



Turfgrass

Council accolades

Boroondara, Holdfast Bay
scoop national awards

Beyond the fairways

Mount Lawley GC's
environmental focus

Great expectations

Race against time for
Graduate of the Year

Devonport CC's core asset

Walker leads Tassie club down bold new path

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Editorial

Brett Robinson
Office: (03) 9548 8600
Mobile: 0434 144 779
Email: brett@astma.com.au



Advertising

Pam Irvine
Office: (03) 9548 8600
Mobile: 0402 069 489
Email: pam@astma.com.au

Art Direction & Design

Jo Corne

Printed By

Southern Impact Pty Ltd



Suite 1, Monash Corporate Centre
752 Blackburn Road, Clayton, VIC 3168
P: (03) 9548 8600 E: admin@astma.com.au
W: www.astma.com.au
ABN 96 053 205 888

ASTMA Board

Ben Tilley (president), David Thomson, Peter Loneragan, Damian Hough, Troy Jordan, Mark Findlay

Chief Executive Officer

Mark Unwin
Office: (03) 9548 8600
Mobile: 0438 320 919
E: mark@astma.com.au

Membership

Allison Jenkins
E: admin@astma.com.au

Finance Manager

Frank Joseph
E: frank@astma.com.au

Events and Education

Simone Staples
E: simone@astma.com.au
Pam Irvine
E: pam@astma.com.au

RTO/Training Manager

Albert Sherry
E: albert@astma.com.au
M: 0437 064 726

AGCSATech

Bruce Macphee (Senior Agronomist)
E: bruce@astma.com.au
Tim Fankhauser (Agronomist)
E: tim@astma.com.au

Social Media/First Green Program

Keally Nankervis
E: keally@astma.com.au

www.facebook.com/TheASTMA

www.linkedin.com

www.instagram.com/the_astma

[@TheASTMA](https://twitter.com/TheASTMA)

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COVER STORY

DEVONPORT'S CORE ASSET

Devonport Country Club's Craig Walker created history in June when he became the first superintendent from a Tasmanian golf course to win the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award in its 34-year history. Since arriving at the club in 2019, Walker has played a key role in its transformation into one of the premier golf and sporting facilities in the Apple Isle. In addition to that, Walker and his crew, which boasts seven apprentices, also oversee the maintenance of multiple turf facilities throughout the region and operate a turf renovation service which is providing the club with a new and important revenue stream.

Cover: Devonport Country Club's par three 10th.
Photo: Brett Robinson.



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Contributors to Australian Turfgrass Management

Journal Volume 25.5 (September-October 2023): Adobe Stock Images; Australian Golf Media; Shane Baker (CSTM, GCSAWA); John Flaherty (NSWBGA); John Forrest (Forrest and Forrest Horticultural Consultancy Services); Ben Gibson (The Toolbox Team); Leon Hennessy (NSWGCSA); Dr David Huff (Penn State, USA); Paul Locke (City of Boroondara); Nick Marino (City of Boroondara); Peter McMaugh AM (Turfgrass Scientific Services); Mary Napier (VGCSA); Troy O'Hern (Mount Lawley GC); Niall Rogan (Kalgoorlie GC); Lachlan Roache (The Gabba); Albert Sherry (ASTMA); Simon Snedden (ACTSTMA); Rod Tatt (Mount Lawley GC); Kate Torgersen (Environmental Golf Solutions); Mark Unwin (ASTMA); Craig Walker (Devonport CC); David Wark and City of Holdfast Bay, SA; Ashley Watson and Joondalup Resort; Jenny Zadro (STA NSW/Turf NSW); Jayden Zappelli (Kalgoorlie GC).

Undeniable contribution

As this edition was being signed off, the Australian Golf Industry Council (AGIC) released its **2023 Community Benefits of Golf in Australia** report. Compiled by urban and public policy consultancy SGS Economics & Planning, the report details the significant benefits of golf through quantified data and robust research methodology. Headlining the report is the revelation that the sport provides \$3.3 billion in total annual benefits to the Australian community, economy and environment.

In her introductory note to the report, which can be downloaded through the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association website (www.astma.com.au), AGIC chair Karen Lunn notes: *"This report provides compelling storytelling and support for the game of golf, with benefits based on quantified evidence. The benefits are the flow on effects from the Australian community's spend on golf, golfers leading active and healthy lifestyles and the vital open spaces and environments created by golf courses and facilities."*

"The numbers outlined in this report will perhaps surprise, but they are undeniable. My hope is they will go a long way to change the perception of golf. We now have the evidence to inform decision makers and strengthen partnerships so that together golf can continue to build on the social fabric of a healthy and connected Australia..."

The 40-page report contains some impressive statistics, but of particular interest are those relating to the environmental benefits of golf. It is the first time that a dollar figure has been put on this aspect, with the report estimating the total environmental benefit per year to be in the vicinity of \$890 million. That's some figure! The report breaks that down further into five key areas – flora and fauna biodiversity (\$354m), urban cooling (\$257m), flood and stormwater management (\$159m), water filtration and purification (\$114m) and carbon sequestration (\$6m).

As part of the report, it quotes the outcomes of the excellent research project conducted by the University of Melbourne in conjunction with the ASTMA and the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology. Over a three-year period, the groundbreaking project studied 13 golf courses in Melbourne to ascertain their biodiversity benefits, with the results published in the September-October 2014 edition of Australian Turfgrass Management Journal (Volume 16.5).

In that article, lead researcher Dr Caragh Threlfall noted in her summary: *"This study demonstrates the great biodiversity benefits that large urban golf courses are providing to us all. The retention of these important large urban green spaces and management of these spaces with greater consideration for the biodiversity they support can only increase the playing experience and the overall liveability of Australia's towns and cities."*

To the industry's credit, golf clubs are now realising more than ever before the significant benefits that come with having environmental and sustainability goals as a key focus of their operations. Take for example Mount Lawley Golf Club in Perth. At the recent Adelaide conference, their course superintendent Rod Tatt was bestowed the Australian golf industry's highest environmental accolade, the ASTMA Claude Crockford Sustainability and Environment Award. As you will read as part of our coverage of the National Turf Industry Awards in this edition, the club has made a public commitment to delivering positive environmental outcomes by developing a dedicated 'sustainability strategy'.

As Mount Lawley general manager Troy O'Hern states in the article, having such a strategy is central to their long-term social license to operate as a custodian of the land upon which the course resides. It provides a focus for the club's environmental and sustainability efforts and has greatly increased transparency and community understanding, as well as fostering stronger relationships with external stakeholders. Above all, it's a perfect example of how having buy-in across all areas of the club, from management to membership, can bring about positive outcomes.

Mount Lawley's story is just one of many throughout the industry and acts as a perfect case study to support the statistics released in the AGIC report. It's a practical example of the important role that golf courses do play in our communities and one which we need to celebrate and promote as much as possible. Enjoy the read...



Brett Robinson, Editor



Celebrating milestones and farewelling a friend

In another milestone for the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA), last month we released the association's updated Strategic Plan for the 2023-2027 period. This follows an in-depth six-month review of the current Strategic Plan (2019-2023), with the Board and association team developing a new Strategic Plan which aims to build on the successes of the past five years.

When announcing the new Strategic Plan to members, we provided an update on performance of the 2019-2023 plan which highlighted a tremendous amount of development. Through the leadership of the Board and hard work from the association team, these outcomes have provided the opportunity to continue our work in supporting members and the industry. Among some of the highlights were:

- Association membership more than doubling over the past five years and approaching close to 2000 members;
- The implementation of simplified membership categories;
- Developed turf research, sustainability and GC2030 programs;
- Delivered a series of leadership and professional development events and the Women in Turf Strategy; and
- An update to the association name to be more representative of all members across the industry.

The revised Strategic Plan will guide our efforts and initiatives over the next five years and has been developed on the foundation of the association's mission and values that will focus the team on five key pillars – Education, Industry Capability, Member Support, Advocacy and Professional Development. ASTMA members can find more information about the key objectives under each of these key pillars on the ASTMA website.

I strongly believe that this plan will not only benefit our members individually but also continue the association's efforts to strengthen the sports turf management industry as a whole. I encourage members to visit the website and have a read through of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan to see what is in store for the association as we move forward.

As was noted in the previous ATM, this edition (from page eight) is dedicated to the 2023 National Turf Industry Award winners who were announced at the Adelaide conference in June. Each article provides a wonderful insight into the operations, performance and motivations of each of our deserved winners and shines a light on their outstanding achievements. Again, my congratulations goes to all our winners and finalists and a special thanks to partners Toro, Syngenta and Envu who help make these awards possible.



Australian
Sports Turf Managers
Association



After more than 21 years with the ASTMA, finance manager Philip Horsburgh retired in September

Continuing the pleasing news, we recently saw the ASTMA's new Registered Training Organisation (RTO) division reach another milestone with the completion of the first units delivered as part of the Certificate III in Sports Turf Management and Diploma of Sports Turf Management courses. After attaining RTO status in June this year, the ASTMA started delivery of both courses in late July. The Certificate III students had their first block release session at The Grange Golf Club in Adelaide in late September, with another scheduled for late November.

With more than 30 students already studying, interest in the courses on offer, including Chemical User Refresher Training, continues to be strong. With enrolments available year-round, students can join at any time. Visit the 'Education' tab on the ASTMA website (www.astma.com.au) where you will find out more information on the courses available and how to enrol.

On 12 September, the ASTMA joined together with a number of international associations to support and promote International Thank a Superintendent Day for 2023. A joint initiative between associations from Canada, the USA, UK and Australia,

recent years have seen the event expand across New Zealand, Europe (FEGGA), Asia (AGIF), South Africa and India (GIA).

The #ThankASuper initiative was developed as an opportunity for players, clubs and the industry to celebrate and recognise the hard work and efforts of their golf course agronomy team. This year, globally, more than 4500 posts were shared across social media, an increase of nearly 30 per cent over 2022. Those posts resulted in 14.7 million impressions, a 41.5 per cent increase.

END OF AN ERA

Finally, September saw the end of an era here at Clayton HQ with the retirement of the ASTMA's long-serving finance manager **Philip Horsburgh**. Philip joined what was then the Australian Golf Course Superintendents Association back on 12 March 2002 and in the years since became part of the fabric of the organisation.

Notching up his 70th birthday earlier this year, Philip was instrumental in assisting to develop and grow the association through his tenure and provided invaluable support to members and the industry. Philip can lay claim to being the association's longest-serving employee and we wholeheartedly extend our thanks for his invaluable contribution over more than two-decades. While it's always bittersweet farewelling a team member, we know that Philip, together with wife Lynn, will have a long and enjoyable retirement. They will be busy come the end of the year when they are due to welcome their third grandchild!

Speaking at a special dinner with ASTMA staff and Board members held in his honour, Philip noted: "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the ASTMA. The thing I will miss most are the wonderful people in the office and across the industry who I have met over the years. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with all the ASTMA staff and Board members and they have made it such an enjoyable place to work. Many of them have become close friends and I look forward to catching up with some of them as Lynn and I enjoy our retirement."



As one chapter finishes another starts and we are delighted to welcome our newest team member **Frank Joseph** (pictured) who has assumed the finance manager role.

Frank has worked in wholesaling, construction, manufacturing, motor vehicle dealerships, management consulting and retail, and will continue a 30-year career in finance and accounting with the ASTMA. Frank will be working Mondays to Thursdays and can be contacted on (03) 9548 8600 or email frank@astma.com.au. We welcome Frank to the team and trust he will enjoy his time with us. 🌱

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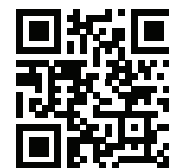


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TE ARAI LINKS

"1 October 2023... The North Course!" (Following the opening of the South Course earlier this year, its spectacular sister course at Te Arai Links (NZ) was opened for play on 1 October. Pictured is the 2nd hole of the Tom Doak-designed course by Ricky Robinson.)



Best on ground

ATM showcases some of the best social media posts and pictures from around the turf industry in recent months.

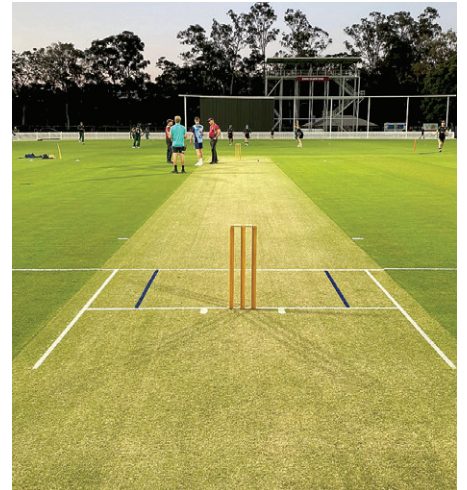


EASTLAKE GOLF CLUB

"Course superintendent Simon Blagg and his team are smashing out the reno checklist – coring all fairways with 19mm hollow tines." (It's that time of year... Renovation season has hit and crews around the country, like the one at Eastlake Golf Club in Sydney, have been very busy!)

BRENDAN LARGE

"NRL doubleheader Saturday into AFL Sunday – the crew are doing a great job in preparing for a big weekend." (It was a busy start to August for the Optus Stadium crew in Perth, hosting two NRL matches back-to-back before converting the ground to AFL for Fremantle v Brisbane the following day.)



in TONY POTTER

"Where has the last seven weeks gone! 19 days/games including a washout at AB Field. Boys have worked out of their skins being a staff member down for the majority, couldn't be prouder!" (It has been a busy start to the new cricket season for the team at Allan Border Field in Brisbane.)



in MARK HOLMES

"The 6th green progressing nicely. Good to get the project underway over the past few weeks." (Work has begun on the redevelopment of The National Golf Club's Long Island course.)



AWARDS

Devonport Country Club (DCC) resides above the tidal flats of the Mersey River, just south of the Devonport town centre in Spreyton. Pictured is the par three 10th which was reconstructed in the first phase of the current masterplan works

Devonport's core asset

Devonport Country Club in Tasmania can lay claim to having one of the more unique course management setups. Over two articles, ATM editor Brett Robinson talks to superintendent Craig Walker, winner of this year's ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, to see how their model is helping transform the club into one of the state's more progressive sporting entities.

It was the perfect start to Craig Walker's week in Adelaide. One of five state finalists for the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, the Devonport Country Club superintendent arrived at the National Turf Industry Awards dinner looking forward to the evening but by no means expecting much. Put it this way, he hadn't prepared a speech and if the inevitable was to happen he would just wing it.

It had already been a pretty good year for Walker to that point. A month earlier he had captained the Ulverstone Golf Club pennant team to Tasmania's North West Division 1 premiership, while back in March he and his



Ulverstone teammates claimed an historic win in the coveted Claremont Shield. Featuring the best Division 1 pennant players from across the state, Walker captained Ulverstone's four-man squad to a commanding victory, bringing the Shield back to the club after a 58-year absence. What made that win sweeter was they did so on their home track, affectionately known by the members as 'Allison'.

Walker was one of a number of Tassie superintendents to attend this year's

conference and at the awards dinner at Adelaide Oval found himself sitting alongside a good contingent of them. Among them were Phil Hill from Barnbougle, Launceston's newly appointed superintendent Mack Blazely, who himself was part of last year's ceremony as Tasmania's Graduate of the Year Award representative, and Kingston Beach's Tom Filtness. It was going to be a good night no matter what the outcome.

Walker was up against some stiff competition. In what was arguably one of the most experienced fields the award has seen, his fellow finalists included Brent Hull (Moruya GC, NSW), Kelvin Nicholson (Palmer Coolum



Resort, Qld), Des Russell (Cottesloe GC, WA) and Mark Angel (Kingston SE GC, SA). With just 13 years as a superintendent under the belt, Walker was the least experienced of the cohort, but as soon as Martin Ball, from award sponsor Envu, began reading the award preamble, he knew that this was his night. The penny also quickly dropped for those sitting next to him, his fellow Tasmanians shooting knowing glances to which Walker could only smile broadly in response.

By receiving the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, Walker created a slice of association history, becoming the first superintendent from a Tasmanian golf club to

win the award in its 34-year history. Although just four years into his tenure at Devonport, the 46-year-old was recognised for his key role in the club's transformation into one of the premier golf and sporting facilities in the state. Walker and his young team oversee the maintenance of not only Devonport, which comprises golf, bowls and croquet, but two other golf courses (Ulverstone and Port Sorell) and a bowling club (Latrobe). They also run a turf renovation business which is providing a major revenue stream for the progressive club.

Summing up best what Walker and his team have achieved was a quote that Ball read out on the evening. Coming from



2023 ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award recipient Craig Walker

Ulverstone club captain and course manager Sarah Johnstone, one of the Tasmania's most prominent female amateur golfers, it lauded Walker's skills as a sports turf manager and his passion for the industry.

"Craig is a dedicated tradesman who puts his heart and soul into what he does and produces some of the best turf surfaces in the state week in, week out," stated Johnstone. "This year alone his courses have successfully hosted a number of prestigious events, with other tournaments also being awarded which is in no small part thanks to Craig and his team. They do an incredible job of maintaining the three courses, producing surfaces that are of the highest standard with limited budgets and working long hours for the betterment of all our members. I cannot think of a more worthy recipient for this award and it is a fitting acclamation of Craig's contribution."

THE ROAD TO 'WOODRISING'

The ASTMA award is very much the pinnacle of Walker's career, one which has come full circle in many ways. Born and raised in Ulverstone, just a 15-minute drive west of Devonport, Walker had never considered a career in turf as a first option. Instead, his sights were fully set on becoming an accountant. He was a numbers man (and still is) and after finishing school started a university degree by correspondence. Halfway through it, however, things weren't adding up and it dawned on Walker that an office-bound job wasn't for him.

A keen golfer since the age of 15, Walker was having a round at Ulverstone Golf Club one day when he spied long-serving superintendent Wayne Porter on a mower and stopped him to ask if he could have an apprenticeship. His timing was perfect. Porter's apprentice at the time, Ben Norton-Smith

PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON



PHOTOS: NEARMAP

After receiving an \$11 million government grant, in 2018 construction started on the new DCC facility which included three bowling greens, two croquet lawns and an international-standard indoor bowls centre. Pictured is the site before (left), during (middle) and after construction (right). Note the changes to the 10th hole (top right)

(now superintendent at Tuncurry Golf Club in NSW), was about to finish up. Walker was duly put on and would end up completing his apprenticeship and staying on for two years.

In 2001 Walker hit the road and headed south. An opportunity had come up at Pittwater Golf Club, a small nine-holer just outside of Hobart. Five years into his time there, Walker was approached by Chris Hay who had just established CoreTaz, a turf renovation contracting business. Walker would team up with Hay, travelling around the region providing renovation services to nine-hole courses and bowling clubs, as well as overseeing maintenance at the Pittwater and Huon Valley golf clubs and a number of bowling clubs (Berriedale, Rodman and Sandy Bay). They also ventured statewide undertaking renovations and sportsfield construction jobs.

While it was a role he enjoyed, especially the variety, it involved a lot of travelling which was starting to take its toll, especially with a young family now in the picture. In 2013, Walker, together with wife Stacey and their two eldest daughters, made the decision to move back to Ulverstone. After more than a decade on the tools, Walker took a break from turf

and for the next six years ran his own tiling business, a trade he had learned from his father. Operating his own venture equipped Walker with some good business skills and also freshened him up for what would be his next and most prominent move.

Returning to Ulverstone had also seen him reconnect with the golf club he played at as a junior and as a highly-regarded scratch golfer he soon became part of their pennant team. He would also be encouraged to join the club committee which he did for three years, serving as vice-president for the last two.

It was around 2017, just as he'd taken on that role, that word was getting around about Devonport Golf Club being in merger talks with two local bowling clubs and a croquet club. It piqued the interest of Walker given his past experience working on all three surfaces and, as the merger solidified, he was encouraged to apply for the vacant superintendent role. Ultimately successful, in July 2019 Walker drove down Woodrising Ave, named after the old farm on which the Devonport course resides, through the gates and into a job which has seen him play a pivotal role in furthering the club's fortunes both on and off the course.

COMBINING RESOURCES

The rise of Devonport Country Club as one of the region's premier sporting and community hubs is an interesting one. It arguably had its origins in the mid-2010s when Spreyton Bowling Club merged with Devonport Bowling Club. The Devonport Croquet Club was also incorporated into the new entity which was based out of the Devonport Bowling Club site in the middle of Devonport.

In 2017, Devonport Golf Club, realising it needed a change of direction in order to guarantee its survival, formed a steering committee to also examine the benefits of a possible merger. After a great deal of investigating, they approached the aforementioned clubs with a proposal to join them at the golf club site in Spreyton, about five kilometres south of Devonport's centre, forming what would be known as the Devonport Country Club (DCC). They agreed and the wheels were set in motion.

By combining facilities and centralising services, the new DCC entity was able to secure \$11 million in government funding to construct a new state-of-the-art country club facility. Starting construction in early 2018, the new complex would include three turf bowling greens, two croquet lawns and an international-standard eight-rink indoor bowls centre. The new administration building would also contain a 180-seat function room, sports bar, sports shop and adjoining offices.

In addition to that, golf course masterplan works were also progressing under the direction of architect Graeme Grant. In order to accommodate the larger clubhouse footprint and new bowling greens, the par three 10th needed to be reconfigured. The hole was shortened by 50 metres, with new tee and green complexes constructed. A new Rain Bird



DCC's three bowling greens are all Penncross and have hosted numerous state and regional events since opening

IC irrigation system was also in the midst of being installed.

Into the middle of all this work arrived Walker, six years out of the industry and inheriting a crew of just two – assistant Tim Moore and a casual. With little time to settle in, Walker was immediately charged with managing multiple projects as well as implementing improvements across the course and their operations.

From a redevelopment perspective there was putting the finishing touches to the 10th and bringing it into play, overseeing completion of the new irrigation system as well as substantial drainage rectification works on three holes (9, 11 and 18). Then there was the grow-in of the new Pennncross bowling greens, construction of two croquet lawns (originally a rye/fescue/bentgrass mix, now 80 per cent Pennncross) and associated landscaping works.

“It was a pretty daunting prospect,” reflects Walker on those initial months. “You felt like you were being pulled from pillar to post. Looking back it was really good management training because you had to be everywhere at once. We had a small team at the time, but soon after we started employing a few apprentices as we started to grow.”

COURSE IMPROVEMENTS

The works to the 10th hole, as well as the repositioning of the practice green in front of the clubhouse, formed the first stage of a golf course masterplan that was adopted by the membership when the DCC was formed. Further masterplan works will start to gather momentum in 2024 and proceed in stages over the next decade as funds allow.

A Vern Morcom design, the Devonport course has resided next to the Mersey River at Spreyton since the 1950s and aside from a few bunker additions/fill-ins over the years has remained relatively untouched. One of the first 18-hole layouts on Tasmania’s northwest coast, it is a tree-lined parkland-style course with some neat bunkering and plenty of doglegs. Like most courses of its era, technology has rendered a lot of the fairway bunkering impotent and rectifying that forms a key component of the masterplan.

Grant, an aficionado of Morcom’s design work, was seconded by the club to restore some of the original design intent to the layout. All 42 existing bunkers will be touched in some form, with overall numbers to increase to the mid-50s. Positioning of around 20 fairway bunkers, in particular on the doglegs, will be a lot more strategic. The 13th green will be moved back by around 40m to make it a true par five, with other work to focus on tying greens and tee complexes together. Holes 2 and 16 will kick off the next tranche of works mid-next year which will primarily involve additional fairway bunkering.



The DCC team oversees course maintenance at the spectacular 18-hole Ulverstone Golf Club

The new irrigation system, which was completed in early 2020, was designed to accommodate the masterplan changes. The Rain Bird system, together with a new pump station housing two 17kW multistage Grundfos units, is a vast upgrade on the old system which comprised of pop ups around greens on decoders and travelling irrigators on fairways.

Thankfully, water is one resource that Walker doesn’t have to worry about given that over the fence resides a large Fonterra processing plant. In 2016, the golf club struck a deal with the Australasian dairy giant to pump its excess water (essentially the condensation created from the pasteurization process) directly into the club’s 20 megalitre storage dam next to the 2nd hole.

Having an unlimited supply, together with a new system to distribute it efficiently, has helped to vastly improve course conditioning. It affords Walker the luxury of being able to overseed fairways and ensure a successful strike by keeping the seed moist. Having double row irrigation has allowed Walker to incorporate more first cuts to provide greater fairway definition and thicken up the roughs.

“The new irrigation system has been of huge benefit,” states Walker. “The saving in man hours alone has been astronomical and has essentially freed up one worker. It’s a very

windy site, so being able to localise irrigation and drill down to one or a series of sprinklers to remedy any dry spots is invaluable. Our fairways are predominantly rye/fescue/Poa and our greens are an 85/15 bentgrass/Poa mix. The evapotranspiration rate here in summer with the wind is very high. Everyone thinks of Tasmania as a cooler climate, but if we get a 30-degree day here with a northwest wind we can lose turf pretty quick.”

Other improvements Walker has instituted since taking the reins have come in the areas of environmental management, nutrition programs, WHS and staff management (see the following article, page 14, for more on this latter aspect of the DCC setup).

From an environmental perspective, Walker has introduced no-mow zones and promoted out of play areas, as well as increased the planting of endemic species. With a young staff of mainly apprentices, Walker also ensures that no S7 chemicals are used, with S6s also rarely applied.

By better scheduling nutrient applications Walker has also significantly reduced fungicide usage. With greens prone to disease earlier on in his tenure, Walker was making upwards of 13 applications of fungicide a year. That number has now been reduced to just 3-4 through better nutrition practices.



Last August, the nine-hole Port Sorell Golf Club approached DCC to take over maintenance of their course



PHOTO: CRAIG WALKER

Since September 2020, the DCC team has operated a turf renovation business which now services 30 venues

On the WHS front, Walker knew he was in for some fun times when in his first week at Devonport he spied a volunteer doing tree work up a ladder that was in the bucket of a front-end loader. Like many regional courses, volunteers play a critical role at Devonport, but with very loose guidelines in place and no formal structure as to what work was being undertaken, Walker knew change was needed.

A few incidents early on were enough for Walker to draw a line in the sand and implement some proper processes such as site inductions and signing in and out. One of the key elements was the development of a detailed safety manual which outlines how each task should be performed and what is expected of the volunteers. Walker also appointed leaders in each of the work gangs who not only act as a point of contact but also ensure compliance with the new guidelines.

COMING ON BOARD

While ensuring the Devonport course is continually improving and presented at its best for members, it is arguably what Walker has achieved outside of the club's boundaries which are having the biggest impact on the club. Taking a leaf from the successful country

club merger, Walker and his crew have expanded their operations to now oversee the maintenance of nearby Ulverstone and Port Sorell golf clubs and, more recently, Latrobe Bowling Club. In doing so it has seen Walker's country club crew expand to 10, which includes seven apprentices.

The arrangement with Ulverstone had its beginnings long before Walker started at Devonport. There was already a degree of collaboration between the two clubs and when Walker was on the committee they had agreed to go halves with Devonport in purchasing renovation equipment (a ProCore 648, a core harvester and topdresser) that the two clubs could share. Former club president Dean Hart had earlier mooted the possibility of having one team looking after both clubs, but it wasn't until Walker had moved to Devonport that the opportunity would arise.

In 2019, then Ulverstone superintendent Izaak Jones departed and the club struggled to find a suitable replacement. Ulverstone approached Devonport for assistance and it was then that Walker proposed that his team could run the course while taking on board Ulverstone's sole apprentice. Six weeks after discussions started, the two clubs had signed

an agreement and four years down the track it is still paying dividends for both clubs.

Seeing the success and benefits of such an arrangement prompted other nearby clubs to also seek out the expertise of the DCC team. The nine-hole Port Sorell Golf Club, 25 minutes east of Devonport, came on board in August 2022 and just recently Latrobe Bowling Club also joined. As part of the agreements, DCC oversees all maintenance operations, renovations, all consumables and equipment maintenance, including reel grinding. All clubs still have their own machinery should things not work out further down the line.

"It has been pretty seamless," says Walker on incorporating the other clubs into their operations. "There are many benefits from our point of view. It means we are able to buy product in bulk, have a larger and more flexible workforce, as well as using our expertise to save on labour costs and thus making a profit for DCC to invest back into the course. From the other clubs' perspectives, it cuts down on administration, with all course-related expenses included in the contract. It has been a huge success to date and we really take pride in the work we do at those clubs."

REVENUE-RAISER

If having four facilities to oversee isn't enough to keep Walker and his crew engaged, since September 2020 they have also started up a turf renovation business. It services many smaller golf and bowls clubs and turf facilities throughout the state's northwest and is providing a lucrative revenue stream which is being reinvested back into the club.

When Walker was interviewed for the Devonport job, the committee told him it was open to ideas for bringing in extra revenue. With a new \$11 million facility, the running costs of which are high, it realised that the old-fashioned way of running a golf club wasn't going to cut it and they needed to diversify.

Having been involved with CoreTaz earlier in his career, Walker knew that a turf renovation business would be a perfect fit. They had the equipment (Devonport took over the lease of the renovation equipment when Ulverstone came on board) and also the staff, but more importantly there was growing demand for such a service. Soon enough word got around and Walker's phone started running hot.

Since undertaking their first reno gig, ironically at Pittwater Golf Club, Walker and his team now have more than 30 facilities on their books. They undertake everything from coring, harvesting and solid-tining, through to topdressing and applying amendments and fertiliser. Although not travelling as far south as Pittwater anymore, Walker and his team have undertaken work as far away as Smithton to the west, Bothwell to the south and Ringarooma to the east.



Devonport masterplan works will ramp up in 2024 to restore some of the original Vern Morcom design intent

Over the past 12 months, through the renovation business and the maintenance contracts at Ulverstone, Port Sorell and Latrobe, the DCC grounds crew has generated a staggering \$200,000 in revenue. As DCC general manager Brett Kerr notes, their department is evolving as a key profit centre for the club that is rivalling the traditional food and beverage and pro shop business units.

"Historically a grounds department's ability to generate income has been limited, so to be bringing in that amount for the club is something that we as a team are pretty proud of," states Walker. "The money we are generating is being reinvested back into the club as well. We have been able to purchase additional equipment such as new utilities, spare mowing equipment and a bigger trailer to transport renovation equipment. Hopefully down the track I'd like to direct some of that money towards the course masterplan and expediting some of those works."

"More than anything though it is helping us to keep our skilled staff who we have invested a lot of time and effort into. We can offer improved wages and conditions and generally make it a good place to work. That is critical in regional areas like ours where skilled labour is very hard to come by."

TEAM EFFORT

The DCC model is certainly unique and one that Walker admits has only just scratched the surface in terms of its potential. Discussions around expanding the team and including other services such as sportsfield construction and irrigation works are always being had, with nothing off the table.

Walker is always thinking outside the square and one of his latest ideas has just come to fruition. In late October, the club



Bunkering will form a key part of the upcoming DCC masterplan works. Pictured is the greenside complex on 12

opened an RV accommodation park on land next to the croquet lawns. It will provide yet another revenue stream and continues a progressive mindset which is helping establish a solid foundation for the club's future.

"I can absolutely see this sort of model working in other regional areas," ruminates Walker. "As finances get tighter, sharing resources like we doing here is becoming more of an attractive option. We are essentially looking after Ulverstone for not much more than what it would cost for a superintendent, an assistant and an apprentice. They are getting a really good result and the course is continuing to move forward."

"At the end of the day it's all about what clubs can afford and whether they are comfortable with that sort of setup. The way that I look at it, these clubs aren't letting go of anything – they still get a say in everything. As

long as the communication is there and things are clearly set out and everyone agrees to them, it works."

"I guess we were lucky with Ulverstone as they knew me well and knew what I could do. Port Sorell and Latrobe could see that success and they came on board too. It is a big step for these clubs that have always had their own greenkeeper to say we haven't got that any more but we trust you blokes to do a good job."

"Communication is such a vital part of making this setup work. Above everything though, you have to have a great team. We have been able to build a team which has grown from two full-time staff to 10. That has happened organically as we have expanded our areas of operation. The team is critical to what we do and as I said in my award acceptance speech in Adelaide, it wasn't my award but very much a team award." 🏆



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The DCC crew of 10 includes seven apprentices, among them mature age Anthony Johns (pictured foreground) and Jack Pearce (background)

WORDS AND PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

Four clubs, three different sporting surfaces, a flourishing turf renovation business and seven apprentices at varying stages of completion. Devonport Country Club superintendent Craig Walker is a busy man and you only have to look at the calendar on his phone to see just how hectic his management schedule is. Add to that a home life too, where he and wife Stacey, his self-confessed “rock”, are parents to four daughters between the ages of 8 and 17, and you do have to wonder how the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award recipient manages to squeeze everything in.

As much as the operational model in place at Devonport Country Club (DCC) is unique, so too is the staffing set up that Walker has fostered during his four years in charge. As mentioned in the previous article (pages 8-13), when Walker arrived at Devonport in 2019 there was just himself, assistant Tim Moore and a casual. Fast forward to 2023 and that crew now numbers 10 full-time staff, with seven of those still learning their trade.

Walker’s role has evolved significantly in that time. With the Ulverstone, Port Sorell and Latrobe maintenance contracts coming under the DCC umbrella, in addition to the start-up of the turf renovation business in 2020, Walker has transitioned into a genuine 2IC role directly under current general manager Brett Kerr. Although technically still superintendent, Walker has taken on additional responsibilities, most prominently managing the payroll for all 38 DCC staff as well as projected income

A unique team

Every turf management crew is different. Then there’s the one at Devonport Country Club...

coming into the club through the various revenue streams they have developed. Walker devotes one day of his week to that task and says it has helped him to better understand his role and where his department fits into the overall club operations and finance setup.

From a committee and reporting perspective, there is an overarching DCC Board and under that the various sports sub-committees to which Walker submits monthly reports and attends most of their meetings. When the DCC was formed, all committees got new terms of reference which Walker says provides important clarity.

With the Ulverstone, Port Sorell and Latrobe contracts, Walker is on the course committee at Ulverstone, while at Port Sorell he reports directly to their Board. Each contract is similar, with minimum hours the staff will spend at the courses per week. Walker’s time is split

across the three golf club sites, including 10 hours a week at Ulverstone, three at Port Sorell and the rest at Devonport.

TRAINING THE FUTURE

Within a month of taking over at Devonport and with the huge amount of work going on with the country club development and golf course masterplan works (see previous article), Walker quickly realised the need for additional staff. Caleb Lawler was the first apprentice he brought on board and he was followed a few months later by Sam Omahony. Together the quartet, and a casual, looked after the entire Devonport site, including the indoor bowls centre which requires its own maintenance (hand-watering and rolling once a month, vacuuming and twice-weekly marking out).

When the Ulverstone deal was struck, the club’s apprentice Coby Walmsley was absorbed into the DCC team. Despite leaving for a short period, he would return and is now foreman at Ulverstone where he oversees two apprentices Logan Heazlewood and Jack Pearce (now second- and third-year) who also rotate through Devonport two days a week.

With Port Sorell coming on board last August, Walker has used that as a bit of a training base for his more experienced apprentices to learn management techniques and take ownership of. To that end, Lawler and Omahony (now both fourth-years) spend a couple of days a week there honing their skills.

Anthony Johns, a mature age apprentice, came on board about a year ago and is developing into the role of a bowls supervisor.

An experienced pennant bowler, he has been a strong addition to Walker's team, especially with Latrobe now under DCC's management. Johns also rotates through Port Sorell.

Another apprentice, Brodie Whelan, was also part of the crew up until recently, but sadly due to ongoing health issues had to step down. To boost numbers up, Walker has just put on two more apprentices who were about to start as this edition was going to print.

"The direction of the club was to grow organically and not poach any other staff from nearby clubs," explains Walker of their decision to go down the apprentice path. "We were aware of the acute lack of skilled turf workers and knew the best outcome long-term was to stagger our apprentice intake and train them in all aspects of sports turf management on the three different surfaces we have at Devonport. Training the future of sports turf managers can be a challenge at times, but it is something that I am really passionate about as we do have a drastic shortage here in Tasmania.

"I like to base the apprentices mostly at the one course, but I do rotate them so they have at least one or two days a week at the other courses to give them a broader experience. With the bowling greens for example, we will rotate the guys equally through this area each week. By the time you mow three greens and



The Devonport CC crew: Back row (from left) superintendent Craig Walker, Logan Heazlewood, Anthony Johns, Coby Walmsley and Sam Omahony. Front row (from left) Brodie Whelan (since departed), assistant superintendent Tim Moore, Caleb Lawler and Jack Pearce. Two more apprentices were joining the team at the end of October

double roll them, you don't really want to be doing that again the next day, so we do spread the load out evenly. By the end of the week everyone has had their turn."

A MOBILE, FLEXIBLE UNIT

Although DCC management would prefer Walker to plan everything a fortnight in advance and work out where everyone is

going to be, the nature and breadth of their work means that isn't an option. As Walker admits, he's kind of lucky as the apprentices have grown up knowing no other way. They are accustomed to knowing they could be at a different site from one day to the next or have their schedule changed last minute should something unexpected happen. Having that adaptable mindset has become ingrained.

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Count on it.



Experienced assistant Tim Moore has been Walker's right-hand man throughout the DCC journey to date

With staff across four sites or on the road undertaking renovation work, Walker has set up a group chat on Facebook Messenger to regularly communicate with his crew and keep them up to speed with where everyone needs to be at. Walker says it has proven to be an extremely simple yet effective management tool and also allows the team to engage in a bit of light-hearted banter to keep spirits up.

"Flexibility is key," says Walker. "You have to be mobile, especially when you take into account the renovation business. Sometimes you don't get a lot of notice with that work. We do a lot of council work and they will sometimes decide they want an oval topdressed within the week. All the boys have been trained up to handle those sorts of tasks, so I am happy to send them out on the road and know that they can do the job."

"We have different people with different skills and sometimes when you are a little stretched you play to your strengths. At other times, when things are quieter, we can get the others involved in a particular task and teach them how to do it and upskill them."

"Things always crop up, especially with the weather. Ulverstone is heavily tree-lined, so if we get a storm rip through the northwest coast, we know there's going to be a lot of cleaning up to do there. So we have that ability to roster the majority of staff on to one site if needed and all the clubs understand that."

While there is a lot of change, there are a few constants in Walker's schedule. Monday is the only day they have the bowling greens to themselves, so Walker will make sure he has extra hands on deck to get everything set up for the week. With the renovation business, Walker tries to schedule any work between Tuesdays and Thursdays, keeping Mondays and Fridays focused on the courses, especially during the growing season and bowls season.

Where that staff flexibility really comes into its own is when the courses host major tournaments. By being able to pool all their resources for those special events, Walker

and his team are really able to showcase the playing surfaces and the excellent conditioning they can turn out.

Having two championship 18-hole golf courses in Devonport and Ulverstone makes it particularly appealing for Golf Australia to host state and national events. Indeed, over the past three years Ulverstone has hosted two Tasmanian Opens and the Australian Junior Interstate Teams Championship, while Devonport hosted the Tasmanian Amateur last November and will do so again this November. Devonport has also been earmarked for the 2025 and 2026 Tasmanian Opens.

And it's not just golf events. Devonport has hosted premiership bowls finals, the Tasmanian Croquet Championships and this September the Australian Bowling Arm Championship which saw 140 interstate bowlers converge on the club's indoor bowls centre. As Walker notes, from having one major event there every three years, DCC is now attracting one or two major events every year, which is helping to further boost the club's bottom line.



Now a fourth-year, Sam Omahony was one of the first apprentices to come on board the DCC team

JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Perhaps the most pleasing aspect for Walker with the staffing model they have is the level of development he has witnessed in his young staff. While he admits it probably takes them a little longer to get their heads around everything due to the different requirements and nuances of each playing surface, in the long run it is helping to make them more rounded turf managers.

"I have certainly noticed after that two-year mark they do have the skills to work out issues for themselves better because they have seen more," notes Walker. "They have seen different types of machinery and how they work. They have seen the different irrigation scheduling requirements between a golf course and a bowling green. And they have also seen the different approach to managing turf on a golf green compared to a bowling green. They can see how close to the edge you can run turf on a bowling green."

"That's where I am starting to see the benefits. Logistically we do have a lot on our plate and you have to be well organised, but as the boys progress through their apprenticeships and develop their skills, the onus on me reduces. For example, I might not have to take an hour out of my day to do a return trip to Port Sorell to check on what looks like dry patch on the 9th green. They can diagnose it and deal with it, which means I can spend my time focussing on other areas of our operation."

As much as the apprentices are learning and developing new skills, Walker too has been on his own journey of discovery, especially when it comes to staff management. He confesses it has been a steep learning curve and one that he is still perfecting.

"They [the apprentices] come here as kids straight out of school and you become involved in their lives," reflects Walker. "You hear about their first big night out, their first girlfriend, their first break-up. You get to know them quite well and that is kind of special."

"The biggest thing I've learnt by far is how much every apprentice's life is different and how each person needs to be respected in their own way and treated differently. I've had to learn pretty quickly to get to know them in order to get the best out of them. If I treated my first two apprentices the same way, I wouldn't get anywhere near the level of work I do out of them."

"I definitely think the hardest years are behind us. When we set out it was challenging, especially when there was just myself, Tim and three first-years across multiple sites. Now that more have come on board and are more experienced, they have become an important part of our team. They have come along for the ride and stuck with it and so far it has been a really interesting journey for all of us."

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Mount Lawley's passion project

Mount Lawley Golf Club in Perth received the Australian golf course industry's highest environmental accolade at



this year's National Turf Industry Awards in Adelaide.



Mount Lawley Golf Club in Perth is on a mission. Already well-established as one of the leading golf clubs in Western Australia and a top-100 course nationally, recent times have seen it make significant inroads into improving not just its championship golf course but its surrounding environment as well.

Starting last July, the club's much-anticipated greens replacement program kicked off under the auspices of OCM Golf, a three-year program of works that will see all 20 green complexes reconstructed and converted to 007 creeping bentgrass. Stage one works, which focussed on four greens (1, 7, 8 and

11), were completed in February, with stage two works, involving a further eight greens (2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14 and 16), starting this July.



Mount Lawley superintendent Rod Tatt (right) with GM Troy O'Hern after receiving the award in Adelaide

The remaining eight greens will form part of Stage 3 works scheduled for 2024.

While these works are significant and will set the club up for many years to come, for Mount Lawley course superintendent Rod Tatt there has been another significant area of focus that he, his crew and the club have devoted much time and energy to over recent years. Although not as conspicuous as ripping up greens and rebuilding them, these works are playing an equally important role in the overall enhancement of the course.

Since arriving at the club from Melbourne in September 2018, Tatt has been patiently steering the club along a journey of improved environmental management and sustainability.

Opposite: Perth's Mount Lawley Golf Club became just the third Western Australian club to win the ASTMA's coveted Claude Crockford Sustainability and Environment Award in its 28-year history

Under his guidance and with the full backing of the Board and club members who have collectively bought into an overall vision, Mount Lawley is setting a valuable and positive example of what today's golf clubs should be doing when it comes to managing their natural environment.

Together with his course staff and a dedicated core of member volunteers, Tatt has achieved a tremendous amount of work to ensure the golf course and the broader facilities are continually focusing on environmental management, while at the same time maintaining a high-quality sustainable course. And much more is still to come.

In recognition of its commitment to going down such a path, Mount Lawley received the Australian golf course industry's highest environmental accolade at the National Turf Industry Awards held in Adelaide this past June. Tatt was bestowed the ASTMA Claude Crockford Sustainability and Environment Award, sponsored by association Gold Partner Syngenta.

A staple of the ASTMA's annual recognition program since 1996, the Crockford award celebrates those superintendents, their teams and clubs for excellence in sustainability and environmental management. Mount Lawley becomes just the third Western Australian golf club to win the award in its 28-year history, joining the likes of previous winners Hartfield Country Club (2015 – superintendent Nick Kinley) and El Caballo Resort (2002 – superintendent Jeff Austen).

"I'm extremely honoured to accept the award," says Tatt, who prior to Mount Lawley



PHOTO: NEARMAP

The 80-hectare Mount Lawley site is an important inner suburban greenspace that provides both a recreation reserve and a valuable biodiversity resource

was superintendent at Melbourne Sandbelt clubs Yarra Yarra and Woodlands. "It's the ultimate recognition for the club given the work we have been undertaking in recent years which has focused heavily on environmental sustainability. The ground work in the vegetation areas has become a real passion for the 30 dedicated member volunteers who give their time twice a week helping the club achieve goals set out in the Vegetation Management Plan and our Beyond the Fairways – Sustainability Strategy document. I thank them and the staff greatly for their effort and commitment."

Present at the Adelaide conference to witness Tatt collect the award on the club's behalf was Mount Lawley general manager

Troy O'Hern, who says it is ultimate vindication for the club's decision to make this area of management a key focus of their operations.

"The Mount Lawley Golf Club Board, members and management have made a commitment to environmental sustainability across all areas of the club and we are extremely pleased that Rod was chosen for the ASTMA Claude Crockford Sustainability and Environmental Award," says O'Hern.

"Rod, his team and our member volunteers do an incredible job in revegetating and enhancing the natural environment on course and in bushland areas. Receiving this award is great recognition for their efforts. Mount Lawley will continue its commitment and we encourage other golf clubs to do the same."

STRATEGIC INTENT

Located in the inner Perth suburb of Inglewood and set on around 80 hectares of rolling sand dune landscape, Mount Lawley is considered one of the premier golf courses in Western Australia. The area is gazetted as a restricted A-class reserve vested for recreation with significant mixed floristic communities including endangered *Banksia* woodland, transitional *Melaleuca* woodland and large pockets of landscaped golf course fringed with various species of introduced parkland trees.

The site is an important inner suburban greenspace that provides both a recreation reserve and a valuable biodiversity resource within the City of Stirling local government area. This juxtaposition of active recreation and environmental values provides both a management challenge and an excellent opportunity for the club to showcase urban sustainability initiatives.

Overarching all of the work at Mount Lawley has been the club's development of

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The ground work in the vegetation areas has become a real passion project for a dedicated group of Mount Lawley member volunteers. This group has grown from just four to more than 30 over the past four years

a document which provides a focus for its environmental and sustainability efforts. Released in 2022 and titled '*Beyond the Fairways – Sustainability Strategy*', the publicly-communicated document demonstrates Mount Lawley's commitment to the protection and sustainability of the existing natural environment.

It's aim is to create long-term sustainable outcomes for the club and broader community by restoring urban biodiversity, while also providing a sustainable and highly-regarded golf course for generations to come.

The strategy highlights seven priority areas for the club, including:

- **Recreation:** Maintain a high quality and well-regarded golf course which currently caters for upwards of 65,000 rounds of golf per year;
- **Consultation and collaboration:** Maintain and build strong relationships with key stakeholders;
- **Flora and fauna:** Undertake a restructuring of bushland vegetation to protect and restore endemic bushland conservation and biodiversity values;
- **Climate change mitigation and adaption:** Help mitigate climate change and build resilience for the club and land it manages;
- **Canopy:** Increase overall tree canopy commensurate with the City of Stirling Urban Forest Plan;
- **Water:** Ensure sustainable and efficient water management programs; and
- **Safety:** Maintain a safe golf course environment.

"Mount Lawley Golf Club undertakes its community obligations and stakeholder engagement with genuine commitment and acknowledges its responsibility as a joint custodian of the land," states O'Hern, who has been the club's general manager for the past seven years. "We feel that the restoration of the

woodlands, including the endangered *Banksia* community, is a very important action for the club to take and central to our long-term social license to operate. The club's environmental strategies are not only about replanting but responding to and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

"Sustainability strategies, like the one we have developed, are now accepted as an essential part of modern natural resource management. They make a public commitment to delivering sustainable outcomes and, importantly, also greatly increase transparency and community understanding. They give the community an opportunity to learn what is happening and encourage input and feedback. We have experienced this first-hand at Mount Lawley with both club members and community stakeholders seeking out *Beyond the Fairways* to provide positive feedback."



Overarching all of the work at Mount Lawley is the club's sustainability strategy released in 2022

RESTORATION AND PROTECTION

Supporting the sustainability strategy is the club's comprehensive Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) which was ratified earlier this year. Essentially an action plan for the sustainable management of remnant and restored vegetation within the golf course boundaries, it sets out the club's objectives across a range of key areas. It is complemented by the club's Bushland Management Plan (BMP) which specifies the management practices and approach to be employed to bushland areas within the site. The VMP's areas of focus include:

- **Protection of remnant vegetation:** Protecting these areas from further degradation, particular the *Banksia* and *Melaleuca* woodland remnants;
- **Restoration of degraded areas:** Restoring local biodiversity values in selected degraded areas without detrimental impact on remnant bushland or golf attributes;
- **Management of introduced trees:** Ensuring introduced trees do not significantly damage bushland or golf attributes of the site or jeopardise the safety of people; and ensuring their management is consistent with broader water use efficiency objectives and chemical reduction;
- **Weed management:** Controlling weeds consistent with City of Stirling objectives and the Bushland Management Plan; and ensuring weed impact on remnant vegetation and reintroduced species is kept to a minimum; and
- **Canopy management:** Ensuring the club's tree management activities make an appropriate contribution to the City of Stirling's Urban Forest 2040 target.

To ensure best practice and to demonstrate its commitment to the protection and sustainability of the existing natural environment, Mount Lawley has engaged and worked closely with a range of internal and external experts to help guide their work. Among those to have provided specialised input include Paul van der Moezel (PGV Environmental), the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (Kings Park), John Forrest (horticulture consultant), Ray Wills (Future Smart Strategies) and Kate Torgersen (Environmental Golf Solutions).

Dr Paul Barber from ArborCarbon Environmental Consultancy has also been extensively involved, conducting an arboricultural survey and tree risk assessment of the course in addition to a tree growth forecast report. The club has also been savvy and utilised the expertise of a number of current members, among them retired environmental scientist Tim McAuliffe, TAFE lecturer Paul St Jack and environmental specialist Matt Holding.

MEMBER-DRIVEN

Starting in 2019, over the past four years Mount Lawley has embarked on an ambitious planting program which has seen course staff and member volunteers reintroduce almost 9500 endemic trees, shrubs and groundcovers to the site. The yearly breakdown has included:

- **2019-2020:** 2350 trees and 1850 shrubs and groundcovers;
- **2021:** 615 trees, 1677 shrubs and 551 groundcovers;
- **2022:** 194 trees, 1454 shrubs and 789 groundcovers;
- **Four-year total:** 3159 trees and 6321 shrubs and groundcovers.

Over the next seven years, continuation of the endemic planting program will see the reintroduction of an additional 1700 trees and 17,500 shrubs and groundcovers. As part of the process, Mount Lawley has developed a comprehensive flora species list, with only endemic species now being planted on site. This is helping to restore much of the endemic vegetation that had been removed through historical clearing activities prior to the golf club occupying the land in the late 1920s.

The effect of these additional plantings, together with problematic tree removal, will see an expansion of canopy cover by more than 29 per cent by 2042. The actual area of canopy



Mount Lawley has developed a comprehensive flora species list, with only endemic species being planted on site

at Mount Lawley is significantly higher when remnant bushland areas are included.

The buy in of the wider Mount Lawley membership has been critical to the success of the revegetation works. A significant amount of the 'on ground' work has been undertaken by a dedicated group of member volunteers under the guidance of Tatt and the

club's Landcare officer. The volunteer group started with just four members in 2019 but has grown to more than 30 members in 2023. A key driver behind this growth in numbers is the club's genuine commitment to good environmental management. In 2022 alone, this group clocked up 4000 volunteer hours on environmental activities around the club.

Handy PUMP

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Mount Lawley's ambitious planting program has already seen course staff and member volunteers reintroduce almost 9500 endemic species since 2019. The photo on the left shows members planting out the 15th tee carry and, middle, some of the maturing plants. The photo right shows the revegetated area on the right-hand side of the 9th tee

Such engagement also extends to the development of strong working relationships with external stakeholders, among them local community group Friends of Inglewood Triangle (FoIT) and the Urban Bushland Council WA.

The Inglewood Triangle bushland area is located immediately adjacent to the golf club and this collaboration has included joint participation in Clean-up Australia Day activities and FoIT volunteers assisting with weed removal in golf club areas abutting Walter Rd which runs along part of the club's eastern boundary. Together they also put in an application to the WA Government's Natural Resource Management Program that has provided tube stock and other assistance over the past two years.

The club engages Perth environmental consulting company Natural Area for the collection of seed with local provenance to be propagated and planted on the course, within the Inglewood Triangle and other surrounding sites. The revegetation works have also given the club an opportunity to showcase their efforts to the wider community as well as help educate TAFE students. Under the supervision of golf course staff, students have assisted the club with revegetating areas around the course.

WHOLE-OF-COURSE FOCUS

The extent of the work at Mount Lawley doesn't just finish with the vegetation and also encompasses other areas such as the preservation of local fauna and water management practices. The course provides a vital urban habitat for a diverse range of native animal species, among them the forest red-tailed black cockatoo and endangered Carnaby's cockatoo, rainbow bee-eater and southern brown bandicoot (or quenda).

bungalows' is creating safe havens for the southern brown bandicoot from predatory foxes and feral cats.

Future priorities include relocation of fauna from areas expected to be cleared (Perth Airport is one such site), enhanced weed control programs, dieback assessment and management and the introduction of difficult-to-germinate understorey species.

Elsewhere, Tatt has been investigating options to improve Mount Lawley's irrigation

“Under Rod's leadership, Mount Lawley is setting a valuable and positive example of what today's golf clubs should be doing in managing their natural environment.” - Troy O'Hern, GM, Mount Lawley GC

The club has recently installed the first lot of owl boxes to provide safe nesting sites for owl species currently experiencing decline in the Perth area. It has also mounted microbat boxes as roosting sites for bats found in the region. Dead trees and fallen branches are retained where possible in out of play areas to act as fauna habitat. The club is also proactive in the protection of the spectacular migratory rainbow bee-eater bird and through the building and installation of special 'quenda

water quality and usage in both the short- and long-term. The course is already an active participant in the WA Government's Waterwise golf course program and back in 2016 installed a new Rain Bird irrigation system.

More recently, Tatt started looking into Nano Bubble Technologies (NBT) and their groundbreaking technology which infuses microscopic nanobubbles of concentrated dissolved oxygen into water. The heightened levels of oxygen in the water have shown to provide significant benefits for soil and turf health, assisting nutrient uptake and reducing the likelihood of diseases. Tatt put forward a request to conduct a six-month trial which the Mount Lawley Board approved in March.

“We started the trial in August which has seen the installation of a full NBT system that is treating the water in our irrigation lake before being pumped out onto the course,” explains Tatt. “We have engaged John Forrest to collect data on the impact the treatment system is having on water quality and how that translates to turf health. It is early days so far, but the NBT system has greatly improved the clarity of the lake and its dissolved oxygen readings. It will be interesting to see how the trial goes as we enter Perth's usual hot and dry summer.”



Over the next seven years, continuation of the endemic planting program will see the reintroduction of an additional 1700 trees and 17,500 shrubs and groundcovers



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Clear goals, collaborative efforts, favourable outcomes. One leads to the other and it's a formula that for one turf management team has paid significant dividends, especially during some challenging and character-building times recently. Maintaining sports turf surfaces is very much a team pursuit and for the turf management crew at Melbourne's City of Boroondara, it is that team ethos which has seen them continually uphold the highest levels of service for the community they serve.

Such efforts were duly recognised at the Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in June when the City of Boroondara team was confirmed as the latest recipient of the ASTMA's Sports Turf Management Team of the Year Award. Struck three years ago, the award acknowledges those sports turf management crews who espouse the values and importance of teamwork and their dedication to providing the best conditions possible.

The Gabba crew took home the inaugural award in 2021, while last year it was jointly won by Lynwood Country Club and Meadowbrook Golf Club for their incredible work to bring their facilities back after multiple flood events. Again, there were some strong nominations in 2023, but it was the breadth of work achieved by the Boroondara crew which set them above the other finalists.

Boroondara brings it

The City of Boroondara's turf management team collected the ASTMA Sports Turf Management Team of the Year Award at this year's Adelaide conference.

The City of Boroondara team comprises 15 members and is headed by turf management coordinator Nick Marino. Now in the 15th year of his turf management career, the former VGCSA Graduate of the Year winner and alumnus of the 2016 Future Turf Managers' Initiative, joined the council in 2018. Over the following five years he has risen through the ranks to take on the leading role which he has now held for the past 15 months.

Posting on LinkedIn shortly after fellow team members Paul Locke and Ben Hartley accepted the award in Adelaide, Marino was thrilled to share his team's success: "Over the past few years we have encountered numerous challenges, but despite these obstacles the team has always worked towards our collective goal of delivering positive outcomes for the Boroondara community.

"This achievement is a testament to Paul Locke and Shannon Bennett's commitment and demonstrated outstanding leadership in keeping our operational teams engaged and always working towards being better. Steve Vernon and Rhett Pinder have contributed enormously to the planning and delivery of the team's capital renewal program by collaborating with others to achieve great outcomes. A special mention goes to Roxanne Black whose exceptional organisational skills and tireless efforts have been the glue that holds everything together.

"To every member of my team, I extend my sincerest congratulations on this incredible achievement. Your hard work, passion and unwavering commitment to excellence have brought us this well-deserved recognition. This award serves as a reminder of our collective ability to overcome challenges and accomplish great things. I am immensely proud to be a part of such an outstanding group of individuals."

Opposite: Members of the City of Boroondara turf management team, from left, Tim Quinn, Ben Hartley, Roxanne Black, coordinator Nick Marino, Paul Locke, Aaron Van Haften, Indi Taylor and Steve Vernon

WIDE SCOPE

The City of Boroondara covers an area of around 60 square kilometres in the inner eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Wedged between the Yarra River to the north and the Monash Freeway to the south, it encompasses some of the more affluent suburbs in Melbourne including Kew, Hawthorn, Camberwell, Balwyn, Balwyn North, Glen Iris and Ashburton.

Together, Marino and his team look after the 18-hole public access Freeway Golf Course which caters for upwards of 60,000 rounds annually, 54 sports grounds and a comprehensive capital works program. Of the sportsgrounds, the council's premier venue is Camberwell Sportsground (home to VAFA side Old Scotch Football Club and Victorian Premier Cricket club Camberwell Magpies), with other major venues including Victoria Park (Kew), NPL-level soccer ground Dorothy Laver Reserve West (Glen Iris), Gordon Barnard Reserve and Macleay Park (Balwyn North).

With the golf course located on the banks of the Yarra River and the majority of council's

CITY OF BOROONDARA TURF MANAGEMENT TEAM

Nick Marino (coordinator turf management); **Paul Locke** (formerly team leader Golf, currently team leader Parks on a six-month secondment); **Shannon Bennett** (team leader Sportsgrounds); **Roxanne Black** (technical support officer); **Steve Vernon** and **Rhett Pinder** (project officers); **Benjamin Hartley** (acting team leader Golf); **Dylan Williams** (turf management technical officer); **Indiana Taylor** (acting technical officer); **Michael Asbury**, **Troy Watchorn** and **Aaron Van Haften** (turf officers); **Timothy Quinn** (golf course roustabout); **Jason Penny** (tractor operator); and **Tom Jones** (turf management apprentice).

sports grounds built in the late 1980s, one of the most significant issues facing the team is the condition of playing surfaces during the winter season. In addition, with the rapid growth of female sports participation and junior golf, playability is a high priority for the team.

The past couple of years have been a challenging yet productive one for the team. That included navigating the COVID-19 pandemic period, where the team demonstrated exceptional commitment to

excellence by ensuring the sports grounds within the municipality were maintained to the highest standards. As people sought out safe spaces to maintain social distancing and cope with quarantine measures, the turf management team stepped up to provide top-quality public facilities.

FREEWAY FOCUS

Undoubtedly the biggest project that the City of Boroondara team has tackled in recent times has been the redevelopment of Freeway Golf Course. Due to land acquisition by the Victorian Government for the North East Link project, two holes were lost which necessitated the reconfiguration of six holes in order to maintain an 18-hole layout. Pacific Coast Design undertook the redesign, with SJM Turf and Civil awarded the construction tender.

Closing in mid-2021, over a near two-year period the course was significantly altered, with the new and improved layout and turf surfaces re-opening in March 2023 to widespread praise. The course reconfiguration works were significant and included:

- Rebuilding seven greens (1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 13 and the practice putter) to USGA specifications and hydroseeding with a 50/50 mix of 007 and 777 creeping bentgrass;

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A major component of the Freeway Golf Course redevelopment was reconstructing all bunkers. That included replacing the old sand faces with timber sleepers, creating a unique and striking look throughout the course

- Resurfacing six of the oldest greens (2, 8, 9, 16, 17 and 18). The top 50-100mm of each green was removed, the profile rotary-hoed, fresh sand imported, green reshaped and then hydroseeded with the same bentgrass mix;
- Rebuilding 11 tees (1-7, 10, 12, 13 and 18). Many were increased in size to help manage wear and provide additional challenge for golfers;
- Installing 2.8 kilometres of additional cart paths to allow cart usage through the wetter months. The new paths comprise a mix of concrete, granitic sand and Porous Lane recycled tyre path; and
- Planting 200 native trees and 8000 native plants and shrubs.

Bunkering was also a major focus of the works with all bunkers rebuilt and the old sand faces replaced by timber sleepers. Now a striking and unique feature of the course, hardwood timber that was sourced from forests in NSW was used to line all the faces.

Installing the sleepers has resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in maintenance due to eliminating sand face washouts during periods of excessive rain.

The sleepers were installed at an angle of 60 degrees from vertical to allow any golf balls to ricochet up and behind the player if they were to hit into the face. The timber was concreted into a 400mm-deep footing and bolted into the clay behind. A 200mm layer of coarse sand was installed in the bases, allowing the ball to sit up enough to get a clean shot out of the bunkers.

As part of the cart path installation component, Boroondara received a grant from Tyre Stewardship Australia to install about one kilometre of Porous Lane path mix, a new environmentally-friendly alternative to concrete paths. Made up of 60 per cent recycled car and truck tyres, as well as stone, it allows paths to maintain large pore spaces so that water can freely move through the path while still providing the strength of a sealed surface.



Eleven tee complexes (pictured is the 2nd) were rebuilt as part of the Freeway Golf Course redevelopment

As it is porous, the path mix can be installed in tree protection zones and, in some cases, extremely close to tree trunks.

In addition to the above works, all fairways have been transitioned across to Santa Ana couchgrass and a fairway drainage program implemented. These have both resulted in more consistent and expansive playing surfaces (an increase of about three hectares) that can better cope with wet weather conditions.

That was put to the test in late 2022 when the Yarra River, which wends its way along the northern boundary of the course, flooded three times in a two-month period. Two of those three floods washed away a newly-built tee complex and the front of a new green. Luckily enough, a good relationship with SJM meant the Boroondara turf management team could navigate the delays positively.

The reconstruction works at Freeway were undertaken specifically with the environment in mind. A vital component was the implementation of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) which was an action item in the council's endorsed Climate Action Plan. The EMP encompassed the planting of native trees and shrubs, the establishment of garden beds, the conversion of two hectares of mown rough into new biodiversity zones and a tree management plan.

Working with Kate Torgersen from Environmental Golf Solutions, a huge amount of change has happened with the new revegetation areas establishing well and starting to mature nicely. One unique feature has been the inclusion of an 'education garden' situated adjacent to the pro shop. The garden contains information signs and QR codes showcasing the variety of native vegetation that can be found out on the golf course.

With the course reopening in March, the team has also successfully developed a comprehensive service delivery standard that sets out the minimum acceptable level of maintenance for the golf course. This document is crucial in guaranteeing that these standards are consistently met to ensure the best possible experience for the golfing community. It also serves as an educational tool for new team members.

Outside of turf management operations, the golf course facility is not just limited to golf. The new pro shop operator actively engages with the community and has diversified usage by organising social programs such as 'Bring your dog to golf', Blitz competitions, environmental educational walks and 'Ride the course' events. In addition to the social program, they have also grown junior golf programs, schools and community golf groups and registered Freeway as a 'Future Golf' facility.

SPORTSGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

During the golf course reconstruction project, the Boroondara team still needed to maintain 54 sports grounds and undertaken capital works. Some of the maintenance included renovations and maintenance of 16 turf wickets, fortnightly oval WHS/condition audits, mowing, nutrition and pest control programs, turf preparation and asset audits.

One of the bigger capital works projects was the reconstruction of Macleay Park Oval 2, a 1.2-hectare ground which caters for soccer and cricket. Again undertaken by SJM Turf and Civil and completed across the spring and summer of 2021/2022, the ground was reconstructed with a sand base, 4m-wide lateral drains, 2m-wide sand slit drains and a 100mm sand carpet layer on top. Evergreen Turf solid-turfed the ground with Santa Ana couchgrass maxi rolls which came from South Australia, with the Boroondara team managing the grow-in and establishment period.

Other projects ticked off include;

- Cricket net construction;
- Synthetic turf replacement across cricket pitches and practice nets;
- Installation of hybrid turf technology in high wear areas such as goal squares and centres;
- Light tower installation for training;



Porous Lane path mix, which comprises around 60 per cent recycled car and truck tyres, being installed at Freeway Golf Course

- Construction of sport risk fences; and
- Design work and feasibility studies for future projects.

Over 160 local clubs utilise Boroondara's sporting facilities and by completing the above projects it has increased holding capacity for these clubs, with strategic planning assisting the team in making more precise informed

decisions about project scheduling. The city's 10-year capital works program enables the team to forecast budgets and allocate resources to create valuable open spaces for the community. In addition, the plan allows them to confidently schedule projects and ensure efficient delivery.

FORWARD THINKING

On the grounds throughout the municipality, the Boroondara team is always looking to trial new technologies where possible.

Currently, they have engaged structural engineers to assess and report on all current sports training light towers aged between eight and 20 years old. If the return of the reports is compliant, the team begins an LED light conversion program, increasing lux levels across grounds while using less power. More even light and compliant lux levels allows clubs to host night games while reducing their electricity bills.

Boroondara has also in recent years partnered with Melbourne field of play company SportEng to conduct a trial looking at the feasibility of using refined recycled glass as a natural rootzone sand substitute. In November 2021, three 300mm-deep rootzone trial plots were established on the couchgrass nursery at Freeway Golf Course consisting of

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The reconstruction of Macleay Park Oval 2, a 1.2-hectare soccer and cricket ground in Balwyn North, was undertaken over the spring and summer of 2021/2022

a 100 per cent recycled glass profile, a 100 per cent natural sand profile and a 50/50 mix profile of recycled glass and natural sand.

Following some promising results with the 50/50 blend, a second trial has since been established at HA Smith Reserve (a soccer ground in Hawthorn) to see how the profile performs under regular usage. Early results have indicated that the profile is stable and the turf is coping with the level of usage.

SAFETY FIRST

Being part of a local government entity, workplace health and safety (WHS) is at the heart of everything the Boroondara turf management team does. Over the past year it has engaged The Toolbox Team to ensure WHS compliance by providing the tools and resources to educate them on potential risks. Dedication to WHS compliance is evident through weekly 'toolbox talks', where the team actively engages in safety conversations to help create a positive safety culture.

Additionally, the council recently introduced innovative wearable technology to assess body stress and pressure points during strenuous tasks. Team members wore special devices while completing tasks such as laying turf, moving fertiliser bags and changing holes. The devices monitored motion and body movements, highlighting which actions put the most stress on the body and, importantly, the specific area of the body.

As an example, when the team were changing holes, the device registered high stress points when driving the cutter into the green, but also showed the extreme high stress loads on the lower back when pulling the cutter from the green. The purpose was to inform staff of movements that could result in injury and have them work to reduce that likelihood by sharing the tasks or completing stretches before undertaking them.

TEAMWORK, COMMUNICATION

The City of Boroondara is committed to recognising and celebrating the turf management team members' successes

and outstanding work through organisational awards. It takes great pride in the team's ability to adapt to change and work collaboratively towards achieving the city's shared goals. Additionally, it greatly values professional development and provides regular opportunities for team members by allowing them to take on higher duty positions during periods of leave. Investing in the team is a key to Boroondara's success and the council is committed to providing them with the support and resources they need to achieve their goals.

Team members have gained valuable experience in golf course and sports grounds operations and projects, allowing them to work seamlessly across both operational delivery areas. This flexibility in staff allocation enables Boroondara to concentrate resources on different projects or scheduled works and ensures that they are delivered within agreed timeframes. For example, during the council's 16 turf wicket block renovation program, the team worked seamlessly to complete the work in just three days. This teamwork is also evident during renovation works at Freeway Golf Course.



The resurfaced nets at Nettleton Park in Glen Iris

In the lead-up to the re-opening of Freeway this March, the team worked tirelessly to complete minor works, remove construction signage and bunting, prepare all turf surfaces for play and plan and deliver the official opening event which councillors and all stakeholders attended. The team's ability to work together as one was the only reason the course could successfully open by the due date.

Managing numerous facilities demands the team's continuous pursuit of learning. It is essential for the team to keep up to date with industry trends and best practices in order to maintain the highest level of service. To this end, the team makes a strong effort to attend industry events in order to stay connected with peers and ensure they remain up to speed with the latest developments.

To ensure the community's needs are met, the turf team routinely engages in a comprehensive consultation process involving understanding, communicating and collaborating with key stakeholders. This requires good planning and clear objectives, enabling the team to quickly communicate any changes or issues and provide frequent updates to the community.

For example, the team encountered unexpected delays during the Freeway Golf Course project due to weather and other external factors. The team ensured that stakeholders were informed and aware of the situation by communicating regular updates through various channels, including council communication, delivery team updates to clubs and social media.

In addition, throughout the project 'walk and talk' sessions were conducted for the public, club members and councillors. These sessions served as both an educational opportunity and a means of addressing any PR challenges associated with having the course closed for an extended period. This approach helped to build trust and confidence among stakeholders and demonstrated the team's commitment to delivering high-quality outcomes. 🌱

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Walking the Wark



Glenelg Oval became the third recipient of the ASTMA's Excellence in Sportsfields and Grounds Management

TORO

Award at this year's conference.

TORO

Managing a community sports field is challenging at the best of times, but when it's one that caters for both state level football and first grade cricket, that demand is elevated to another level. Over the past nine years, Glenelg Oval curator David Wark has become fully versed in balancing the needs of the various stakeholders that use the ground and providing playing surfaces that not only meet but in many cases exceed expectations.

With the Australian Sports Turf Management Conference being held in Adelaide this June, it was fitting that Wark was recognised for his dedication and the high turf management standards he sets. Nominated by the City of Holdfast Bay, which oversees the municipality's premier sporting oval, Wark, together with the City's open space lead Kris Charlton, were bestowed the ASTMA's Excellence in Sportsfields and Grounds Management Award, sponsored by Toro Australia.

Holdfast Bay was one of two council's honoured at the awards, with Melbourne-based City of Boroondara collecting the ASTMA Sports Turf Management Team of the Year Award (see previous article, page 24).

Wark was overseas when the award was announced at the National Turf Industry Awards dinner at the Adelaide Oval on 19 June, with Charlton joined by City of Holdfast Bay field services manager Bill Blyth to accept the award on Wark's behalf. Presented with the award upon his return, Wark commented: "Every day I come to work with a passion to make this space as best I can for the Glenelg community. I love what I do and I am proud of my work!" Enough said!

HOME GROUND

Glenelg Oval is a true community facility and one of South Australia's iconic boutique venues. A focal point for the Adelaide bayside suburb, it has long been the home of the powerhouse Glenelg Football Club and Glenelg District Cricket Club.

During winter it hosts regular SANFL matches and this past season provided the launch pad for the Tigers to snare the rare double of winning both the SANFL League and Reserve premierships. The kikuyu/ryegrass oval became something of a fortress, with the League side winning 10 of its 11 home games and the Reserves winning all 11 of theirs. Between mid-March and early September, Glenelg Oval hosted a total

of 43 SANFL matches across the League, Reserves, Women's League, U18s and U16s competitions, including 14 double-header days and four triple-header days.

Over the past 12 months the oval has also hosted training sessions for teams travelling to Adelaide for the AFL's Gather Round, while last August it hosted Adelaide's opening round AFLW Season 7 match against Melbourne.

No sooner has football season finished, the oval switches into cricket mode, with one of the state's leading premier cricket clubs, Glenelg District, moving in. The oval's seven Santa Ana couchgrass wickets host multiple fixtures across multiple grades and competition formats. Last season that included 11 1st Grade, four one-day and three T20 men's competition matches, as well as four 1st Grade and eight T20 women's matches and three U18 Shield fixtures. Last December it also hosted an Australian U19s Championship match. The ground also has 11 Santa Ana turf and two synthetic turf practice wickets.

As well as catering for these premier competitions and fixtures, Glenelg Oval also hosts many community events. Neighbouring Glenelg Primary School holds sports days and concerts on the ground, while pupils are allowed to use the oval during their breaks.

Glenelg Oval is one of South Australia's iconic boutique sports grounds and is home to the Glenelg Football Club and Glenelg District Cricket Club



CRITICAL ELEMENTS

Managing different stakeholder expectations across two major sporting codes, not to mention the transition period between seasons, can only be done so with clear communication and sound forward planning. Due to the high volume of matches and events across the year, teamwork is vital.

While there are many long days and weekend work as the oval's sole curator, Wark



Glenelg Oval curator David Wark (second from left) with fellow City of Holdfast Bay representatives (from left) Kris Charlton (open spaces lead), Bill Blyth (manager field services) and James Mitchell (former acting GM)

is part of the City's greater Open Space team which is headed up by Charlton. Working together, they are able to coordinate additional staff resources in and around major events and programs, especially as competing demands mean ongoing maintenance schedules must be flexible. No better example of that is when the oval transitions between summer and winter codes, with often just a two- or three-week gap to do so. Wark and Charlton have also engaged a turf consultant to assist with the development of robust turf programs to better support the oval's usage requirements.

Communication is key to the success of all relationships that have a vested interest in the oval. Wark is instrumental in liaising and forecasting potential impacts both for his curatorial practices and ground usage. There is constant negotiating and educating to facilitate desired outcomes beneficial to all parties.

A recent example of this was Glenelg Primary asking for a time they could access the oval for a sports day in September. Wark

and Charlton requested three different dates so that they could then liaise with both the football and cricket clubs, as it was around that season transition period. The four parties were able to negotiate in a positive way to settle on a date that worked for all, enabling a smooth transition from one code to another, a school sports day and the required maintenance to occur in preparation for summer.

HIGH PRAISE

As part of the City's nomination of Glenelg Oval for the ASTMA award, there was unanimous praise for Wark and his efforts. Speaking to the various clubs who supported the nomination, all were in agreement that it was his knowledge and expertise, as well as his ability to foster strong working relationships with all key stakeholders, that were key to his success as a turf manager.

"From a surface perspective, David's ability to implement and maintain systems and processes to ensure a high-quality surface is

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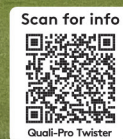
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"Every day I come to work with a passion to make this space as best I can for the community. I love what I do and I am proud of my work." – David Wark (Glenelg Oval)

exceptional," wrote Justin Scripps, the current chief executive and former football director at Glenelg Football Club. "When all other SANFL grounds are struggling to maintain quality playing surfaces towards the end of winter, our surface coverage is consistent and well-manicured.

"David's knowledge and expertise is highly valued by the football club, as is his ability to foster strong working relationships with our key stakeholders. No request is ever too much and his eye for detail and commitment to excellence provides our club and players with a surface that is the envy of the competition."

Added Jarret Moyse, president of the Glenelg District Cricket Club: "The club feels very fortunate to have David as our curator. He has done a tremendous job over a number of years producing high quality pitches, practice facilities and outfields for our men's, women's and junior teams to train and play on. It's credit to David that he has also prepared the oval to host First Class games (including a Sheffield Shield final) and A-list games, which we had great feedback from all the teams, including the visiting Indian Test team.

"Unfortunately weather conditions can always play a part in preparation of wickets, but David's work ethic and knowledge has enabled us to get games of cricket on the oval when sometimes it looked pretty bleak. Winter and the football season can often put a real strain on the oval, but David works tirelessly to get it up to a great standard quickly for cricket. David listens to our needs and feedback, and is very willing and easy to work with.

"We often get comments from opposition teams in particular who regularly rank Glenelg Oval as one of the best places to play in the competition. The feedback I have from our internal stakeholders, as well as SACA grounds personnel, has only been positive in that David is very helpful and manages the limitations and use of the oval well. From a personal point

of view as well, David has been a pleasure to work with and provides the club close to the best, if not the best, in the competition."

Trent Kelly, grounds manager at SACA's Karen Rolton Oval, also noted: "SACA and I have had the pleasure of working with David for a number of years. David has great attention to detail when it comes to preparing cricket pitches and outfields at Glenelg Oval. He displays his excellence on a weekly basis to prepare practice and match-day pitches for Glenelg. Anytime SACA reaches out to host a Sheffield Shield game or any other high-performance fixture, David shows outstanding enthusiasm and delivers on the finished product time and time again."

OVAL UPGRADES

Shortly after winning the ASTMA award, the City of Holdfast Bay confirmed that Stages 3 and 4 of masterplan works to upgrade Glenelg Oval had been approved and would begin this September. Stage 1 and 2 works, undertaken in 2020 and 2021, saw the \$1.2 million redevelopment of the adjacent Holdfast Tennis Club and construction of new unisex change rooms in the southwest corner of the oval precinct. Stage 3 and 4 works, to be completed by May 2024, will focus on the northeast corner of the property and include;

- Rebuilding the practice wickets to SACA standards and increasing from 11 to 12;



The northeast corner of Glenelg Oval is undergoing redevelopment, which includes increasing the number of practice wickets and building a new curator facility



- A new curator and storage facility;
- Redevelopment of the northeast mound with tiered seating and viewing area;
- New public toilets;
- A plaza-style entry to the northeast corner from Rugless Terrace and upgrade of the adjacent Margaret Messenger Reserve.

In preparation for these works, earlier in the year smaller projects were undertaken to upgrade and relocate the oval's irrigation bore water supply system. Initial borewell, pump and electrical system installation started in March with final connection to the irrigation system occurring ahead of the latest works.

The borewell was relocated 20 metres east of its previous location, with a sub-surface pump and infrastructure installed. Part of the upgrade also included power supply and irrigation control system upgrades. The relocation of the existing bore enables the expansion of the practice wicket area and upgraded toilets/curator's facility infrastructure.

Wark has been deeply involved in the design of the new practice wickets, determining the most ideal configuration to best support sound turf practices. This has included creating better airflow, coverage from the irrigation system and creating a pedestrian thoroughfare to eliminate unnecessary foot traffic moving across the decks.

Wark and Charlton also had significant involvement in the review of the oval's existing curator's facility and making the case for it to be upgraded. Improvements will be made to the chemical storage facility to create a safer working environment, while the workshop will have a greater capacity to store equipment. New equipment is also being looked at, such as cricket cover rollers to reduce manual handling tasks. Such changes will create greater efficiencies and allow Wark to spend more time out on the oval in order to cater for the increasing pressure and demand for a premium surface all year round. 🏏

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AWARDS

*ASTMA Graduate of the Year Award
winner Jayden Zappelli from
Kalgoorlie Golf Course, WA*



Great expectations

ATM profiles this year's Graduate of the Year Award recipients

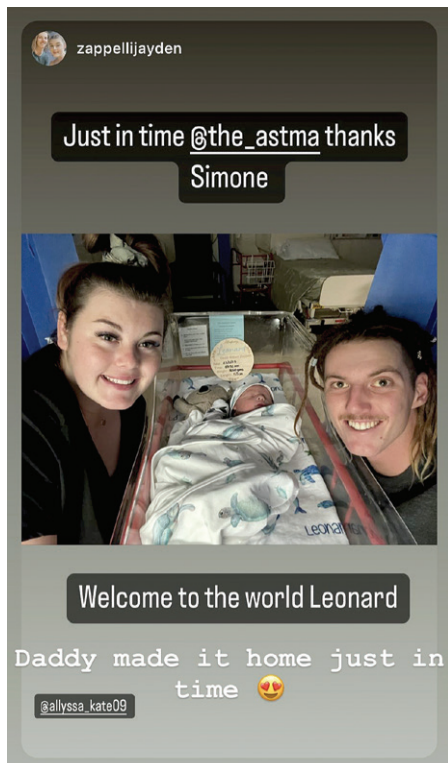
TORO Jayden Zappelli and Lachlan Roache. **TORO**

It was a big week for Jayden Zappelli, much bigger than the nearly 300 attendees at the National Turf Industry Awards dinner held at Adelaide Oval in June would have realised. As he was on stage accepting the 2023 ASTMA Graduate of the Year Award, sponsored by Toro Australia, few would have known that at the same time his mind was 1600 kilometres away in his hometown of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

While the gregarious Zappelli held court and cracked jokes having just been adjudged the golf course management industry's leading apprentice, his partner Allyssa was back home in Kalgoorlie heavily pregnant. The young

couple were expecting their first child on 1 July and with the conference being held in Adelaide from 19-22 June, they knew they would be cutting things pretty close were Zappelli to attend. Zappelli was one of six national finalists and after much discussion and upon Allyssa's insistence due to the importance of the event, he jetted to Adelaide despite knowing full well the unique circumstances on the home front.

Sure enough, just hours before the Monday awards ceremony, Zappelli received a call from Allyssa informing him that there were possible complications with the pregnancy and that she may have to be induced on the Thursday. At that stage she was waiting on



Zappelli's Instagram post the day after partner Allyssa gave birth to their first son, just four days after he had received his Graduate of the Year Award in Adelaide

blood test results, so told her man to hold off coming back until they had come through.

The awards evening came and went with Zappelli a popular winner of the national honour, becoming its 28th recipient and just the fourth from WA. He joined Lachlan Roache from The Gabba in Brisbane who was bestowed the Sportsfields and Grounds Graduate of the Year Award, also sponsored by Toro Australia. It was a night to remember for the whole graduate cohort who celebrated in the time-honoured tradition.

Thankfully Allyssa's results came back on Tuesday fine, but by that point Zappelli had made the decision to head back home. Informing ASTMA events and education manager Simone Staples, who had made all the arrangements for the graduates to attend the conference, she booked Zappelli on the next available flights. After a six-hour layover in Perth, Zappelli eventually landed back in Kalgoorlie on the Wednesday afternoon.

At 10pm Thursday, Allyssa went into labour and at 3.52am on Friday 23 June, Leonard David William Zappelli, weighing eight pounds one ounce, came into the world. It was the perfect finish to what was an amazing week for Zappelli and he took to Instagram the following day, posting a photo of their new family along with the comment *"Just in time @the_astma, thanks Simone. Welcome to the world Leonard... Daddy made it home just in time."*

WA RULES AGAIN

In winning the ASTMA Graduate of the Year Award, Zappelli made it back-to-back wins for WA graduates, following in the footsteps of last year's winner Jon Christmass from Lakelands Country Club in Perth. In doing so he topped another quality field of finalists which included



2023 Sportsfields and Grounds Graduate of the Year Award winner Lachlan Roache has been at The Gabba since 2021

Riley Willcox (Gold Creek CC, ACT), Jackson Lanning (Killara GC, NSW), Daniel Fulcher (Maroochy River GC, Qld), Sophie Hamdorf (Royal Adelaide GC, SA) and Solly Marshall (Kingston Heath GC, Vic).

Born and bred in Kalgoorlie, Zappelli's career in golf course management started in 2018 at the age of 15 when he took on a work experience position at the course one day a week. He obviously impressed and was offered a job not long after, becoming a casual there for two years on and off over school holidays and weekends. After he finished his schooling, in February 2020 he started an apprenticeship under the guidance of Patrick Casey (CSTM), going on to attain his Certificate III in Sports Turf Management through Perth's South Metropolitan TAFE in May 2023.

During his time at Kalgoorlie, Zappelli grew to be valued and integral member of Casey's team, helping prepare the course for daily play as well as numerous WA PGA Championships. Last December, he also worked as a volunteer at The Victoria Golf Club in Melbourne, helping the crew prepare the famous Sandbelt course for the 2022 ISPS Handa Australian Open.

In March 2023, at the WA Turf Awards evening, Zappelli received the Baileys Award for 'Best Block Release Apprentice' for his hard work, commitment and efforts towards his certification. From there he was interviewed by the GCSAWA committee and was ultimately bestowed the AFGRI Apprentice of the Year Award at the WA Golf Industry Awards Night. That qualified him for the national final in Adelaide which was judged on the Sunday before the awards ceremony.

"I was shocked to hear my name called out," recalls Zappelli of the moment when the award was announced. "I remember looking at the other graduates to see if I was wrong! But when I received it, I was lost for words. The award means a lot and is something I was striving for since starting my apprenticeship. It's a massive help to achieve what I want in the industry which is to become the best greenkeeper I can be. It's a great thing to have and will definitely help open some doors."

Those opportunities didn't take long to materialise. After winning the award, he was approached with a number of offers, including that of foreman at Royal Perth Golf Club. Accepting the role, Zappelli will shortly reconnect with his former Kalgoorlie boss Casey who moved there earlier in the year.

In accepting the award, Zappelli was quick to praise his family and partner Allyssa who have supported him unconditionally along the

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Roache with Gabba ground manager David Sandurski (left) and Zappelli (right) with their graduate awards

journey, as well as the likes of Casey and his fellow co-workers at Kalgoorlie Golf Course who have helped him to hone his skillset.

"I had a great apprenticeship at Kalgoorlie and I'm really looking forward to working with Patrick again," states Zappelli on his impending move to Royal Perth. "He played a huge part in my apprenticeship and I am really grateful for the position he has offered me there. Patrick taught me everything I needed to know and entrusted me with important tasks and projects, like constructing our nursery. Previous assistant Matt Vroom also played a huge part in encouraging me and driving me to progress. He told me about the graduate award and encouraged me to strive for it.

"Working as a greenkeeper is extremely rewarding. I wanted to be in the turf industry because I love sports, but also because I wanted a job where I could be outside and have a good work-life balance. I love knowing that no two days are the same and the great sense of pride you get when accomplishing a task, whether that be daily preparations or hosting a PGA Tour of Australasia tournament. Those events were great to be part of and were extremely rewarding given all the hard work that went into them."

ON THE RIGHT WICKET

If Zappelli was surprised to hear his name read out in Adelaide, his sportsfields and grounds graduate counterpart Lachlan Roache was as equally taken aback. The Gabba apprentice was one of the last finalists confirmed for the award, but he was quick to impress the judging panel with his unwavering passion and outstanding technical knowledge. In winning the award he edged out fellow finalists Lachie Deep (Garangula Polo Club, ACT), James Ophir (Lake Macquarie City Council, NSW), Kieran Gowdie (Christ Church Grammar School, WA), Wade Oliver (Pitchcraft, Vic), Marc Shaw (Sunnyside Instant Lawn, SA) and Angus Vear (Blundstone Arena, Tas).

"I was shocked," recalls Roache. "I'm a pretty quiet person so I was more thinking about what to say in front of a room full of people I didn't know! I felt very honoured to have won the award. I take such pride in working at The Gabba and love what I do there. I'm hopeful that winning the award will help me gain more exposure in the industry and lead to some new and exciting opportunities in the future.

"Since winning the award I've started my Diploma of Sports Turf Management

and am really enjoying that. I'd really like to continue my development and progression in the industry and would love the opportunity to progress into a management position at The Gabba and potentially work interstate or overseas to learn how different states and countries prepare different types of turf for their different sports and events."

Roache started out in the industry doing work experience as a grounds assistant at the Coorparoo Cricket Club in Brisbane between 2017 and 2020. During that time, he also worked in a similar capacity at the Rodley Cricket Club in the UK while playing cricket there. Returning home, Roache started an apprenticeship with the Brisbane Metropolitan Touch Association in 2019 working under Rob Watkins. He then transitioned over to The Gabba in 2021, joining the crew led by ground manager David Sandurski.

The biggest highlight for Roache to date was being involved in his first Test match which just happened to be an Ashes Test in December 2021. What made it even more special was that Australia won by a commanding nine wickets, setting up what would be an eventual 4-0 series win. "I had never experienced such a focus on what we do as greenkeepers and how much our work impacts the match," reflects Roache. "It was another level."

Roache says that he has been extremely fortunate to have had excellent mentors in the early years of his career. He credits Watkins as "a massive influence", someone who taught him everything regarding equipment and general turf maintenance. In particular, Roache says that Watkins would let him make mistakes in order to learn from them, which is so important when starting out. "I learnt that it was okay to make mistakes and that it was more about how you fixed them and bounced back from them that shapes you," says Roache.

To then be able to work at the world-renowned Gabba has continued to accelerate Roache's skillset, especially under the watchful eye of the highly-experienced Sandurski. "Dave has refined my skills to an international standard and I feel extremely lucky to be able to learn from him every day," states Roache. "For him to give me the chance to work at a stadium where I grew up watching the Brisbane Lions play at is pretty special and something I am very appreciative of.

"I really enjoy preparing a world class field, making sure it's always of the highest standard for major events. I love the pressure that comes with working at an internationally-recognised stadium that broadcasts events all over the world. I enjoy working in an environment where I continue to learn new things every day, not only from The Gabba team but from industry experts and professionals as well."



The 2023 Graduate of the Year Award cohort on the evening of the National Turf Industry Awards in Adelaide



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Joondalup Resort's dramatic par three 3rd hole on the Quarry nine. The Quarry and Lake loops hosted the 2023 WA Open



Quarry, lake and desert

The PGA Tour of Australasia headed west in early October, with Joondalup Resort and Kalgoorlie Golf Course superbly presented.

Western Australia has more than its fair share of top golf courses and two of its more unique layouts were centre stage as the PGA Tour of Australasia landed for this year's WA swing in early October. After last holding a state Open back in 1987, Joondalup Resort returned to the tournament roster when it hosted the Nexus Advisernet/Bowra & O'Dea WA Open,

before players made the journey east to the Goldfields region to contest the CKB WA PGA Championship at Kalgoorlie Golf Course.

First contested in 1913, this year marked the 99th staging of the WA Open, with Joondalup's renowned Quarry/Lake loops of nine in play for the 72-hole stroke play championship. Traditionally, the WA Open has been played the week following the WA PGA Championship, but this year the events were

switched to avoid the PGA clashing with the 2023 Kalgoorlie Cup horse race. With Golf WA's Men's Country Week also taking place the same week as the WA Open, it was one of the biggest weeks on the WA golfing calendar this year.

Guiding tournament preparations at Joondalup was course superintendent Ashley Watson who has worked at the club ever since its opening – a remarkable 37 years. Watson, who was named the GCSAWA's Superintendent of the Year in 2019, has been superintendent for the past 15 years. He leads a crew of 15 that includes senior staff members Troy Johnston (assistant superintendent), Stuart Police (irrigation technician), John Mundy (turf technician) and Josh Hall (head gardener).

Designed by Robert Trent Jones Jnr, few golf courses offer the dramatic contrasts, scenic beauty and sheer golfing challenge that the 27-hole Joondalup Resort layout provides. It boasts three nine-hole courses – Lake, Dune and Quarry – which are routed over a harsh landscape of bush, gum trees, rocky



Simon Hawkes, who works casually on the course crew at 7 Mile Beach in Hobart, won the WA Open

was presented to PGA Tour standard. Perth's weather also created a few headaches. It was unseasonably cold, wet and windy, meaning the crew was often out cleaning up rather than being able to focus on our preparations.

"One of the biggest challenges was ensuring the course was presented to a tournament level during one of our busiest times of the year. October is our biggest revenue month in terms of corporate golf days. Hosting the Open meant that we had to turn away this business in order to prepare the course. We closed the two courses for a full week pre-tournament as well as the entire week of the tournament.

"We are very fortunate to have a team of loyal and hardworking green staff which resulted in the course and wider resort being presented at an elite level. With the current economic climate, finding new staff has been extremely difficult, which did put extra pressure on existing staff. We thank all the Joondalup staff for their dedication and efforts to present the resort for this prestigious tournament."

outcrops, limestone quarries, lakes and dunes. The Quarry course is the most striking, cutting through, as the name suggests, a former limestone quarry site. Holes 3-5 in particular are world-class (*pictured above is the 3rd*) and feature Trent-Jones' most dramatic work.

Watson and his crew again delivered the Quarry and Lake nines in championship condition, as they do week-in, week-out. The Penncross bentgrass greens were cut at 3mm each day and rolled every second day, with Stimpmeter readings starting out at 10.5 and getting up to 11.5 by the final round. The Santa Ana couchgrass fairways and tees were kept at 12mm and 7mm respectively and the ryegrass/tall fescue roughs were at 50mm.

In the lead-up to the tournament a few minor projects were undertaken in order to host the event. New bunker sand was required throughout both courses, while a bunker at the back of 3 Lake was filled in and turned into a grassy hollow. The crew also built a new pro tee on 2 Lake to lengthen the hole, resulting in an added degree of difficulty for the tournament.

"The tournament lead in was quite difficult due to the time of year coming out of winter with little to no grass growth," notes Watson. "This, combined with the high level of course occupancy and expectation, did add an element of challenge to ensure the course



Ashley Watson (middle front row, blue shirt) and the Joondalup Resort course staff ahead of the 2023 WA Open

PHOTOS: JOONDALUP RESORT/NIALL ROGAN/GA MEDIA



It was the 13th occasion Kalgoorlie had hosted the WA PGA, but the first in charge for superintendent Niall Rogan

The Open went down to the wire with eventual winner Simon Hawkes nailing a crucial up-and-down from the greenside bunker for birdie on the 72nd hole to secure a two-shot win. A two-time winner on the Tour, Hawkes might well be able to thank his recent new job for aiding his winning form. Hawkes has been assisting superintendent Anthony Toogood with the construction and grow-in of the 7 Mile Beach course just outside of Hobart.

"Simon has been with us for about six months," explains Toogood. "He doesn't have a formal role as such, but comes and goes and fits in depending on his playing schedule. He does everything – irrigation, hydroseeding and whatever else needs doing. He has a great attitude and we are happy to have him."

Watching the final round of the WA Open on TV, Toogood took to social media platform X (formerly Twitter) just minutes after Hawkes had rolled in the winning putt, with a tongue-in-cheek post 'One of the staff @7milegolf has had a few days off to play golf!' It was certainly one way to spend a weekend and earned Hawkes a cool \$31,500!

HOT TO TROT

Following Joondalup's return to the tournament calendar, a week later it was the turn of Kalgoorlie Golf Course as it hosted the \$200,000 CKB WA PGA Championship. It was the 13th occasion the spectacular Graham

Marsh-designed course has hosted the event, but this year it was the first one in charge for course superintendent Niall Rogan. Previously the assistant for just under two years, Rogan took over the top role following Patrick Casey's departure to Royal Perth late last year.

While a lack of rain, hot weather and wild winds leading into the tournament proved a challenge for Rogan and his team, for the four tournament days conditions could not have been more perfect. Temperatures between 24 and 29 greeted the field, while winds of between 30-40kph each day were just enough to create some additional challenge.

The conditions and course were certainly to the liking of eventual winner Ben Eccles who shot a four-round total of 23-under to win by five shots. That included a course record-equalling 9-under 63 in his second round. Eccles was on par to smash the record when he was 7-under through 12 holes, but in the end drained a 20-foot birdie putt on the par five 18th to tie the record.

South Australian Jak Carter was also complementing the conditions that Rogan and his team had prepared after a spectacular ace during his third round. Having just putted out for a double-bogey on the 16th, Carter nailed his very next shot, a 178-metre 8-iron, on the par three 17th. What made the turnaround in fortune even better was that he won a \$50,000 Subaru Crosstrek!



Paris Sangwin (right) and volunteer Jason Gangell cut fairways at 8mm during the WA PGA



Kalgoorlie's Jaron Schmidt on the end of a hose. Moisture management was critical during the WA PGA

Rogan oversaw his crew of eight, with one volunteer coming in for the tournament and Kalgoorlie members assisting with bunker raking. Greens were cut at 3mm and rolled every day, while the Wintergreen couchgrass fairways and tees were cut at 8mm. "The course came up great and I couldn't be prouder of the team," says Rogan. "They worked very hard to get it to that level and loved being able to show off their hard work over those few days."

"We had an intense lead-in to this year's tournament. A couple of weeks out we got hit with a wind storm which saw gusts of up to 120kph hit the course. That topdressed a lot of the surfaces with red sand and removed sand from the bunkers. It was a big task to clean up and get the bunkers back up to scratch, but the lads did an amazing job."

"Leading into the tournament we had some intense temperatures as well. From the Friday before to the Tuesday of tournament week we had a run of 29, 32, 34, 36 and a peak of 37. That warm spell started to dry us out, but the course held up well. The main focus was on moisture management and also spraying a preventive fungicide to aid against outbreaks during the soaring temperatures."

"The biggest change we made to the course from a presentation perspective was the cut on fairways. We changed it to a 50/50 cut to show up the beautiful shape of our undulating fairways and highlight the green to red contrast to the desert rough. We also let our roughs grow out to give the course a bit of a links finish and to make the pros think more around the green complexes."

Rogan and his crew didn't have too much time to reflect on their successes across the week. Just a few days after Eccles had claimed the title, they were straight into course renovations. The greens, which are a mix of the original G2 and newer 007 creeping bentgrass varieties, were cored, fertilised and topdressed. A super's work is never done...🌱



Kalgoorlie's Zac Naake on the greens roller

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For more information please contact:

Will Pearce

M +61 (0)491 379 996
E will.pearce@icl-group.com

Paul Stubbs

M +61 (0)400 100 078
E paul.stubbs@icl-group.com

POA ANNUA

*No matter what superintendents do or how they
manage their mowed playing surfaces,
Poa annua has the ability to adapt*

Poa unplugged

*Dr David Huff, one of the world's leading authorities on Poa annua,
outlines why it is one of the most fascinating and complex grasses he has
ever worked with.*

Paul R. Latshaw, the legendary American golf course superintendent who hosted a combined nine majors including the US Open, PGA Championship and Masters, once told me: “*Poa annua* has probably saved more superintendents’ positions than it has destroyed.” That’s a powerful statement and implies that the invasive nature of *Poa annua* often outweighs any lack of biotic or abiotic stress tolerance.

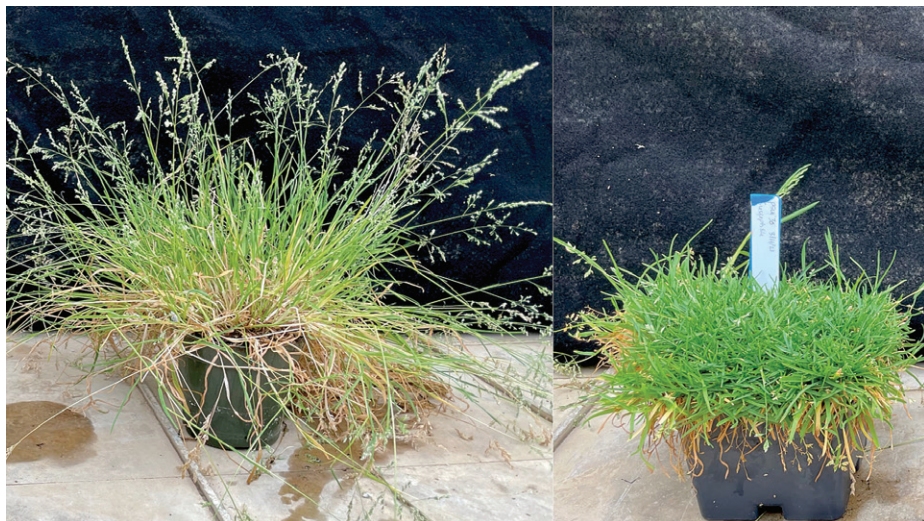
He shared this insight with me back in 1998. At the time, I’d just started my *Poa annua* breeding program at Penn State University to develop improved varieties for greens and fairways. He called to encourage me to “give it all you got, and never give up!” That’s because he knew what I was about to learn – being a proponent of *Poa annua* in the golf industry is like swimming against a rip tide of disapproving popular opinion, and such rip currents can end badly for swimmers unless you know how to navigate them.

Poa annua is not only our most controversial turfgrass species – in that a majority of the industry strive to eradicate it while others, many of them at top-ranked golf courses in the US, propagate it – but it’s also one of the most scientifically interesting grasses I’ve ever worked on and one of the hardest to understand agronomically.

It is unlike any of our other turfgrass species, but once you understand some fundamentals of its biology it can become a reliable ally, as Latshaw knew so well. In this article, I’ll attempt to explain the key aspects of *Poa annua* biology to help superintendents either propagate or eradicate it.

EVER-PRESENT AND ENIGMATIC

To begin, let’s examine where *Poa annua* grows naturally, unaided by golf course



Poa annua has the genetic programming to behave like an annual (left) and as a perennial (right)

management practices. In 18th Century England, *Poa annua* was observed to rapidly fill in the paths where humans regularly walked but was noticeably absent from the adjacent hillside meadows. Because of this habit, *Poa annua* became known as ‘path grass’ in the US during the early 1900s. Today, *Poa annua* continues this behaviour by dominating hiking trails on Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, campsites in Australia and dirt roads in China, all while being absent beyond a yard’s distance from the edge of these disturbed areas. Thus, *Poa annua*’s presence seems to be a biological indicator of human activity.

In addition, *Poa annua* has very few herbivore resistance mechanisms and serves as a common food source for grazing animals and migratory waterfowl like ducks and geese. Knowing its association with human travel, combined with its beneficial feed value for animals and birds with regional and global migratory routes, leads us to the unsurprising result that *Poa annua* has a world-wide

distribution. However, what is surprising and what we need to learn is why *Poa annua* is so broadly adaptable to such a wide range of environmental conditions around the globe.

One of the main stumbling blocks that most superintendents and scientists have regarding *Poa annua*’s basic biology that limits their ability to either manage or control it is they’ve been taught that *Poa annua* exists in only one of two forms – it’s either annual or perennial. In fact, all *Poa annua* is both annual and perennial at the same time, all the time. Let me explain.

Genetically, *Poa annua* is an allotetraploid species, which simply means that each of its cells contains the genetic material (genomes) of two different species. For *Poa annua*, these genomes have not had sufficient time to become blended together. The ‘mum’ of *Poa annua* is *Poa infirma*, a truly annual species native to the Mediterranean where it grows and sets seed during the mild, moist winters and survives the cloudless, rainless summers as



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The two main management parameters that guide *Poa annua* adaptation are mowing and disturbance. Without mowing, *Poa annua* has a difficult time outcompeting other grass species

seed. The 'dad' of *Poa annua* is *Poa supina*, a stoloniferous perennial species native to the mountainous regions of central Europe where it's often managed as soccer fields and golf course fairways. Thus, in every cell of every *Poa annua* plant is the genetic programming to behave as an annual (like mum) and as a perennial (like dad), and in reality, it behaves as both at the same time, all the time.

POA ANNUA'S SUPERPOWER

Having annual and perennial life history characteristics in each of its cells enables *Poa annua* to exhibit some truly remarkable behaviours. For example, inheritance of 'annuality' versus 'perenniality' in *Poa annua* does not follow the three laws of Mendelian genetics – i.e., dominance, segregation and independent assortment – but rather by a new field of genetics known as 'epigenetics' (La Mantia & Huff, 2011).

In addition, management practices like mowing not only influence the growth habits of the mowed plants, but also influence those of their next generation's seed progeny (Mao & Huff, 2012; Benson et al., 2021). Such phenomenon is known as 'transgenerational memory', which is when epigenetic properties induced by the parent plant's environmental growing conditions, like mowing, are being inherited by its seeded progeny. In other words, *Poa annua* plants 'remember' if their parents were mowed or not. As I said, *Poa annua* is scientifically very interesting.

Finally, the underlying genetic programs of annuality and perenniality inherent in *Poa annua* have not had sufficient time to have become blended together but rather remain distinct and operate simultaneously under contrasting environmental conditions (Benson et al., 2023). Thus, it may be surmised that

Poa annua's 'superpower' stems from a non-segregating, supercharged hybrid vigour for all of its life history characteristics.

Hybrid vigour, or heterosis, is a powerful genetic feature resulting in enhanced performance and happens to be the basis of the modern US corn industry. However, unlike corn where the effects of heterosis are lost after one generation due to segregation, heterosis in *Poa annua* does not segregate away and is thus maintained generation after generation.

As a result of its permanent heterosis, *Poa annua* has the ability to outperform either of its parental species. *Poa annua* can be a more successful annual than its annual parent (*Poa infirma*) by producing more seed at a faster rate, and it can be a more successful perennial than its perennial parent (*Poa supina*) in extreme environments, like low putting green mowing heights.

In addition, because *Poa annua* has this supercharged hybrid vigour permanently



Researchers have been exploring the genetics of *Poa annua* to better understand its biology and adaptability

built into its genetic makeup, it also has a supercharged ability to adapt to very different environmental conditions. For example, in the non-irrigated, Mediterranean climate of California, *Poa annua* functions more successfully as an annual. However, in the consistently dry, windswept regions of Antarctica, *Poa annua* functions more successfully as a perennial. What's truly remarkable is that this genetic potential for such extreme and varied adaptation is inherently present in each and every cell of each and every *Poa annua* plant.

HOW TO MANAGE POA ANNUA

Given this new understanding of *Poa annua*'s basic biology, let's consider how it might be applied for its encouragement or discouragement on greens and fairways. For management purposes it's more useful to think of *Poa annua* as having two different modes of reproduction: sexual reproduction via seed which is an annual life history characteristic, and vegetative reproduction via tillers which is a perennial life history characteristic. *Poa annua* modulates between these two modes of reproduction differently depending on the environmental conditions it encounters.

The two main management parameters that guide *Poa annua* adaptation are mowing and disturbance. Without mowing, *Poa annua* has a difficult time outcompeting other grass species, it is after all 'path grass'. However, under mowing heights of a few inches down to just a few millimetres, *Poa annua* proportionally increases its production of daughter tillers allowing it to compete against other grasses. When these mowed turfs are disturbed by core cultivation, vertical mowing, traffic and other stresses, *Poa annua*'s ability to flower and set seed under any mowing height gives it a competitive edge by quickly filling in the resulting voids with seed.

Without regular disturbance, the opportunity for seedling establishment is reduced and *Poa annua* begins to reallocate its photosynthetic resources away from seed production and more toward vegetative daughter-tiller production, resulting in very high shoot density plants that are low seed yielders. Thus, the type of *Poa annua* you have will depend on how you manage your surfaces.

Superintendents first need to determine the function they want their *Poa annua* to serve and then manage for that function, because *Poa annua* will adapt itself to any set of management conditions. When management plans are unclear and inconsistent, a highly variable population of *Poa annua* will result. Additional factors such as temperature and available soil moisture throughout a growing season will also tell *Poa annua* at which point along its spectrum of annual and perennial life history characteristics it needs to be.

Therefore, these additional factors also need to be considered. For example, on non-irrigated bermudagrass fairways in Australia, *Poa annua* behaves as a winter annual and is actively managed by Australian superintendents as a low-cost winter playing surface, a technique once practiced long ago in the southern USA.

Don't get caught up in wondering whether you have the annual or the perennial *Poa annua*, because unlike what we've been taught, it is not one or the other but rather a spectrum. The more appropriate questions to ask are, "How is *Poa annua* adapting to my current management practices and how can I best change my management strategies to either propagate or eradicate it?"

It should be clear by now that no matter what you do or how you manage your mowed playing surfaces, *Poa annua* has the ability to adapt. Thus, eradicating *Poa annua* is an extreme challenge and according to the International Herbicide-Resistant Weed Database, it has developed herbicide resistance to nine modes of action involving 23 different active chemistries, so chemical control seems limited. The best *Poa annua*-free bentgrass courses I've visited all have a 'zero-tolerance' policy and physically remove each and every *Poa annua* invader with a knife or plugger and then transport it away from the playing surfaces.

Renowned Michigan State University turfgrass pathologist Dr. Joe Vargas once said, "If *Poa annua* is so weak, what happened to your bentgrass?" Which was his way of letting people know that not all *Poa annua* is intolerant of stress. In my *Poa annua* breeding program, we've discovered naturally occurring resistance to biotic diseases like anthracnose, dollar spot and bacterial wilt along with sufficient variability for tolerance to abiotic

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- All *Poa annua* plants are both annual and perennial at the same time, all the time. How it behaves on that spectrum is dictated by the growing environment and management program.
- Properties induced by the parent plant's environmental growing conditions, like adaptations to mowing, are inherited by its seeded progeny.
- *Poa annua* adjusts its adaptation differently to different management strategies. This is the root of why it is so difficult to control and why many have found it better to work with this grass rather than trying to eradicate it.
- Trials are underway to evaluate improved varieties of *Poa annua* that could become commercially available.

stresses like heat, cold and salinity. These are the elements necessary to breed improved stress-tolerant varieties. While I fully appreciate how difficult it is to control, clearly one of the most significant problems with *Poa annua* is that there are no commercial seed sources of improved varieties for superintendents who want to actively manage it, but that situation is about to change. Currently, trials are underway at five golf courses across the US to evaluate the performance of the commercial variety 'Pa-33' *Poa annua*.

A FINAL THOUGHT

The amount of information remaining to properly discuss the management and control of *Poa annua* would fill a book, but unfortunately I've reached my editor's word limit and so I'll finish with a quote from Dr. Leon C. Megginson, a Louisiana State University business professor, who wrote: "According to

'Darwin's Origin of Species,' it is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself."

Poa annua's heterosis superpower, which underlies its extraordinary ability to adjust its annual and perennial life history characteristics to changing environmental conditions, supports Megginson's statement perfectly. This is the central feature of its world-wide distribution and serves as the foundation for the challenges and opportunities superintendents face in either its propagation or eradication.

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PETER McMAUGH AM

AI

All In?

How are you feeling about the new phenomenon of 'AI'? No, I'm not referring to 'artificial insemination' replacing bulls – that is well and truly accomplished – but rather 'artificial intelligence' potentially replacing humans. Is it going to emasculate the human population so that we become its slaves? If you really want to derail any new technology, just play the fear game – it's a sure-fire winner. Just ask any politician; they are experts at it!

What is it about AI that is creating this fear that it is out of control and about to swamp us? If you are that worried, just go and pull the plug out of the wall! End of conversation. AI is the product of a machine. Machines don't work unless we give them the electrical power to function. They can only turn themselves on if we give them permission to do so and we give them the algorithm (instruction) to be able to do so.

Peter McMaugh AM reflects on the rise of artificial intelligence and its potential applications in biology and agronomy.

They are totally reliant on an external source to power them up. Only then can they do what their programmes tell them to do. It is not the computers that push out the action plans. If it is programmed to push out a destructive plan, it will happily and totally unwittingly do so. So your fear is really about all the nutcase conspiracy theorists out there that don't care what happens, provided it is disruptive in a chaotic way.

Okay, so we have just flashed over the worst-case scenario for AI. It hasn't invaded our brains yet. I know mine is okay – how about yours? Are you interested in what AI

might do for you to make you great? Are you still listening?

In an earlier edition (*ATM Volume 25.1 – January-February 2023 – 'Unveiling the holy grail'*), I showed my excitement, my wonder, my enthusiasm for what I called the greatest advance in biology since the discovery of DNA. By way of a recap, last August British company DeepMind announced that after years of research they had developed an AI program called AlphaFold which provides the folding sequences and patterns of the 200 million proteins known to science. The benefits flowing from this are only now just getting a toehold in the practical application of science. There is still a very long way to go.

This has been achieved on a conventional computer system. The computational power is so big that it can look at processing billions of 'bits' of data every second. Where does that leave the prospects of Quantum computers which theoretically can promise to outperform



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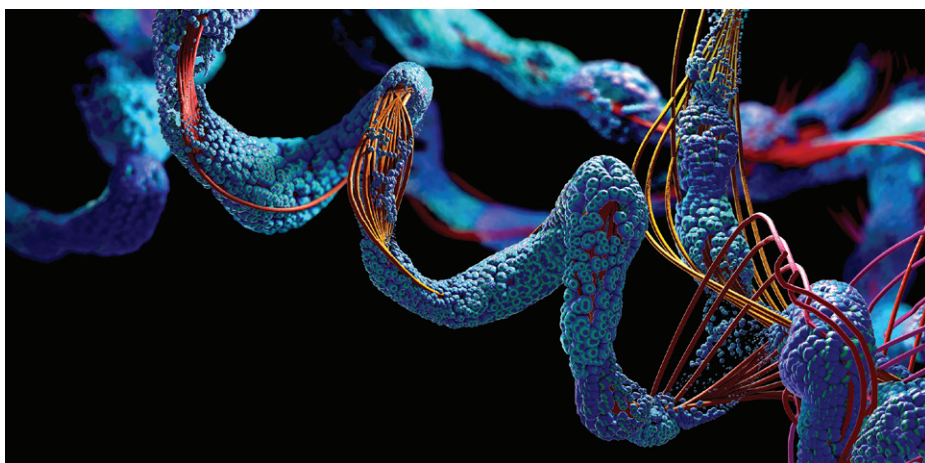


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a conventional computer? Currently these struggle to reach processing of 1000 gbits/second. Yes, they will probably get there but it won't be some time soon.

What is very clearly evident so far in everything that has been published as high-quality technical releases, is that the same principles still hold. If you put rubbish in you get rubbish out. The real problem with AI being trained with lots and lots of data, whether text or numbers, is that any bias or any error gets magnified as it trains itself to sieve the data for items it can build on further. It is just as capable of spitting out a nonsense novel as it is a simulated document of a PhD thesis.

So we can ask ourselves the very valid question, 'What does AI offer now and in the future in the world of turf?' The short answer is a great deal, but that very much depends on how it is developed. Some of the biggest bottlenecks in the development of new ideas and techniques in agriculture have revolved around our methods of studying the microbiome. We have long known that the microbiome has billions of inhabitants across viruses, bacteria, nematode worms, a multiple of other invertebrates and a fungal cornucopia. This is nature's great recycling depot. This below surface level world varies with climate and with soil type and it varies with what feeds into it.

In our world of boring monocultures of grass, we set ourselves up for a microbiome which is rather limited in its complexity. Grasses are really great at delivering one plant product – fibre. If you look at the world's vegetation there is a lot more natural grassland than there is natural forest. This may well be because of human influences, but it is still the ball game we are living with.

Scientific agricultural research has long been focused on increasing yield of both pasture and grain crops, while nuts and fruits limp along a poor third. Ornamentals and turf live in a peripheral world where they are just tolerated. But it is in this part of the plant spectrum that the microbiome has had the most intense attention.

The big players in this are the modern hunter gatherers, big pharma, who are looking for products of the microbiome that they can develop as medicines. This process mostly requires the development of a lot of new techniques to make it work efficiently and effectively, and this is where AI becomes a particularly useful tool. It can help make the decisions about which chemical pathway they may want to follow to synthesise promising compounds, or it may save them many years of trial work time by identifying what pathogens it will influence.

The very big changes that have come with the advances in molecular biology have relied to a certain degree on luck. We only have the gene editing therapy CRISPR thanks to research into bacterial defences against viruses. The chosen paths to which these

now widely used PCR (polymerase chain reaction) programmes dominate the field. The critical barrier to making this work effectively and reliably has been the choice of primers which the PCR process uses to identify the protein groups you are looking for. This is where AI comes in to provide both speed and accuracy into a process that was previously guided by informed intuition and a bit of guess work.

These techniques are being used currently to revolutionise plant disease identification. This is not new in the sense that it was discovered yesterday. It has been around for quite a few years, but is now becoming more useful because AI is helping to build the library of identity profiles that you need to match the PCR results you are getting from your disease analysis.

How this is used is going to be the next big problem. It is not just the physical techniques that need to be totally reliable (and they are about 90 per cent already there) but how you interpret what you see. Here again we see a big role for AI. It has already been used in medical pathology to be more successful than human observers in identifying cancer cells in human tissue biopsies.

Just within the last five years I have seen reports from commercial laboratories that, to put it mildly, might just as well be fabrications rather than critical examinations and done for outrageous fees. They have found up to seven different pathogens including 'curvularia' on plants sent in for diagnosis. You can find

“What does AI offer the world of turf? The short answer is a great deal, but it depends on how it is developed.” - Peter McMaugh

can be applied can be brought to bear more quickly and productively with the help of AI.

Historically, the techniques which soil scientists tried to develop to study the soil microbiome were very clumsy and very limited because they lacked the tools that have been developed in the last 30 years. Sixty years ago we were using buried slide techniques to try to capture the players of importance in the microbiome. We also used soil dispersion plates to try to grow the diversity of organisms in the soil for identification. This was all hit and miss and very little useful information ever came out of it. Sometimes you might fluke isolating a bacterium which was especially useful in breaking down atrazine, but getting it to work commercially was another story.

Then in the 1950s we started to see the development of identifying molecular markers in protein production and the various techniques of using these to identify the DNA of individual organisms (bacteria, fungi, plants). This has refined itself over the years and the

curvularia spores on almost any piece of grass you pick up! Curvularia sp. are not a strong pathogen. It might help dispatch a weakened plant more quickly, but it won't start the process.

The time-honoured techniques of plant pathology that sterilise the surface of plant tissues and then grow out on agar plates the pathogens from inside the tissue, and then apply Koch's postulates to it, is a time-consuming process. The current advances using PCR techniques to identify DNA in fluid from macerated disease tissue aims to very quickly (one hour) identify a candidate from a known library list of pathogens. The only problem then is, does it answer the question 'Is this the causative pathogen for the disease?' Again, this will be where AI can step in to compare this sample against the library list and provide an acceptable level of statistical certainty to take a remedial action.

This is where, up to now, we are still around the 70 per cent reliability level. This is

right now where the action is to improve the reliability of the process to a level that will give it commercial reality.

These very same processes are the ones being used by public health authorities to examine sewage for the presence of drugs and drug-resistant pathogens in the community. It can pinpoint a street in a given zone where the illicit drug use is located. These forensic uses of PCR and AI are aiding crime control in the same way as they promise to increase our ability to manage disease control on our courses or sports fields.

These systems only work in an enforcement sense if they have the backup of a highly-qualified expert to take responsibility for their interpretation. While they promise nirvana for the superintendent to be able to do any instant disease diagnosis, how reliable is that going to be? This is where a new paradigm of skills will need to be learned.

Just who is going to provide this is going to be a very important question to be answered. I know for certain that there is no current training course, no matter the provider, that has even the shadow of a possibility of providing the training in the necessary skills. The hole that has to be filled will undoubtedly be considered in the marketing of these new techniques.

Are these new discoveries going to be fully provided with what we need to know about disease identification and control? You don't have to look very far to see that this is highly unlikely. Just look at the list of new root rot fungi that Dr Percy Wong has identified in the past 20 years and know that it doesn't end there. The microbiome is ever-changing because it is biological and that is what adaptability is all about in these communities.

While we have looked so far at the problems of plant diseases, that is again only one facet of far more complex relations between plants and soils that control what we refer to as 'soil health'. Once more, 'complexity' is at the heart of the system being examined. Part of this complexity is physical and part of it is biological.

When I was a student at Sydney University, we were very fortunate to have a genius mycologist, Dr David Griffin, as our lecturer. He had a very simple but very effective way of looking at the soil biome in relation to the ratios of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the soil. He built a device with a PVC pipe containing a soil mix capped at both ends, with sampling ports at various points along the tube. At one end he had an inlet for carbon dioxide and at the other an inlet for oxygen. This created a gradient of mixed CO_2/O_2 levels along the

tube. You could inoculate the soil with the fungal target of the examination and look at its dominance in the soil along the CO_2/O_2 gradient. Simple but brilliant.

At this time, Dr Griffin did not have the PCR and DNA tools we have today. If he had, he would have been able to utilise the same techniques as the water authorities use to look at the biome of sewage and town water supplies. Any organism in the soil is leaving its DNA imprint there and by using water extractants we can find the DNA profiles of the multitude of species of the soil biome. In fact, the amount of information is so vast that you need the assistance of AI to deal with it.

AI, PCR, CRISPR are just tools. How you use them and the information you feed into them are the critical factors to making them work for you. The only danger that AI poses is its potential misuse by the crackpot fringe of society to disseminate their conspiracy theories about anything and everything. Don't ignore that; be very aware of it. But equally, don't ignore its potential to help provide enormous benefits for society if we embrace it and use it intelligently and morally for the benefit of everyone.

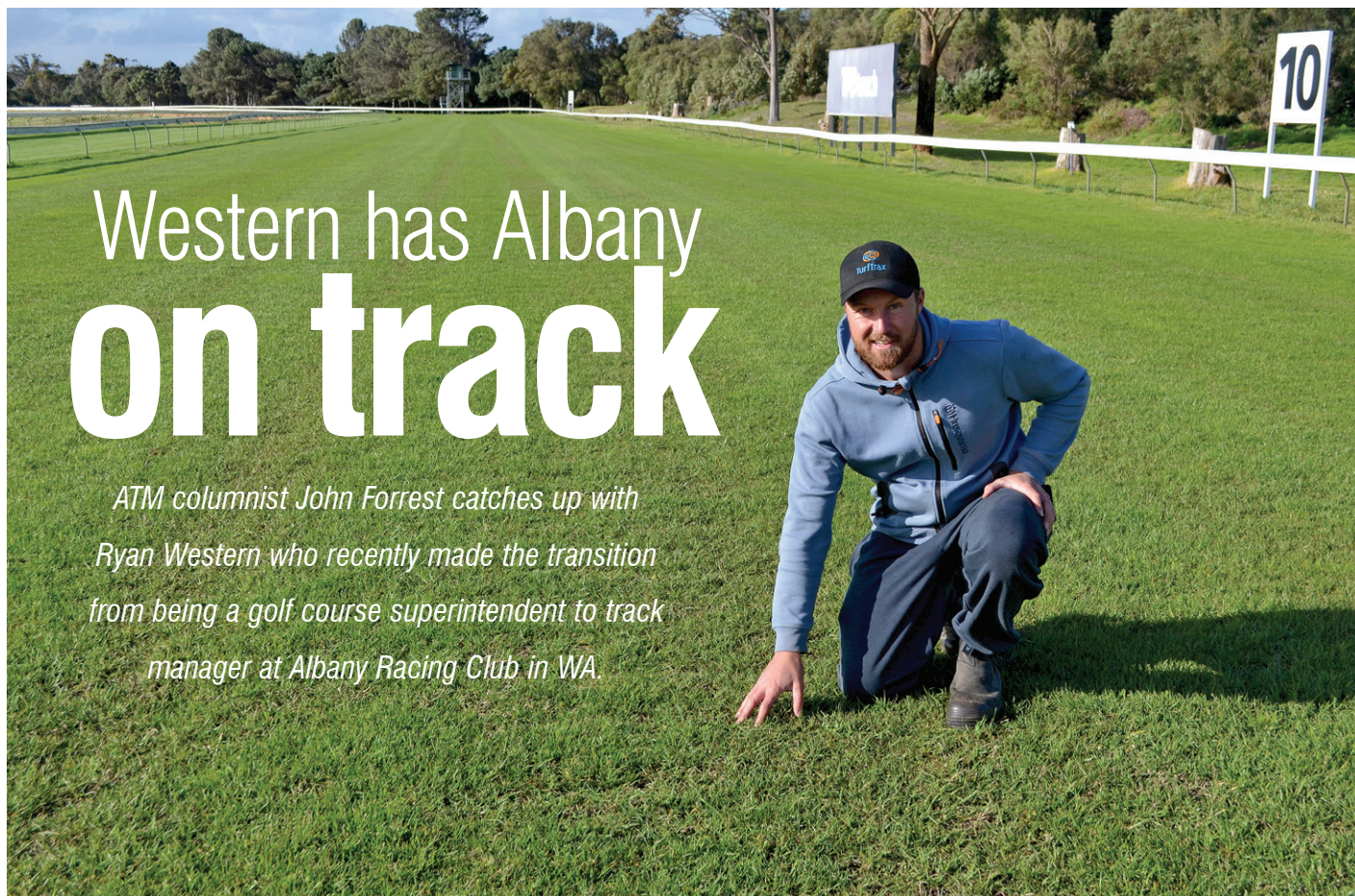
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Western has Albany on track

ATM columnist John Forrest catches up with Ryan Western who recently made the transition from being a golf course superintendent to track manager at Albany Racing Club in WA.

PHOTOS: JOHN FORREST

One of the benefits that a career in the sports turf management industry can afford is the opportunity to work across its different sectors. Take Ryan Western, the current track manager at Albany Racing Club, for example. Growing up in the seaside township on the southwest coast of Western Australia, Western played golf at the beautiful Albany Golf Club links. Located next to the beach at Frenchman Bay and facing the Southern Ocean, it is one of the true hidden gems of Australian golf.

Upon leaving school, Western took on a sports turf management apprenticeship at the club where he enjoyed working in a small team under the watchful eye of then superintendent Jason Fleming. Before long, Western found himself elevated to the top role and quickly got an appreciation of the challenges that come with managing a seaside course. With strong winds during the summer months, moisture management was imperative.

As well as being a passionate golfer – Western has won numerous club championships at Albany, including the Albany Classic – the sport of racing is also well and truly part of his DNA. His father Peter is a horse trainer and as a youngster Western would regularly go along to race meets with the family. Western held the position of superintendent at Albany for two years, but in

March this year decided to take on the role of track manager at Albany Racing Club. It was an opportunity to further his turf management career and with it the excitement of a new challenge.

TRACK FINE-TUNING

The skills that Western developed during his time as a golf course superintendent significantly helped his move into racecourse management. His time in golf helped to groom him to handle a high-pressure position where expectations are high.

In making the transition from golf to racing, Western's primary consideration was to investigate his new turf environment thoroughly, starting with the two most essential areas – soil and irrigation. He took his time to assess the track conditions before starting to implement some subtle yet significant changes. He looked at the existing practices and programs in place, paying particular attention to turf health, the soil profile, weed infestation and overall track condition.

The Albany track is kikuyu-based, with the 14-meet racing season starting in November and finishing in May. Training is held twice weekly during the season. That leaves the winter and spring seasons for the track to recover which can be difficult, especially if a cool spring occurs. Kikuyu grows best January through to March during the peak of Albany's

racing season. The recovery months of June, July and August are cool, with Albany's maximum daily temperatures only reaching 16-17 degrees. That can make renovations challenging as taking the kikuyu back in those temperatures can create a perfect environment for weeds to take hold, especially *Poa annua*.

Rainfall through June this year was close to 300mm, making it very difficult to do any track maintenance or put out applications to control *Poa annua*. This winter the track also experienced six frosts which impacted the kikuyu. July and August had lower than average rainfall which allowed Western to undertake some regular Verti-draining.

PUNCHING HOLES

As part of his initial assessment of the track, Western spoke with a number of local trainers and jockeys to get their thoughts on the track's performance, both positive and negative, which he could then make connections back to the agronomic observations he had initially made. The feedback from those discussions was that the track was variable in places, ranging from soft to hard.

Soil plugs were removed around specific sections of the track to ascertain the depth of thatch and organic matter layers under the surface which consist of humus-rich soil that increase the profile's nutrient and moisture-holding capacity. Looking at the soil profile,

Opposite: After two years as superintendent at Albany Golf Club, Ryan Western took up the role of track manager at Albany Racing Club in March this year

it was identified that the natural sand was consistently under the rootzone, although at varying depths.

Soil samples identified a compacted zone in the profile at a depth of about 30mm and was 70mm thick. The natural sand was dark in colour from some intermingled organic matter but had significant drainage capacity. Organics on the surface were the perfect conduit to produce a soft track during periods of high rainfall or too much irrigation.

Breaking up the compacted zone in the soil profile to introduce oxygen, allow water to move down and to enable the surface to dry has been a key change that Western has subsequently introduced. Their Verti-drain has 24mm tines set at a maximum depth of close to 400mm. During the racing season Verti-draining will continue, but not closer than 10 days to a scheduled race meeting. A frequency of one Verti-draining per month is targeted.

IRRIGATION ADJUSTMENTS

Irrigation is another significant factor that Western has focused his attention on since



The Albany track has come through the cooler months well, with a healthy coverage of kikuyu heading into the upcoming racing season

starting. Upon arriving at the track, irrigation programming and system efficiency were one of his priorities and getting moisture levels to where they needed to be. Because the Toro system is similar to the one at the golf club, Western is comfortable with its operation.

He considered the inefficiencies of the system and the prevailing winds. Locations of trees around the track make for a number of different microenvironments, in particular with protection or exposure to the wind, shade and their resulting impact on moisture levels.

As part of the process, Western is checking the performance of the irrigation system sprinkler by sprinkler, making adjustments depending on the direction of the prevailing wind and looking at when and how strong they are. While maximum daytime temperatures are not high, wind is a constant factor at the site, with daily wind speeds during summer and winter averaging between 22-24kph. This investigation has helped him to determine when to water which sections of the track.

POA CONTROL

Poa annua control has been quite difficult as plants were already well-established when Western arrived. One practice that Western immediately changed was that of rolling the surface after race meetings to smooth out any divots. When looking along the inside of the track, just outside of the true rail position, a defined line could be seen of very pure kikuyu, while the other side was *Poa annua*.



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Albany Racing Club's season runs from November to May, with 14 race meets and training twice weekly

infested kikuyu. That rolling, when there was moisture in the top of the profile combined with fine organic matter, was creating a perfect environment for *Poa annua* to thrive.

Pre-emergent herbicide management will play a role in future control measures. Removing the compacted zone through Verti-draining is enabling the kikuyu to better compete with the *Poa annua*. Although temperatures were cool through winter, Western's newly introduced practices demonstrated that growth can be achieved.

With consistent Verti-draining and regular foliar applications of nitrogen (low rates of less than 10kg/ha), turf conditions on the track have noticeably improved. At these rates, fertiliser does not require watering in. A granular fertiliser will be applied when the weather warms up and the results of recently taken soil and tissue tests are assessed. Growth potential can then be used to assist in designing a nutrition program for the upcoming racing season which begins on 19 November. Mowing at 50mm encourages prostrate growth and as temperatures increase the kikuyu will become more competitive, putting pressure on the *Poa annua* and other weeds.

FUTURE IN MIND

A question that Western has fielded numerous times since taking over at Albany Racing Club is why ryegrass isn't grown and whether the track would hold together if ryegrass was used. To answer that, Western has planted ryegrass on the inside grass training track at 350kg/ha to see how it grows and handles the Albany environment. Plugs from the profile show that the rye has established a reasonably deep root system (see photos below).

On the inside of the true rail position, there are also patches of bentgrass growing. How it got there no one knows, but a cool-season mix may have been used in the past to try and get coverage. Small patches can be seen on the track and although they are not of concern at this stage, Western continues to regularly monitor them.

When looking at research and growing conditions of warm- and cool-season grasses, it would appear to be a no-brainer to go with a cool-season ryegrass track. But looking at the health of the kikuyu in the track with Western's newly-implemented practices, it may not be that clear cut. The racing season is in the warmer months and the kikuyu will

handle that if it is strong enough at the start of the season. Nutrition, renovation and mowing practices are the key. Ideally, Western has set up a comparison between the warm- and the cool-season grasses to determine future methodologies for the club to consider.

Cool-season grasses may be ideal throughout the cooler months. Still, as temperatures increase during the warmer months, the kikuyu may out-compete the rye, meaning that processes would need to be put in place to slow the kikuyu, while reseeding would also add another cost to the budget.

Another investigation Western is looking to undertake is that of finding a source of sand for topdressing to intermingle among the organic matter in the top of the profile. As part of that process, Western is also looking into where he can store the sand. With an annual rainfall of over 800mm and the ability for it to rain pretty much every season in Albany, appropriate storage is required as wet sand is not conducive to spreading quickly and evenly.

As well as making improvements to the track, Western has also been fortunate to undertake some personal development as well thanks to the Australian Racecourse Managers Association (ARMA).

Earlier this year he was one of six to be awarded a 2023 TAB ARMA Scholarship, receiving an all-expenses-paid trip to the ARMA Conference which was held in Cairns in August. Western joined fellow scholarship winners Bree McMinn (Racing Orange, NSW), Kenny Watson (Gold Coast Turf Club, Qld), Tim Hutchinson (Oakbank Racing Club, SA), Jai Struthers (Tasracing, Tas) and James Hibberd (Horsham & District Racing Club, Vic).

As well as giving Western the ability to network with fellow track managers, it also enabled him to hear from some of the leaders in the racing industry and bring back some ideas to help continue the improvements he is making which is helping to keep Albany on the right track. 🐾



Western has oversown the training track (to the left of the rail in the photo above) with ryegrass. Left is a plug showing the ryegrass roots extending down through the profile



Flying the green and gold flag

To many in the golf and turf industry around Perth, Phil Gooch is a familiar name.

For nearly 20 years, he was the go-to contact at local machinery dealerships, including CJD Equipment, where he helped Gosnells Golf Club with the maintenance of its first delivery of John Deere mowers.

Now employed at the Club as a mechanic, his appreciation of the quality and value delivered by John Deere equipment continues in his work overseeing the performance of machines on the course.



Phil Gooch, Gosnells Golf Club Mechanic

“When the Club was in the market for some new equipment recently, I was quite keen to get some more green and gold into the shed,” Mr Gooch said.

Corey Clark was at the time the man representing John Deere in Perth with local dealer AFRGI Equipment, and was happy to assist with the order.

Gosnells received two 7700A PrecisionCut™ Fairway Mowers, a 2700 E-Cut™ Hybrid Triplex Mower, a 2653B PrecisionCut Trim and Surrounds Mower and a 8800A TerrainCut™ Trim, Rough & Surrounds Mower.

“Corey puts his heart and soul into the job, and was a big factor in the club doing business with AFRGI,” Mr Gooch said.

“He’s been very proactive in making sure our needs are catered for.

If we have any questions or concerns, he’ll go out of his way to address them.

“I actually sent him a photo of some of the new machines out on the course the other day doing a great job.”

The course, located in the southern Perth suburb of Canning Vale, boasts 5,893 metres of manicured fairways, undulating greens and a natural Australian bush setting.

The original Gosnells Golf Club in Maddington was opened in May 1946, before Athol Doig discovered the current site while working as a quarry engineer and developed the new course alongside club champion Lindsay George and designer Murray Dawson.

“The feedback from the team has been positive, and personally it’s nice to have come full circle and be working with John Deere again”. Phil Gooch

Graham Marsh, one of Australia’s leading golf professionals throughout the 1970s and 80s, played much of his early golf at Gosnells, before returning in the mid-1990s to help redesign parts of the course.

The Gosnells Open draws hundreds of visitors to the Club each year, with Josiah Edwards and Celine Chen crowned the champions at the 2023 event recently.

“It’s our biggest event each year, so it’s a real showcase for the course,” Mr Gooch said.

“In the leadup to the tournament we mow the fairways three times a week and the greens every day to make sure it’s in top condition.

“We also stripe the fairways which adds a fair bit of time to the preparation.

“The new equipment really came in handy for us. The feedback from the team has been positive, and personally it’s nice to have come full circle and be working with John Deere again.”



ATM environmental columnist Kate Torgersen provides an update on the Operation Pollinator pilot program.

As we transition from winter into the warmer months, there is enthusiastic anticipation not only among sports turf managers but also within the diverse species of pollinators. They eagerly await the forthcoming blossoming of flowers, milder temperatures and an abundance of food sources.

Last year, three Australian golf courses – Bonnie Doon Golf Club, Moore Park Golf Course (both Sydney) and Indooroopilly Golf Club (Brisbane) – were selected to partake in Syngenta Turf & Landscape's Operation Pollinator pilot program. Following an extensive and meticulous site preparation process under the instructions of Environmental Golf Solutions, these locations ensured a pristine canvas for planting. Site preparation occurred over a 12 month-plus period to allow all weed seeds to be eliminated as much as possible from the seedbank. While the sites were being

prepared this allowed several local indigenous nurseries to propagate and grow our orders.

After what feels like a never-ending process, all three sites completed the appropriate site preparation to ensure a clean area for planting. This past August, the Sydney-based courses undertook planting within their pollinator plots. Both sites planted over 500 plants, a variety of indigenous species grown from local nurseries. The species that were chosen will provide food sources and valuable habitat for pollinators as well as an array of colour for the golf courses.

It is noteworthy that the species selected specifically for each of these sites hold significant ecological value not only for pollinators but also for the critically endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) vegetation community, which faces a concerning decline. Both clubs are committed to promoting and safeguarding ESBS species.

The planting initiative occurred in August to take advantage of available plants and the potential rainy days of spring.

In Brisbane, Indooroopilly Golf Club, which is currently undergoing an extensive reconstruction project, was the third club to engage in the pilot program. The planting of the Operation Pollinator site here is imminent and will be carried out with the dedicated assistance of enthusiastic volunteers from the club. The plant species selected for this location significantly differ to our Sydney pollinator plots due to distinct vegetation communities throughout Australia.

Situated along the Brisbane River, Indooroopilly Golf Club has unfortunately endured several devastating floods over the past 12 years, resulting in the destruction of essential infrastructure and the elimination of critical vegetation that stabilises riverbanks and protects the water source. Planting at



The Bonnie Doon Golf Club's Operation Pollinator site before (left), during (middle) and after (right) planting. The site was planted in August 2023

Left: Both Operation Pollinator sites in Sydney – Bonnie Doon and Moore Park – have now planted over 500 indigenous species grown from local nurseries

Indooroopilly is scheduled for October, a decision influenced by ongoing construction works and the usually rainy season of spring/summer in this region.

WHAT IS OPERATION POLLINATOR?

Operation Pollinator is a global program that has been running for a number of years. Syngenta Turf & Landscape is proud to have begun hosting the program in Australia and has plans to expand it into New Zealand. The program started in Australia last year with the three partner clubs mentioned.

Operation Pollinator is an environmental conservation and sustainability program that focuses on enhancing pollinator habitats within the Australian context. It is designed to address the decline in pollinator populations, such as bees and butterflies, which play a crucial role in pollinating crops and maintaining biodiversity. The program aims to create pollinator-friendly environments in various settings, including golf courses, to support these essential insects. Some of the key outcomes of Operation Pollinator include:

- **Habitat restoration:** The program often involves the restoration and creation of



A fringe lily one month after planting at Bonnie Doon

pollinator-friendly habitats by planting indigenous plants and flowers that provide food and shelter for pollinators.

- **Biodiversity conservation:** Operation Pollinator Australia aims to conserve indigenous plant species and ecosystems, particularly those that are critically endangered or in decline, such as the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) vegetation community.
- **Education and awareness:** It often includes educational initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of pollinators and their role in agriculture and ecosystems.
- **Community engagement:** The program may engage local communities, volunteers and organisations to participate in habitat restoration and conservation efforts.

- **Collaboration:** Operation Pollinator typically involves collaboration between environmental organisations, businesses, golf courses, sports turf managers and various stakeholders to achieve its goals.
- **Expansion of pollinator-friendly areas:** The program often seeks to expand the number of sites and locations that support pollinators beyond golf courses to include other areas within the sports turf industry.

AN EXPANDING PROGRAM

In response to the level of interest in the program, Syngenta Turf & Landscape has expanded their list of participants, with almost triple the number in Australia and the addition of three from New Zealand. Next year will see an even greater number of partners engaged as we rework the funding to cater to even more interested partners around Australia.

It is noteworthy that the program has extended its scope beyond golf courses to encompass the entire sports turf industry. Applications were received from various sectors, including universities, TAFEs, cemeteries, local councils and nurseries.

We encourage everyone to continue to participate in Operation Pollinator, not only to protect and promote pollinators but also to continue the great efforts from the industry to protect our valuable biodiversity. 🌱



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PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

Put through their paces

The ASTMA's new Registered Training Organisation (RTO) division has ticked off a couple of major milestones in recent months, with the completion of the first units delivered as part of the Certificate III in Sports Turf Management (AHC31319) and Diploma of Sports Turf Management (AHC51019) courses. After attaining RTO status in June, the ASTMA started delivery of both courses in late July, with newly-appointed training manger Albert Sherry guiding the first batch of students through the initial units.

First-year Certificate III students completed the 'Contribute to work health and safety processes', 'Operate machinery and equipment' and 'Communicate effectively in the workplace' units. Second-year students finished the 'Control weeds' and 'Control plant pests, diseases and disorders' units, while the third-year students undertook the 'Prepare sports turf playing surfaces' and 'Monitor turf health' and 'Apply environmentally sustainable work practices' units.

The Certificate III course is being delivered for apprentices in South Australia, with a total of 19 now undertaking the qualification across the three year levels. They include apprentices from Glenelg GC, Royal Adelaide GC, The

*The initial units of the Certificate
III and Diploma courses have
been successfully delivered by the
ASTMA's new RTO division.*



Grange GC, Kooyonga GC and Adelaide Oval. Fourteen undertook the first three units, with a further five joining the course in mid-October.

One of the advantages of the ASTMA's delivery model is that both the Certificate III and Diploma courses have rolling enrolments. This means students can join either program at any time, commencing with the next scheduled unit and finishing with the units missed. As the courses are delivered online, students also have access to course and learning materials when it suits them, meaning greater flexibility for both the student and their employer.

September also saw the Diploma students complete their first units – 'Manage work health and safety processes' and 'Manage enterprise staff requirements'. There are now a total of 16 students enrolled in the Diploma course, with those coming from regional areas in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, as well as South Australia, the ACT and a course superintendent from India.

BLOCK RELEASE

The Certificate III course is being delivered via a blended method of online classes and block release sessions where the students undertake practical assessments of the skills they have learned. The first block release session was conducted in Adelaide from 25-28 September, with the apprentices basing themselves at The Grange Golf Club. The block release session was timed around the inaugural Turf Seminar of the recently formed Turf Management South Australia association, enabling the apprentices to sit in on a variety of informative talks.

With the support of Grange superintendent Rowan Daymond, assistant Jeff Gillies and head turf technician Tom D'Arcy, Sherry and ASTMA senior agronomist Bruce Macphee put the students through their paces, assessing them for competency across their units.

Opposite: ASTMA training manager Albert Sherry (centre) with the South Australian Certificate III students during their first block release session at The Grange Golf Club in Adelaide

First-year student assessments included:

- **Contribute to WHS processes:** Moved fertiliser bags safely and in consideration of manual handling; conducted a safety audit.
- **Operate machinery and equipment:** Undertook prestart checks and operation of transporters, walk-behind cylinder mowers, ride-on rotary and cylinder mowers and turf rollers; backlapping of cylinder mowers; checked and changed height of cut on a fairway unit.

- **Communicate effectively in the workplace:** Undertook a one-on-one discussion regarding finding a balance and asked to communicate career aspirations and any additional support they required; completed assessment on literacy and numeracy; completed a case study on fertiliser application and explaining issues as a result of poor mixing practices.

Second-year assessments included:

- **Control weeds:** Undertook a case study of weeds at a property outside The Grange where they identified weed populations; prepared to implement controls; selected an appropriate chemical control and gave consideration; undertook calibration of a knapsack applicator; prepared an integrated weed management plan.
- **Control plant pests, diseases and disorders:** Monitored greens daily for pests, diseases and disorders; set out and monitored sticky traps and insect traps to gauge insect populations; calibrated a boom spray.

"We had a busy couple of days

undertaking the practical assessments, with all the apprentices conducting themselves well," says Sherry. "They started to network with each other, enjoyed the program and had the opportunity to attend the Turf Management South Australia seminar. We finished off with a barbecue for the apprentices and Grange staff to show our appreciation, before sending the apprentices back to their clubs. I'd really like to thank Rowan and his staff at The Grange, particularly Jeff and Tom, for their support during our time there and Bruce Macphee who came across from Melbourne to help with the practical assessments."

Following the successful completion of the first units, students across both courses had a couple of weeks' break prior to the start of delivery of the next units. From Monday 16 October, first-year Certificate III students began the 'Renovate sports turf' and 'Estimate, measure and calculate measurements for work' units. Subject matter expert Cathy Venn (from Interskills) has been engaged to deliver the latter foundation skills unit.



The Grange apprentice Casey Clarke is assessed on operation of a triplex ride-on greens mower



Adelaide Oval's Mitchell Bennett checks and sets the cutting height on a fairway unit



The Grange head turf technician Tom D'Arcy walks the apprentices through operation of a roughcutter

Second-year apprentices have embarked upon the 'Transport and store chemicals' and 'Prepare and apply chemicals to control pests, weeds and diseases' units which form the requirements of the Chemical Applicators Licence at AQF3 Level. The second block release session for Certificate III students will take place in November. The Diploma students have also started the 'Develop policies and procedures for sustainability' unit.

For more information about the courses being delivered by the ASTMA's RTO division, visit www.astma.com.au and search under the



Glenelg's Kobe Tozer on the roughcutter



Adelaide Oval's Jack Stirling operating a fairway unit

'Education' tab. Any queries can be directed to training manager Albert Sherry on 0473 064 726 or email albert@astma.com.au.



Locke-d in

In his latest profile, ATM columnist Ben Gibson catches up with City of Boroondara team leader Paul Locke.

As you will have read earlier in this edition of ATM (page 24), the team from the City of Boroondara in Melbourne was bestowed the ASTMA Sports Turf Management Team of the Year Award at this year's conference in Adelaide. The 15-strong team, headed by turf management coordinator Nick Marino, was acknowledged for its commitment to excellence in maintaining the City's turf assets and upholding the highest level of service for the community it serves.

An integral member of that team over a long period has been Paul Locke, who has spent his entire 17-year turf management career with the local government entity. Initially cutting his teeth as an apprentice at the public access Freeway Golf Course, Locke has steadily risen through the ranks to become a team leader in recent years, helping to oversee golf course operations as well as other sports turf facilities the department manages.

The beauty of working in a local government setting is the opportunity it can afford to work across a variety of sectors. As Locke divulges in this edition's leadership profile, such opportunities have helped to broaden his skillset immensely and made him a much more rounded turf manager and leader. By way of example, having spent the past few years as a golf course team leader, Locke was recently seconded to a similar role within the City's parks department. It's a role that the 35-year-old is looking forward to stamping his mark on, and just a few weeks into this new stint we caught up to reflect on his career journey to date and to discuss his management philosophies...

Tell us about your journey in turf management with the City of Boroondara.

Where did it all begin? My journey with Boroondara began back in 2006. I stumbled into this industry while I was fresh out of school

and looking for an apprenticeship. I came across the ad for an apprentice greenkeeper in the paper and straight away loved the idea of working outside. I honestly had no interest in golf at the time and my interview with then Freeway Golf Course superintendent Glen Davie was actually my first time on a golf course! Little did I know that starting my apprenticeship at Freeway was the beginning of a career and sport that I quickly learnt to love.

Shannon Bennett was a second-year apprentice when I started and we spent a lot of our time in the early days divotting tees and cutting rough. Skip forward 17 years and our desks are now next to each other and we run our teams from the golf course office at Freeway, with Shannon leading the sportsground team. I always felt like I had a great start to my career at Freeway because with a smaller course and a smaller team I quickly got to learn all the jobs that others may



Team leader Paul Locke (main photo left) has spent his entire 17-year turf management career at the City of Boroondara in Melbourne's inner eastern suburbs. He is part of a dedicated turf management team of 15 that oversees the municipality's key turf assets, among them Freeway Golf Course which re-opened in March after a significant redevelopment

to be able to work across different teams, such as leading the Parks team where we have a number of formal gardens and parks, including Canterbury Gardens and Surrey Gardens. I've also spent six months managing the sportsgrounds team and 56 ovals. This included preparing our premier venue Camberwell Sports Ground for four WBBL matches in the summer of 2017/2018.

As well as that, I was in a six-month role as a project officer where I oversaw an oval reconstruction in Glen Iris from beginning to end. This included drainage and irrigation installation and synthetic wicket construction. I also had three ovals with lighting upgrades, a couple of safety fences behind footy goals and oval fencing renewal. It has been a fantastic opportunity to gain new skills which still help me today.

PHOTO: BRETT ROBINSON

not have done early in their apprenticeship, including changing holes and fertilising greens with an old boom sprayer.

You have had an interesting journey in turf. What are some of the responsibilities of your role and are there any differences working in local government? Working in local government is definitely different to other private or public golf course organisations. I think we get a bit of a bad rap, but the benefits outweigh any negatives in my opinion.

It's always interesting getting new staff that have not worked in local government before; they always struggle with the extra meetings or level of WHS compliance, but I think it's just a mindset change. Nine-day fortnights and flexible working is generally a good selling point.

One great thing about local government is there are always secondment opportunities within the organisation. I have been lucky

Freeway Golf Course has transformed over the last 18 months. What did you learn from all that project work? Would you do anything differently now looking back? I think there are always things that, upon reflection, could be done differently, or things that you learn along the way that would change the way you work in the future. However, the experience of being right in the middle of a large-scale reconstruction was fantastic and one that I was very lucky to be involved in. I worked quite closely with Shane Newman from SJM Turf and Civil throughout the project, with his experience making the process a lot easier.

An important part of the work undertaken was our environmental management plan, working with Kate Torgersen from



Environmental Golf Solutions. Through this process we identified areas of high-profile garden beds to focus on planting and weed management, as well as a large amount of tree planting around some of the open spaces.

With the soil along the Yarra River (the course is bounded by the major waterway), there is never enough drainage to add to this golf course. Naturally we have found that a few areas around new paths are needing drainage where we never had scope to include. This will be ongoing work for our team through winters in the future no doubt. One huge benefit has been the additional paths from tee to green, allowing golf carts to stay off fairways if needed.

Our wooden-faced bunkers have been a bit of a talking point throughout the project as well as after we opened. Overall the public have been very happy with the bunkers and from a maintenance point of view they are very easy to keep in good condition. Of course we will need to treat the timber sleepers at some point in the future, so I will report back after that process is undertaken!



Locke has volunteered at a number of major tournaments, including the 2016 World Cup of Golf at Kingston Heath Golf Club where he got the opportunity to hand mow greens

What is at the top of your priority list as a turf manager?

This is a hard one as there are so many moving parts. Naturally I want to say that creating good playing surfaces, healthy turf and ensuring clubs and golfers are happy is the main aim, but it's not really that simple. My priority is to ensure my team members are happy, healthy and not overworked. It tends to be a flow on effect and you can achieve all the other stuff when we start with the team's health. You might think that's a difficult or unrealistic approach, but I think it's a no-brainer.

A team that feels neglected or unheard can often turn into a really hostile or low output team. When you see really high staff turnover numbers, generally there is an internal problem that needs to be addressed. I have been part of teams like this which has made me very conscious of this effect on productivity.

Have you worked at any other golf courses?

My entire career has been at Freeway Golf

Course, however, I was lucky enough to get a seasonal position at St Andrews Links in Scotland for six months in 2011. This was an experience hard to explain. It was pretty surreal living in St Andrews and working at the 'Home of Golf'. I used to drive my little Peugeot 106 across the road between the 18th tee and green on the Old Course every morning on my way to work, the car generally holding five of us somehow! I made some lifelong friends there that I still see today.

I was always very keen to be involved in tournament preparation and managed to help out on a couple of different tournaments over the years. Working at The Dunhill at St Andrews was my first tournament experience. There was such a variety of professionals and celebrities playing that tournament, including Rory McIlroy, Shane Warne and Hugh Grant.

I worked the 2014 Vic Open at Thirteenth Beach which was a great tournament. I was also lucky enough to help the team at the World Cup of Golf and Australian Masters at



Royal Melbourne over consecutive weeks in 2013. I also worked the World Cup of Golf at Kingston Heath in 2016. At both Royal Melbourne and Kingston Heath I had the opportunity to hand cut greens which was an experience I will never forget.

Your family of two became three not too long ago. How do you balance work, family and new fatherhood?

As much as I love work and the team I work with, I really got a good dose of perspective when my wife Britt and I had our daughter Ava. I think it's all part of growing up, but I got a greater sense of appreciation for what I have, and that reflects on the golf course as well. Britt had a pretty exhausting pregnancy so balancing those nine months followed by the newborn stage was pretty important. Knowing that I was going to be taking six or so weeks off when Ava was born gave me plenty of time to ensure the team was set up and the right support was in place during my absence.

It was quite a big change having a little person that is totally dependent on you and it can definitely be challenging with early start times each day, but Britt and I always had a good schedule to make sure we had equal sleep and equal time with (and without) Ava!

How would you describe your leadership style?

I think I have an affiliative style of leadership. I think it's really important to build strong relationships which focus on collaboration and good communication. I find that to foster a positive work environment every member of our team needs to feel trust and transparency. A mixture of growing up experiencing both good and bad leadership situations is what drove me to be the type of leader I am today. I definitely don't always get



Since the age of 14, Locke (middle) has been a basketball referee and currently officiates in the semi-professional NBL1 South competition

it right, and there isn't always a right or wrong way, it's just what works for you.

I don't have all the answers and we don't have a perfect culture; I don't think that really exists. I don't pretend to have all the answers and I often learn things from my team. I think it's especially important to have people with certain strengths that can help with the overall success. The team's wellbeing must come first in my opinion, that way you can create better working relationships.

Leadership isn't something that has come naturally to me like a lot of people. I still get really nervous about the idea of talking in front of large crowds! One thing that has really helped me excel in my leadership role at work is being a basketball referee. I started refereeing local junior basketball at the age of 14 and have progressed to a level where I now officiate in the NBL 1 South competition. To this day it helps me with decision-making, effective communication (often to the point), conflict resolution, high pressure, adaptability and fairness and impartiality. These skills can take a long time to master and I am still learning!

The City of Boroondara recently won the ASTMA Sports Turf Management Team of the Year Award at the Australian Sports Turf Management Conference in Adelaide. How did that feel and what impact has it had on your team? This award was such a huge recognition for the work done by the turf team at Boroondara. Every single member has played a huge part. I also think it's fantastic to share an award like this with some of the high-level teams that have won it in the past, such as the crews at Lynwood Country Club and Meadowbrook Golf Club and inaugural winners The Gabba. This is great for public courses and council courses around Australia.



Locke with wife Britt and daughter Ava who is now two

Our team made an important decision around 18 months ago, meeting with Steve Eddy from The Toolbox Team and bringing all of our compliance together. This has created a really good safety culture within our team and

we now openly discuss any issues or concerns weekly. This may sound a bit off topic, but safe staff are happy staff and happy staff are productive staff, so this has played a large role in our journey.

What advice would you give younger staff just starting out in turf management today?

Ask lots of questions. It's important to learn the basics by getting a solid understanding of what we do, the machinery we use and the expectations of the team. Be keen to learn the hands-on requirements and attention to detail. Safety always comes first – one of the hardest things to do as a young apprentice is to speak up if you see anything that doesn't look right, but it is so important.

What do you like to do outside of work? I

love to travel and plan on doing lots more over the next few years. More recently Britt, Ava and I have had a couple of trips to Queensland, with another coming up later this year. Before Ava came along, Britt and I travelled the US and Europe, so we are keen to see some more of the world soon.

During winter my weekends are often taken up with refereeing basketball. Yes, I am a ref. Yes, it's extra hurtful when people say 'Oh yeah, you look like a ref!' I referee NBL1 South which is semi-professional, so I get a pretty good view of some of the best basketballers in Australia. Refereeing takes me all over Victoria and to South Australia and Tasmania.

As well as that, I am currently renovating a house that we will be moving into in a few months. I enjoy learning new skills like framing, tiling and generally renovating things. My wife and I renovated our current home in 2021 and swore we wouldn't do it again anytime soon. It's funny how quickly you forget...🙃



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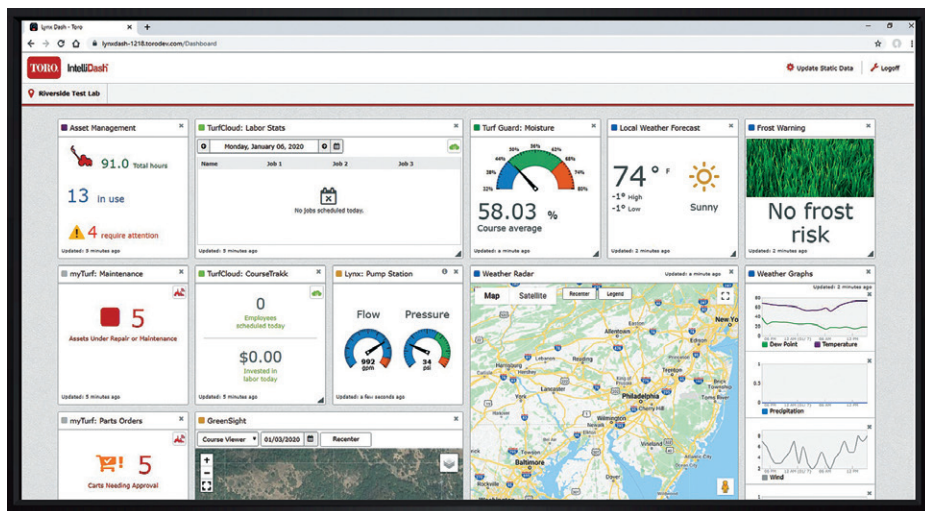


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TORO LAUNCHES NEW INTELLIDASH MANAGEMENT PLATFORM



ASTMA Platinum Partner Toro has released its new IntelliDash irrigation and fleet management platform into the Australian market. IntelliDash brings key course elements together to provide course managers and superintendents greater visibility to course health and unique access to equipment fleet and irrigation data.

"We are very excited to introduce this new platform to the Australian market," says Bruce McNeilly, Toro Australia's National Service Network (NSN) manager. "IntelliDash will be an essential tool for courses that have a Toro maintenance equipment fleet and/or irrigation system. Superintendents can easily access the platform from any computer or mobile device, allowing them to view equipment, labour, equipment health and agronomic data from anywhere at any time.

"Having access to this data will empower superintendents to streamline course operations, pinpoint inefficiencies and optimise resource allocation. The all-in-one dashboard provides a bird's-eye view of the course and fleet data, so turf managers can make informed decisions using information from various sources, such as weather and radar streams as well as evapotranspiration forecasts. By incorporating weather data, they can make real-time decisions."

For agronomic conditions, IntelliDash integrates popular Toro products like Lynx Central Control, which collects essential irrigation information to better manage water and resources while maximising course playability and aesthetics. IntelliDash can also incorporate well-known products such as Turf Guard and leading third-party services like Playbooks and taskTracker to manage labour, track expenses and understand operational inputs, over time and by area of the course, providing insights for year-over-year comparisons and effective budget management. Toro is working to integrate additional new data sources into the

dashboard to ensure operators can access all their essential data in one place.

For daily productivity and planning purposes, IntelliDash provides equipment health and status. Equipment health is further managed by the inclusion of Toro's myTurf Pro Fleet Management tool, giving users convenient maintenance scheduling, parts ordering and reporting. For configured equipment, IntelliDash will provide diagnostics and valuable information on engine health, like operational hours and fuel use.

For more information and to request a demonstration of the new IntelliDash platform, contact your Toro area sales manager or call 1300 130 898.

NEW FORMULATION PRIMO MAXX II NOW AVAILABLE



ASTMA Gold Partner Syngenta has unveiled its new and improved turf growth regulator. PRIMO MAXX II (116g/L trinexapac-ethyl) is a new formulation that delivers identical performance as the

original but with a slightly lower active content. Users should continue to apply the rates they have always used and can be confident of achieving the same results while applying less active ingredient.

PRIMO MAXX II enhances turf health and playing surface consistency, delivering improved playability by increasing turf density. Biochemically, PRIMO MAXX II works by temporarily blocking the production of gibberellic acid within the plant leaf, which effectively limits cell elongation and vertical growth. The result is to shorten the distance between the shoot nodes, leading to more compact growth and stronger turf. While the vertical growth is slowed, energy in the plant is diverted to boost both root and lateral growth, creating stronger, healthier and denser turf.

Toro's new IntelliDash platform enables golf course superintendents to view equipment, labour, equipment health and agronomic data from anywhere at any time

PRIMO MAXX II promotes healthy plants that are better able to resist the effects of stress and disease, to produce season-long better playing conditions. Applying a PRIMO MAXX II program ahead of periods of stress (pre-stress conditioning) makes plants better able to cope with adverse conditions – including drought, water-logging, heavy wear and disease pressure. Not only will turf stay looking good for longer, but also recover faster after stress conditions have eased.

PRIMO MAXX II can help plants compensate for a 75 per cent reduction in light levels, which could transform turf performance in shaded areas. Research has shown that PRIMO MAXX II applications increase the level of photosynthetic availability. As internodes shorten, the number of shoots within a given area increases, thereby assisting the plant capturing available light. The more light captured means more carbohydrate production and associated flow on energy to the plant. When shoot density is increased, then the plant has an improved wear tolerance. This combination of density, along with improved root structure and a reduction in water usage, all combine to improve quality and wear tolerance.

Contact your local Syngenta representative for more information on PRIMO MAXX II.

TURFCARE LAUNCHES RAPIDOL FUNGICIDE



Turfcare Australia recently announced the registration and launch of Rapidol turf fungicide. Rapidol comes with a powerful and unique active ingredient – mandestrobin (250g/L) – making its debut in the Australian turf industry.

Rapidol is registered for brown patch, dollar spot, grey leaf spot, fairy ring, helminthosporium, pythium, anthracnose, winter fusarium, curvularia and ERI, providing turf managers with an effective and comprehensive control solution.

One of Rapidol's key features is its dual-action capability, offering both preventative and early curative control of these destructive diseases. By ensuring whole-of-plant protection, Rapidol safeguards turfgrass against disease threats, maintaining its lush green appearance and playability. The patented latex formulation used in Rapidol enhances rainfastness, making it an ideal choice for unpredictable weather conditions. Rapidol will stay in place, delivering consistent results even in wet conditions.

Rapidol has no poison schedule and no re-entry restrictions, making it safe for turf managers and their teams to apply. Rapidol is compatible with a full range of spray equipment, including backpack sprayers, making it convenient for turf managers with various equipment preferences. Its broad spectrum of activity means turf managers can rely on Rapidol for multiple disease challenges, simplifying their turf management practices. What's more, Rapidol offers a competitive price point, making it an ideal replacement for current Group 11 fungicides. Turfcare is the exclusive distributor of Rapidol in Australia. For more information, contact your local Turfcare territory manager on (02) 4571 6444 or Green Workz (WA) 0417 986 285.

SOEGAARD OFF TO GIS

ASTMA Silver Partner Country Club International (CCI) and partner Par Aide USA have announced Phil Soegaard (Lakelands GC, Qld), as winner of their trip to the 2024 Golf Industry Show in Phoenix, Arizona. Soegaard's name was drawn from more than 50 entrants and will now accompany the CCI team on an educational trip to scope out what's new in all things golf and turf related.

"Supported by Par Aide, one of the world's most recognised golf hardware brands and represented by Country Club International in Australia, this reward was aimed to give a little back to our loyal customers," says CCI national sales director John McCafferty. "No doubt this will provide a wonderful experience for Phil and provide insights that can be brought back and put into practice at his club."

NUTURF FAREWELLS GREEN

September saw the end of an era for ASTMA Bronze Partner Nuturf following the retirement of Queensland territory manager Rob Green after 40 years with the company. The longest-serving member of the Nuturf team, Green was farewelled by turf industry colleagues and friends at a special function held at the Brisbane Racing Club in late September.



Nuturf's Rob Green recently retired after 40 years as a Queensland territory manager with the company. Pictured right is Green featured in a 1999 Chemturf advert that appeared in Australian Turfgrass Management Journal

Posting on Facebook, Nuturf commented: "Today marks the end of an era for a legend of the Nuturf team! Our longest-serving team member, Rob Green, will be retiring today after an incredible 40 years with Nuturf. During this time, Rob has played a key role in the development and modernisation of turf racing agronomy in Queensland, which has since seen Queensland racing produce some of the best track surfaces in the world. He has forged strong relationships with turf managers and has helped support and mentor countless peers through their careers.

"When we looked back on Rob's time with Nuturf, we found him featured in the April 1999 edition of Australian Turfgrass Management Journal. The advertisement (pictured above) shows a younger Rob on the right in the days when Nuturf was known as Chemturf. When this photo was taken, Rob had already been with Nuturf for 17 years! We'd like to thank Rob for his contribution to the turf industry over the past four decades."

SILVAN'S NEW TRAILER-MOUNTED SPRAYERS

Spraying specialist Silvan has recently unveiled two new 200-litre trailed sprayers in the company's BIG RED Spring 23 catalogue – the Lightfoot trailed sprayer and GP spray boom (LT20-S7C-3) and Lightfoot sprayer with four-metre crossfold boom (LT20-S10R-4).

The LT20-S7C-3 includes a Lightfoot 200-litre tank, 30-metre-long reel and hose fitted to a Spotjet spray gun and stainless-steel lance, new general purpose (GP) spray boom and electric 12-volt pump all mounted on a robust trailer. The sprayer comes fully assembled and factory tested. Its versatile design allows for immediate attachment to side-by-side vehicles, ATVs or utilities, making it a valuable asset for a wide range of spraying applications.

Standout features include a Smoothflo pump, capable of providing an open flow of seven litres a minute at a maximum pressure of 827kPa (120psi). Unlike traditional pumps, this high-pressure constant flow

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Silvan's new Lightfoot trailed sprayer and GP spray boom (left) and Lightfoot sprayer with crossfold boom (right)

pump produces a smooth and pulsation-free operation, contributing to consistent and accurate spraying.

The new GP spray boom boasts independent nozzle operation capability, a feature tailored for precision tasks such as fence line treatments or spray widths of up to seven metres. This functionality ensures uniform coverage while minimising waste. For targeted applications, the Spotjet spray gun,

featuring a 500mm stainless steel lance and a 30m long x 10mm ID hose and reel, provides users with the flexibility to address specific areas with precision and control. Retailing at \$4345, the spraying unit measures 1.5m in length, 1.05m wide (outside the wheels) and weighs just 79kg when empty.

The LT20-S10R-4 sprayer includes a Lightfoot 200-litre tank, hi-flow 12-volt unit and an advanced four-metre wide crossfold boom.

The boom offers a 4m spray width along with a break-back device that safeguards it when encountering obstructions. A highlight is the Varijet spray gun, which can transition from a focused stream to a diffuse conical mist through a simple barrel rotation.

The package includes a 30m long hose on an Eco reel, ensuring ample reach and easy handling. The sprayer also boasts an adjustable pressure regulator and a glycerine-filled gauge to give users precise control over pressure and flow for both the gun and boom.

The 12-volt electric pump comes with an electric sensing switch and delivers a maximum flow rate of 14L/min and pressure of 413.69kPa (60psi). The pump includes a factory-fitted pressure regulator with automatic bypass for agitation and seamless operation. Retailing for \$5390, the sprayer is 1.5m long, 1.05m wide (outside the wheels), 925mm high, with hose and reel and weighs 82kg empty.

Call 1300 SILVAN (1300 745 826) or email info@silvanaust.com for technical specifications and product details.

INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS

DILLON SWITCHES TO SYNGENTA TURF & LANDSCAPE UNIT



ASTMA Gold Partner Syngenta has appointed **Lisa Dillon** (pictured) to its Turf & Landscape division as territory sales manager for Victoria, South Australia and

Tasmania. Dillon has spent the previous 10 years with the company as Crop Protection sales manager for Victoria where she was responsible for Syngenta's plant protection products across a range of horticultural crops.

Bringing decades of experience in plant protection products to the Turf & Landscape team, this is Dillon's second assignment in turf, having been Barmac national sales manager several years ago. "I really enjoyed the people I met then and am looking forward to meeting new people and reconnecting with old colleagues," says Dillon.

Adds Syngenta Turf & Landscape business manager Paul Jackson: "We are very excited and fortunate to have someone with Lisa's plant protection experience joining our team; she will be a great asset for the industry across the southern states." Dillon is based in Melbourne and can be contacted on 0407 499 946 or email lisa.dillon@syngenta.com.

SHAW TO LIVING TURF



ASTMA Silver Partner Living Turf has appointed irrigation specialist **Clint Shaw** (pictured). Shaw joins fellow Living Turf irrigation specialists Tyson Riley (WA),

Shane Carman (SA), Mac Ross (Vic) and Martin O'Malley (NSW) and will represent the Rain Bird, Leemco and Groundworx brands.

Shaw's irrigation pedigree follows in the footsteps of his father Bill, who was also well-known as an industry specialist. Shaw was first apprenticed as a greenkeeper at Kingston Heath Golf Club, before moving to The Capital as an irrigation technician. Years later, Shaw freelanced as an irrigation contractor, before joining Toro as a territory manager where he worked for 12 years in the golf and racing sectors along the eastern seaboard. Shaw can be contacted on 0407 100 606 or email cshaw@livingturf.com.

K&B ADAMS LURES LENERTZ

ASTMA Bronze Partner K&B Adams has appointed **Dean Lenertz** as a technical sales representative for NSW. Lenertz arrives at the company with 30 years of experience in the industry and having spent the past 15 months as course superintendent at Sydney's North Ryde Golf Club. Prior to that he was an assistant superintendent for more than 12 years at both New South Wales and St Michaels golf clubs. A career highlight during his time at NSW GC was attending three US Opens at Merion, Chambers Bay and Pebble Beach as part of the course teams.

"Dean's experience and technical skills within the industry over the years have given him opportunities to develop his career and manage various golf courses in Sydney as well as running his own small landscaping business," says K&B Adams' Mark Eardley. "Dean began working with K&B Adams last month and looks forward to catching up with everyone in the turf industry." Lenertz can be contacted on 0409 669 751 or email dean@kbadams.com.au.

BEAL JOINS NUTURF



ASTMA Bronze Partner Nuturf has named **Phil Beal** (pictured) as its new territory manager in NSW. Beal joins Nuturf having served as course superintendent

at The Australian Golf Club in Sydney for over 10 years, where he led the redevelopment of the golf course, practice facilities and two maintenance facilities. During this time, the club also hosted four Australian Opens. Prior to this he held various roles in golf across Australia and the UK in both construction and maintenance.

Beal has recently been working in a consultancy capacity through his own business, Tallowood Advisory Services, engaging with organisations as an agronomy advisor, due diligence advisor for new course constructions, project management and in a mentor capacity at several facilities. He will be continuing this work in his capacity with Nuturf. His new role will see Beal service a golf-focused territory incorporating Sydney and Newcastle, taking over from **Craig Paget** who was recently appointed Nuturf national sales manager. Beal will also be assisting with the company's overall service of the golf course industry.

"We're absolutely thrilled to welcome Phil to the Nuturf team," says Paget. "Phil is undeniably passionate about the turf industry, but more importantly he is passionate about seeing the people around him succeed. This is one of the many reasons he is held with such high regard amongst professional turf managers." Beal can be contacted on 0499 994 315 or email phil.beal@nuturf.com.au.

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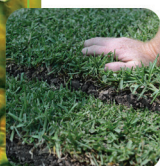
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Steve Cole, General Manager, Lilydale Instant Lawn



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Matt Legge, Superintendent, Brookwater Golf & Country Club, QLD



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Martin Rose, Course Manager, Ocean Dunes, Tasmania



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VGCSA

The VGCSA's education program for 2023 wrapped up in early September with Commonwealth Golf Club hosting our final education meeting for the year.

The day entailed two course tours led by host superintendent and VGCSA treasurer **Adam Lamb** who outlined the club's exciting course restoration project which got underway last August. Members had the opportunity to tour the redeveloped northern section of the course which formed part of the first stage of works, as well as get a preview of the second stage of works at the southern end of the course which had just got underway.

Whereas the first stage involved only minor design changes, the second stage will see far greater changes to the Commonwealth layout. With the relocation of the maintenance facility between holes 10 and 12 in late 2021, it has created the opportunity to open an area of the course previously pretty tucked in. Greens 7, 10 and 12 will be pushed a little closer together, creating the feel they are linked, which is very common throughout the northern half of the course.

The 1st green and approach area will receive a major makeover and the 7th, 10th, 12th and 19th greens will all be redesigned. The 11th green, notorious for its severe back-to-front fall, will also be softened a little. We look forward to seeing these works progress over the coming months.

2023 brought healthy attendances at our meetings, with a successful program of activities providing a sense of relief that events were 'back to normal' after months of COVID disruptions. Overall, our meetings averaged attendances of 100-plus and we thank all members for their support of these events.

A recent highlight was the two-day VGCSA Country Meeting at Rich River Golf Club attended by 122 members. As part of the Tuesday educational program, US guest



Commonwealth course superintendent Adam Lamb



PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

Works have started on the second stage of the course restoration project at Commonwealth Golf Club

speaker **Dr Shawn Askew** (professor and turfgrass weed specialist at Virginia Tech) presented a live webinar on the findings of glyphosate use on dormant turfgrass, plant growth regulators and application of endothal. It was a valuable session for all attending, with turf managers learning about Shawn's extensive research on these topics. VGCSA members will have the opportunity to access his online presentation at a later date.

Other Country Meeting sessions didn't disappoint, with insightful content presented across the day. This included Tara Iti Golf Club (NZ) superintendent **Brian Palmer** providing two talks on fescue management and construction, **David Warwick's** discussion of 'A fortunate career', trade news and demonstrations on the latest industry research and innovations and a course walk with Rich River superintendent **Jarrod Castle**.

The VGCSA also presented five training workshops during July and August. The focus of our course staff training days is to provide specialised training in small class settings to maximise practical learning for enrollees. We wish to acknowledge our trade partners for facilitating this year's workshop program, including:

- **Tees & Greens, Rain Bird Australia and Toro Irrigation:** Irrigation early and advanced level training days;

- **Toro Australia:** Cutting unit set up and sprayer maintenance/calibration turf equipment management workshops;
- **Melbourne Polytechnic with Dr Phil Ford** and ASTMA agronomists **Bruce Macphee** and **Tim Fankhauser:** Disease identification workshop supported by Syngenta Turf & Landscape ANZ.

This year we also farewelled VGCSA vice-president **Travis Scott**. Travis joined the VGCSA committee in 2018 and became secretary in 2021 before becoming vice-president in May this year. In early August, Travis stepped down from the committee due to his newly-appointed role of branch manager for Brandt Australia at their Knoxfield and Lilydale branches.

Travis has been a dedicated and valued committee member throughout and he will be sorely missed by all of us at the VGCSA. We look forward to seeing Travis at future VGCSA meetings in his capacity as trade member. We wish him the very best in his new career.

While the VGCSA event program may be complete for 2023, the next few months will be busy planning the final stages of 2024 activities with our annual program being launched to members in November/December.

MARY NAPIER
CEO, VGCSA



VGCSA members tour the southern end of Commonwealth where restoration works are currently underway

GCSAWA

Spring is here and already we have had a number of days reaching into the mid-20s and the rain starting to drop off. Perth had 120mm in July, 75mm in August and 45mm in September for a total of 582mm so far for the year.

In mid-August we held the Margaret River Conference with 72 people in attendance for the event, including 12 from interstate. A good time was had by all with great speakers including **Leigh Yanner** (The National GC, Vic) presenting on the impending Long Island course development and what it means to be a superintendent. **Rowan Daymond** (The Grange GC, SA) spoke on communication and hosting the LIV Golf Adelaide event earlier this year, while **Anthony Mills** (The Lakes GC, NSW) talked about the upcoming Australian Open which they will be co-hosting alongside The Australian, the challenges of nematodes and kikuyu management.

Troy Jordan (Melbourne Olympic Park Trust, Vic) ran through his stadium career, before **Cameron Sutherland** (Programmed Property Maintenance) spoke on managing high use sporting facilities. **Mark Unwin** provided an update on ASTMA activities and Western Australian Golf Club general manager **Damien Todorovic** presented on the importance of the GM/superintendent relationship.

GCSAWA Apprentice of the Year and ASTMA Graduate of the Year recipient **Jayden Zappelli** spoke on his career and time at Kalgoorlie Golf Course and how he will shortly be moving to take on the role of 3IC at Royal Perth Golf Club under his former Kalgoorlie boss **Patrick Casey**. Finally, Broome Golf Club's **Jason Johnson** was a standout, sharing some wonderfully entertaining stories on his life and last few years living in Broome.

The dinners were a highlight with the local restaurants outdoing themselves with the quality and quantity of servings. With everyone staying at the same hotel and all meals together, it's a very social conference with the camaraderie between new and old friends great to see.

We always seem to bring the bad weather to Margaret River for the golf afternoon and the forecast this year was no different. Amazingly the rain held off until the last hole with host superintendent **Scott Barnett** winning the Rain Bird/Living Turf Cup for the second year in a row, with Scott's assistant **Chris Mitchell** winning the stableford event.

In late August, John Deere held the WA leg of the John Deere Team Championship at Secret Harbour Golf Course. Host superintendent **Tom Tristram** had the course in great condition, with **Nick Kinley** and **Brian Close** from Hartfield Country Club booking themselves a trip to the final to be held in New



PHOTO: COHESION, WA

Secret Harbour hosted the WA leg of the John Deere Team Championship event in late August

Zealand. Thanks to Matt, Cobus, Jacques and the whole team at AFGRI and John Deere for a really fun and well run day.

Congratulations to the teams at Joondalup Resort and Kalgoorlie Golf Course who were in the tournament spotlight in early October when the PGA Tour of Australasia headed West. Joondalup (superintendent **Ashley Watson**) hosted the WA Open from 5-8 October, with Kalgoorlie (superintendent **Niall Rogan**) holding the WA PGA Championship the following week. These are two of the toughest and most picturesque courses in WA and they presented superbly which is a real credit to the course crews.

In October we have the next PD day between the GMA and GCSAWA. We return to Royal Perth on 20 October for a lunch and presentation from former Perth Wildcats coach **Trevor Gleeson** on leadership and management. It's a more favourable time and location so hopefully we can get a good turnout in what is a pretty important day. This will be followed closely by the Management Challenge Golf Day on 13 November at The Vines with the superintendent, general manager and two committee members teaming up in a stableford competition.

Finally, I just want to send a big thanks and congratulations to retiring ASTMA finance manager **Philip Horsburgh** for his work with the association. The GCSAWA had a brand-new committee about four years ago and Philip was a huge help as we figured out the bookwork side of the role and explaining things with advice and tips. Thanks for your work with the ASTMA and enjoy your retirement.

SHANE BAKER
PRESIDENT, GCSAWA



The GCSAWA's Margaret River Conference was held in early August. Pictured top is guest speaker Leigh Yanner from The National GC, Vic. Pictured above are Rain Bird/Living Turf Cup golf winners Scott Barnett (second from left) and Chris Mitchell

ON THE MOVE...

MICHAEL CAMPBELL: From superintendent Duntryleague GC, NSW to superintendent Wentworth GC, NSW.

TERRY DEWHIRST: Has departed Murray Downs G&CC, NSW after nine years, including the past three as superintendent, to concentrate on the family's farming business.

LUKE DISERENS (CSTM): From Land HQ/John Deere to superintendent Northbridge GC, NSW replacing retiring NSWGCSA life member Malcolm Harris.

MATTHEW DUFF: From superintendent Sawtell GC, NSW to superintendent Coffs Harbour GC, NSW.

TMSA

Turf Management South Australia (TMSA) held its inaugural Turf Seminar at The Grange Golf Club in Adelaide on 26 September, with former Australian cricketer great **Greg Chappell** headlining a diverse list of presenters. More than 110 TMSA members and trade registered for the day which featured presentations across the racing, golf, cricket and AFL sectors.

Kicking off the day's proceedings was former champion jockey **Clare Lindop**. One of the most accomplished female jockeys the country has ever produced, Clare created history in 2003 when she became the very first Australian female jockey to ride in the Melbourne Cup aboard Debben. She went on to ride 111 winners in the 2003-2004 racing season, becoming the first female jockey to crack a century in one season, with that record only being broken in 2018. In 2008 she tasted her biggest success when she piloted Rebel Raider to win the Group 1 AAMI Victoria Derby at Flemington.

Following her retirement as a champion jockey, Clare has continued to be heavily involved in racing and was recently appointed to the newly-created role of industry development and training officer for Racing SA. As well as reflecting on her career in the saddle, Clare provided an insight into the world of racing and track management from a jockey's perspective and the importance that turf plays in horse performance. She also talked about the synergies between all turf-related sports and showcasing the career path opportunities that they can present.

Blundstone Arena head curator **Marcus Pamplin** took to the lectern next and talked about the challenges that come with managing Tasmania's premier cricket and AFL venue. Marcus, who won the ASTMA's Excellence in Sportsfields and Grounds Management Award at the 2022 conference in Melbourne, has been in charge of the Hobart venue since 2008.



Pictured with TMSA acting chair Nathan Bennett (far right, Royal Adelaide GC) at the association's inaugural Turf Seminar were guest speakers (from left) Marcus Pamplin (Blundstone Arena), Belinda Marsh (SANFL), Greg Chappell, Rowan Daymond (The Grange) and Clare Lindop (Racing SA)

Marcus provided an overview of the facility and the juggling act required to cater for the venue's many tenants across both cricket and football seasons. He outlined the venue's winter programs, highlighting the recent advent of their marquee practice facility which enables cricket training to continue throughout the cooler months.

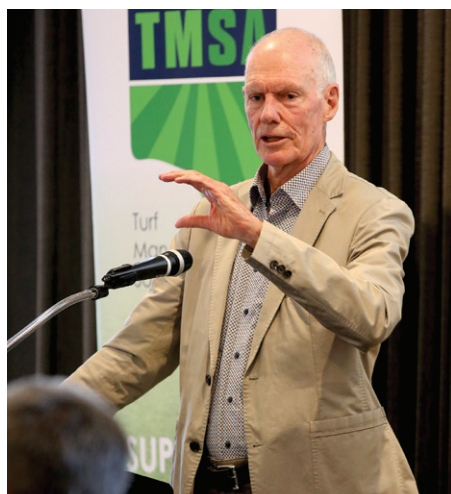
He discussed some of the challenges around managing the ground through Hobart's unique climate, as well as the ongoing issues with painted logos and their impact on the turf. *Poa annua* management was a particular focus, with Marcus outlining his various control strategies. He also spoke on ground renovation practices, before outlining their summer programs and pitch preparation techniques during a busy cricket schedule.

The final speaker of the morning session was **Belinda Marsh** who is the head of infrastructure and government relations with the SANFL. Belinda has been with the SANFL for the past two-and-a-half years, where she combines her passion for football communities with government engagement expertise to drive the implementation of the organisation's Infrastructure Plan 2022-2032. She outlined the significant increase in participation levels

being experienced in SA, especially the rise in popularity of AFLW, and the implications that was having for existing sportsgrounds and the need for innovative solutions to cater for that growth. One of those was working with local schools to improve their facilities and increase capacity.

Following lunch, The Grange superintendent **Rowan Daymond** looked back on the club's hosting of the inaugural LIV Golf Adelaide event in April. Titled *'The plan, the prep and the party'*, Rowan recounted the hectic lead-in to the tournament and their preparations, the huge infrastructure build and the three days of competition which saw more than 77,000 fans flood through the gates.

Closing the day out was keynote speaker Greg Chappell (AO MBE). Chappell played 87 Tests for Australia, including 48 as captain, retiring in 1984 as the highest run-getter in Australian Test history at the time (7110 runs), surpassing the great Sir Don Bradman (6996 runs). After hanging up the Baggy Green, he served on the Australian Cricket Board, was a national selector on three separate occasions and had coaching stints with South Australia and India. His last major appointment was as Cricket Australia's National Talent Manager



Australian cricketer great Greg Chappell capped off a diverse line up of speakers at the TMSA Turf Seminar



Head curator Marcus Pamplin spoke about the challenges of managing Blundstone Arena in Hobart



SANFL's Belinda Marsh outlined the challenges faced by existing grounds due to increases in participation

PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON



Clare Lindop provided an insight into racing and track management from a jockey's perspective

which he held from 2010 to 2019. Chappell reminisced on his days as a 'back yard curator' as he and brothers Ian and Trevor prepared their back yard for epic 'Test' matches against one another, finetuning their skills which would ultimately take them to the highest level.

The seminar was well supported by the trade with many of the association's partners setting up stands and showcasing machinery. During the long break, attendees had the opportunity to visit the stands and peruse the machinery which was set up next to the practice green as The Grange Golf Club crew undertook course renovations in the



The TMSA seminar was well supported by the trade with many of the association's partners setting up stands inside The Grange clubhouse and showcasing machinery outside

background. A lucky door prize was drawn at the end of the day with **Paul Chapman** (Baileys Fertilisers) securing a round of golf at The Grange for four people, kindly donated by the host venue.

The TMSA wishes to thank all guest presenters, trade partners and all those who took the time from their busy schedules to attend this event. Some travelled from the regions and some even from interstate which was greatly appreciated. We have received some great feedback and are looking forward to organising our second Turf Seminar in 2024. To check out more photos from the day, follow

the TMSA on Facebook and Instagram. The final TMSA event for 2023 will be the inaugural AGM and Christmas function to be held on 23 November at The Howling Owl.

COMMITTEE, TMSA

ON THE MOVE...

MATT KELLY: The 2023 Future Turf Managers' Initiative graduate is moving from his role as assistant superintendent at Redcliffe GC, Qld to take on the assistant superintendent position at The Jockey Club Kau Sai Chau, Hong Kong.

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STA NSW



The last couple of months have seen a fair bit of activity for STA NSW, with the NSW Turf Industry Field Day and Seminar as well as a regional wicket program in Albury.

We were really pleased with the NSW Turf Industry event in Pitt Town and it was a great opportunity to work collaboratively with Turf NSW to present this inaugural event for the NSW turf industry. This event presented both machinery demonstrations at Dad & Dave's turf farm and some great talks and a trade expo at Lynwood Country Club. The location and venues were great and the feedback we received was very positive, particularly how good it was to connect with other industry workers.

Our guest speaker for the event was rugby league legend and now former NSW State of Origin coach **Brad Fittler** who provided some great insights into his career and the challenges of coaching at an elite level. Fresh from the success of the FIFA Women's World Cup, we had the opportunity to hear from **Graeme Logan** (Accor and CommBank Stadiums) on hosting the tournament and what that looked like for the venues involved.

Recently the STA NSW team headed to Albury for a regional wicket training program requested by Cricket Albury Wodonga to assist their wicket managers improve their skills and produce top quality wickets. We had 25 attend the day who soaked up the information on wicket preparation and management.

It was a great event and we are now preparing to host a similar event in Coffs Harbour as well as a Sydney-based 'Wicket 201' event. Keep an eye on the STA NSW website www.sportsturfnsw.com.au for upcoming events and images from our events.

STA NSW wishes everyone success as they work through the sports transition period from winter to summer sports and hoping your surfaces are healthy and strong.

TURF NSW



The inaugural NSW Turf Industry Field Day and Seminar was held on 22 August in Pitt Town and was a successful day bringing together both turf producers and sports turf managers. We were pleased to work with STA NSW for this event and it was a great opportunity for our industries to better understand each other and be more connected.

The day started at Dad & Dave's turf farm with a variety of machinery demonstrations from mowers to scarifiers and harvesters. We then moved to Lynwood Country Club for presentations and the trade expo. We will now work on continuing this collaborative approach in future years.



Accor Stadium's Graeme Logan talks about their involvement in the recent FIFA Women's World Cup tournament

Engaging with members is a regular focus for Turf NSW and some recent farm visits have included Canturf in Canberra and Tarcoola Turf in Wagga Wagga. This gives us the opportunity to build a closer relationship with our members and understand their farms and how Turf NSW can work with them.

Turf NSW also recently held its Annual General Meeting, with the Board remaining the same for the coming year. It comprises:

- **President:** Troy Franks;
- **Vice-president:** Paul Saad;
- **Treasurer:** Anthony Muscat;
- **Committee:** Patrick Muscat, Joshua Muscat and Dave Raison.

As the weather warms up our growers are well into their busiest period of the year of spring and summer. Here's hoping it's good growing weather and an improvement on past years' challenges, ensuring growers can keep up with the demands for natural turf. Further information on Turf NSW can be found at www.turfnsw.com.au.

JENNY ZADRO
EO, STA NSW AND TURF NSW



Above: Former NSW State of Origin coach Brad Fittler (left) was among the guest speakers at the NSW Turf Industry Field Day and Seminar

Below: A range of machinery was on display during the trade expo held at Dad & Dave's turf farm. The event brought together both turf producers and sports turf managers



It has been a busy winter period for the ACTSTMA with our annual seminar taking place at Thoroughbred Park on 26 July. We had a great turn out of close to 200 delegates which was great to see, with many local and interstate visitors supporting our association. A big thank you to all our sponsors for their continued support; days like this can't happen without them.

Supported by Platinum Partner Living Turf, the education sessions kicked off with long-serving Moruya Golf Club superintendent **Brent Hull** providing an insight into his career and management of the NSW South Coast course. Hull won the NSWGCSA Superintendent of the Year Award in 2022 and was a finalist in the ASTMA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award at the recent Adelaide conference.

He was followed by **Phil Beal**, former superintendent of The Australian Golf Club, who reflected on his career, the challenges of mental health and how we can all play a part in taking care of each other at the workplace.

Golf Australia's head of workforce engagement, **Claudia Marazita** presented on Golf Australia's approach to supporting clubs and turf facilities, opportunities to address the growing staff attraction and retention challenge in the industry and the importance of developing plans to support, train and develop staff.

Racing Victoria's tracks and facilities manager **James Cataldo** then talked through the setup and operations of managing racetracks throughout Victoria and the co-ordination of works required to keep metropolitan and country tracks operational all year round.



Around 200 attended the ACTSTMA's annual seminar at Thoroughbred Park in Canberra



Resurfacing trial work underway at Thoroughbred Park

The final session of the day saw the team from Pitchcraft, led by **Richard Winter**, talk through the construction of Wyndham Football Facility and the redevelopment works completed at Gosch's Paddock, home of the AFL's Melbourne Football Club, and the detailed process around construction of sportsfield surfaces.

The day was well supported by association sponsors Living Turf, Syngenta, Nuturf, LandHQ and Kubota Canberra. Each company provided updates on their product developments and releases for 2023. The seminar also included recognition of the 2022-23 Graduate of the Year recipients **Riley Wilcox** (Gold Creek CC) and **Lachie Deep** (Garangula Polo Club) by award sponsor Living Turf. Both Riley and Lachie represented the association at the national conference.

The ACTSTMA Annual General Meeting was held following the education seminar with the full 2023-24 committee comprising:

- **President:** Peter Dunn (Federal GC);
- **Treasurer:** Chris Bale (Yowani CC);
- **Secretary:** James Correll (Federal GC);
- **Committee:** Adam Ayre (Thoroughbred Park), Ryan Stores and Brendan Williams (Royal Canberra GC), Andy Middleton (Canturf), Campbell Griggs and Chris Patrick (Murrumbidgee CC), Simon Snedden (Gold Creek CC), Dave Mann (ACT Sport and Recreation), Scott Fogg (Living Turf) and Jon Tait (CIT).

Elsewhere, track manager **Adam Ayre** is currently undertaking some exciting trial work at Thoroughbred Park. The purpose of this trial is to remove a test strip of vegetation and re-seed the area situated on the outside rail edge of the Course Proper at the 1200-metre chute. Regular assessments (seedling development, shoot density, root depth, volumetric water content, infiltration rate and compaction) are to be undertaken in order to predict re-establishment time for the surface to be fit for racing.

Trial measurements are being conducted on a monthly basis in order to map the growth and development of the new grass from seed germination through to maturity. This will also assist with predicting an accurate turf establishment time in preparation and planning for resurfacing the entire Course Proper at a future date. We wish Adam and his team all the best with this work and look forward to seeing the results.

SIMON SNEDDEN
COMMITTEE, ACTSTMA

GCSAQ CHANGE OF GUARD AS HAUFF TAKES REINS

Mark Hauff has been elected as the new president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Queensland (GCSAQ). The Palmer Colonial and Palmer Gold Coast superintendent takes over from Sanctuary Cove's **Paul McLean** who stepped off the committee at the late August Annual General Meeting held at The Brisbane Golf Club.

Hauff, formerly the association secretary, presides over a committee that includes vice president **Keith Johnstone** (Keperra GC), treasurer **Rod Cook**, newly-elected secretary **David Mason** (Brisbane GC) and trade representative **Matt Holmes** (Adama).

Stepping down from the Board were former vice-president **Shaun Cross**, treasurer **Luke Helm** and general committee members **Brendan Clarke**, **Mick Pascoe**, **Lincoln Coombes**, **Mark Stanley** and **Garry McClymont**.

The AGM also included the GCSAQ's golf event, with Johnstone collecting the major prize with 39 points, followed by **Paul Lierse** and **Josh Morris** who both posted 34 points. Nearest the pins went to **Taylor Wills** (4th), **Todd McNamee** (19th), **Matt Legge** (21st) and **Jason Lavender** (7th), while **J. Wells** collected the longest drive prize (10th).

Host superintendent Mason and his crew had Brisbane Golf Club in great nick for the golf which was held in balmy 27-degree conditions. Mason, who started at the club last March just days before the course was inundated by a major flood, also provided an update on the course, including information on upcoming projects such as improvements to the fairway surfaces, driving range upgrade and greens grass trial plots being established for future greens resurfacing.



ON THE MOVE...

DYLAN KNIGHT: Appointed superintendent at Belvoir Park GC, Vic.

DEAN LENERTZ: From superintendent North Ryde GC, NSW to K&B Adams.

SCOTT MCCOMAS: After 12-and-a-half years at the club, the Nudgee assistant is heading up the M1 to take over as superintendent at Noosa GC, Qld.

KEITH MCPHEE: After 21 years' dedicated service, including the past 11 as sports facilities team leader, McPhee has departed Maitland City Council, NSW.

BARRY PROCTOR: From superintendent Woodlands GC, Vic to superintendent Riversdale GC, Vic.

TRAVIS SCOTT: From superintendent Riversdale GC to Knoxfield branch manager with Brandt AU/John Deere, Vic.

MATT SHUTTLEWORTH: From Supergardens to superintendent Melton Valley GC, Vic.

NSWGCSA



Last month we published the Winter edition of the NSWGCSA magazine. It was a bumper issue featuring an article on Shoalhaven Heads Golf Course with course superintendent **Will Ockenden**. Shoalhaven was the only course not to close in last year's big wet. They are a great community course and it was great to be able to highlight the work at this club.

Elsewhere in the edition, **Ben Gibson** from The Toolbox Team discussed discipline, systems and a safe, high performing team. Avondale Golf Club superintendent **Robert Biddle** wrote about his experiences volunteering at the LIV Golf Adelaide event alongside two of his fellow staff members, while NSWGCSA life member **Peter McMaugh AM** gave us his insights into the way we think about water. The NSWGCSA would also like to congratulate Peter on recently being awarded the Australian Medal of Agricultural Science by the Ag Institute of Australia.

The Winter edition was the last magazine the association will produce in a hard copy format. The committee has decided to move across to a digital format from our next issue. We have done this for environmental sustainability reasons and also to reach a wider audience. A link to the current e-version can be found on our website www.nswgcsa.com.au.

In August, we held two education days. **James Newell** (Magenta Shores G&CC) and **Jake Gibbs** (Elanora CC) hosted one at



The NSWGCSA held an education day at Camden Golf Club in early August

Camden Golf Club on 3 August with guest speaker **Phil Beal** talking about managing people. The day also included presentations from our sponsors **Craig Paget** and **Nathan Bradbury** (Nuturf) and **Nadeem Zriekat** (Colin Campbell Chemicals). Thanks also to Camden superintendent **Justin Bradbury** for a 'walk and talk' around the course and to our Q&A panel.

The second day was hosted by **Pat Wilson** at Narooma Golf Club on 16 August. Thanks to sponsors Rain Bird and Living Turf and speakers **Scott Fogg**, **Henk Smith**, **Matt Kennedy**, **Allan Tarrant** and **Martin O'Malley** as well as guest speaker **Adam Marchant**, course superintendent from Royal Sydney Golf Club. Both days were extremely well attended and we received great feedback from all.

As this edition was going to print, the 2023 Elite Sand & Soil Rube Walkerden event was about to be held at Royal Sydney Golf Club. This year marks the 50th anniversary

of the Rube Walkerden Golf Trophy as part of the association's annual golf championship. The first was staged in March 1973 at Royal Sydney, so this will be a great tribute to Rube and Royal Sydney and what is a special event for the association.

For the first time since COVID, our annual awards for 2023 will be combined with Golf NSW, PGA of Australia and Golf Management Australia. The event where our winners will be announced will take place on Monday 6 November at Crown Barangaroo. On this night the NSWGCSA will hand out three awards – Superintendent of the Year, Assistant Superintendent of the Year and Outstanding Achievement of the Year. We look forward to this event and recognising the contribution and achievements of our colleagues and workmates.

LEON HENNESSY
PRESIDENT, NSWGCSA

NSWBGA



It has been a busy time for the New South Wales Bowling Greenkeepers Association (NSWBGA) since my last report. Australian Federation Week was a great success with around 100 bowling greenkeepers from across the country making their way to the Gold Coast in May for a week of education, bowls and networking. NSW managed to win all three championship titles – **Ben Morthorpe** (singles), **Brent Norman** and **Shannon White** (pairs) and **Pat Chorley**, **Lee Johnson**, **Adam Webb** and **Martin Gosper** (fours) – with South Australia taking out the Test Series.

The 2023 Living Turf Greenkeeper of the Year Award was presented at Cabramatta Bowling Club in August during the Peter Mobbs Shield event. **Sean Bellotti** from Figtree Sports was a very deserved winner and fended off some very stiff opposition in **Wade Turner** (Queanbeyan RSL) and **Duncan Elphick** (Cherry Street Sports Ballina).

It was great to have the Peter Mobbs Shield event (Legends Day) return to the NSWBGA and Bowls NSW calendar for the first time since COVID. This event has always been a highly sought after title and nothing



Bowling greenkeepers from across the country converged on the Gold Coast for Australian Federation Week in May

had changed in its three-year absence. Bowls NSW named a very strong team for the event and took out the Shield for another year. The NSWBGA committee has been working closely with the new Bowls NSW committee over the past three months and is looking forward to presenting at the Bowls NSW Annual Awards and Conference in November.

August saw the retirement of two of our longest-serving members – **Phil Harfield** (Grandviews BC) and **Terry Doyle** (Canberra North BC). Phil and Terry have guided many apprentices through the industry during their careers, as well as attending many conferences and bowls weeks. They were both always willing to share their wealth of knowledge with fellow



2023 Living Turf NSWBGA Greenkeeper of the Year recipient Sean Bellotti

members and are very well respected throughout the association. The NSWBGA wishes them both well in their retirement.

Chris Mumby from CMR Turfworks also completed his last renovation season earlier this year. Chris has been a major part of Sydney bowling club renovations for the past 30 years and will most definitely be missed.

JOHN FLAHERTY
SECRETARY, NSWBGA



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