exposed the reality of what rewards a cunning and highly successful practitioner of the game, along with his secondary skill as a greens keeping practitioner, could squeeze out of the game. When you have the reality of his rich patrons gambling on the outcome of their skills, while he stood head and shoulders above them, shows how well he adapted to the environment of his day and extracted a very comfortable living out of it.

The measure of any highly successful individual is always found in how well their ideas and practices have become part of tradition in the industry. Here we see two divergent streams – one in golf course layout and design and one in greens keeping practice. To say that Old Tom is a legend in both is probably almost belittling. He was a physical giant and a mental giant in the application of his skills and of influencing those around him. To be still influencing the industry is a tribute to his place in history.

Let us first discuss his legacy to greens keeping practice. Old Tom's most enduring practice is that of topdressing the greens with fine sand and with fine sand mixed with compost. By controlling the contents of the compost, which included raking up seaweed on the beach boundaries of the course and sieving the compost at its end point of curing,

he obtained the controlled growth he needed to ensure the surface quality of his greens. His sand topdressing assured the uniformity of their putting quality.

His practices of lifting the surface of his greens on a rotational basis – cutting out the old thatch layer before replacing the turf – has become the pinnacle of good renovation technique. We could say lots more about his practices, but enough to say that the embedding of these in historical practice and best management guidelines places him among the immortals.

The second aspect of his fame is that the links style of golf course, which he espoused and practiced in his design strategies, is the revered style aspired to by the majority of practicing golf course architects, or so they say. It is very important here to remember what he was – ‘a professional golfer’. What made him stand out from the pack was that he was not only the greatest exponent of his time, but that he understood very well the strategy of the game and how it had to be played by those less talented than himself.

Today, I am sick and tired of listening to almost every aspiring and practicing golf course architect espousing their adulation for links style golf and the traditions of the game, when being largely incapable of understanding the subtleties of what they are talking about.

Professional golfers have traditionally often tried to extend their life in golf by hanging out their shingle as golf course architects. The old adage of ‘*There is many a slip between the cup and the lip*’ applies here. This charge into golf course design has been aided and abetted by the ‘developer’ syndrome, whether it be a housing estate or a resort which ‘needs a name’ for sales purposes. This syndrome then peaks with the ‘Signature’ golf course, where only the best (i.e. the most famous) will do.



PHOTO: THE R&A

Old Tom Morris was a physical and mental giant in the application of his golfing and greens keeping skills and of influencing those around him

Professional golfers, especially those eminently successful on the Tour, are by and large considered a protected species. The assumption in all of this, and it is usually a quite invalid one, is that those who have excelled at the highest level must thereby have a total understanding of the game and, by extension, everything else that goes with it. This is just so obviously not the case, because as they develop their ‘name’ they have to take on board many specialists.

These include engineers who understand both bulk earthworks and fine finishing. Engineers who understand irrigation. Agronomists/superintendents who understand the climate of the area, the grasses available and what are best suited, as well as the

multitude of small details needed to provide the best surfaces for the game. Then there are the specialist managers who understand the timelines and what it takes to get it all done. And that doesn’t include the inevitable stuff ups which occur somewhere along the line, and mostly where you least expect it.

If you talk extensively with the project managers and construction superintendents, you will find that the ‘name’ only visits the course probably a maximum of five times in the build schedule. When he does, there are not lots of rolls of detailed drawings, but rather lots of hand waving and loud talking and instructions to move that bunker three metres to the left or right or nearer the green.

By the time it comes to opening day, then the ‘name’ has to hit the first ball off the tee (unless the owner considers himself more important) and let the advertising loose with his ‘Signature’ status ticket to perfect golf. Also now the golf writers can join the fun and decide whether the course deserves including in the top 100 courses (wherever), if that is important.

The true test comes when it opens to the public for play and at the end of the round the players say whether they enjoyed their game or not. One famous case which illustrates this is a nine-hole course on the NSW mid coast where three professional golfers joined forces to build the course. Their main design criteria was to copy their favourite holes from other courses. When it opened, a player came off the course and said “*I lost 13 balls here today and I am never coming back.*” The course was developed in a tea tree swamp forest and they cut out the fairways in a width too narrow for the public players’ spread of shot.

Another public course development at Parklea in NSW was developed on an old dairy farm by an investor whose in-laws owned

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public golf courses in Bankstown along the George's River. When he asked his brother-in-law to look at the course, his first comment on the 1st hole was "Get rid of that dam. That is where 90 per cent of public golfers will land their first shot." How right he was.

BUNKER BLUNDERS

As I watch clubs spending millions of dollars on revamping golf courses that have been revamped only a few years ago, I wonder about the sanity of the people who are making these decisions. If you dig into the whys, it is usually due to someone's ego. When I look at the end result of some of these decisions, I see some classical blunders which should have been well and truly understood, but have not been given as much attention as they needed.

The first and most obvious for me has been the failure (long-term) of the exercise of revetting bunker walls using stacked sod. It is great for the first six or seven years and then suddenly under drought the walls start to collapse and the first 300mm-450mm of the bunker face comes apart and has to be totally rebuilt.

Why hasn't the transfer of this practice from the UK to Australia been a long-term success? The reason is very simple when you understand some simple soil biology. In the UK you have different grasses than are used in Australia because of the climate and they continue to grow even when they have been piled on top of one another. The UK's traditionally soft, wet weather keeps those bunker faces alive and thriving with new roots permeating the stacked sod walls.

In Australia we have warm-season grasses which, among other things, need high levels of daylight to grow and thrive. Once stacked it is very hard for them to do so. The sod that is



PHOTO: BIGGA

The UK's cooler, wetter climate and cool-season grasses keep revetted bunker faces thriving. With a warmer climate and different grass types in Australia, this bunker style can have its downsides

stacked here also contains a high percentage of lignified stolon and rhizome material, not green shoots and lots of roots like the cool-season grasses used in the UK. This in turn gives the soil fungi, that thrive on breaking down lignified material, the stimulus they love. These fungi belong to the mushroom group. Once the strength of the wall, the strong runners and rhizomes are rotted through and the wall falls down. Whether we use an extra strong couch or a zoysia, which both have these massive rhizome systems, it is only a matter of time before they fail, especially in our climate conditions which are much warmer and drier than the UK.

Now there is a new answer, a fake wall of plastic in a sod wall lookalike. How long will it

last? From my experience with plastics on the turf scene, take the guaranteed life and halve it and you will probably be somewhere near the failure date. But what is probably more important is the environmental damage from the micro plastic breakdown products that you ultimately need to be worried about.

So what do we get out of this? No matter what solution you use, it is not going to be permanent and will need to be budgeted for replacement. Some superintendents use a dripline around the bunker edge to help keep the moisture there and to help keep the grass growing on the revetted face. Yes it may slow down the process of decay, but it won't stop it entirely. While I love the look of revetted bunker walls, remember they do have their downsides.

The second great time and money spender that I see are the huge areas of open sand that are often referred to as 'waste bunkers'. I totally agree with the use of the word 'waste' – it is very appropriate. This is especially so in courses in the natural sand dune areas in various parts of the country.

Dunes have two natural forces which cause their formation – water and wind. The latter is by far the more important when you decide to build and maintain a golf course in a natural dune area. When The Lakes Golf Club course was cut in two by Southern Cross Drive in Sydney, despite advice to the contrary the contractors opened up big areas of sand and the result was mayhem. Every night when the winds tore through, they shifted up to half a metre of sand from the surface resulting in multiple reshaping and repositioning of the watering system pipe work. In recent years big waste bunkers have been designed on this course. The result – shifting sand!

Golf like many other sports has not stayed static either in its technical development of



Bunker maintenance is the single most expensive operation on a golf course, both in high man hours and costs of repairs

Waste style bunkers, while architecturally striking, come with plenty of construction and maintenance challenges, especially in areas of high wind

equipment or in its course design response to this. Today's par 4s are yesterday's par 5s. The old standards of bunker placements have been abandoned. Every now and then somebody tries to come up with new ways of designing bunker faces and there seems to be a lot of competition between architects as to who can be the most outlandish and freakish.

One of the realities that never seems to get any consideration from golf course architects is the cost of bunker maintenance. It is the single most expensive operation on a course, both in high man hours and costs of repairs.

With today's club equipment and their technical improvements, playing out of sand has become the pimple on the pumpkin problem for most quality golfers. So for me it is far more logical to use the old truism of golf design that 'bunkers are there to guide play for the thinking golfer', but also to challenge the top level golfer to play the calculated risk when looking for the birdie or eagle chance.

Large numbers of bunkers may give you sensational visuals, but mostly I don't see any great value to play other than to slow up the play of the high handicappers.



LET THE GROUND DICTATE

Peter Thomson, that great Australian golfer, used to frequently bemoan the demise of chip and run golf in modern golf course design. This is as much a comment on how greens are sighted into the landscape of the hole as it is to the prowess of golfers. All too often greens become an architectural statement rather than an examination of golfing skill. It is far easier to read big changes in surface elevation than small subtle ones. Today the trend is to build huge greens. If you can't get a good

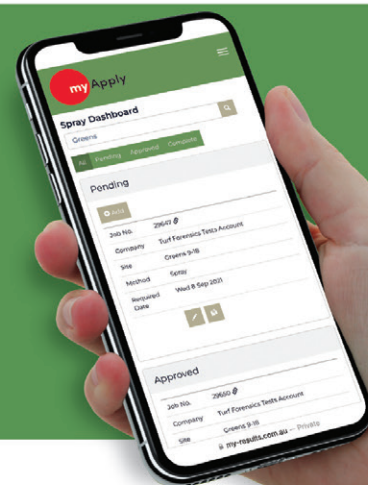
putting test on 450m² then you won't get it on something lots bigger.

It is interesting to look at some of the great names in the development of golf course architecture as a profession and probably the standout is Dr Alister MacKenzie. His most astounding attribute was his ability to draw people of talent into his working group and to keep them tied to his cause. He could listen and you see that in the development of his work. His Scots origin and his experience as a camouflage designer during World War I



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PHOTO: 'DISCOVERING ALEX RUSSELL' (RYAN PUBLISHING)

The great Alister MacKenzie (left) was a master at drawing the best local talent to work with creatively. In Australia this was typified by his involvement with Alex Russell (middle) and Mick Morcom (right)

developed his 'eye' for how well land forms were naturally there to be taken advantage of with his design ideas.

He didn't have much of a reputation in the UK and there is no doubt that his best work was done outside of his homeland, especially in the US and here in Australia. He wasn't much of a golfer either but he knew how to 'talk' golf. His ability to draw the best local talent to him and to work creatively with them is of course exemplified in his relations with Alex Russell and the Morcoms here in Australia. These were very talented men whose skills enabled MacKenzie's ideas to be perfectly translated into 3D masterpieces.

His best work is probably in the USA where his design of Cypress Point is considered as the epitome of a great golf course for the ages. It is just as successful for the social golfer as it is for the talented low marker. What's more, it stands a lot of the 'rules' of design on their head. You often hear you can't have a par 3 as an opening hole or you can't run two par 3s or two par 5s consecutively. Who says so? What he did at Cypress Point was to let the ground dictate the play.



MacKenzie's design of Cypress Point in the US is considered as the epitome of a great golf course for the ages where he let the ground dictate play

This is where I have come to see so many contemporary architects lose it. I have seen lovely natural dune sites massacred for things that don't really matter like spectator vantage points being preferred over natural greens sites. On the other end of the construction spectrum I have also seen overly slavish adherence to concepts of greens construction that in the circumstances can be ignored for much simpler and less costly solutions.

Another of my favourite gripes is that, by and large, golf course architects are much better at waving their hands around and sprouting gobbledegook about what they want, than they are at putting specific ideas into precise documents that can be used to calculate the volumes of dirt to be moved or added, so that you can get accurate costings.

Admittedly golf course architecture has to have an element of flexibility in it, so that the design intent can be fulfilled with moderate changes on the ground. No one is ever perfect with their play lines on paper, but there is a big difference between sketches of ideas and defined points of reference with proper elevation and depression levels related to the architect's original point of reference.

So where does this leave you, the practising superintendent? Whatever you do don't get caught in the middle. Don't let the stresses of a construction job get in the way of your enjoyment of life and health. I have seen too many emotional wrecks as a result of trying to stop juggernauts over which they have no control. I have seen very wise men give up top cream jobs to save their sanity and been very happy to do so. As the saying goes, 'If you choose to sup with the devil you need a long spoon'.

DRAINAGE STILL THE KEY

There is one last thing that needs to be said that gives us the complete picture for good design and that is that it has to be relatively easy to maintain. There should be a minimum of handwork and fiddly things to do. If you design problems for maintenance into a course you need whipping.

If there is one thing that stands out above everything else in great golf course design it is mastering of drainage. Drainage doesn't just relate to keeping water under control. It is equally applicable to air drainage and air movement, especially through and around green sites. If you look critically at some of the best known courses in the USA you will see huge banks of fans surrounding greens or you will see a metal lock up cabinet containing the entrance and exit for a sub air system. Answers to problems yes, but eyesores none the less.

When you look at the drainage requirements for a course you have to be able to see the big picture and to break it into manageable sections. This almost invariably means that most golf course architects look to use drainage water in water features on the course. This is great if they guide the golfer clearly, but when you see a big drain crossing a fairway at the exact expected landing area for the high handicapper you know there is something disastrously wrong in the designer's thinking.

The aim of well-designed drainage on a course is the ability to return it to play very quickly after a rain storm. If you succeed in this aim then you have the bones of excellence to build on. 🏌️



PHOTO: IDRIS EVANS (WAGG)

Proper drainage and greens construction is critical. Slavish adherence to concepts of greens construction in favour of simpler and less costly solutions is a recipe for disaster



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More in Stores

Ben Gibson kicks off a series of leadership profiles by talking to Royal Canberra superintendent Ryan Stores.

Royal Canberra Golf Club has a big chapter ahead and with superintendent Ryan Stores and incoming general manager Ben Styles there is a new era of leadership at the club. It takes great energy, motivation and dedication to plan and execute the turf and infrastructure projects that lie ahead for Royal Canberra. Approaching the end of his first 12 months in charge, I caught up with Ryan (29) to reflect on his 11-year career to date and those who have had an impact on the pathway to his current role.

Tell us about your journey in turf management that led you to Royal Canberra?

I began as an apprentice at Yowani Country Club in Canberra in late 2010. It was during this time that I fell in love with the job and knew this is what I wanted to do. Towards the end of my time at Yowani, I applied to be an intern with The Ohio Program in the USA and was placed at Quail Hollow in Charlotte, North Carolina for 13 months. I moved back to Australia and took up a position at The Australian Golf Club and after a relatively short stay I moved back to Canberra and joined the team at Royal Canberra Golf Club (RCGC).

Towards the end of 2016 I moved back to America and joined the management team at

Quail Hollow for the 2017 PGA Championship and then in mid-2018 I re-joined the team at RCGC as 3IC, eventually progressing to assistant which I held for three years. I became superintendent in October 2021, following the footsteps of my predecessors and mentors Ben Grylewicz and Jake Gibbs. Over the past seven years they have paved the way for me to move into this role and take the club forward.

Having worked at RCGC in several positions over many years, and understanding the club inside and out, I hope to be able to effect positive change both on the course and within my team and enhance sustainability for the club and my department.

You have had a new addition to the family recently? How has that shifted your perspective and has it influenced the way you lead?

My daughter Tilly was born in November last year, a month after I took over the superintendent role, so the timing was pretty intense. Being a dad hasn't necessarily influenced the way that I lead, but I now have a new-found appreciation for the meaning of 'family comes first' and I take my hat off to everyone working to find the right balance between work and home. Having a baby changes priorities and makes me want to work even harder to give her the best life possible.

What have you been working on in your first six months in the role? My priority for the first six months was to get through the summer as best as possible as I had two new assistants and a handful of new staff. Thankfully the weather was kind to us and we had record rain. Moving into winter my top priorities are my people. My goal is to continue to enhance staff culture, development and engagement as well as training and education. I'm also focused on mentoring my two assistants.

I currently have several big projects to manage that include the completion of a new irrigation system on 18 holes, planning and construction of a new state-of-the-art practice facility, implementation of a five-year machinery rollover plan, maintenance facility upgrade and working in conjunction with the general manager and the club on addressing the long-term sustainability of RCGC.

What is at the top of your priority list as superintendent? Providing good leadership and creating emotionally intelligent greenkeepers while giving my staff the practical trade skills required for them to enhance and progress their careers in turf management. Staff retention and attraction are always at the top end of my priority list. It has become increasingly difficult to find

It has been a big 12 months for Royal Canberra's Ryan Stores - taking on his first superintendent role and becoming a dad (right)

greenkeepers in recent years and one of my goals is to provide a point of difference to attract people to work here. I always keep sustainability, both from an environmental and workplace/people perspective, close to the top of my priority list as well. It's important to me to leave a legacy at RCGC, not just for today or tomorrow, but well into the future.

You have two new assistants at the club.

How have you built your leadership team and what did you focus on? I have purposefully built a leadership team that brings diverse views to the table as well as a wealth of knowledge and experience in all facets of greenkeeping. Both Jake (Smith) and Luke (Triffett) have great skill sets and really complement each other. It was important to me to bring people in with experience in managing people and experience at high-end golf clubs, agronomic knowledge and project experience to increase standards and expectations. It was important that they also had the ability to think outside the box and have big picture thinking, as RCGC is so unique. We're kicking goals already and I have no doubt we'll continue to deliver some great results for RCGC.

What does staff development look like at Royal Canberra? Staff development is one of my biggest focuses. It is vitally important to invest in staff and culture and I have put a lot of my time and effort since becoming superintendent into the governance that is required to better support the staff, both day-to-day and their future development.

Over recent months I have created individualised position descriptions that are site-specific to RCGC, as well as Professional Development Plans with KPI's for individuals to work on. Myself and the rest of the management team have also developed and implemented site- and task-specific standard operation procedures. Additional training opportunities have been given to the team for external training and education. We've got presentations from trade professionals coming up as well as some mental health training.

More recently we have facilitated the first of five interactive staff sessions which are focussing on workplace culture and where we want to head into the future together. Phil Beal, (ex-The Australian GC), is helping me out with that and providing invaluable expertise and insight. I hope that these sessions will provide the team with the foundations of what we stand for and the standards we accept and strive for.

Stores' goal is to enhance staff culture, development and engagement as well as training and education



How would you describe your leadership style? I aim to lead from the front, balancing my responsibilities as a manager while still contributing to achieving course outputs with the team. I'm collaborative in my leadership style and I find huge value in seeking my team's opinion and input. I strive to always do what is best for the team, even when that means putting myself last.

I like to think of myself as a fair boss and encourage team members to take ownership and autonomy of their work and always offer assistance and advice along the way, remaining conscious not to micro-manage.

Who has influenced your career and how? I have several people who have influenced me so far in my career:

- **Justin Haslam** (superintendent Yowani CC) – for teaching me the core skills of the greenkeeping trade.
- **Keith Wood** (director of agronomy Quail Hollow) – the hardest person I have ever had to work for! He taught me what maintained intensity means and what it does to people and an understanding of what it takes to consistently operate at a world-class level.
- **Ben Grylewicz** (former RCGC superintendent, now superintendent Indooroopilly GC) – for giving me a chance as assistant and teaching me the ins and outs of leadership roles at the golf club.

- **Jake Gibbs** (former RCGC superintendent, now director of agronomy Elanora CC) – for teaching me how to be more self-aware, people management and the business side of RCGC.
- **Matt Olson** (former RCGC general manager, now general manager at The Lakes GC) – for providing stoic leadership, guidance and advice, for believing in me and giving me a chance as superintendent.

How do you juggle the balance between people and turf in your leadership? I do my very best but it can be extremely hard. Both require equal amounts of attention, but you unfortunately can't always give it. However, people always come first. There are certainly times where you must make hard decisions and put one above the other and it's just about knowing what you can let drop momentarily while you alter your focus. I am grateful that I have a strong leadership team that is able to keep the golf course and team moving when I get tied up with the office side of the job.

In an industry predominantly made up of men, you have four women on your team.

Yes, we currently have three females on the turf team and one who looks after the office admin, who all came on board over the past two years. I have always been passionate about creating a diverse team in a predominantly male-dominated industry. Having a mix of people (and not just genders) is key to having an inclusive and diverse work culture.

When recruiting for staff, I always cast my net far and wide and advertise on multiple online platforms. Recently I have created flyers and taken them to schools, universities, TAFEs and sporting clubs. When hiring staff I don't always look for previous experience or skills, I sometimes focus more on their personality, attitude, passion and willingness to learn. 🌱





On the level

Terry Muir asks what's your club's risk appetite when it comes to using volunteers?

All organisations take risks to increase value and productivity. But how much, and what types of risk, should a golf club take when it comes to using volunteers?

Volunteers are working in high-risk arenas which presents significant inherent and residual risk to them, to others and to the business. Risk, when it comes to the safety of volunteers is "uncertainty that matters." It therefore requires a significant effort to manage this risk and the duty that the business has to its volunteers includes a legislative requirement to ensure the following:

- The provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to their volunteer's health and safety;
- The provision and maintenance of safe plant and structures;
- The provision and maintenance of safe systems of work;
- The safe use, handling and storage of plant, structures and substances;
- The provision of adequate facilities for the welfare at work of workers in carrying out work for the business or undertaking, including ensuring access to the facilities;
- The provision of any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking; and
- That the health of workers and the conditions at the workplace are monitored for the purpose of preventing illness or injury of workers arising from the conduct of the business or undertaking.

With the legal requirements in mind, before a club Board can make a decision in respect to the engagement of volunteers, it has to have some sense of their organisation's overall

appetite for risk taking. This simply means the amount of risk the club is willing to accept in engaging volunteers to help the club achieve its objectives. This should ideally be based on a club's Risk Appetite Statement.

A Risk Appetite Statement for golf club Boards will summarise a club's tolerance for risk in each of a whole range of activities undertaken by the business. Every club's appetite for risk in respect to environment, health and safety matters must be very low, particularly so when it comes to volunteer workers. Therefore, the willingness of any club to accept risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of volunteer workers must be very low.

Risk appetite matters for two key reasons. The first is that it is a compliance requirement driven by national and international risk standards, corporate governance regulations and, of course, the law. And second, the ability to understand and express risk appetite allows decision makers at all levels in the club to decide how much risk they should take in a given situation.

It is important to articulate your club's risk appetite when it comes to volunteer workers – how much risk do we face, can we take, should we take, do we want to take, will we take and how much risk are we taking when our volunteers start work? It is then ultimately management's responsibility to confirm whether the appetite for volunteer risk is in line



PHOTO: NINEFOTOSTUDIO/ADOBE STOCK.COM

with the club's strategy. Your risk appetite is the general level of risk you're willing to 'live with' after analysis of the above. In simple terms, your appetite for risk shows how willing you are to take risks. Many risk assessors refer to it as your attitude to risk – are you risk averse, a risk seeker or risk neutral?

If you are risk averse, you don't like uncertainty and you intend to take a path that is most certain even if it is least rewarding. The risk seekers type of attitude or behaviour is the opposite. They gravitate towards uncertain activities rather than more certain ones and are ready to pay a penalty to take a risk. They are people who enjoy risk and have a higher tolerance for risks and tend to underestimate their severity. They don't worry too much about repercussions and are more focused on benefits they are going to get. Generally, people are more risk-seeking in poor condition and more risk-averse in a wealthy position. The risk neutral individual possesses an indifferent attitude toward risk. They are quite calculative and they weigh all pros and cons before deciding to take a risk or not.

In summary, risk management is not just about avoiding harms. It is also about increasing the likelihood of success and understanding what might happen and acting to increase the extent and likelihood of success. If your club believes the potential gain of using volunteers exceeds the potential loss, it may be prepared to accept the risk 'as is' or make slight adjustments to elements of it.

It then becomes a simple question – "By implementing, managing and monitoring our risk controls, is the business, with confidence, prepared to accept the risks and the potential consequences?" After all, there are only two ways of dealing with a risk – it can be accepted or it can be avoided. It's all about taking the right level of the right risks. 🏌️

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TORO LAUNCHES NEW AND IMPROVED PROCORE 648S AERATOR



Toro's ProCore 648s has more than 10 new patents which help to improve productivity and performance

The recent Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Melbourne saw ASTMA Platinum Partner Toro Australia launch its new and improved ProCore 648s pedestrian aerator. Coring and aerating are some of the most crucial renovation practices that turf managers undertake on their surfaces and the new model in Toro's popular ProCore aerator lineup includes more innovative, patent-pending features and thoughtful enhancements to improve its turf-care capabilities.

"The ProCore 648 aerator has been the industry-leader and an operator favourite for years," says Brian Goodridge, product marketing manager at Toro Australia. "We are keeping everything that people love about the ProCore 648 and improving on it. We've listened to our customers and are confident they'll find that the features on the new ProCore 648s, which has more than 10 new patents, will help improve productivity, operating consistency, ease of use and, most importantly, its aerating performance."

One such improvement of the ProCore 648s is its new electronic drive control, which can maintain more consistent hole spacing when aerifying sloping terrain. Additionally, this precision control gives operators the ability to increase speed on turnarounds while also allowing for a tighter turning radius with little to no front wheel push during turns.



Operating the ProCore 648s in the 'Delayed Mode' reduces disruption of the turf surface, resulting in a faster return to pre-aeration conditions. In this mode, key operating parameters are continually monitored to ensure maximum tine depth on the first entries into the soil. In most turf conditions, this feature eliminates labour needed to repair tufted turf. Delayed Mode also allows operators to mark the spot where they want the coring head to drop or raise using the leading edge of the front tyre as their indicator, making starting and ending passes or jumping up and over an in-ground obstacle, like an irrigation head, much easier.

Goodridge says the Toro team also took a hard look at how operators use the machine to inform enhancements. Revised positioning of the controls on the console allows single-handed operation from either side of the machine, so operators can easily walk forward, reducing fatigue and allowing them to focus their attention toward the direction of travel.

Toro's InfoCenter technology has also been added to enable precise 'set and save' increments for tine depth and hole spacing, giving managers full control. Lastly, a storage box has been added and an accessory LED light kit is available.

In other company news, Toro Australia announced in May that it will start selling and servicing Ventrac tractors and attachments (pictured left) direct to customers in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory, Tasmania and northern Queensland. This follows The Toro Company's purchase in 2020 of Venture Products Inc (Ohio, USA) the manufacturer of Ventrac-branded tractors and attachments. All sales and enquiries in New South Wales and southeastern Queensland will continue to be handled by the existing Ventrac distributor.

"We are pleased to be able to offer these innovative products locally and look forward

to offering our customers the same sales and support services they already get from Toro Australia," says Goodridge. "Ventrac tractors have articulating frames to make going around obstacles easier and are able to tackle hills with up to 30-degree slopes. With over 30 different attachments available, it really maximises what can be done with just one machine."

For more information on Toro's new ProCore 648s aerator or to view the range of Ventrac tractors and attachments, visit www.toro.com.au.

BAYER GOES GOLD



In the lead-up to the recent Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Melbourne, the ASTMA announced the extension of its partnership with Bayer which has become an association Gold Partner. As long-time supporters of the turf management industry, Bayer continues its focus on supporting local turf managers and furthering education through sponsoring industry events and initiatives including the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award.

"The Bayer turf team are very excited to be further extending our strong, long-standing partnership with the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association," says James Royal, Bayer's national sales and marketing manager (turf and ornamentals). As our Bayer Environmental Science business prepares to enter a new and exciting phase in our history, our elevation to an ASTMA Gold Partner signifies the commitment our business and team have to supporting our industry and the ASTMA.

"We look forward to working with the ASTMA to address key industry issues, maintain strong industry advocacy stewardship and support high value delivery to all ASTMA members across all geographies and turf management segments. We are very proud to be a Gold Partner, as well as sponsoring the Excellence in Golf Course Management Award again this year."

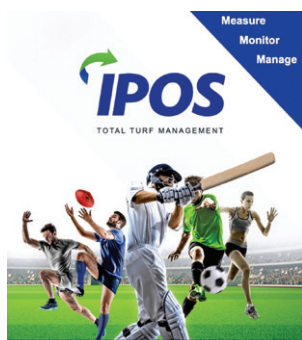
LIVING TURF LAUNCHES MY-APPLY, ACQUIRES IPOS

ASTMA Silver Partner Living Turf has recently unveiled its latest digital tool for turf managers from Turf Forensics – My-Apply. My-Apply is cloud-based platform that helps to plan, allocate, execute and securely store spray/spread records inside Living Turf's My-Results accounts.

The company's experience with Precision Turf, a professional spraying and spreading service for sportsfields and urban green space, led to the development of My-Apply. My-Apply allows for complete traceability of applications through the generation of an informative spray record. Mobile device friendly and applicable to all turf venues, My-Apply can help turf managers to:

- Plan and program treatments, up to 12 months in advance;
- Activate approved applications to spray technicians for in-field completion;
- Verify information, approve and save spray records;
- Search a secure log of digital spray records any time; and
- Manage all site details and product information seamlessly in one place.

Living Turf technical director Dr Henk Smith says My-Apply is "designed from the



ground up for flexibility, control and ultimately compliance. Most turf managers already have a My-Results account to access all their analytical test results, so it makes perfect sense to accommodate their spray record compliance in the same place."

Available from the sales agronomy team, activation of this subscription-based service comes with one-on-one training from the Living Turf technical support team.

Shortly after the launch of My-Apply, at the start of July Living Turf also announced the acquisition of IPOS Consulting. Living Turf will integrate the IPOS sports ground management information system into its Turf Forensics suite of digital tools and represent it through its network of sales agronomists throughout Australia and New Zealand. IPOS Consulting is the brainchild of Gerry Charlton, a local government specialist from South Australia.

"Gerry has built the IPOS software based on best practice principles and it deserves

the broad platform that Living Turf provides," says chief executive Rob Cooper. "We believe the IPOS sports ground management and risk assessment system, combined with its associated safety product solutions, will be of great interest to all local government and open space managers."

As a result of the acquisition, IPOS staff Peter Harfield (formerly Blackwood Golf Club and Scotch College, SA) and Craig James (formerly City of Onkaparinga, SA), along with Charlton, will join the Living Turf team.

WOODS TO HELM PACE TURF

Founders of PACE Turf, Drs Larry Stowell and Wendy Gelernter, announced in late June its acquisition by Dr. Micah Woods, president and chief scientist of the Asian Turfgrass Center (ATC). Woods will become director of the science-based online turfgrass management information service, with Stowell and Gelernter becoming visiting research directors. Woods will continue to oversee ATC research and education programs as he expands PACE Turf to meet the needs of today's turfgrass management community worldwide.

INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS PEART TAKES ON SYNGENTA TSM ROLE



ASTMA Gold Partner Syngenta has announced two new appointments on both sides of the Tasman in recent months.

Andrew Peart (pictured top)

has joined the team in the role of territory sales manager for Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, based out of Melbourne, while **Bevan**



Houghton (pictured bottom) has been appointed as NZ business development manager. Peart's position became available due to the promotion of **Peter Frewin** to the newly created role of national sales manager for turf and landscape.

"Andrew is a very experienced turf manager and we are excited to have him join the team, working alongside our business partners and turf managers in southern Australia," says Paul Jackson, business manager for turf and landscape ANZ. "Andrew will be a valuable asset and can continue his passion of working with turf managers to create outstanding turf surfaces."

Peart has over 30 years' experience in the industry, including 15 years with AGCSATech, the ASTMA's technical division. Peart joined the ASTMA in 2002 after earlier holding positions as a production manager at Evergreen Turf and then technical officer with Turfgrass Technology. Together with John

Neylan he helped to establish AGCSATech before being promoted to senior agronomist after the departure of Neylan in 2011. He held that role until 2016.

Peart returns to the turf industry after a stint on the family farm in the Gippsland region and started his new role in mid-July. He can be contacted on 0473 639 466 or email andrew.peart@syngenta.com.

Peart's announcement followed Houghton's appointment to the role of business development manager of Syngenta Turf & Landscape New Zealand in late May. Houghton has worked in the industry for over 25 years, including on multiple golf courses in the North Island of New Zealand. For the past nine years he worked for PGG Wrightson Turf as a territory and site manager, servicing the Auckland region.

NUTURF NABS BRADBURY



Shortly after announcing he was departing as superintendent of Eastlake Golf Club, **Nathan Bradbury** (pictured) has taken up a NSW territory manager role with ASTMA Silver Partner Nuturf.

Bradbury, the immediate past president of the NSWGCSA, started his new role in June and joins the company after a 12-year stint as superintendent of one of Sydney's leading public access facilities. During that time he made numerous improvements to the course and was bestowed the ASTMA's Claude

Crockford Environment and Sustainability Award at the 2020 national conference.

"Nathan's passion for and commitment to the turf industry is second to none and we're absolutely thrilled to have him join the Nuturf team during an exciting period of expansion and investment," says Nuturf national sales manager Andrew Melville. Based out of Nuturf's Sydney office and warehouse sites, Bradbury can be contacted on 0418 102 227 or by email nathan.bradbury@nuturf.com.au.

BAYER APPOINTS KERNKE



ASTMA Silver Partner Bayer has appointed **Amy Kernke** (pictured) to the position of digital and brand marketing lead for its Environmental Science

business unit, based in Melbourne. Kernke is a dynamic and strategic marketing leader with extensive experience across global retail FMCG organisations and complex categories working in both marketing and national account management roles.

Her most recent role as brand, CX and innovation manager at Hallmark saw her lead Hallmark's digital transformation and development of their e-commerce platform, in addition to the management of consumer marketing and customer experience for the business including seasonal executions and new product releases. Kernke began her role in late May and can be contacted by email amy.kernke@bayer.com.

The PACE Turf subscription information service delivers online, science-based solutions to turf management problems using site-specific climate, weather and pest forecasting systems, breaking research news, information and expert advice that is customised for each PACE Turf member location. The website also hosts an extensive collection of turf management tools and guides, including the widely used Climate Appraisal form, that is available free of charge as a public service. For more information on PACE Turf and ATC, visit www.paceturf.org and www.asianturfgrass.com.

BBE ACQUIRES INCA CONTROL



Brown Brothers Engineers Australia, part of the AxFlow Group, has announced its acquisition of INCA Control, a manufacturer of control panels for pumps in agricultural, industrial and commercial

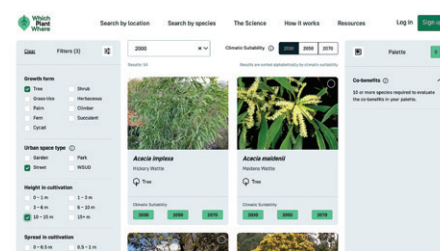
settings. With the acquisition of INCA Control, Brown Brothers Engineers will become a full-service provider for water boosting pressure systems in Australia.

INCA Control is a family-owned business with an operational history surpassing 50 years. Located in Glendenning, Sydney, the company is involved in the pumping field supplying control systems for water sump drainage, water pressure systems including variable speed drives, water booster or transfer systems and fire pump controls to AS 2941 for diesel and electric pumps. All these systems incorporate level, pressure and all associated control measuring devices.

"INCA Control has been a reliable supplier to Kelair Pumps and Brown Brothers Engineers

in both New Zealand and Australia for several years," says John Inkster, managing director of Brown Brothers Engineers Group. "They are very well respected in the market for their technical competence and high-quality products. Control panels constitute a critical part of a pump installation. Having them in our portfolio will enable us to grow the aftermarket offering for the many pump installations that we service today."

'WHICH PLANT WHERE' ONLINE SELECTOR TOOL LAUNCHED



Local governments, landscape architects and urban greening professionals can now determine which plants will survive where over the next 50 years using a new tool. The initiative has been delivered through Hort Innovation, and led by Macquarie and Western Sydney Universities, as part of a five-year research project titled 'Which Plant Where'.

The Which Plant Where plant selector tool is the first of its kind in Australia and according to program manager Gwilym Griffiths will be essential for stakeholders looking to future-proof their urban greening projects. "It will become an invaluable resource to ensure we are making the right decisions when it comes to plant selection," says Griffiths. "Our living green assets play such an essential role in our urban environments; we cannot afford to play

the guessing game when it comes to investing in our future."

The online tool will provide users with the option of a free or paid subscription. Information on over 2500 plant species, their performance and climate functionality will be freely available to all users, as will numerous best practice guides covering topics such as plant selection, plant procurement and urban tree management.

The subscription version will include plant climate suitability information with maps highlighting changes in climate suitability for plants under predicted climate change scenarios in 2030, 2050 and 2070. The ability to build plant palettes, access information such as carbon and shade values and allow users to directly download a spreadsheet to send to the nursery to check for availability are also added functions of the subscription version.

Joanna Cave, chief executive of Greenlife Industry Australia, says that the tool will have countless benefits for the broader greenlife industry. "Growers will be able to use the tool to help guide their own stocking decisions based on the areas and market segments they are targeting. It can also be a valuable tool for sales teams at production and retail nurseries.

"Perhaps most importantly, it will allow customers, including local government, landscape architects, landscapers and town planners to make climate-ready purchase decisions that benefit our communities of today and tomorrow. Climate change is not going away, so being able to plan stock mitigates the risk of losing species that may not be able to cope in the coming decades."

To book a demonstration on how to use the Which Plant Where selector tool, contact whichplantwhere@mq.edu.au.

INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS

ICL SECURES STUBBS



ASTMA Bronze Partner ICL has appointed **Paul Stubbs** (pictured) to the role of technical sales manager – turf and landscape for NSW, the ACT, SA, Victoria and Tasmania. Stubbs has been involved in the turf and landscape industry for over 20 years and has a Masters in Turf Management (Sydney University). He has been an award-winning apprentice greenkeeper and worked various roles on golf courses including construction, irrigation, staff training and as a superintendent. Paul has also run lawn and landscape businesses and sold turf equipment.

Stubbs will support K&B Adams which was recently appointed as the exclusive distribution partner for ICL products in NSW, the ACT, SA and Victoria, as well as TasTurf Solutions in Tasmania. Stubbs began his role in mid-June and can be contacted on 0400 100 078 or email paul.stubbs@icl-group.com.

BURGESS JOINS K&B ADAMS



K&B Adams has appointed former Northern Golf Club course superintendent **Greg Burgess** (pictured) to the role of technical sales representative for Victoria. Burgess has been involved in the turf industry for over 26 years and has a Master's Degree in Agriculture – Turf Management through Sydney University.

Burgess has had a diverse career in turf management, holding a number of roles both in Australia and overseas. Earlier in his career he was an assistant superintendent at Eastlake and Mona Vale clubs in Sydney before heading to Bali where he was course superintendent at New Kuta Golf and Ocean View. While there he prepared the course and staff for the men's 2010 Enjoi Jakarta Indonesian Open and the 2010 Indonesian Ladies Open. He was also a senior agronomist for Sports Turf Solutions based in Malaysia.

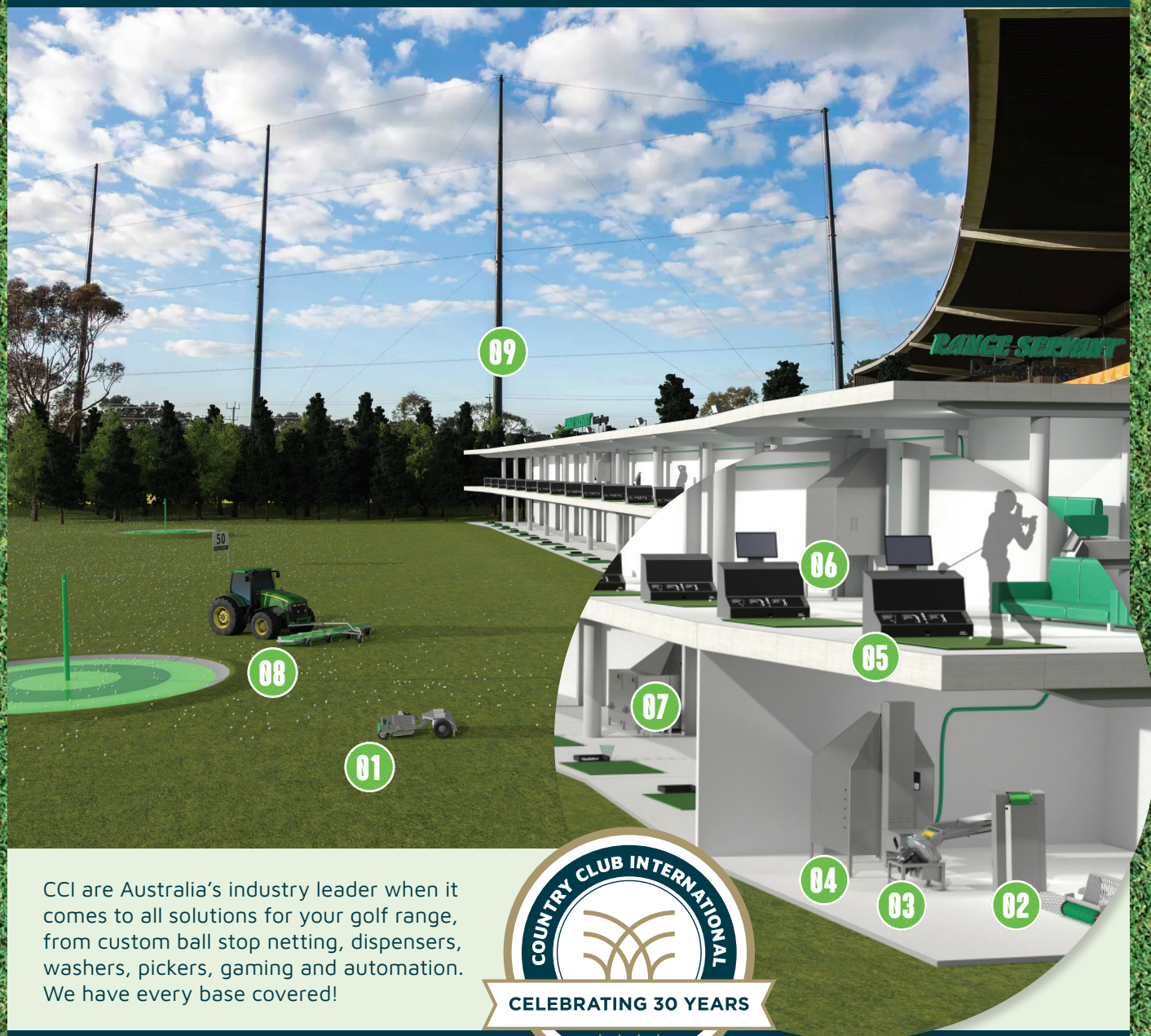
Returning to Australia, he was appointed assistant superintendent at New South Wales Golf Club, before heading to Victoria where he held superintendent roles at Portsea and Northern golf clubs. Burgess can be contacted on 0422 231 183, via head office on 1800 887 343 or email greg@kbadams.com.au.

SKELTON TO SPORTENG



Lucas Skelton (pictured) has joined Melbourne-headquartered Sporteng as a new field of play team leader. Skelton arrives at Sporteng with over 20 years' experience in the horticultural industry, initially cutting his teeth at Metropolitan and The Heritage golf clubs in Melbourne before heading to Vietnam where he was superintendent at Montgomerie Links. For the past 10 years he has worked at the City of Monash, rising to be manager of the horticultural team.

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STA VIC



STA Victoria conducted its annual Sports Turf Seminar at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 14 July with a record number of sponsors and delegates attending. Primary sponsor for the day was Bayer and the committee thanks them for their continued support over many years. A big thanks also to our sponsor members who set up tables around the perimeter of the room, enabling plenty of networking to take place during the breaks.

This year we were delighted to have **Tony Jones** as MC and guest speaker and meteorologist **Jane Bunn** who both stole the show with their professionalism, knowledge and humour. The room was silent more so than I can remember in the last seven years anyway! I can only think that we 'hit the nail on the head' with the program of excellent speakers and talent.

STA Victoria president **Mark Doyle** kicked off proceedings by welcoming attendees and conducting the Annual General Meeting. Mark made mention of the huge contribution made to the association over many years by **John Cann** and **Jim Porter** who are retiring from the committee. New committee members **Jasmine Cooke** (Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust - MOPT) and **Nathan Tovey** (Turf Breed) were also welcomed. The full STA Victoria committee comprises:

- **President:** Mark Doyle
- **Secretary:** Hugh Gardner
- **Treasurer:** Garry Woolard
- **General Committee:** Steve Cole, Jasmine Cooke, Ash Duncan, Erik Kinlon, Justin Lang, Ant Lewis, John Shannon and Nathan Tovey

Life membership awards were presented to two very worthy recipients – **Garry Woolard** for his 20-plus years on the committee and **Danny Edmunds** after 10-plus years on the committee. The following day on LinkedIn, Danny posted: *"I am pretty humbled by this recognition made by my turf industry peers for my contributions and achievements over the past 25 years. Receiving this award is both an honour and a privilege and one I truly did not expect!"*

MOPT's **Adrian Black** was acknowledged with an Industry Recognition Award after many years serving on the committee and for his ongoing unconditional support of the STA Victoria and turf industry as a whole. Thank you also to **Grant Greenway** (ETP Turf) who has stepped up at AGMs to take over voting for many years now and has generously provided storage space for the association's historical papers.

Delegates enjoyed a great line-up of speakers during the day, with Bayer research manager **Jyri Kaapro** discussing research results and use of their new product Tetrino on



Jyri Kaapro talks on Bayer's new Tetrino insecticide at the STA Victoria seminar in July

scarab larvae. It has a new active ingredient (tetraniliprole) and is absorbed via roots and shoots. It has broad spectrum control of scarabs, stem weevil, caterpillars and billbug.

Flemington Racecourse senior manager **Liam O'Keeffe** provided an overview of the tracks and facilities and racetrack preparation for their many meetings, while association secretary **Hugh Gardner** provided an education update which included a discussion on the changes and the benefits for future apprentices. Hugh introduced **Jayde Robson**, **Scott Nicolson** and **Nathan Andrews**, all recipients of STA Victoria Graduate of the Year awards. Grant Greenway spoke about NDVI technology that although around for decades can now be used with small hand held units for performance monitoring, benchmarking, plant health and density among others.

Guest speaker **Jane Bunn** is a highly credentialed meteorologist with an infectious enthusiasm for the weather. Jane explained the two elements needed for rain – tropical moisture and low pressure – and shared tools she uses to monitor weather patterns and provide actionable data for us all. **Jyri Kaapro** then stepped back onto the stage to share a controlled test Bayer did on the application of Specticle on kikuyu during times outside of spring. **Erik Kinlon**, business development manager at HG Turf Group, also came along to discuss hybrid grass systems for sportsfields.

Tony Jones changed hats from his role of MC and keeping proceedings running smoothly throughout the day to entertain us with stories from "the ever changing landscape of sports media and the influence and use of social media".

'Constructing a Demon' was the title of the panel presentation which included **Adrian Black**, **Jarrold Hill** (Sporteng) and **David Drohomirecki** (Pitchcraft). They discussed the challenges that arose during the upgrade of Melbourne Football Club's training ground at Gosch's Paddock. Adrian showed us how MOPT has evolved over the years and explained how the Punt Rd corner was constructed to enable three different sporting codes (soccer, AFL and rugby league) to train. Jarrold shared how the tree protection zone became a limiting factor on how they could get trucks in and out and the tree rootzone became the minimum level around the outside

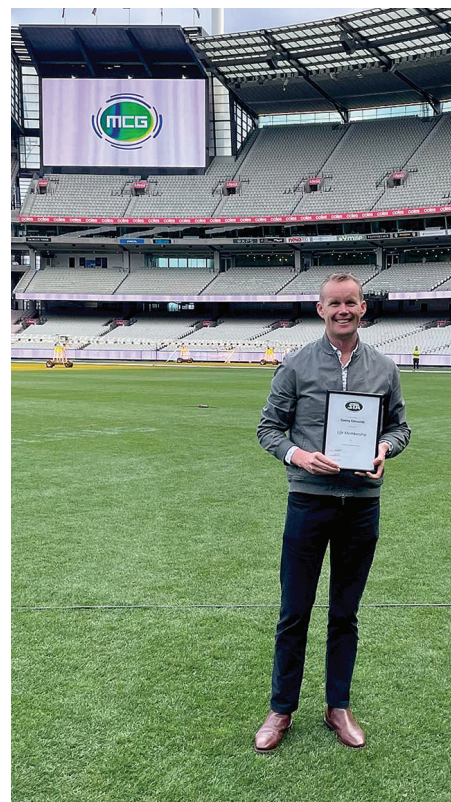


PHOTO: DANNY EDMUNDS/LINKEDIN

Danny Edmunds was awarded life membership for his services to STA Victoria over many years

of the ground. This, at least in theory, had the added benefit of minimising excavation and speeding up production.

David explained the challenges of working with VicRoads and Transurban and the resulting effort of moving 2700 tonnes of drainage gravel (70 trucks and trailers) and 8300 tonnes of sand. This fantastic panel was moderated by Erik Kinlon and we thank all participants for such an interesting discussion.

Delegates then joined **Michael Salvatore** for a chat on the hallowed MCG turf and tour to round off a great day. A big thank you to all who spoke, attended and organised – it really was a great day.

The STA Victoria committee and members would also like to thank **Jan Fenton** for her hard work and dedication over the past seven years. Jan has decided to retire from her role of administration officer with the association and we wish her all the best in retirement.

The next STA Victoria event will be the Pitch Preparation Day in early September. This will be a hands-on practical day allowing delegates to use all the machinery and equipment required to prepare a turf cricket pitch. The day is suitable for new people who have not prepared a cricket pitch before and experienced curators. We will split into two groups (experienced and little to no experience) to allow participants to get the most out of the day. A date and venue was still to be confirmed at the time of writing.

MARK DOYLE
PRESIDENT, STA VICTORIA

With the stalemate of 2020 and 2021, it has been a relief to resume regular VGCSA events and activities, leading to a productive year so far. After two years of cancellation setbacks, finally our members had the chance to attend the VGCSA Country Meeting held at the Murray Downs Golf and Country Club (MDGCC) at the start of August.

Although there were some last minute cancellations due to illness, about 95 members and trade representatives were able to attend the two days. The region provided spectacular weather on day one for a tremendous afternoon of 4-ball Ambrose. We commend host superintendent **Terry Dewhurst** and his dedicated team for presenting such an impressive course. Congratulations to the following golf winners who celebrated on Monday night with presentations and prizes courtesy of Oasis Turf;

- **Winning team:** Tim Warren (Glenelg GC), Shane Greenhill (Sorrento GC), Mark Matehaere (EnvoyGolf) and Theo Maroulakos (McMahons)
- **Runner-up team:** Greg Burgess (K&B Adams), Paul Irvine (Howlong GC), Liam Scott (Frankston GC) and Marc Raymond (Waterford Valley GC)
- **NTP:** Rohan Strauss (Yarrowonga Mulwala GC)
- **NTP and longest drive:** Erik Kinlon (HG Sports Turf)

Day two comprised a full program of indoor and outdoor trade presentations plus informative talks by guest speakers **Richard Forsyth, Tim Warren** and **Mark Matehaere**. With each speaker exploring the theme of 'career', the sessions offered diverse elements, expertise and insight – from showcasing experiences of long life careers to industry observations and advice from a recruiter's perspective. As resident turfgrass agronomist for the VGCSA, guest speaker **John Neylan** also discussed the results of the 2021 VGCSA winter research trials. The latter part of the day



After an absence of two years, the VGCSA Country Meeting made a welcome return in August, this time at Murray Downs Golf and Country Club outside of Swan Hill

two program culminated in an educational course walk led by Terry Dewhurst, followed by the ever-popular Open forum.

Special thanks to MDGCC for their warm hospitality and to all our attending members, guest speakers and the following trade sponsors for their great contribution – Anco Seed and Turf, Bayer, Brandt/John Deere, Colin Campbell Chemicals, Greenway Turf Solutions, Living Turf, Oasis Turf, Pacific Coast Design, Rain Bird, Syngenta Australia, Toro Australia, Turfcare Australia and Turf Culture.

Our next main event will be the VGCSA October education meeting at Ballarat Golf Club where the day will focus on communication processes. It will feature special guests **Jeff Powell** (superintendent) and **Lloyd Miller** (general manager) from Ballarat GC, **Kate Torgersen** and **David Flood** (both Environmental Golf Solutions) and The National Golf Club course manager **Leigh Yanner**.

Due to popular demand, the VGCSA will be delivering a final irrigation training session for the year in late August, while in November we are pleased to be holding a fungal/nematode microscope masterclass with facilitator **Dr Phil Ford**.

In addition to our upcoming program of activities, we recently announced the inaugural VGCSA-John Deere NZ Scholarship. Due to take place in April 2023, the scholarship will

entail a one-week work experience residency at Tara Iti Golf Club, with further training at FMG Stadium and an educational tour of the Tieke Golf Estate in the Waikato district. With more professional development opportunities on the horizon, we look forward to launching the VGCSA 2023 event program shortly.

MARY NAPIER CHIEF EXECUTIVE, VGCSA

ON THE MOVE...

SIMON BLAGG: From assistant superintendent The Lakes GC, NSW to superintendent Eastlake GC, NSW.

MIKE BOSLEY: From Thaxted Park GC, SA to superintendent West Parks Beach, SA.

GREG BURGESS: From superintendent Northern GC, Vic to technical sales representative – agronomy with K&B Adams, Vic.

MICHAEL CAMPBELL: Elevated to superintendent Duntryleague GC, NSW.

HEATH CRAWFORD: After 20 years as coordinator of turf management for the City of Boroondara in Melbourne, Crawford and his family have headed to Queensland. In late July he started as a contract manager at Urban Maintenance Systems.

SCOTT IRVINE: From superintendent Latrobe GC, Vic to Maroondah City Council, Vic.

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GCSAQ Golf Course Superintendents Association of Queensland

It is great to see everyone's event calendars filling up again and the industry getting back to face-to-face meetings, events and conferences across the state and the country. The GCSAQ welcomed over 60 members and guests to the GCSAQ Suncorp Stadium tour and lunch on 14 June. Suncorp Stadium ground manager **Mal Caddies** provided an educational tour of the facility and discussed turf and operational management for the various sports they accommodate during the year. The team then made their way to the Caxton Hotel for lunch and a few drinks.

A number of GCSAQ members attended another successful Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Melbourne in June. As per previous years, all members were invited to meet for a drink on the Tuesday night at the Tessie Pearl Hotel on Southbank.

The GCSAQ was proud to support the Turf Queensland and STA Paddock to Pitch Regional Field Day on Thursday 4 August in Mackay. The event was a great success



Ground manager Mal Caddies took GCSAQ members on a tour of Suncorp Stadium in mid-June

with over 50 delegates in attendance. The association is also looking forward to supporting the GTS 21C education day on 1 September 2022. Our 2022 AGM was also held at Palmer Cooloom Resort on Tuesday 23 August. It was fantastic to get together and have a round following AGM formalities.

Royal Queensland Golf Club is proud to once again be hosting the 2022 Australian PGA Championship from 24-27 November

2022. An exciting opportunity exists for people in the industry to be part of the event by assisting in preparing the course for tournament conditions. If this is of interest to you, please contact host superintendent **Adam Mills** at course@rqgolf.com.au or on (07) 3633 6500.

PAUL MCLEAN
PRESIDENT, GCSAQ

ACTSTMA ACT Sports Turf Managers Association

There was a record attendance at Thoroughbred Park in Canberra in late July for the ACT Sports Turf Managers Association (ACTSTMA) education seminar. Over 150 attendees heard from a variety of speakers, with the diversity of presentations providing great insights on the similarities and variances in aspects of turf management and leadership.

Sessions started with host turf manager **Adam Ayre** discussing turf maintenance practices at Thoroughbred Park ahead of race meetings, followed by Club Catalina course superintendent **Dennis Grounds** presenting on the zoysia trials and irrigation upgrades undertaken at the course. ASTMA senior agronomist **Bruce Macphee** presented on irrigation auditing and turf health assessments using drone technology, before head curator from Garangula Polo Club, **Kyle Murray**, discussed field preparation and maintenance requirements for national and international tournaments.

Manuka Oval head curator **Tom Fahey** presented on the challenges faced and

the innovative solutions put in place by the grounds team during last summer's hectic schedule of domestic, national and international cricket, while former Eastlake Golf Club superintendent **Nathan Bradbury** discussed his ASTMA Claude Crockford Environmental Award and the approach to sustainability at his former course. The Toolbox Team's **Ben Gibson** also delivered a session on the importance of communication and leadership relating to mental health.

Feedback from the record number of attendees was outstanding on the organisation and variety of the event, and thanks goes to each of the event sponsors for their continued support of education opportunities to the industry.

Following the seminar, the ACTSTMA AGM was held with the following committee appointed for the coming year:

- **President:** Peter Dunn (Federal GC)
- **Vice-president:** James Correll (Green Options)
- **Secretary:** Jon Tait (Green Options)
- **Treasurer:** Chris Bale (Yowani GC)
- **Committee:** Ryan Stores (Royal Canberra GC), Scott Fogg (Living Turf), Simon Snedden (Gold Creek CC), Andy Middleton (CANTURF), Bruce Davies (CIT), Dave Mann (ACT Government), Brandon Williams (Yowani GC), Adam Ayre (Thoroughbred Park), Campbell Griggs and Chris Patrick (both Murrumbidgee GC).



Club Catalina superintendent Dennis Grounds presents at the July ACTSTMA seminar

ACTSTMA COMMITTEE

MOGFORD TAKES SAGCA REINS



Paul Mogford (pictured) of Crafter + Mogford Golf Strategies has been elected as the new president of the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects (SAGCA) at its AGM held in Melbourne in June. Mogford takes over from Harley Cruze who retired from the role, with Justin Trott elected as vice-president and Paul Reeves continuing in his role as honorary secretary/treasurer.

"It is an incredible honour to have been elected by my colleagues to the position of president," says Mogford. "I would sincerely like to thank Harley for his tenure these past four years and hope to follow on from his good work."

"An ongoing focus for our society and members is to meaningfully contribute to the betterment of our game. This comes through positive environmental stewardship and sensitive design via our ongoing input to Golf Australia's GC2030 Strategy and collaboration with our colleagues at the European Institute of Golf Course Architects and the American Society of Golf Course Architects via our Global Advisory Board participation.

"In addition, a keen area of focus for our society going forward is on accessible golf and the women's game to provide more playable and enjoyable golf through our design initiatives."



While winter is usually a slow period for us down in the south, there is plenty of action happening, especially in the bottom half of the state.

Superintendent of the 7mile course development, **Anthony Toogood**, has three holes and the practice area of his Toro irrigation system commissioned, with seed also being sown as we speak on these areas. For those unaware of this development, 7mile is the brainchild of Tasmanian professional golfer **Mat Goggin**. It is located near the Hobart Airport and is designed by Clayton, Devries and Pont. As the photos (right) indicate, the course is located on a spectacular parcel of land affording incredible views of the Hobart surrounds and Derwent River.

The TSTMA has pencilled in a date to possibly have a field trip to the site around December, so hopefully members and others can find some time to attend. It certainly will be an amazing opportunity to see a course in the construction stage, one that does not come along that often.

Speaking of field days, the Baker Group has kindly offered to host one at Churchill Park in September. Subsoil and landscaping works, drainage and irrigation were all part of this development so there will be something that will interest everyone as well as be a great



With vistas like this, it's no wonder the new 7mile course development in Hobart has the industry talking

chance to get away for the day before the growing season hits us.

The new TSTMA committee has already had a couple of meetings with some fresh ideas for our annual conference in 2023. We have identified the need to keep encouraging ALL parts of the sports turf industry and are committed to strengthening all lines of communication, not just with members, but also non-members and volunteers.

A new TSTMA logo has been created (see above) and we are also in the process of establishing a Facebook page and new interactive website. We look forward to showcasing these, so watch this space!

RICHARD LANCASTER
TSTMA COMMITTEE



PHOTO: LUKAS MICHEL VIA MAT GOGGIN/LINKEDIN

ON THE MOVE...

JOSH LACEY: From superintendent Maryborough Golf & Bowls Club, Vic to foreman Sanctuary Lakes GC, Vic.

CRAIG MOLLOY: From superintendent Oaks Cypress Lakes Resort, NSW to superintendent Barwon Heads GC, Vic.

RYAN MCNAMARA: From assistant superintendent Rosanna GC, Vic to superintendent Northern GC, Vic.

WILL OCKENDEN: From superintendent Goulburn GC, NSW to superintendent The Links Shell Cove, NSW.

MARC RAYMOND: From superintendent Heidelberg GC, Vic to superintendent Waterford Valley Golf, Vic.

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MARK MITCHELL AND JIM CLEMENTS

The Australian turf education community lost two long-serving stalwarts in July and August with the passing of former Ryde College TAFE teacher Mark Mitchell and Western Australia industry icon Jim Clements. Both gentlemen played key roles in the delivery of turf management education at all levels in their respective states and were popular figures who helped to nurture the next generation of turf managers.

A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE



Formerly the head curator of Barker College in Sydney before turning his hand to turf management teaching through Ryde College TAFE, Mitchell (61) was a much-loved figure within the NSW turf industry who mentored a legion of current day turf managers.

Colleagues within the industry were quick to pay tribute to a man who was a passionate advocate for turf management education, as well as having an infectious personality that touched all those around him.

Former 2011 ASTMA Distinguished Service Award winner and turf education luminary Frank Dempsey was one of many to honour his close friend and former teaching colleague, remembering Mitchell as a natural organiser and team builder who always made you laugh.

"I first met Mark in 1980 when he attended Ryde TAFE as an apprentice greenkeeper," reflected Dempsey. "He was a fresh-faced, smart, streetwise and cheeky young guy. The things from those times that stood out was that he was funny and attracted others to him. He was very popular in the group and he had a passion for the sportsturf industry."

"After Mark completed his studies I lost contact with him until we met again at the Millennium Turfgrass Conference in Melbourne. At that conference there was a lot of talk and enthusiasm for setting up a TGAA NSW association similar to the one running in Victoria at that time. As well as Mark, others interested were Tom Parker, Graeme Logan and Bill Rawlings and this started the TGAA NSW which after many years turned into STA NSW. Mark was a very keen and enthusiastic committee member and we would rotate the monthly meeting locations. I remember having many meetings at Barker College in Sydney when Mark was in charge there."

"As years passed, I asked Mark if he was interested in some part-time teaching of greenkeeping apprentices at Ryde College. He said 'yes' and so began a love affair with Mark and the profession of teaching. Mark was a natural and gifted teacher – funny, smart, caring and kept the language and concepts so they were easily understood. To say he was



Mark Mitchell (centre) worked tirelessly to promote solid, practical turf management education. He is pictured here at the 2015 National Turf Education Working Group Validation Meeting held at Holmesglen TAFE in Melbourne

popular with students was an understatement and he rose to become a full-time teacher and eventually went on to become Acting Head Teacher of Sportsturf Management at Ryde TAFE and did a great job.

"One of the things that Mark was great at doing was making you laugh in the workplace. He was a natural and made the places he worked at very enjoyable."

It was during his days at Ryde College that Mitchell became involved with the National Turf Education Working Group (NTEWG) which was formed in 2003 following the 19th Australian Turfgrass Conference in Adelaide. The NTEWG monitors the educational pathway within the turf industry and makes recommendations on all issues affecting the pathway and its delivery.

ASTMA events and education manager Simone Staples has been on the NTEWG since its inception and remembers Mitchell's ongoing passion and drive for the work the group was doing and the many wonderful contributions (and laughs) he gave during his time on the committee.

"I first met Mark in the mid-90s when he and Bill Rawlings organised a group of Sydney private school curators to attend the TGAA Victoria Cricket Wicket Seminar," recalls Staples. "After his time at Barker College, Mark's passion turned to education. Ever the grass-roots man, Mark wanted what was best for the industry and worked tirelessly to promote solid, practical education and was against the watering down of turf qualifications. He was actively involved in the NTEWG from its inception until his retirement due to antiphospholipid syndrome in 2018."

"Mark was a loveable larrikin. If any student was struggling with label rate

calculations, they were quickly educated in 'Mitch Math 101', which was essentially live decimal horse racing odds! Over the past few years he had a number of health issues but always stayed positive and never let his friends see just how bad it was. Sadly we didn't get a chance for one final catch up and he leaves a big empty space in all our lives. Our thoughts and deepest condolences go to the love of his life Janelle, and their children Matt, Dillon and Kayla."

A WONDERFUL EDUCATOR



Jim Clements was the inaugural winner of the CH Bailey and Sons' Perpetual Shield (for best turf graduate) in 1982 and went on to become a much-loved and highly respected

turf lecturer in Western Australia, heading the TAFE turf department with fellow state icon Lin Hambleton who passed away in June 2016.

"A gentleman always, generous, intelligent and a wonderful educator," wrote the STA WA in tribute to Clements. "Jim stayed in touch with our industry even in retirement, always attending our turf awards evenings every year, right up until he could no longer do so. It is a given that Jim will be sadly missed by his lovely family and many in our industry."

"There are never the right words at these sad times, however, we know that Jim always knew he was respected, valued and honoured by those he taught over the many years, and by all of us in the WA turf industry lucky enough to have known him personally. A gentle and kindly soul, who will be sadly missed. Our deepest sympathy to his very lovely wife Joan and all the family." ۞

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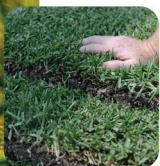
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