

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

August/September 2022

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DON'T MISS

Glenavon FC. Chris McCullough talks to David McClure, Head Groundsman at Mourneview Park

BEHIND EVERY PITCH THERE'S A PERSON

Pitch and Grounds Advisor for the England and Wales Cricket Board, **Andy Mackay**, had a slightly different road into the world of grounds management. The born and bred Lancastrian read Archaeology and Ancient History at Lampeter University in Wales before switching direction to pursue a career in the world of turf maintenance; until then, something he had only done part-time around his studies. Phil Helmn reports

Good things come to those who wait

The Championship club has been trying to create a new training ground for over a decade. Blair Ferguson caught up with QPR's Grounds Manager, Malcolm Gardner, to find out about the new site



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Feeling hot hot hot

During August, many parts of the country have seen soaring temperatures and drought conditions, with the Environment Agency announcing temporary use bans - in no less than fourteen areas.

This is the first time, since 2018, that England has declared a drought and everybody is being urged to use water sparingly during the longstanding periods of hot temperatures.

Two of golf's governing bodies recently came together to urge the industry to play its part in the water crisis and consider its 'social responsibility'. In a joint statement, issued by the GCMA chief executive Tom Brooke and BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton, they state: "Golf club members and visitors are used to seeing green playing surfaces and it is important that we develop an understanding that, under the current circumstances, this is quite simply not possible, and we need to ask our members and visiting golfers to be considerate of this."

"As a sport and as an industry, we also have a social responsibility to consider, and therefore we must all work together to ensure that golf clubs as a whole are working within the current restrictions and that we as a sport are doing our bit to limit water usage as much as is reasonably practical at the current time."

It goes without saying, that the climate is changing and we need to prepare for such heatwaves in the future. A scientist at the Met Office said. "In a recent study, we found that the likelihood of extremely hot days in the UK has been increasing and will continue to do so during the course of the century."

However, as quick as the sunshine came, by the time this magazine is published there will probably be floods, but the amount of work groundspersons and greenkeepers have been experiencing to maintain

surfaces and get pitches ready for the new season in these conditions cannot go unrecognised.

Here at Pitchcare, we have been evaluating how we can be more sustainable and we appreciate that, in a world of mobile phones and iPads, information can be accessed at the click of a button. As a result, and after feedback from many readers and advertisers about the current magazine format we're planning some key changes for 2023. Without revealing too much in this editorial, we'll be increasing our focus on topical news and information, invigorating our digital journalism and improving our sustainable footprint too.

Over the past year, we have seen many internal changes in the team and we are excited to reveal new developments and new relationships with you soon.

Pitchcare's ethos from the outset has been to support turf care education and champion the issues of the dedicated people who work within our wonderful industry. If there are emotive topics, innovations or subject matter you, our audience, feel it's important we cover, do not hesitate to contact us.

**Stay cool
Kerry**



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DAVE MEARS

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GOLF

The Jurgen Klopp of golf

Lying high above the line of the M25 near Reigate, Surrey, Walton Heath is an area of national importance. Nurturing a unique heathland golf setting requires thinking out of the box, as Greg Rhodes discovered when he met Walton Heath Golf Club course manager Michael Mann. **P12**



In the beginning - An architects viewpoint

Phil Helmn recently met with golf course architect Tom Mackenzie to get a little insight into what goes on in the world of architecture, as well as also wanting to understand better what makes the man himself tick. **P24**

WINTER SPORTS

Good things come to those who wait

The Championship club has been trying to create a new training ground for over a decade and though a planning application was granted on a site not so far away, the club's plans were scuppered by long drawn-out processes of appeals and legal reviews. Blair Ferguson caught up with Grounds Manager, Malcolm Gardner, to find out about the new site **P42**

Glenavon FC

If you know anything about football in Northern Ireland, you will undoubtedly have heard of Glenavon FC and the popular stadium which the club calls home. Chris McCullough talks to David McClure (right), Head Groundsman at Mourneview Park at Lurgan in Northern Ireland. **P32**



CONSERVATION & ECOLOGY

If you go down to the woods today

If you strike lucky, you may spot signs of hedgehogs, however you can help support a sustainable community of them by preparing the ground to attract what is one of our favourite mammals, discovers Greg Rhodes. **P60**

TECHNICAL

Plant Protection Products - what you need to know!

You have, hopefully, already heard of the new Official Controls (Plant Protection Products) Regulations 2020. They have recently (June 22nd 2022) come into force in Great Britain and Northern Ireland for businesses, organisations and sole traders who use Plant Protection Products (PPPs) as part of their work, whether that work is either commercial, not for profit or volunteer run. **P70**

Sustainability is top of the agenda

Sport's role in helping tackle the climate crisis came under scrutiny following COP26 in Glasgow at the end of last year. Now, as part of the UN Sports for Climate Action Framework, which brings together sports organisations from all over the world to achieve climate change goals, all UK clubs are being asked to reduce their carbon footprint - targeting a 50 percent reduction in emissions by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2040. Dave French, sales manager for Reesink e-Vehicles, looks at how it can help clubs achieve a better future for football. **P76**

TRAINING & EDUCATION

All feedback is good feedback

Popular trainer and conference speaker Frank Newberry explores the notion that all feedback and complaints (from colleagues and customers) are good. He looks at how even the most vicious, negative feedback can be good for the individual, the team and the organisation. He suggests that we should use 'feedback contracts' with colleagues at work and encourage more complaints from customers! **P80**

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Next generation of turf managers revealed

The British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) has revealed the 20 ambitious greenkeepers who will participate in the Future Turf Managers Initiative 2022.



Each year Jacobsen and BIGGA invite 20 up-and-coming association members to participate in the intensive training programme, which has been credited with developing some of the greenkeeping industry's most influential course managers and head greenkeepers.

This year Jacobsen and BIGGA celebrated the first FTMI graduate to achieve the links superintendent position at an Open Championship venue in the form of Royal Liverpool's James Bledge.

FTMI was first hosted in 2013 as a two-day education event and since then has expanded around the world, with similar schemes being introduced in Spain, Portugal, Australia and New Zealand.

For 2022 the structure of FTMI has been adjusted to become a hybrid event that combines workshops at Ransomes Jacobsen's headquarters in Ipswich, online education sessions and two days of education at BTME in January 2023. FTMI focuses on personal and professional development, rather than agronomy-based subjects, and utilises the expertise of leading course managers,

dynamic trainers and industry experts to mentor and educate the next generation of industry leaders.

Candidates are selected based upon an anonymous judging criterion, with the panel gaining an insight into the achievements and ambitions of each applicant, who must be educationally active on a national and regional level.

BIGGA Learning & Development Executive Deb Burnett said: "As an increasing number of FTMI graduates achieve success in their careers, we are reminded of what an incredible learning opportunity FTMI is for BIGGA members. When the 10th FTMI class convenes this year, we'll be welcoming some of those early delegates back as mentors and I look forward to seeing them inspire the 2022 class, who will then gain the knowledge they require to achieve similar greatness in their own careers."

"Our youngest candidate this year is 22, while the oldest is 47 and that shows how FTMI is available to all BIGGA members. All you need is the desire to learn and progress your career and I'm delighted that among the Class of 2022 we have such a varied mix of people who can share

The members of the FTMI Class of 2022 are:

- Aaron Allibon, first assistant at Orsett
- John Anderson, senior greenkeeper at Prestwick
- Rhian Barton, assistant greenkeeper at Royal Liverpool
- Andrew Barr, deputy head greenkeeper at Greencastle
- Tom Bromfield, assistant greenkeeper at Trentham
- Ray Cotgrave, deputy course manager at Pleasington
- Marcus Davies, assistant greenkeeper at Wentworth Club
- Michael Gibbons, first assistant at Dunham Forest
- Sean Harvey, senior greenkeeper at Frilford Heath
- Peter Lewis, senior greenkeeper/irrigation technician at Royal Liverpool
- Darren McLoughlin, deputy head greenkeeper at Erskine
- Matthew Milligan, first assistant at Rudding Park
- Malcolm Mitchell, deputy head greenkeeper at Burghley Park
- Wayne Mulrooney, deputy course manager at Great Barr
- Robert Munro, assistant superintendent at Cabot Cliffs
- Ryan Oliver, assistant greenkeeper at Hornsea
- Adrian Parsons, assistant greenkeeper at Wenvoe Castle
- Michael Russell, assistant greenkeeper at Ormskirk
- Steven Thomas, deputy head greenkeeper at Prestonfield
- Elliot Walters, deputy course manager at Robin Hood

ideas and experiences and who have all got through to this stage based upon their own merits."

The importance of parks to support public health

The value of our nation's parks has once again been in the spotlight recently and Fields in Trust's Chief Executive, Helen Griffiths reports.

Government guidance for responding to record temperatures includes the recommendation that we "find some shaded green space". So for the second time in as many years our local parks and green spaces are identified as an important part of the answer to a public health emergency, but being able to follow that advice may well depend on where you live.

Our annual Green Space Index analysis identified that 2.8m people in Great Britain live more than a ten-minute walk from their nearest park. We found that the local authorities identified for Levelling Up funding have 10% less green space than authorities in the lower priority categories and that 40% of the worst performing areas for green space fall into the highest priority for levelling-up funding.

If you've found yourself at the local park more over the last two years, then you are not alone; nearly half the respondents in our recent survey said they have visited local parks more often since the Covid-19 pandemic. And 52% say they appreciate the parks close to home more than they used to (this rises to around two-thirds amongst those aged 16-44). A recognisable shift to more outdoor socialising as the number of Covid cases continues to impact our daily lives may well see the increased footfall of recent years maintained into the future.

It is positive that these conversations are taking place now and changing the way we think and speak about green space. The pandemic and the local impacts of climate change have shifted the perspective on our urban parks.



This new recognition of the role of local green space delivers a real moment in time to revalue parks and recognise their role not just for health, wellbeing and the environment but for the local placemaking that results in a stronger, sustainable and more equal future for communities. Parks should be central to levelling up policy development and prioritised as a way to restore a sense of community and local pride.

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New Syngenta Turf App puts information in your hand

The new Syngenta Turf App now includes a host of added features to help with everyday turf management decisions and enhance long-term planning.



Launching the new Syngenta Turf App at the Turf Science Live event recently, the company's Commercial Head for UK and Europe North West, Daniel Lightfoot, said: "It's incredibly valuable to have all the information required to help make key management decisions readily to hand wherever you are."

"From a practical course managers perspective, the Turf App is a hugely beneficial tool for all spray applications and turf management decisions."

A new Disease & Pest ID Guide provide a clear pictorial view of what to look out for, along with management notes

of where and when problems are most likely to occur. It includes an in-depth strategy for the optimum Integrated Turf Management approach to each pest and disease.

Features for the new App include:

- Disease & Pest ID Guide
- Treatment recommendations
- Product information
- Tank-mix calculator
- Application records
- Support contacts

Within each of the product listings, there are full details of statutory labels, safety data sheets and technical guides, to ensure operators are always fully compliant with the latest regulatory information on product use.

"It ensures operators always have access to the most up-to-date information instantly in their hand, wherever they are working. The labels displayed on your phone are always clean and uncontaminated, compared to potentially handling old labels on part-used bottles in the store," reported Daniel.

Application records created in the Turf App enable full spray records to be quickly and simply created. Users can now add any company's products into the system, including fertilisers and biocontrols, for example. Once any product details have been added, they remain available for future addition or reference.

"Course managers or agronomists can create spray recommendations using the Turf App that can be emailed to sprayer operators or contractors. That eliminates the chance of error from misreading hand-written sheets or instructions," he advised.

One-time registration enables users to input all their facility details, spray areas, equipment and operators - which can be instantly imported into spray records - making them quick and accurate to complete.

For more information visit www.syngentaturf.co.uk

Golf must do its bit in water crisis, clubs warned

Two of golf's governing bodies have come together to urge the industry to play its part with many parts of the UK suffering from a drought.

Tom Brooke, chief executive of the Golf Club Managers' Association, and Jim Croxton, CEO of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association, stated that players needed to be "considerate" and understand that green playing surfaces were "quite simply not possible" as the home nations swelter under 30 degree heat.

While golf courses have exemptions for irrigating sports turf, albeit with

some restrictions on times of watering depending on the water company, Brooke and Croxton are urging the industry to consider its "social responsibility".

In a joint statement issued by the GCMA, Brooke and Croxton added: "The golf course is the central element to any golf facility and well managed and maintained surfaces are essential to the playing of the game. In order for this to continue in warm or hot weather

irrigation is critical to ensure the grass plant survives."

"With the above in mind, we must very carefully consider the ongoing and sustainable management of our golf courses, whilst at the same time focusing on priority playing areas and ensuring that we are not exceeding licenced water usage or infringing on any legally enforced restrictions."



FairWays Foundation holds inaugural summit

The FairWays Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting conservation and stewardship, recently held its inaugural summit at Firestone Country Club, Akron, Ohio.

This event brought together industry influencers, as well as previous and potential grant recipients, for educational talks and networking.

With over 80 in attendance, the event aimed to raise awareness for the

work of The FairWays Foundation. With nearly \$300,000 worth of funds granted to date, the foundation will review and award the 2022 cycle applicants in the coming few weeks when they hope to see the running total hit half a million dollars.

The FairWays Foundation president, Matt Foster, expressed his thanks to all those in attendance and encouraged attendees to help spread the word about the foundation, particularly its ability to help fund small and large conservation-based projects for those in their industry.

“We understand making a difference in your community takes tremendous grit from a local champion. Without greenkeepers’ will, these projects would never move forward. Our message to those individuals out there with a wish for a healthier environment is that The Fairways Foundation can help provide a way to make it happen. If you’re on the fence, just apply. You have nothing to lose,” said Matt.

The FairWays Foundation is looking for ambassadors to help reach those who wish to champion environmental projects.

To learn more about the projects that have been supported so far or to learn how to apply for our 2023 grant cycle, visit: TheFairWaysFoundation.com

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Grounds managers already tackling climate change challenges says the GMA

In the month that saw the UK climate reach unprecedented levels of 40°C, the GMA is highlighting the need to place sustainability and environmental issues at the heart of the grounds maintenance sector's thinking.

The Grounds Management Association (GMA) Chief Executive, Geoff Webb said: "Those managing and maintaining sports turf and green spaces are already having to deal with the impact of climate change and industry suppliers are doing their best to innovate and help grounds people to minimise the impact of droughts and floods."

"Extreme weather conditions are becoming more frequent, and we need to continue to educate grounds staff and plan now to ensure that as a sector, we are equipped to deal with what lies ahead."

Announcing speakers for Europe's leading sports turf, amenities, and landscaping trade exhibition, SALTEX, which is free to attend and organised by the GMA, Geoff Webb explains the value of attending the show's Learning LIVE sessions.

"Learning LIVE has been designed to provide support, insight, and real solutions to key industry issues, including those relating to sustainability and the environment and we are delighted to be confirming a growing line-up of impressive expert speakers."

A presentation not to be missed will be one from Tony Hanson managing director, Environmental Solutions International and Robin Price, director of quality and environment at Anglian Water. Geoff says: "Their paper on 'Reducing the impact of future water restrictions on golf and sports turf' is a timely subject as we deal with the results of climate change and approach drought restrictions in this country. Tony and Robin will look at the implications of temporary use bans and changes in water abstraction rulings, and how this will prevent turf irrigation in 2023 and the ways to implement water resilience practices."

Tony Hanson explains the importance of this subject to the industry: "Due to climate change, population growth, and historically high personal consumption, there is simply not enough water available in the UK without action - the water sector will have to use demand management to ensure public supply. Turf irrigation must simply become less dependent on mains or direct irrigation

abstraction."

"The Water Resilience Plan has been designed to guide users on what they need to do and keep them informed of water industry funded seminars and workshops. If you irrigate turf you will need to review alternative water sources for irrigation, create water storage on site - water you control and can use in a drought to cover at least 21 days and review and assess your irrigation management and system. I look forward to discussing all these elements at SALTEX."

The SALTEX 2022 Learning LIVE schedule this year has been extended to over 30 sessions, with additional papers attacking the key issues for the grounds care industry of pay, career development, how to negotiate in the workplace and how to find out about the millions of pounds of grant funding available from sports clubs.

The show takes place at the conveniently central Birmingham NEC on 2-3 November.



BASIS Points for magazine subscribers

BASIS awards two CPD points for 'paid-for' subscribers to the hard copy version of Pitchcare magazine, due to the "diverse range of content that relates to the control, management and use of pesticides".

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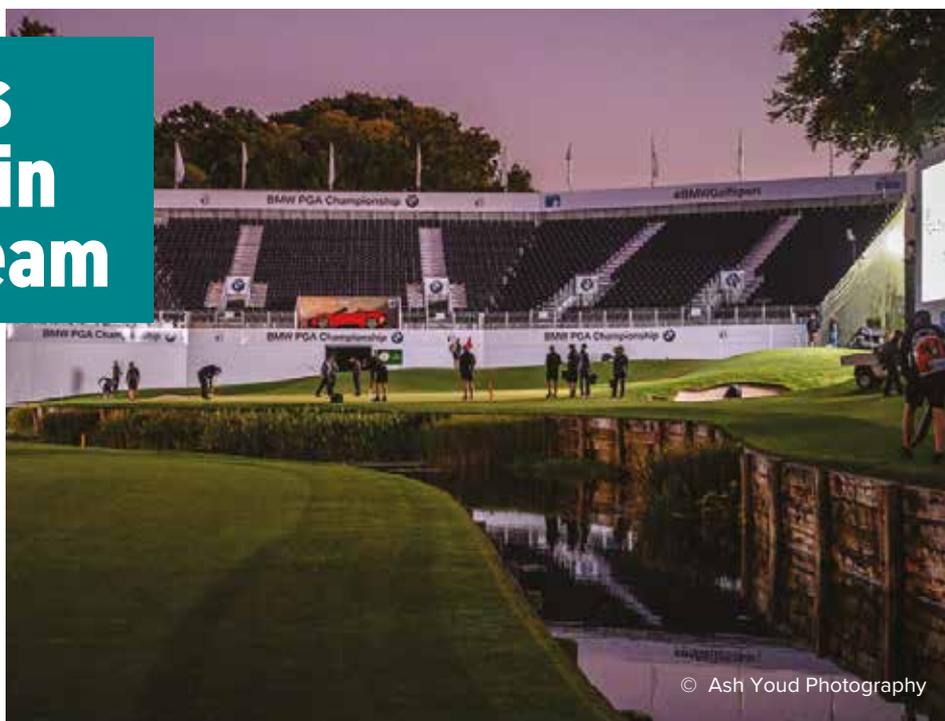
Greenkeepers selected to join Wentworth team

Members of BIGGA will gain an unrivalled behind-the-scenes look at preparations for the BMW PGA Championship this September after being selected to join the Wentworth Club's greenkeeping team for the duration of the event.

Supplementing Wentworth Club's inhouse greenkeeping team will be 24 volunteers from across the greenkeeping association.

The volunteer BIGGA members will fully integrate with the Wentworth greenkeeping team and take on important maintenance tasks to help prepare the course for play each day.

Wentworth Club Courses and Grounds Manager Daniel Clarke said: "We value our relationship with BIGGA highly and given every member of the Wentworth greenkeeping team is a



© Ash Youd Photography

part of the association and has access to the training and education it offers, we know how committed and capable these volunteers will be as we prepare the West Course for the DP World Tour's flagship event. Over the years the BMW PGA Volunteer Support Team has evolved from being a helping hand to now being an instrumental part of the in-house greenkeeping team and I'm excited to welcome them all to

Wentworth Club in September."

The BMW PGA Volunteer Support Team is just one of a number of exclusive and career-defining initiatives made available to members of BIGGA, the UK's only dedicated membership association for golf greenkeepers. Head to www.bigga.org.uk for more information.

STRI Group launches new brand

STRI Group, a global design, engineering and management consultancy, has launched a new brand following a period of growth and diversification.

The group's skills were founded within the design, management and maintenance of sports surfaces, and they continue to deliver and implement strategies for sports facilities and their surrounding infrastructure, as well as working within residential, corporate and commercial spaces.

Since setting up a construction company, Carrick Sports Construction, and adding the Environmental Protection Group to the organisation, as well as investing in their already established planning,

design, maintenance, and research services, the breadth of in-house expertise perfectly positions them to handle a wide variety of sports and urban projects.

The group is also well-renowned for its expertise in scientific research and analysis, monitoring and compliance services, which continue to operate from independent laboratory facilities across the world, with a large research facility at their headquarters in Yorkshire and sites in Queensland and Victoria, Australia.

A number of joint ventures and partnerships adds a strong presence for the Group in the Middle East, with STRI delivering the first ever turf racetrack in Saudi Arabia for the Saudi Cup in 2020. More recently,

through their joint venture Aspire Sports Turf based in Qatar, delivering the design, construction supervision and maintenance supervision of all pitches for the Qatar 2022 World Cup on behalf of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy.

The group's new website, strigroup.com, showcases its end-to-end proposition and highlights completed projects across a range of sports and cities.

STRI Group encompasses STRI Ltd, Carrick Sports Construction, The Environmental Protection Group and STRI Australia. They are also involved in a number of global joint ventures, further strengthening the Group's global offering.

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Walton Heath Golf Club

The Jurgens Klopp of golf

Nurturing a unique heathland golf setting requires thinking out of the box, as Greg Rhodes discovered when he met Walton Heath Golf Club course manager **Michael Mann**

Lying high above the line of the M25 near Reigate, Surrey, Walton Heath is an area of national importance.

Rich in heather and wildlife diversity, this historic site was earmarked in the late Victorian era as a haven of golf by those who saw the opportunity to open up once remote areas around London for the sport, made accessible by the expansion of the railways to, in this case, Kingswood.

A familiar story for more than a few courses across Britain, but blending the natural beauty and fragile environment of Walton Heath with the demands of golf was a challenge only the finest of course architects would dare confront.

Numbering political luminaries like Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George among former members - not forgetting HRH Prince of Wales, who was crowned King Edward VIII in his year of captaincy - Walton Heath Golf Club commands a heritage and status unmatched by many of its contemporaries.

The club was founded in 1903 and its 18 holes, designed by Herbert Fowler, formed the Old Course. Four years later, the first 9 holes of the New Course came into play - the second nine following in 1913, when the Mayor of London officially opened the full course.

Although the club owns the land it rests on, commoners rights prevail and the

heath is criss-crossed with footpaths and bridalways. What was once a track arrowing through the heath is now the busy Dorking road, allowed to rise in prominence over the decades as a business thoroughfare.

It dissects the estate to leave the clubhouse and a solitary hole on one side and the other 35 holes, along with the greens teams sprawling complex, on the other.

So, after the prolonged dry spell had made a wheat field brown expanse of golfing hectares, I arrived to chat with course manager Michael Mann.

The hum and bustle of activity hit me the moment I entered. Turf machines coming and going, tractors and transport vehicles



parked beyond, standing before mountains of sand and topsoil - course care on an almost industrial scale and everyone talking turfcare.

In the midst of all this, Michael is chatting to various team members about the day's activities on what are two outstanding quality championship courses, updating them as deadlines and schedules dictated. Nearby is ecologist and fellow Pitchcare contributor Bob Taylor, here to chart the club's wildlife.

"We have a team of 23 here," says Michael, reading my thoughts as we move into the office, crammed with desktops and other tech. "Each course has its own head greenkeeper and its own greens team,

except when there's extra demand on one or the other."

Pretty much always ranked in the top 100 courses in England or the UK and Ireland, Walton Heath's courses have staged major championships over their lifetime and continue to attract a strong overseas golfer contingent. It's a US Open qualifying venue, when contenders play both the Old and the New.

Arguably, the pinnacle of the club's achievements though, will be hosting the 2023 Women's Open Championships next August - a global major that looks set to further elevate the status and prestige of this already renowned golfing destination.

Before expanding on that, Michael gives



Golf in the UK is cheap. Everyone knows what needs to happen, but making it happen is the challenge. I'm a glass half full guy, but so many I talk to have a glass half empty stance



Course Manager Michael Mann



continuity of supply. “We want to drill a new borehole in the hope of hitting water in the lower greensand, which is untapped, and intend to start that in the next few weeks,” he reveals.

A state-of-the-art Toro irrigation system is being installed and commissioned to cover all areas of managed turf in preset watering periods, with capacity to expand it if needed. “It’s a fit for purpose £2.3m system,” Michael says, “which most of the members (around 900) voted for at an EGM (Extraordinary General Meeting) for which we levied them to help fund the project. Some loaned money, others donated.”

Within such an environmentally sensitive site, you’d expect sustainability to rank high, and it does with Walton Heath’s water management programme, Michael explains.

“Club land runs right up to the M25. In fact, one of three proposals for the line of the motorway saw it slicing through the courses. That plan didn’t go forward thankfully, but what we have done is to install a rainfall capture system along the M25 bank: a French drain with 1,000m perforated pipe to draw rainwater and



Heather is a key component of managing the heathland mosaic and, through the commitment, areas like Walton Heath can have every chance of a sustainable future

me the lie of the land. “Many who come here don’t realise how high up we are - perched on a hill 190m above sea level. The heath is on an overlying layer of sand, silt and loam, then 6m of heavy clay and flint before hitting chalk.”

Like many a course manager across Britain, Michael soon shifts the conversation to water supplies. “The club has a borehole down to 200m from which it can abstract up to 20m³/d supply from the chalk aquifer 200m down and we store it in a 27,000m³ reservoir.

The problem is that there is high demand for water from this layer. Currently the club uses between 14,000 and 25,000m³ a year.”

Accordingly, the club plans to ensure





The key to effective management is building strong relationships and consistency of decision-making. You have to be firm sometimes

boost supply.”

Unfinished business

Michael came here as course manager six years ago when he was 35 and is a professional who admits he is ever in a state of flux. “I never want to turn stale in a job and look on any position I take as unfinished business,” he says.

“I’m passionate about heathland management at golf clubs and know there’s

plenty more to achieve here.”

He’s stayed local in his rise up the career ladder, moving to Walton Heath from Fairleigh Golf Club, near Selsdon, where he was also course manager. Before that, he was deputy course manager at West Hill, Woking - “one of the three ‘W’s”, moving from Wentworth in 2008 after a spell as an assistant greenkeeper.

His first love in golf was Lagganmore in southwest Scotland, “a low-budget course,

formerly a farmer’s field, but opportunities were limited in that part of the country so I followed a friend down to Wentworth.”

“They were polar opposites, with Wentworth hosting three televised tournaments a year. But I’ve enjoyed every minute of my time in golf and have made friends for life along the way.”

Michael’s joy over heathland management bubbles up once more as he talks about regeneration. “Lowland heath only exists

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The dry spell has brought the Poa to its knees. Managing it out is time consuming but hard fescue and bent are starting to predominate now

because of man's intervention and, for me, ranks alongside links golf. It's so satisfying to replant and replace the Walton Heath heather, which is one of the most well-known examples of its kind."

The club and its championship courses do not exist in splendid isolation of the environment they lie within. There's space to "take the air and exercise" and thrive alongside the likes of adders, lizards and slow worms, Michael states.

This is surely an ecologist's dream destination, so I caught up with Bob Taylor after his escorted buggy journey around the site and asked him where Walton Heath fitted into the ecological landscape.

"The UK has some 3,000 golf clubs, occupying 150,000 hectares of land, and each one is a nature reserve, providing a

nucleus for breeding, dispersal and offering important opportunities for wildlife to move freely," he explains.

"Golf courses are good as wildlife habitats because, not despite the fact, they provide golf, and are not intrusive. They are committed to delivering a level and quality of land management often missing in nature reserves," adds Bob, who is the official ecologist to The R&A championships.

"Heather is a key component of managing the heathland mosaic, which includes grasses, plants and wildlife and, it is through the commitment of course managers such as Michael, that areas like Walton Heath can have every chance of a sustainable future."

Many heathland courses rest within Surrey, so Michael has an abundance of like-minded greens professionals to discuss vital





We have a team of 23 here. Each course has its own head greenkeeper and its own greens team, except when there's extra demand on one or the other

management of these cherished spaces.

"It's a question of living in harmony with wildlife," says Michael, picking up on one of Bob's points. "Our out of play areas, where the heather grows a bit taller, alongside stands of gorse, ground-nesting birds such as skylarks, stone chats and meadow pipits can thrive. As a natural site, we want to keep the courses a little more rugged and less manicured."

Another example of Michael's distinctive

turns of phrase that make me think, as sports doyen Mark Chapman said of Liverpool FC manager Jurgen Klopp last season, that he doesn't think in clichés. "Are you calling me the Klopp of golf," Michael asks. Well, if the cap fits as they say, yes.

"These are running courses, where the ball can bounce and roll on. If you land in the heather, you find the ball, not lose a stroke." He can speak from experience. A golfer with an 18 handicap, Michael's been teeing off

since he was ten. "Everybody played, but as everyone else got better I just got crosser, until I gained a deeper understanding of the strategy of golf."

So, how are Michael and his team of 23 preparing for the Women's Open 2023? "There are tees to be stripped, levelled and returned - that's a benefit for members too - and the irrigation project to sign off."

"Generally, we'll be receiving recommendations from a leading architect,



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Club facts

First professional was five-time Open winner James Braid

Staged European Open in the 1970s and 1980s

Ryder Cup, 1981

British Ladies Amateur, 2000

Senior Open, 2011

The British Masters, 2018

Old course

Length: 7,300 yards, Par 72

White tees: 6,786 yards

New course

Length: 7,199 yards, Par 72

White tees: 6,648 yards



who is overseeing the courses. It's a light touch really, restoring bunkers and the tees." The tally of 112 sand traps, which includes practice bunkers, are split 60%:40% between the Old and New courses, so plenty to tackle before the great event.

Team restructuring

Despite the size of the greens team, both Old and New groups have been recently restructured, Michael explains. "It's about creating professional opportunities, making the structure more fluid."

Three of the more "career-minded" greenkeepers have left to pursue their futures, he adds, while a head greenkeeper for each course has been recruited, with deputies, seniors and assistants below them.

A committed BIGGA member, Michael congratulates the member body for its work in addressing the sector's salary scale issues but adds: "Golf in the UK is cheap. Everyone knows what needs to happen, but making it happen is the challenge."

"I'm a glass half full guy, but so many I talk

to have a glass half empty stance."

"Greenkeepers are increasingly publicly acknowledged for what they do, such as at major events like the Open, and course managers get a 'well done' too, but it's the assistant greenkeepers that are on my mind now. Their worth has to be promoted more."

"We work in a wonderful environment with many benefits laid on a plate for you, including the opportunity to play golf on great courses like Walton Heath. It's important for greenkeepers to play golf so they understand things more from members' perspective, although Covid has impacted the time I have available to play."

We move on to the new head greenkeepers. James Bruder arrived from East Berkshire five months ago, (having also served at St George's Hill) with "a passion for turf management and enthusiastic about and experienced with heather regeneration". Seems like a natural fit to transplant his skills to Walton Heath.

"James is responsible for the day to day operations on the Old Course. We discuss



It's a question of living in harmony with wildlife. As a natural site, we want to keep the courses a little more rugged and less manicured





strategy daily, weekly and monthly and he executes the plan," Michael explains.

Due to start on 25 July is Wes Lenihan, James's New Course counterpart, who previously was head at Ealing Golf Club.

"I'm working closely with Alex Woodward, our new CEO who came into post last September," Michael continues. "He takes a keen interest in what we do and helped us introduce the team restructure."

Mid-stream, New Course deputy head

Edoardo Fauro comes into the office with a query for Michael and warmly introduces himself. I'm coming away with a strong sense of a team dynamic - James had come in earlier to speak to Michael and also radiated warmth and strong people skills.

"Edoardo left us in 2019, but has recently returned. It's important to hold on to good people," Michael stresses. As it is to let the team do the job. "No point in recruiting good people and then not letting them prove they

can deliver,"

Singled out for special mention is the workshop team. Graham Goldup and assistant Robert Crossbie have both been at Walton Heath for at least 20 years and Michael cannot praise them enough. "They are so good at preparing equipment," he says. "Graham's world class. They allow us to maintain everything in house. We only outsource when we absolutely have to."

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strategy, the club struck a Total Solutions deal with Toro in 2019, which includes mainly diesel mowers, plus the irrigation system but no battery powered units as yet.

“Electrics is still in its infancy,” Michael states, “although solar panels power the complex and generate as much electricity as we use, making us sustainable. We sell any surplus to the grid. Inevitably, electric power will become the norm,” he adds.

Good morning

Punctuality is key to performance, Michael believes. “Nothing more important than a good morning’s work. Everyone is here at 6am to start the day.”

Warming to his theme, he expands: “The key to effective management is building strong relationships and consistency of decision-making, as this can affect morale profoundly. You have to be firm sometimes but don’t dress it up as a bad news story, and be fair to everyone.”

The head greenkeepers have a major role to play within this management style. “We want to give people more love, be more supportive and be able to discuss personal

problems, while regular one to ones with the heads come within the masterplan.”

“I love the job I’ve chosen and like to get good feedback to compensate for the other times, but you have to do the difficult parts to enjoy the good ones.”

I ask the inevitable question, ‘Do you have any women on the team?’, and receive an interesting answer. “We would welcome women greenkeepers to the team, abilities permitting of course, but none have applied yet. Hosting the Women’s Open 2023 gives the opportunity to focus on women’s participation in golf, which needs to increase.”

“Female role models such as presenter Naga Munchetty, who loves golf, and the Solheim Cup women’s tournament are helping move things forward. A What’sApp group I’m part of mentioned that tournament, amongst all the sports chatter, which perhaps indicates the times are changing.”

The consensus is clear that men and women should rank equally and Walton Heath welcomes the chance to help grow the women’s game by hosting global

tournaments such as next year’s event.

Unwelcome guests

Like many a course, Walton Heath does what it can to deter unwelcome guests of the kind that can badly mar playing surfaces. “Leatherjackets were an issue in 2020,” Michael recalls, “and we lost a good deal of cover on the fairways during the May dry spell.”

“Our aim is to rely less on pesticides and fungicides and apply organic treatments such as molasses-based material to tackle leatherjackets. We apply selectives to spot weed with our Cooper Pegler knapsacks, boom spraying larger areas.”

Other species of unwanted visitor can plague the playing surfaces. Vandalism strikes every so often. “As an open access site, it can be difficult to prevent unauthorised entry. During the pandemic, a bike rider tore up one of the greens. News of it went viral and Piers Morgan picked up on the story. Strategically placed logs help restrict that kind of intrusion.”

“Rabbits too can wreak havoc” Michael confirms, although you wonder whether



It’s important for greenkeepers to play golf so they understand things more from members’ perspective, although Covid has impacted the time I have available to play





I never want to turn stale in a job and look on any position I take as unfinished business.

I'm passionate about heathland management at golf clubs and know there's plenty more to achieve here

raptors such as the red kites, kestrels, owls and sparrowhawks that patrol overhead might do for a good few of them.

Walking out over the landscape, talk again turns to heather, which lines the wide fairways, fringes bunkers and springs up in isolated pockets. "There's about twenty hectares spread over the two courses. It has a 30-year life cycle, passing through the pioneer, juvenile, mature and degenerative stages. If we wish to keep it in the juvenile

state, we mow at five to six inches."

Under the heather regeneration plan, the team top the plant to harvest its seeds then sow these over bare patches (created when degeneration sets in) after scraping back to bare ground.

Michael points out examples of the mauve-coloured ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) rustling through the wiry stems in search of his bete noir - the heather beetle, which defoliates the plant, leaving it

under stress and transpiring uncontrollably, he adds. Fortunately, there is a natural predator, wasps, though they seemed thin on the ground when we were out on course.

In amongst the common variety, purple-pink bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) is showing up, which blooms before the mauve appears.

We examine previously seeded areas looking for growth. It's there but barely noticeable to my eyes, but in plain sight to

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Michael, who clearly sees this as evidence of a successful regeneration strategy.

Brightening the ground cover is heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) its crisp white flowers popping up among the prevailing growth.

We walk the 14th hole of the Old Course, where Michael mentions they've been coring and overseeding with a mix of hard fescue and browntop bent, part of the strategy of ridding the site of annual meadowgrass.

"The dry spell has brought the Poa to its knees," he says. "Managing it out is time consuming but hard fescue and browntop bent are starting to predominate now."

I almost forget to mention that Walton Heath is an artisans venue. I spot the still fresh telltale patches that mark their work. "We have almost 70 who work here. Once a month they divot the fairways with hard fescue and bent grasses mixed with sandy rootzone." Surely an invaluable aid to many hard-pressed greens teams.

Michael's preferred seed supplier is Barenbrug, whose development site in Holland he has visited. "I liked their rigorous

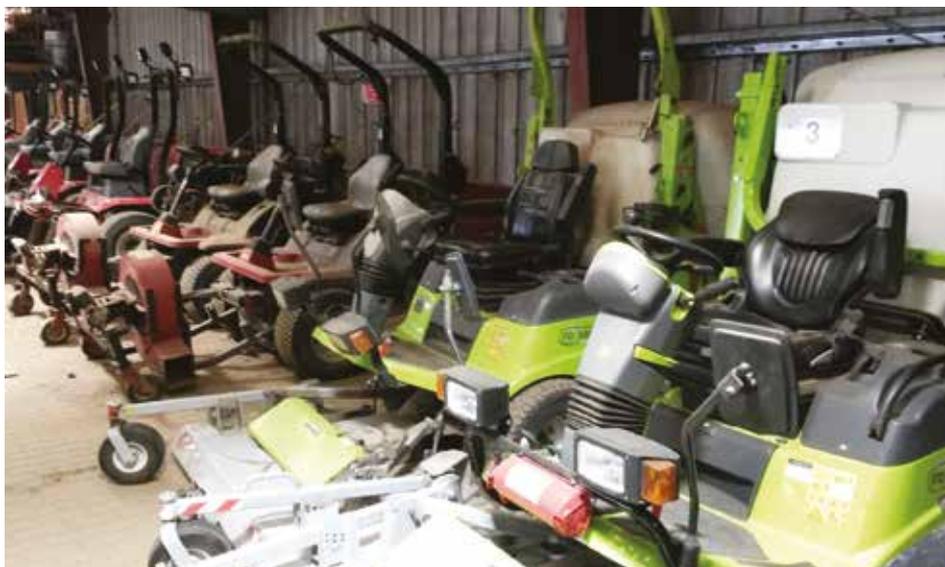
methods and processes," he says. "They prepare a bespoke mix for us of hard fescue, slender creeping fescue and browntop bent. We tend to overseed the greens with 100% browntop bent."

As a parting shot as we walk back, Michael states: "Heathland as a habitat is pretty rare and we have an obligation as a land manager to maintain it."

My big takeaway from Walton Heath is that the management of such a precious natural resource is in extremely capable hands.



Our aim is to rely less on pesticides and fungicides and apply organic treatments such as molasses-based material to tackle leatherjackets



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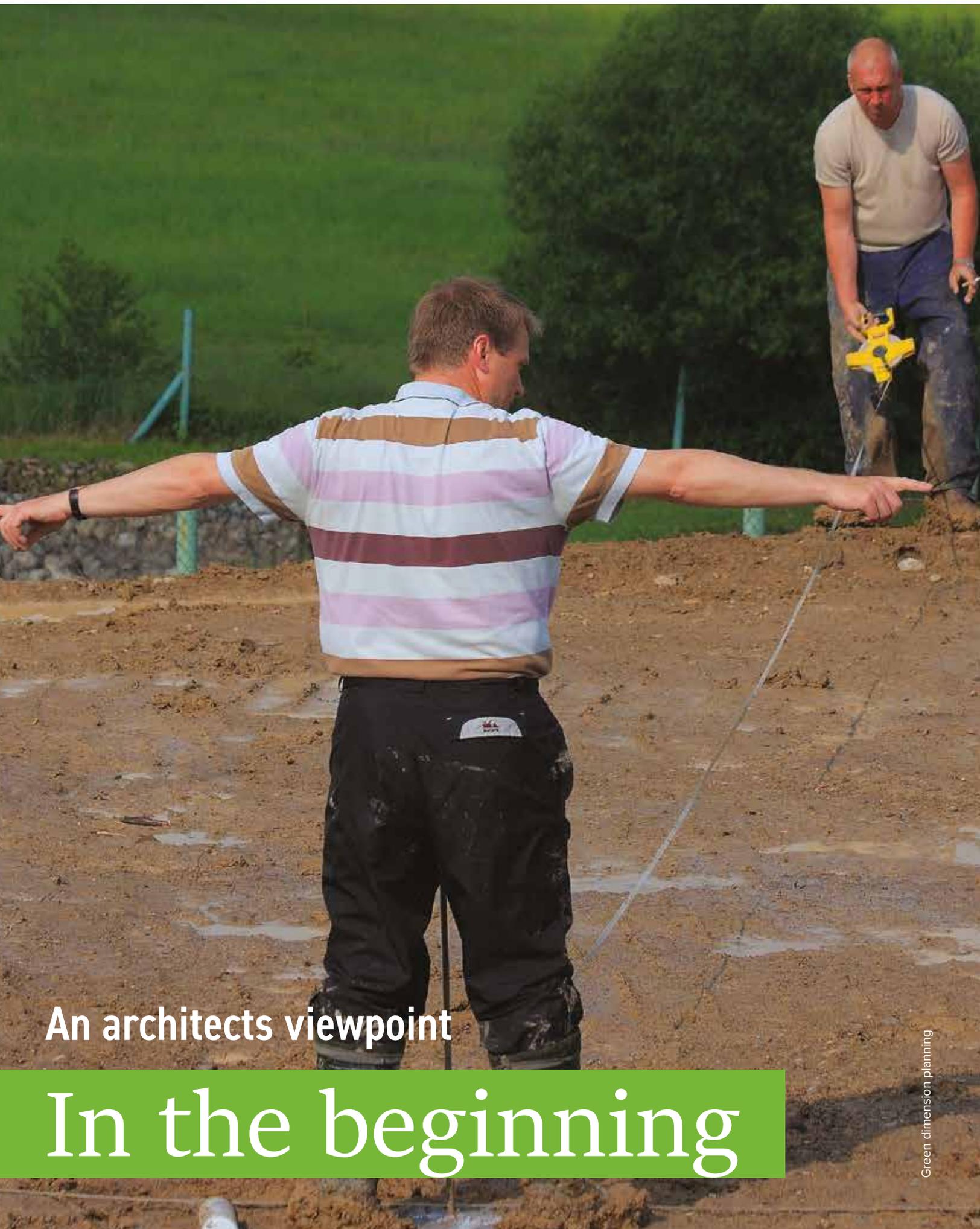
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An architect's viewpoint

In the beginning

Green dimension planning



Mackenzie & Ebert reconfigured the Ailsa Course at Turnberry Golf Club

Phil Helmn recently met with golf course architect **Tom Mackenzie** to get a little insight into what goes on in the world of architecture, as well as also wanting to understand better what makes the man himself tick

Recently, I had the chance to catch up with a good friend of mine, Tom Mackenzie the golf architect. I say chance, because as we all know at this time of year, for us greenkeepers and groundsmen, it's always an extremely busy time. But spare a thought for the golf architect, they must zoom, not only up and down the country, but occasionally must jump on an aeroplane (or boat) to apply their trade. So, as you can see, to get the opportunity for us both to get the time to catch up was a major diary achievement!

I confess, I have known Tom for close to thirty years, right back to the days when he was first starting out as the understudy to the highly respected golf course architect Donald Steel, following his graduation from Heriot-Watt University in 1989. It's worth noting here Tom held a category one handicap whilst on the university golf team, which he explained has helped him over the years gain a greater insight into the playability of his designs.

Tom explained, "I achieved my dream start, working for Donald in my career of choice. At the same time, I also, as part of my apprenticeship, caddied on the European Tour for a full season. It was a year where I learnt a great deal about professional golf and course strategy. The

highlight for me was caddying in the Open Championship at St. Andrews in 1984. I gained further invaluable experience working as a greenkeeper at Royal Dornoch Golf Club which has helped me in appreciating a wide range of opinions about the designs I create. I now play at West Sussex and too infrequently at Royal Dornoch. I am also a member and Past-President of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects."

In our interview, I wanted to get a little insight into what goes on in the world of architecture, as well as also wanting to understand better what makes the man himself tick, so to speak. How so? I hear



Tom Mackenzie



I've always been terribly sympathetic to the landscape. I've felt this for a very long time, and it annoys me when golf course designs aren't practical. In essence, the architect's ego has got in the way of common sense!



Course review exercise at Royal Portrush



The vision explained

some ask, if he's been a mate of yours for such a long time, you must know everything about him. Well, not so really, I've never really asked those work ethic related questions, so I was quite keen to learn after all these years what his work involved and share with you all.

Now it wouldn't be fair of me to just mention Tom at this stage. Tom's business partner, Martin Ebert, has collaborated with Tom since the early Donald Steel days for fifteen years and together formed the Mackenzie and Ebert partnership in 2005. Between them, they have over fifty years of experience in the field of golf course architecture, working not only on new courses but also advising the acknowledged classics.

The Open Connection

Impressively, they advise on eight out of the ten Open Championship venues, have

advised over fifty of the top 100 courses in Great Britain and Ireland, as ranked by Golf Monthly, and the pair also currently advises sixteen of the top 100 courses in the world (except the US), as ranked by Golf Digest.

The primary inspiration for Tom's career is shared with perhaps the greatest golf architect of them all, Donald Ross. They both spent their formative golfing years in Dornoch, whose magnificent greens and subtleties left an indelible impression.

Tom's love for links golf has continued to grow and is highly influential in his approach to design. This passion for golf, plus a lifelong interest in landscapes, led to a degree in Landscape Architecture, a subject that offered the perfect foundation for a golf course architect.

This love of the landscape and deep appreciation of links golf combine in his designs to create courses that sit comfortably in their setting, and which offer



I achieved my dream start, working for Donald in my career of choice. At the same time, I also, as part of my apprenticeship, caddied on the European Tour for a full season



Hands on for the detail



Light touch earthworks

a wealth of shot-making permutations, particularly around the greens. His natural philosophy is that the best golf courses make the most of the site's existing features and work with the landform, a belief that he shares with Martin Ebert. He feels that too many modern courses lack soul because the land has been bulldozed into submission.

"I've always been terribly sympathetic to the landscape," explained Tom, "I've felt this

for a very long time, and it annoys me when golf course designs aren't practical; where the result of the design is out of place, virtually unaffordable or unmanageable. In essence, the architect's ego has got in the way of common sense!" Tom told me how lucky he had felt earlier this year to spend some time with his brother who has some work out in San Francisco. "I was able to tour a lot of the golf courses in the



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Getting Personal

Tom Mackenzie - forget about the golf, he's an entertainer!

Who are you? Golf architect Tom Mackenzie.

Family status. Married to Amanda with two sons Alistair and Robert.

Who's your hero and why? Seve. He was at his peak when I was a junior and I had the amazing opportunity to caddy for him at my home club in Scotland when I was fifteen. He was so kind to his fellow caddy.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Still being married after nearly thirty years - a rarity in our business. It hasn't been plain sailing.

Which famous people wind you up? BoJo and all his lies. Lying politicians generally.

What job would you love, other than your own? That would be rich coming from someone who does the job that almost every golfer would love to do. I suppose I'd love to help people.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Getting off a plane at the wrong airport in Brazil. The front half got off and I followed them, but the rest stayed put and I didn't notice.

What scares you? Looking old, wrinkly and balding in the mirror.

What would your autobiography be called...and who would play you in the film? The Running Game. Robin Williams, except he is dead.

What is your favourite sport? Other than golf, cricket.

What would you cast into room 101? Distance measuring devices, especially when used inside fifty yards.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? Hadrian's Wall to stop the Romans from coming any further north (not historically accurate I know).

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To be healthy and happy to the end.

What three words best describes yourself? Enthusiastic, creative and funny (I hope).



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Both of my grandfathers who I never met. Robin Williams to keep the conversation and laughs going.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? From a developer - "Forget about the golf. You are in the entertainment business. Most people who play the course aren't golfers - they are there to enjoy themselves."

What's your favourite piece of trivia? Cam Smith's average putt length holed on the Friday of The Open was fourteen feet. 14 FEET!!!!!!

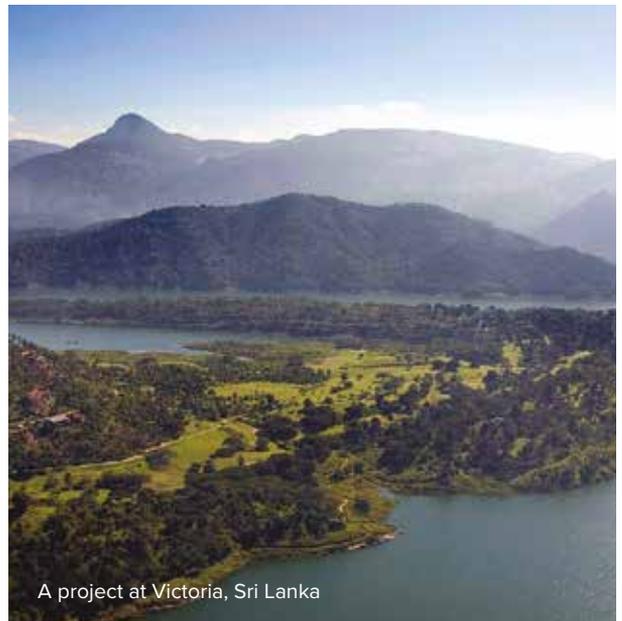
What's your favourite piece of kit? Reluctantly, I would have to say the AutoCAD on my laptop. I was brought up in the era of ink pens and tracing paper and, although I hate it daily, it is a huge time saver.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Animals by Pink Floyd, Born to Run by Bruce Springsteen and Rain town by Deacon Blue.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? People asking why there is a new hill when it is a pile of topsoil.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Buy a good alarm clock and make your lunch before you go to bed. That's two things.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? With the climate emergency and cost of fuel, slower speed limits and enforce them. A bit serious, sorry.



A project at Victoria, Sri Lanka

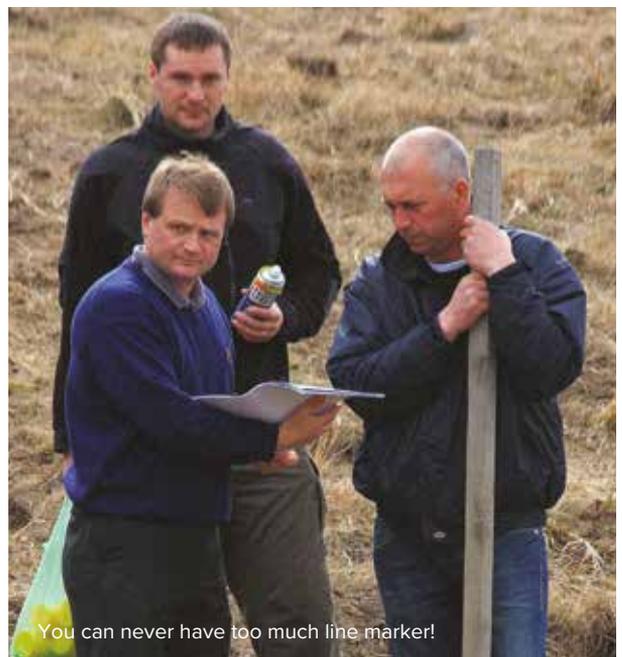
area, where the average greenkeeping team was 25," reminisced Tom. "Interestingly, the average bunkering number was around 125 per course!"

Architect and Greenkeeper

We all know, as any greenkeeper will testify, bunker maintenance has an enormous impact on his/her budget. Tom went on, "it rammed home to me then, that what we (as architects) design has a lasting legacy on costs and, as a result, if we are not mindful, makes our courses only the rich can afford to build, and only the rich

can afford to play on them! That's not something that sits comfortably with me at all."

Tom explained, a motto he keeps at the forefront of his mind comes from a well-known American golf writer, Bradley Klein, who once wrote 'golf course architecture is about what happens when the ball hits the ground'. In other words, we have no influence on the ball in the air, but as soon as it hits the turf we do. Tom passionately believes that greenkeepers and architects need to be aligned in the final product (the ground). "I've always believed that greenkeepers



You can never have too much line marker!



Early days - water on



There are lots of technical data which are required before even pen hits paper. I've been taught that a routing plan begins with finding great green positions!

and architects must be in tune with each other and by working closely together great golf courses are created, thus creating a virtuous circle of success. We all are finding the best way to remove water and then to put it back on. Well-conditioned courses do that and poor ones do not. It starts with the architect and continues with the greenkeeping staff," he explained.

Before pen hits paper

Tom and I chatted more on this fundamental element when designing a golf course - that basic principle of 'water on - water off'. What that means is paying meticulous attention to the detail around drainage and irrigation (water on - water off)! Tom concluded, "If the architect gets this wrong, it can be almost impossible for a

greenkeeper to present the course at its best."

It's worth mentioning, that, of course, none of this can happen without landowners and developers making that initial call into the golf architect's office. Tom explained that when the call comes in, there is a raft of questions that need to be asked and understood before even the initial site visit.

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Reshaping of the 9th green at Royal Liverpool



What's in the shed

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Obviously, it's not that simple; there are lots of technical data which are required before even pen hits paper. I've been taught that a routing plan begins with finding great green positions! Of course, we work extremely hard to help clubs align their golf course so that everyone can enjoy the game. I know the slope rating of a golf course and stroke indexing helps, but the role of the architect is to design a golf course which is enjoyable for the elite player and the beginner alike whilst playing the same course. If you think about it, there aren't many sports in which this happens (e.g., downhill skiing has black, blue, red runs and a nursery slope depending on ability). There is a myriad of design techniques to help stimulate and give mental (not just physical) enjoyment such as, obviously, forward tees, elevated tees, bail out areas, varying angles of fairway lines and staggered bunkering to test every level of golfer.

It was a great pleasure catching up with Tom again and getting an insight into his world. Like he says, with a smile, everyone thinks they've got a bit of golf architecture in them, but there's so much more to be considered when designing a great golf course. I guess, a little like us groundsmen and greenkeepers, there's always someone out there who could maintain our hallowed turf better than us; if you have a back garden lawn, why couldn't they? Thanks Tom!

The top questions are:

- 1) Do you have a topographical survey?
- 2) What is the soil type (water off)?
- 3) What is your water supply (water on)?
- 4) Is the land subject to any planning restrictions?
- 5) What are the land boundaries and access points?
- 6) Do you have permission to construct buildings and where on site?
- 7) As the owner, what do you want?
- 8) Is there a budget?

Sustainability is an increasingly important factor when designing, building and maintaining a golf course and it is the architect's job to understand all these factors

at the outset of the project. Tom explained, "When we begin dialogue with the authorities, the planners are acutely aware of the impact construction can have on the land. Disruption must be understood so that the project can run smoothly with minimum effect on the environment. Sustainability, in all its forms (material sourcing/construction operations/wildlife habitats to name but a few) must be researched and implemented so that the project can be successfully delivered, but not at the expense of the local environment."

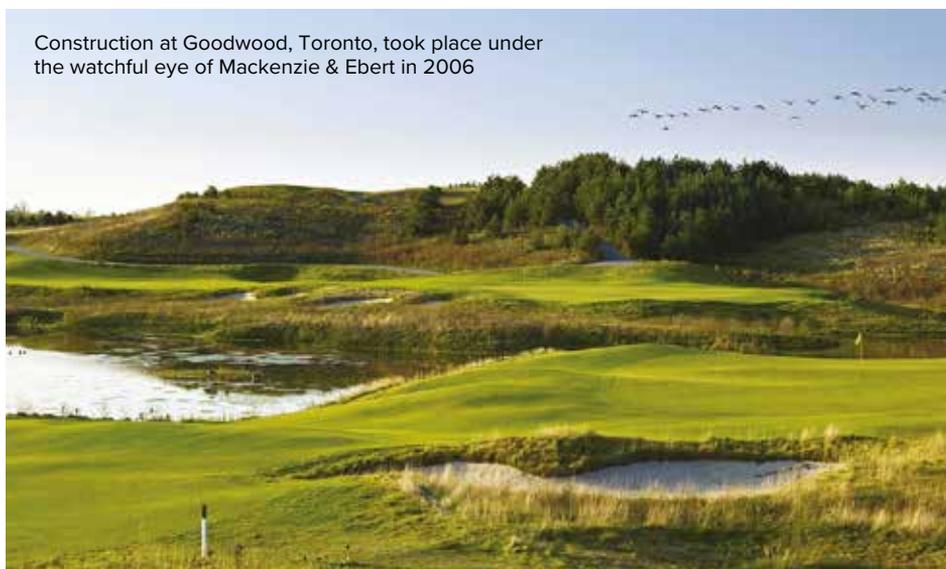
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Glenavon FC

Steeped in history

If you know anything about football in Northern Ireland, you will undoubtedly have heard of Glenavon FC and the popular stadium which the club calls home. Chris McCullough talks to **David McClure**, Head Groundsman at Mourneview Park at Lurgan in Northern Ireland



With a capacity of over 4,100 fans, Mourneview Park near Lurgan is steeped in history, having been originally built in 1895. Glenavon FC was formed in 1889, but didn't find their home until 1895 when they rented a field from a local lady in Lurgan.

There isn't a lot of information about any work on the pitch, but it seems that drains were installed in 1990 with gravel drains put in sometime in the 2000s. Between 1992 and 2011, Mourneview Park underwent a number of significant renovations, including the building of three new seated stands.

Over the years Mourneview Park has been used by other clubs due to construction work and repairs going on at their own grounds. In 2014, Mourneview Park was nominated by Belfast club Linfield to be their designated home ground for their home matches in the UEFA Europa League after their normal home ground, Windsor Park, was undergoing redevelopment.

Mourneview Park was chosen as the

venue for the 2015 Irish Cup semi-final between Glentoran and Crusaders due to the unavailability of Windsor Park ahead of a Northern Ireland international fixture. Back in September 2020, Glenavon FC unveiled a new 5m x 2m digital LED screen at Mourneview Park, which was the first of its kind anywhere in Ireland.

The person tasked with keeping Mourneview Park in tip top condition is head groundsman David McClure who has worked there for the past four years. Explaining how he got into the industry David said: "I've always wanted to be involved in football in some way. When I was 16, I went on work experience at Windsor Park, not knowing what I'd be doing and ended up being passed onto Gary Thompson, the head groundsman. One week later and I was hooked. For the next 13 plus years, I worked at Windsor Park as a part-time general dogsbody before becoming assistant groundsman and eventually became head groundsman. I left there in 2013, spending five years away from

the industry before being tempted back by Glenavon FC in 2018," he said.

As anyone who works in the industry knows, ongoing training and gaining experience is very important to keep ahead in the job. David said: "Most of my training has been done on the job. Working at Windsor Park, I was preparing the pitch for Irish League, European games and international football. I had to learn on my feet and with the help of people around me. I have also completed winter sport pitches courses from the GMA."

"When I started out at 16, I knew absolutely nothing. My first boss, Gary Thompson, taught me a lot and helped me in my new career. Since then, I've been inspired to try and achieve the best playing surface as possible."

David is responsible for all work carried out on both the main pitch and a training pitch, also located at Mourneview. He decides on what work needs to be done and draws up budgets to cover it for the season ahead. A board of directors, who David

//

I really do believe we are undervalued in the industry. Personally, I hate attention or the limelight. I'd rather stay in the shadows, and even being interviewed for this is giving me the sweats, but at the same time I don't feel like people understand or appreciate what goes into preparing a playing surface with the weather and lack of money or equipment or any support



Social media has been good for groundstaff as well, as they can show their skills, although this can also put pressure on us as the season goes on, the pitch needs to be as good as last week



reports to, considers and agrees to the yearly budget. "I am the sole full-time employee at Mourneview Park. I am the groundsman, the cleaner, and the maintenance man," said David. "My father comes in to help lift litter and empty bins after games, and every summer I try to organise a volunteer group to tidy the stadium, paint wherever is needed, for the incoming season. For everything else, it's just me."

"I can and do take advice from a couple of outside



sources. Kyle Irwin from Irwins Sportsturf Limited is a great help. I also use Haffey Sports Grounds as contractors as I have very little equipment for major work. The grounds do not need any special type of treatments. I have learned what works here and I do things my way. It's a system I've perfected over the years, although I'm sure what I do is very different to what others do."

The pitch at

Mourneview Park is used by the Glenavon FC first team, under 20s and, on occasion, underage teams. Mourneview Park is also used by the Irish Football Association for minor international games and semi-final cup matches. There are also charity games played at the end of the season and Academy days or weeks at different times of year.

The main pitch itself is 100m x 66m with surrounds making it 7,000 square metres, or around 1.7 acres. There is a training area behind the pitch that adds another 1,800 square metres. David also has a training pitch that is off site.

Discussing how the climate can affect his work, David said: "As Mourneview is close to Lough Neagh, it would get quite high winds at times. This can be a blessing as winds from Lough Neagh keep the worst weather away, but it also dries the pitch out quickly especially in March and April when the weather can be dry and cold. And with no irrigation system available to me, this is a massive problem. Frost can be a problem down one side from shading by the main stand."

"As part of my work schedule, I try to get as much water as possible onto the pitch. An aeration programme is also important, as is top dressing to try and keep the



I've always wanted to be involved in football in some way. Most of my training has been done on the job and I had to learn on my feet

Left: Head Groundsman David McClure



No irrigation system is a massive problem



Presentation ranks very highly as it's what impresses fans. It is what people talk about, more so than technical stuff like how healthy the leaf is

levels. But this is quite difficult as March and April are busy times with little space between games to get work done. And quite often the budget doesn't stretch for sand."

"Poor airflow in certain parts cause an issue up one side of the pitch because of the position of the main stand. During the winter, the sun doesn't make it over the stand and causes a shadow from inside the 18 yard box to the side line. If there is a heavy frost, this side becomes unplayable

and impossible to thaw out. During the summer, the same side doesn't get the same light as the rest of the pitch," he said.

Glenavon FC also uses the local high school's rugby pitch as a training ground, which David also maintains. He said: "This can be very difficult as I can only get onto the pitch at certain times as it's being used by the school. Another massive problem is, as it's the school's rugby pitch, the school board mark the lines with weed killer killing

any grass. Over the year, these lines then dip and can cause injuries."

Every sporting venue has its own maintenance programme uniquely devised to suit the individual needs of the grounds. David has drawn up his own tried and tested regime that keeps Mourneview Park in the best condition it can be. He said: "My weekly maintenance consists of divotting regularly and cutting. I cut using a Baroness LM331 and Dennis G860 with a height of 18mm

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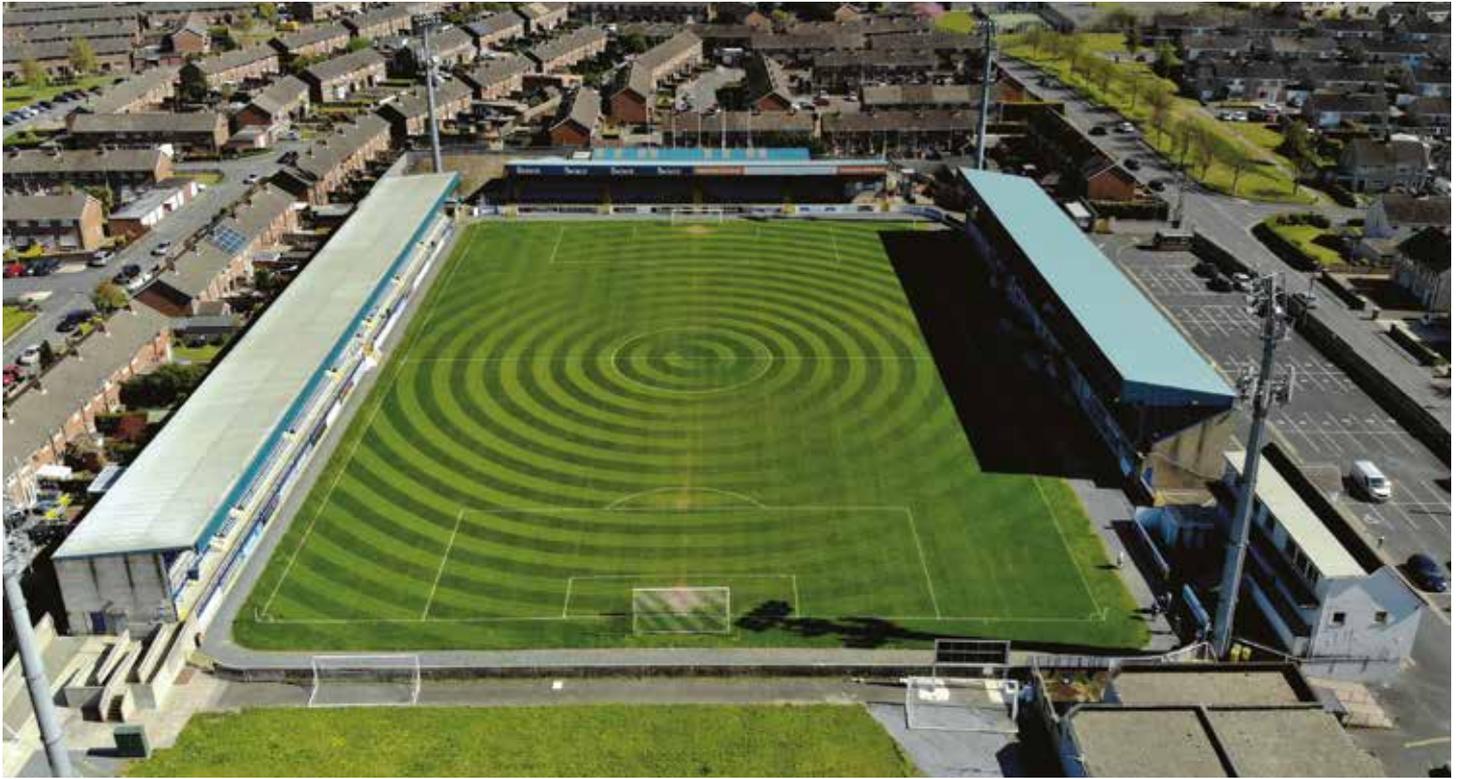


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The weather can be my best friend or my worst enemy. I am reliant on the weather for my irrigation, but when that doesn't come the pitch can get very hard

to 24mm depending on time of year or density of grass. I mark the pitch the day of every game using a spray line marker. Spot divoting with sand and seed mix is carried out through the season.”

“The monthly maintenance is based around matches. Aeration is really important throughout the season. This is carried out by Haffey Sports Grounds as I don't have the equipment. I carry out regular spraying of liquid iron and seaweed, which is a great soil conditioner and provides nutrients needed for a strong plant. It also gives the grass a great colour. Seeding and overseeding jobs takes place from May to September and depends, like all work, on the budget for that season. Again, this is carried out by outside contractors. Weed control is carried out by hand during the growing season but,

as long as they are kept on top of, weeds aren't a problem I have. As I am the only staff member at these grounds, it's all hands-on deck for me to get the pitch and stadium ready for every game.”

Ensuring a well presented pitch and stadium is ready ahead of all the games is a major goal for David, as that is what the fans see first when they arrive. He said: “Presentation ranks very highly as it's what impresses fans. It is what people talk about, more so than technical stuff like how healthy the leaf is. People want to see green grass. I want a good playing surface and healthy soil and grass, but being pleasing on the eye is important. It can also deflect away from any problems that only groundsmen can see!”

“Our end of season maintenance is all down to budget and time. This season, we





Below: Jonathon Bunting, representing Killeen Hardware inc. Hillocks, presents David McClure with a new strimmer



will run a very small programme consisting of using an Earthquake machine to break up the soil, then 100 tonnes of sand will be added, followed by seeding. Seeding is also carried out throughout the summer. Last season, the pitch was heavily scarified which was needed. Unfortunately, due to a very dry couple of weeks, and an extended season, meaning less time, the grass and roots didn't establish quickly enough. I didn't get the same coverage and the grass was

kicked out very quickly. It was a difficult season," he said.

Of course, any renovation jobs are affected by budget availability and that has to be assessed at the beginning of every season. "Yes, budgets massively affect any proposed work," said David. "That and time. I have a very small budget that has to be stretched the whole season. As I don't have the equipment, I have to spend a lot of the budget on outside contractors."



It's important to know your pitch. Every one I've worked on is different and different programmes are needed



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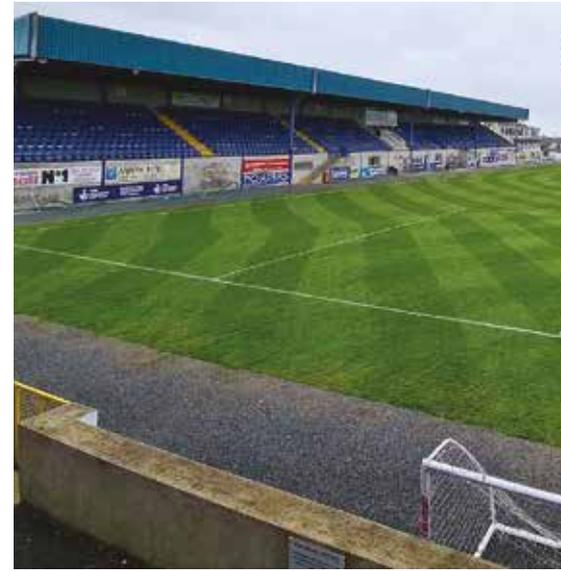
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Weather patterns are changing across the world, with negative effects. Northern Ireland is a small country, but the weather can be different every few miles, which plays havoc with maintenance programmes. David said: "The weather can be my best friend or my worst enemy. I am reliant on the weather for my irrigation, but when that doesn't come the pitch can get very hard. Irish weather is very unpredictable, and I have to plan, as much as you can with weather, around that."

"We don't take regular soil samples. I've learned, and am still learning, what works here at Mourneview and what doesn't. It's important to know your pitch. Every pitch I've worked on is different, therefore different programmes are needed. But I'm on that pitch every day and have found learning on the ground is better than what's in a book.

"Currently, we do not have any special projects under construction, but there



are plans in the pipeline for new training facilities and an academy. No budget is in place or exact plans made as we are only at the beginning of this project and funding is still needed for the long term. Money is not free flowing in the Irish League and pitches are not very high on the priority list, probably somewhere nearer the bottom. We get by on what we have when it comes to pitches," he said.

Any machinery required for Mourneview Park is purchased either second-hand or perhaps an ex-demo machine, if available. More recently, a Baroness mower was purchased from local dealer, Cyril Johnson & Co Ltd. In fact, this particular mower purchase has proved to be a real useful piece of equipment at the grounds as David explained: "The Baroness machine is a fantastic mower with a super cut. The main benefit is that it is less time consuming than the Dennis. It frees up time for me to do other things around the stadium. Also, it means I can cut both pitches. The training pitch is not on site, so I have to travel to it."

"All servicing of the bigger machines is carried out by the local dealer, and we



Poor airflow in certain parts cause an issue up one side of the pitch because of the position of the main stand. During the winter, the sun doesn't make it over the stand and causes a shadow





When I started out at 16, I knew absolutely nothing. My first boss, Gary Thompson, taught me a lot and helped me in my new career. Since then, I've been inspired to try and achieve the best playing surface as possible

use the local lawnmower service company to work on the smaller machines. If I was given one wish, it would be that I can be self-sufficient here. In terms of equipment, a seeder and an aerator with something to pull it would be a great start. However, most of all, I need an irrigation system," he said.

Pests and diseases are the scourge of all groundcare professionals and David has not escaped the perils of nature fighting against his work. He said: "We have a bad pigeon

problem here and I'd love to take any help to get rid of them. As for weeds around the ground, I use Roundup to control them. I also have a problem with worms and worm casts at different times of the season. The best method to control these is by using a soil conditioner."

Groundcare staff play a vital role in the sports sector, but all too often their work is very undervalued and taken for granted. David has his own opinion on how

groundcare staff are perceived around the industry but believes changes can be made for the better. He said: "I believe the industry is in a strong place. Outside of Northern Ireland, the industry is growing with an expanding profile, better pitches, better training, etc. Inside Northern Ireland, the industry is really non-existent. Pitches are very low on the priority list for clubs. There is no funding for grass and many clubs have, or are turning to, artificial pitches, seeing the



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I want a good playing surface and healthy soil and grass, but being pleasing on the eye is important

financial benefits they can bring in. There is funding for artificial pitches. Most clubs train on the main pitch, which is also used for U20 and U18 games. I'm really not sure what the future holds for grass pitches in Northern Ireland."

"I really do believe we are undervalued in the industry. I think that many clubs and societies just expect that pitches are ready for matches, no matter the weather or damage done during training or matches. Personally, I hate attention or the limelight. I'd rather stay in the shadows, and even

being interviewed for this is giving me the sweats, but at the same time I don't feel like people understand or appreciate what goes into preparing a playing surface with the weather and lack of money or equipment or any support."

"In order to raise our profile, I think what the guys at Leicester City are doing is excellent. They have made good plans to get more people into the industry. Social media has been good for groundstaff as well, as they can show their skills, although this can also put pressure on us as the season goes on, the pitch needs to be as good as last week. I would love the opportunity to learn from groundstaff and see what I can do to improve my pitch and myself. There isn't many of us in the Irish League to talk to, so it would be nice to be able to talk to others. I think this would give others encouragement to know we're not alone in our struggles or anxiety in getting things right," said David.



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Queen's Park Rangers

Good things come to those who wait



The Championship club has been trying to create a new training ground for over a decade, and though a planning application was granted on a site not so far away, the club's plans were scuppered by long drawn-out processes of appeals and legal reviews. Blair Ferguson caught up with Grounds Manager, **Malcolm Gardner**, to find out about the new site

When a new site became available and with all the necessary planning processes in place QPR are finally building their home in Heston.

The 27-acre QPR recently acquired training ground site has already undergone some serious redevelopment, and in the first year of a five-year project the site is already looking transformed from a site, at the time of purchase, that was dated and suffering from a serious lack of investment. The steel frame of the new main building has created the silhouette of what will be the finished structure, and as it stands in July 2022, three new Desso hybrid grass pitches have been completed and ready

for training to commence with a further two just completed in early July and undergoing a period of growing in. The complete project will see seven Desso pitches and two 3G pitches, one of which will be indoor under a constructed dome. The interesting part of the construction is that with future sustainability in mind, just one of the features will be a water storage area under the 3G pitches that will enable the club to capture and control the water that would otherwise be sent straight down the drain.

Grounds Manager, Malcolm Gardner, is the man closely monitoring the construction and growing in of the pitches, managing the transition from soil-based pitches to sand-based hybrid grass pitches. These first team and academy pitches come fully



complete with Rain Bird irrigation and one with undersoil heating, which is rare at any training ground, never mind one outside the Premier League.

This is just one example of the philosophy behind this build. The mission is to bring the club together under one roof and give the players and management at all levels the best chance of success. As a reported £20 million project, no stone has been left unturned to achieve this aim, and in Malcolm, the club has an experienced head who is relishing the chance to work on a once in a career build.

"I think if you compared the build here to the old ground, the difference is chalk and cheese between the two," Malcolm explains. "The project here is quite an extensive

and exciting one, and I think it is pretty awe-inspiring if you look at it in terms of its significance."

"For me, it's one of those projects that doesn't come along very often, and I feel very fortunate to have been in the right place at the right time here to oversee something like this. It's pretty much a dream come true."

"It is an aspirational thing for the club with the academy being on the same site as the first team. Particularly as academy players have an opportunity to observe the first team training and strive to be part of it. It's good to have something in place where you can aspire to train on the first team elite pitches. So, if you're training down on the lower field academy pitches, it gives you



It is a significant investment, but it's a decision that will benefit the players at every level. It will also help attract new players to our club because training facilities are a massive part of what a football club can offer



Grounds Manager, Malcolm Gardner



Finding suitable staff at this point in time can be quite hard and challenging

something to push for.”

“There is a lot of history to this site which, during the second world war, was a RAF airfield and, if you look hard enough, you can still see some vestiges of the old hangers now part of a separate industrial estate.”

“The land belonged to British Airways and many will remember it as being the Concorde club. Times change however, and British Airways sold the site to Imperial College who, at the time of purchase,



wished to do more with the site, but following a review and five years hence decided to sell it and concentrate all their students’ activities on the ground we previously leased and trained on.”

“Because of the academy’s long-standing presence here, it was a quick and easy decision for QPR to purchase the ground once the site became available just over two years ago with a view to developing the site into their very own training ground.”

“Of course, a lot of careful planning went into the project and we were not alone, as nationally with the situation with COVID, it was inevitable that the initial steps of the project were pretty much pushed into a soft start.”

“The stadium pitch is Desso and of course we were keen to provide continuity between stadium and the training ground, and very quickly partnered with White Horse Contractors, who work and have experience with the Desso Grassmaster system. I think Desso was keen for an opportunity to be involved in a project they can point to, so it is a partnership between themselves, White Horse and QPR.”

“Things pretty much kicked in, stepping



Trilo in action



up several gears since last October, when White Horse arrived on site and started stripping away some of the old features of the ground, such as the disused bowls green and grass tennis courts, and creating the formation layer that would eventually become hybrid pitches for the elite team. At the time, planning for the new building that will become our new home and workspace, which will be better suited to the needs of both the teams and staff, was still in the final

stages of getting the finer details passed by planning consent. But currently as it stands today, with the main structure through all the planning stages and in place, it is going to become a fantastic focal point for the ground."

Considering the start date of October, the pitch project and White Horse partnering alongside Desso Grassmaster, having completed three Desso hybrid grass pitches which were handed over at the beginning of July, with a further two currently finished and likely to be ready late September/early October following a growing in period, it is an outstanding feat.

"From next year, we hope to complete another hybrid pitch. We don't think we'll be quite ready to do two pitches, but once the new building is complete and we're able to

demolish the rest of the old buildings, that will give us the necessary room to complete the final build Desso hybrid grass pitch."

"Into the fourth/fifth year, we'll be looking to put the artificial pitches in, and I think the indoor artificial will probably be the last year. The associated hard and soft landscaping and car parking will start to take shape from next year, but that is going to be quite an ongoing thing."

"I don't doubt that there will be some minor tweaks throughout the project, as there are with all projects. But, by and large, all the basics are in place here now."

Malcolm has worked on the Heston site for fifteen years and has gone through the transitions of British Airways and Imperial College. Transforming the land he knows so well is an exciting prospect, and welcoming



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The project here is quite an extensive and exciting one, and I think it is pretty awe-inspiring if you look at it in terms of its significance

the first team for pre-season in mid-June has proved a significant milestone in bringing the club together.

Getting things right from the start has been a focal point for him, and working closely with White Horse Contractors has brought the quality he is after.

“Getting the right contractor for a project like this is massively important. With White Horse, we became comfortable very quickly with the relationship. They’ve always been very open and upfront with processes they’ve undertaken, and it’s been a good relationship and we are looking forward to continuing into the next phases of the pitch building program that will see us with seven hybrid grass pitches and two 3G pitches.”

“Pitch One, which will be the main first team pitch, also has underoil heating and floodlights, and I don’t think there are many

clubs that could boast that amount of hybrid grass pitches, so it’s a phenomenal project to be involved with.”

“It is a significant investment from the club, but it’s a decision that will benefit the players at every level. It will also help attract new players to our club because training facilities are a massive part of what a football club can offer.”

“I think the level of investment has always been about the surfaces we can offer, and I think if you have the best facilities, you’re going to attract the best players, and that is the top and bottom of the philosophy. It is also a massive part of what any football club can provide and offer.”

“Traditionally, ground maintenance at the QPR stadium and training ground has always been undertaken through a contractor, and though the club have been vastly happy with





Academy pitches under construction



Undersoil heating installation

the previously used contractors, now owning their own site allowed them to take a fresh outlook on having an in-house team and to explore the flexibility that might bring them.”

Attracting new recruits isn't limited to the first team and academy players, with Malcolm aiming to grow his team of three to nine in the coming year. “Of course, the labour market is quite a difficult thing at the moment and finding suitable staff at this point in time can be quite hard and

challenging. It will be a long process, but I'm sure we will get there in the end, and it will be worth it.”

He accepts that this will be a somewhat difficult task given today's challenging recruitment market, where even the most iconic names are also finding things difficult. But it is still ultimately a rewarding profession to be in and one where maintaining and providing excellent surfaces for the elite and academy teams to play

on is very much an important part of their success.

“Building a grounds maintenance team is one thing, but managing a successful team is another and is one where each team member no matter what role they fulfil, is able to understand and feel that they are very much an important cog in the team.”

One thing the new recruits will become accustomed to is Malcolm's focus on soil biology. Clearly, he cares about his job, but



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Each team member - no matter what role they fulfil - are able to understand and feel that they are very much an important cog in the team



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his passion intensifies when we get onto this topic, and his vision for the future becomes clear.

“I come from a background where I strongly believe in feeding the soil rather than the plant. I’m very strong on soil biology, and I think it’s something that has developed from my time when I first got here with British Airways some eighteen years ago.”

“When I arrived and looking after their bowling green, we were almost spraying fungicide two or three times a year, and the cost of fungicide products are quite high. So always conscious of costs, it was something that I didn’t enjoy the idea of doing. This sent me down the road of exploring different ways how I could move away from a reliance on fungicides, knowing how much damage they can have on soil biology. Eventually, I started exploring alternative cultural practices to ease the swards susceptibility to fungal diseases, even when those within the industry at the time said that I should just accept that it was part of how a bowls green should be managed.”

“And then I chanced upon a couple

of articles on soil biology and got quite interested. Soon after, and a lot more research, I started to develop my strategies over the next few years, but importantly after the first three years of working with a few different people and suppliers, we were able to give up using fungicides completely and as a result haven’t used a fungicide on this site for some fourteen years.”

“My philosophy moving forward here will be to carry that forward, particularly with the sand-based pitches. So, we’ll be basing our maintenance and feeding programmes around looking after the soil management as much as the grass management, with the use of compost teas and low salt index products.”

“Of course, on a sand-based build all the materials brought in are sterile, so getting the soil biology correct and established is going to be quite tricky, but with the right strategy and programmes it builds in time and doing everything that you can to promote that rather than damage it will bring with it returns. It will be an ongoing process.”

“I think people are coming to be a little more open minded about it and



Because of the academy’s long-standing presence here, it was a quick and easy decision for QPR to purchase the ground with a view to developing the site into their very own training ground



Stitching on elite pitches



I am sure that year on year, there will be things that can be improved on that will make everything work in ways that you would want it to

understanding the importance of it has grown quite substantially in the last few years.”

“The key thing is understanding good soil biology affects grass growth, rooting and also helps to control thatch, helping the grass plants through a number of the stresses. Once you understand that symbiosis, you can tailor your maintenance towards it. It’s one of those things that you can produce excellent quality from the

outset if you have that understanding.”

“The feeding programme between our current soil-based pitches and our new sand-based pitches are very different. As part of a balanced programme, we apply around 120kgs of nitrogen a year on our soil-based pitches because we are on a silty, clay sand-based soil, with the grass clippings often returned to the soil. On some of the more extensively used soil-based pitches, that will increase to around 180kgs

per hectare.”

For a hybrid pitch, where the nutrients are more easily lost through leaching and volatilization etc. and where grass clippings are always collected, annual applications of nitrogen can be anything up to 400/500kgs, sometimes more. But I think the importance there is understanding the nitrogen cycle and the important part that soil microbes play in making applied nitrogen into an available form for grass plants to use.

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Work continuing on site

“We’re tailoring that to try and keep our inputs as low as possible, striking a balance between too much and too little, ensuring it is steadily available within the soil profile. There will be a learning curve with it, but it’s getting to understand how things react within the two different soil profiles. It is almost like moving to a new site and getting to know the soils and environment all over again.”

As part of the project, new machinery will be bought in, including Dennis G860s, Dennis Pro 34s, new fairway mowers for summer cutting and a couple of tractors and tractor mounted equipment. The new Rain Bird irrigation system, which was designed and installed by White Horse Contactors, will be another vital addition and, certainly, I will not miss popping in regularly in the evenings to move hoses around.

“As part of the overall project, we will be getting a new maintenance building, and that is for me and my team an exciting

prospect,” Malcolm said. “Being able to design a building from the ground up and have something that’s purpose-built to your own specification doesn’t happen that often. The new maintenance facility will be built much more central between the upper and lower end of the training ground, giving us better more efficient access to the field.”

“The current maintenance building we are in was probably great in its day when it was first built. It was probably the top spec at the time, but times move on, machinery has moved on, and there are different requirements for storing and maintaining it, and the new building will be centred on that.”

“I’ve been fairly involved with most of the internal layout. But certainly, when it came to working with the designers on specific storage areas like seed sheds and pesticide stores and outside recycled water washdown areas etc., it has been very satisfying influencing the design of these

key areas, ensuring the building will be useful and current for a long time.”

The legacy aspect of this project isn’t lost on Malcolm. He is looking forward to the site becoming elevated through the landscaping plans, which will begin as the new main building is completed.

“For me, the landscaping adds to a site like this. If you arrive at a site and there is nothing there, and it’s just a green field, then it is just a green field. But, when you start to add elements to it, whether it’s cleverly designed car parking, verges or planting, you give the site character.”

We’ve purposefully come up with planting plans using native species. One of our first thoughts on landscaping was that we would try and contain everything that would be native and that we should be ecologically sensitive as to how we manage the site.

“It will be exciting adding this aspect back into my job, being no stranger to managing sensitively planted environments,





The key thing is understanding good soil biology affects grass growth, rooting and also helps to control thatch helping the grass plants through a number of the stresses

because the majority of my working life as a groundsman (36 years) has mainly been managing grounds in private education, where the outside spaces are an important part of the environment, and it's something that I'm looking forward to managing and developing again."

"I will be absolutely ecstatic when it's done, but I think experience will say for me it will never be quite done as there will always be some enhancements you can make to

any site. I am sure that Year on year, there will be things that can be improved on that will make things work in ways that you would want it to."

That, along with the project milestones that will be hit regularly over the next four and a half years, will bring excitement to the job. But, experienced as he is, Malcolm knows the projects won't stop once the opening ribbon is cut.



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Andy Mackay

Behind every pitch there's a person





My new role is to work towards the improvement of cricket playing surfaces, support the First Class Counties and their Head Grounds Managers, turf management practices at all levels of the game and to generally provide technical support

Pitch and Grounds Advisor for the England and Wales Cricket Board, **Andy Mackay**, had a slightly different road into the world of grounds management. The born and bred Lancastrian read Archaeology and Ancient History at Lampeter University in Wales before switching direction to pursue a career in the world of turf maintenance; until then, something he had only done part-time around his studies. Phil Helmn reports

think it fair to say, Andy is very passionate about the technical and scientific aspect of the fine art of wicket management. His thirst for knowledge explains how, in his early days, saw him completing his A-levels and graduating from university while holding down a part-time post at Lytham Cricket and Sports Club, in Lancashire, where he worked for four years. From Lytham he moved to St. Annes Cricket Club on a full-time basis where, during his six years, he went on to gain a Higher National Diploma qualification in turf science and golf course management from Myerscough College in Preston.

Three years in, he also took on Blackpool Cricket club, an out ground for Lancashire County Cricket Club, before making the

leap from the Fylde coast to Sussex to join the team at Sussex County Cricket Club as Deputy Head Grounds Manager in 2006, before becoming Head Grounds Manager in 2008.

Fast forward twelve years, and following a remarkable transformation and renovation of the ground and the introduction of some innovative best practice methods (both on and off the square) at Hove, as well as improving himself further via undertaking a Bachelor of Science in Sports turf Science and Management, Andy had the calling from cricket's governing body, The England and Wales Cricket Board to help them replicate some of his ideologies and best practices as their new Pitch and Grounds advisor.



The Oval



Lords

New role

I hadn't seen Andy for over two and a half years, when he had supported both myself and the Head Groundsman Richard Geffen on the Goodwood cricket surfaces as we embarked on a wicket renovation programme.

After all the usual stuff 'turfie' blokes talk about when catching up after a while, I congratulated him on his new role and asked the obvious question, "So what do you actual do in your new job?" Andy, always gives measured and thoughtful answers, he replied, "I've always been fascinated by cricket pitches, outfielders; well, turf in general really, and how it's managed." Andy went on, "My new role is to work towards the improvement of cricket playing surfaces, support the First Class Counties and their Head Grounds Managers, turf management practices at all levels of the game and to generally provide technical support with respect to pitches and turf for the first-class game and Team England. I'm expected to

support the National Cricket Performance Centre at Loughborough University and develop and direct research projects on future innovations; something I feel passionate about."

Andy started his new role in March 2020, all fired up and ready and eager to go, however, as we all remember too well, March 2020 was the beginning of the COVID pandemic! Just like the rest of us at the time, Andy had the phone call one week into his new role to say, 'That's it Andy...the England Cricket Board (ECB) has gone into lockdown, you need to go home immediately and wait for further instructions.'

Andy recalls, "I remember quite vividly, I was in a hotel in the Midlands ready to visit Edgbaston County Cricket the next day when I was told to return home. Not the most ideal start to my new job. However, I set up on the family dining table, like the rest of the country, and did my best. I soon had to move out to the garden shed in desperation as the kids, who had also been sent home

from school, had to use the table for their schoolwork, and I couldn't get anything done! I spent a lot of time talking to the Head Grounds Managers over the phone."

Andy busied himself supporting the Head groundsman up and down the country who were still having to maintain their turf (often with skeleton teams) and advise how best to do that during an incredibly stressful time. Of course, mental awareness featured heavily (and still does), and Andy was able to reassure and provide moral support to his industry peers, something that could only be done by someone with Andy's experiences and history.

Andy is part of the Domestic Cricket Operations Department at the ECB but his role also works across Team England and the Facilities Team who, amongst many other things, take the lead on the bulk of the recreational grounds management support (approximately 3,500 clubs). Andy spends 90% of his time supporting the First Class professionals (nineteen venues) and working



If they consider that the ground had genuinely attempted to prepare the best pitch possible, and that their actions have been reasonable, then they will report that no further action is required





When discussing climate change, it's equally important not just to look at how this is affecting grounds, but to ask how grounds are affecting the climate and the environment

with the international pitches and venues, but always has one mind on the recreational game and its support network. He also supports the Loughborough cricket facilities where Will Relf heads up the National Cricket Performance Centre, the base for training the national squads.

He gives a lot of thought to the recreational game and the County Pitch Advisors. To that end, the ECB set up the Pitch Advisory Service (similar to the advisory

services which support rugby and football surfaces) which is run by the Grounds Management Association (GMA). This is a cricket specific service, with three full-time members of staff, which exists to support recreational pitches.

Andy explained that they are re-writing the maintenance advice from TS4 and putting it on the Toolkit section of the GMA website for all to access. This will eventually link in with an app called 'Pitch Power', which

I'm advised will hopefully be up and running soon. "This will be extremely beneficial to grounds managers as they can input some basic information and use this to access some advice. The County Pitch Advisors will be also able to access this information, so they can help if needed. I think it's going to be a hugely useful tool to promote better practices and assist in improving surfaces. Going forward, the bulk of our advice for recreational grounds

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Getting Personal

Andy Mackay - he loves Les Mis and the smell of grass!

Who are you? Andy Mackay.

Family status. Married to Sarah, three children (and two dogs).

Who's your hero and why?

'Tank man' – the guy who stepped out in front of the tanks during the student riots in Tiananmen Square in Beijing with his shopping bags! That took principals and courage, and it's a lesson to us all about moral fibre in the face of adversity!

What's been the highlight of your career so far?

Landing my current job with the England and Wales Cricket Board.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think?

Blimey...you look old! (If I were feeling polite).

What job would you love, other than your own? I'd love to be a pro golfer. Unfortunately, I lack the talent.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life?

I once walked straight into a lamp post in France whilst talking/looking the other way. Unfortunately, it was in the middle of a campsite where about 2,000 people witnessed it (and they all laughed)!

What is your favourite film? Les Miserables (the musical). Judge me if you like, but it touches my soul!

What scares you? Anything that may threaten the safety of my family (at the moment, it's the Ukrainian conflict; before that it was Covid).

What would your autobiography be called...and who would play you in the film? Doing The Best I Can - James Corden.

What would you cast into room 101? Unkind people.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit?

Pompeii in 79AD, just at the moment when Mount Vesuvius erupted (I'd make sure I'd be standing in a safe place though!



Do you have a lifetime ambition? To not die!

What's your favourite smell? I know it sounds cringeworthy, but freshly cut grass (I can smell it again now I'm around it less).

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Peter Kay, Leonardo Da Vinci and Cleopatra.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Be flexible, but always believe in yourself.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? I'm not sure I have one, but as you asked: A 'jiffy' (as in, 'I'll be there in a jiffy') is a real unit of time. It's the time it takes light to travel 1cm in a vacuum.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? La Boheme (an opera by Puccini), Graceland (Paul Simon) and No need to argue (The Cranberries).

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Are you repairing the foot holes with concrete?

What three words best describes yourself? Kind, passionate and daft.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Commit to doing the best job you can, but never lose sight of the fact that life is more important.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Free public transport for all and a vastly improved network.



management will be going out via the GMA."

Behind every pitch there's a person

Being an ex-cricket grounds manager himself, Andy can vouch that the role of a grounds manager is a very tricky business which inherently comes with a lot of stress and, potentially, anxiety, particularly in the world of elite sport. "When I landed my new role, I wanted to help grounds managers with the stresses and strains of the job. First and foremost because it was the right thing to do, but also because we need everyone to be able to perform in the best way possible. I'm focused on ideas which may help build

strategies for coping with some of this pressure." Andy explained

"I'm working on 'The First-Class Playing Facilities strategy' to answer the rapidly changing needs of the game, and the questions this asks of grounds teams on wellbeing, practice facilities, pitch quality, outfield performance and people skills, because at the moment many things simply feel unsustainable. An important part of this is the message that behind every pitch there's a person or people," Andy clarified.

"These potential solutions are directly related to drivers such as the rapid growth in women's cricket, the Hundred, climate change,



Hollow coring at Bath Cricket Club



Trent Bridge

the effects of Covid and the changing expectations of players, broadcast partners and spectators. Of course, when discussing climate change, it's equally important not just to look at how this is affecting grounds, but to ask how grounds are affecting the climate and the environment. So, a key objective for this strategy is sustainability, in all sorts of ways."

Recently, there has been increased pressure on venues to host music events and concerts to bring in revenue, which hugely impacts the groundsmen and their ability to produce good surface quality for the original intention of the ground. The overall goal of the Playing Facilities strategy is to respond to the current pressures and map a way forward, helping and supporting everyone so that professional cricket gets what it needs to be successful. Andy continued, "We also have a recruitment crisis brewing due to a distinct lack of skilled groundsmen in the industry now and I know that this is mirrored in most of the turf management sectors such as football, rugby and golf. I believe both Brexit and COVID seem to have played their part, but it's essential that we do something about this."

Data gathering, surveys and steering groups are being set up to better understand what's happening and what's required. "I'm hugely passionate about apprenticeships and feel that this could help provide some answers, if we can support it in the right way, but we'll look at a wide number of solutions, including partnering other sports. We also need to start answering the question of why approximately 99% of our workforce is male and why we have very little diversity

in the workforce...that can't be right, that's a ridiculous scenario! The underlying challenge is to create more skilled people, but also to make grounds management visible and more attractive to work in... and we need to do it relatively quickly."

Pitch performance

Pitch management has been described as something of a 'black art', but Andy's role is based much more on science and experience than mystic myth! He very much sees himself as a supportive, unbiased second pair of eyes, primarily there to support each head grounds manager to deliver best practice. "Each venue is inherently different, as you would expect." He explained, "Different environmental factors such as climate produce unique challenges, and coupled with different soil types, age of pitch and grass species, as well as different challenges from the end users, make for a complex approach to management. You also have different grounds managers with different ideas

and different needs. They are all experts in their own right, so I get to have some fascinating conversations and frequently get to challenge my own ideas every bit as often as I might have the opportunity to challenge theirs. Pitch production is a science supported by the experience and art of the individual, and not something that you will ever learn just from a text book...but that doesn't mean that the text books and research papers aren't of huge value!" Andy explained that the ECB ask that a venue prepare 'the best pitch possible' and have a 'Pitches Document' for quantifying pitch performance in the domestic game. "It's designed to set out the standards required and protect quality and prevent too-much home advantage," he said. "Understandably, we want certain performance criteria, but we are also sympathetic to the reality of the challenges in venues and make allowances. There's a match referee at every game and it is their responsibility to 'mark' the pitch on a scale of 1 to 6 on its performance."

The pitch is rated on consistency of

I'm there to support the process and to offer advice to match referees and grounds managers, if needed. I'm hugely sympathetic as to how difficult the role of the grounds manager is



Emirates Old Trafford

bounce, the amount of bounce and carry, the amount of seam movement, and the amount of spin (a three/four day pitch should deteriorate to offer more spin as the game goes on, whereas a one day pitch should not offer more than too much spin at any stage). The scoring is as follows:

- 1= Unfit
- 2= Poor
- 3= Below average
- 4= Above average (there is no average)
- 5= Good
- 6= Very good

Andy explained, “If a pitch scores 3 or below, it would usually instigate an investigation by the match referee. If they consider that the ground had genuinely attempted to prepare the best pitch possible, and that their actions have been reasonable, then they will report that no further action is required. But if they have doubts, then they might ask me to provide a technical inspection of the pitch and then, if they still have concerns, may ultimately look to take this matter further.”

A technical report on the pitch is to better help understand why a particular pitch hasn't 'performed' and give the regulatory process more information. This will help officials to understand why a pitch has been sub-standard, but also it can help the venue understand and find ways to prevent it happening in the future. Mostly though, pitch marks are high across the board, reflecting the high standard of pitches in the English game, and it's very rare that a pitch investigation needs to be taken further than the Match Referees and a technical inspection.

Overall, pitch marking is a hugely emotive subject and the difference between one mark and another can be tough to call. Some people get upset and others are more stoical, and as you can imagine there is every emotion in between. However, it's a transparent process and the match referees are never more than one mark away from where they probably should be, and match referees also seek feedback from umpires out in the middle.

“I'm there to support the process and to offer advice to match referees and grounds

managers, if needed. I'm hugely sympathetic as to how difficult the role of the grounds manager is and I also understand the pressures they are under to produce what their home side needs, whilst trying to satisfy what the ECB want.”

To finish (but not quite)!

It's always a pleasure to catch up with Andy, especially after such a long time, and I was delighted in hearing about some of the complexities of his new role. He is extremely passionate about all things cricket and pitches, as well as the people involved in the great game. Andy and the rest of the people at the ECB are working hard behind the scenes to support the game. It's a big job, but there's no doubt that his enthusiasm, passion and experience will win the day!

Whilst catching up with Andy at the beautiful and historic Goodwood ground, we began chatting about wicket stitching and all its complexities. We ran out of time but agreed to catch up soon to discuss his ideas, data and personal experiences on choice, installation, renovation and maintenance on this relatively new hybrid revolution!



Understandably, we want certain performance criteria, but we are also sympathetic to the reality of the challenges in venues and make allowances



Andy and Phil Helmn



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Hedgehog support

If you go down to the woods today

If you strike lucky, you may spot signs of hedgehogs. However, you can help support a sustainable community of them by preparing the ground to attract what is one of our favourite mammals, discovers **Greg Rhodes**



It's hard to discover whether hedgehogs are living on a site and to figure out how many of them are in a particular place. We appear to have lost over half of our hedgehogs from the countryside since the millennium alone and a third from towns and cities

They are a national treasure; however, hedgehogs are in troubled times as numbers have declined alarmingly in recent decades.

The population in Britain is uncertain and estimates have varied dramatically over the years, but if indicators and markers of their presence and activity are any guide, hedgehogs remain increasingly thin on the ground.

I well recall walking out of a park early one evening after a tennis session and nearly tripping over one of the spiny creatures as it emerged from a hedgerow.

Picking it up with the help of my racquet, I popped it back inside the park. Probably on a journey back to base, it may have resented the intrusion, but the road alongside was wide and the thought of leaving it to brave a safe crossing was the less acceptable option to my mind.

That was nearly 40 years ago, and I haven't happened on another 'hog', or 'hedge' as some refer to them, in a public place since.

In the garden setting, a friend remembers sitting out in the evening, watching a hedgehog family grunting their way towards her, nudging her leg as a prompt for food. Again, probably a rarer experience today.

Hedgehogs have all too quickly slipped out of the public consciousness it seems, but the good news is that several charities and agencies across the country hold their best interests at heart - People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS), the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Wildlife Trust to name four.

Hedgehog Street is a UK-based conservation initiative set up by the PTES and BHPS charities and is extremely active in promoting and encouraging awareness of



© Jonathan Dean



© Matt Haworth



Hedgehog tunnels



Hedgehogs enjoy no special protection and they have similar diets to badgers. When food is short, they are competing for the same prey

hedgehogs, their habitats and how best to redress the decline in their population.

In the 1950s, estimates placed Britain's hedgehog population at 36.5 million - "probably an overestimate", believes Hedgehog Street, an independent body that has amassed plenty of research and background data on the mammal.

In 1995, that number had plummeted to 1,550,000 (1,100,000 in England; 310,000 in Scotland and 140,000 in Wales) Hedgehog Street notes, adding that "the evidence suggests declining numbers since" while conceding that there's "still no reliable

method of estimating numbers in any given area".

Telltale indicators can reveal hedgehog presence, however. The PTES surveys, Mammals on Roads and Living with Mammals, point to a "downward population".

"We appear to have lost over half of our hedgehogs from the countryside since the millennium alone," Hedgehog Street concludes, "and a third from towns and cities."

Damning figures for sure, though "the urban decline appears to be slowing" according to the 2018 State of Britain's Hedgehog report.

Despite that, the apparent speed of decline makes it vital we only consider fairly recent records when inspecting the distribution of hedgehogs, which is "still almost comprehensive across England", Hedgehog Street notes, adding that "this distribution masks the ongoing decline that our long-running mammal surveys are detecting".

Signs of life

As detecting hedgehog presence is difficult, searching for footprints is one way forward.



Tracks

© Emily Thom



Hedgehog droppings



Habitat management has changed over the years and simply placing them in what could be an alien environment may prevent them gaining sustainability

and typically packed with the exoskeletons of invertebrates such as beetles, they are cylindrical or tapered, appearing like a dark slug, 15 to 50mm long.

"There's still much we don't know about hedgehog habits and how they use the natural environment," states Hedgehog Street - one reason the PTES and BHPS are funding research that will help such bodies deliver better advice to landowners about managing land sympathetically for the mammal. Radio tracking is one item in the toolbox researchers will be relying on during their work in Yorkshire and Norfolk.

Other research, led by WildCRU, University of Oxford, is studying hedgerows and field margins to unearth more about how hogs rely on these resources.

"It's hard to discover whether hedgehogs are living on a site and to figure out how many of them are in a particular place," says

Hedgehog Street, reiterating the familiar theme that these creatures are elusive.

Further research by the universities of Reading and Nottingham Trent may deliver further revelations about territory and communities. They have devised a standardised method of detecting hedgehogs using tracking tunnels baited with hotdogs, reportedly.

Urban barriers

Britain's built realm presents almost insurmountable obstacles to hedgehog movements. Fragmentation by major roads is one issue, as are fences, walls and new developments - all break up the green spaces hedgehogs rely on, interfering, if not blocking, their passage from one to another.

The larger the green space, the more favourable the opportunities for hedgehogs to establish sustainable populations, at

Front and back feet both have five toes although only four toes usually show up on tracks.

The front feet are wider and appear like little hands, while slimmer, longer back feet leave correspondingly narrower prints. The PTES has adopted footprint tunnels as one way to reveal hedgehog activity.

Droppings vary according to diet and are usually dark brown-grey or black, depending what was on the menu. Firm

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Hedgehogs have all too quickly slipped out of the public consciousness it seems...



Collecting slugs

least in theory. Large parks, golf courses and sports estates that mix 'wild' areas with manicured pitches and specialised play could be a real blessing, if we lay the groundwork in a way to welcome them.

Leading the charge to transform the landscape of opportunity for hogs are Dr Chris Carbone, of the ZSL, leading authorities Dr Pat Morris and Dr Nigel Reeve, and environmental campaigner Hugh Warwick, who consults to the BHPS, among a host of other commitments.

He references Hedgehog Awareness Week, held in May, as a key action in helping consultants, landscape architects and developers on the need to take account of hedgehogs in their projects. As of this May, the BHPS and PTES are seeking to sign up volunteer 'Hedgehog Champions' to help further the cause.

The BHPS holds half-day presentations focusing on ecology and behaviour, population monitoring, threats and mitigations surrounding hedgehog livelihood, including no doubt an overriding factor in that equation. "Estates have to be porous," Hugh insists, to allow hedgehog

movement, bearing in mind that they can travel far overnight, either in search of new territory, new homes or food.

He wants gardens and green space connected by "hedgehog highways" - "holes in fences and boundaries to allow them to travel to find food and nesting sites." A minimum 13 x 13cm suffices, while deterring cats and other larger animals and pets.

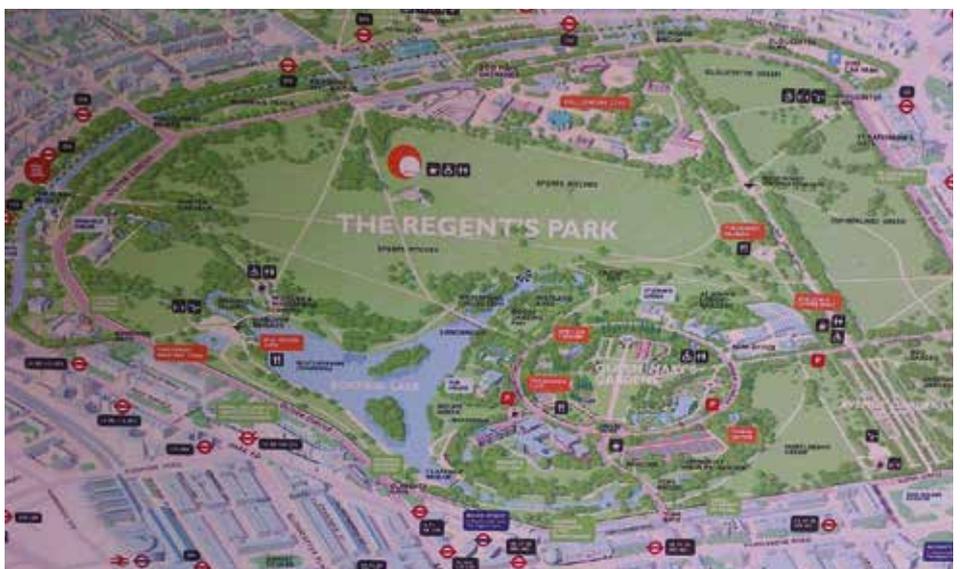
"A minimum hectareage is needed to support a viable population," Hugh says. "Thirty-two hedgehogs living in a 90-hectare area" is his estimation. We must "manage with nature in mind" and there is "a political win to be had" in doing so, he believes as "massive resentment exists about loss of green space to new homes".

Golf courses come in for a verbal hammering. They can be guilty of "a cult of tidiness, the most evil of cults", he says, adding that they must strike "a happy medium between the pristine and the rough". Allowing a "rich regime" of invertebrates and pollinators to thrive presents "a very straightforward win" for hedgehogs.

However, legislation may be the only



... but the good news is that several charities and agencies across the country hold their best interests at heart





The Regent's Park, where hedgehogs are clinging on

solution in ensuring wildlife habitats prevail amid a balanced infrastructure, Hugh believes.

Ground rules

Although large green spaces would appear to offer the best opportunities for hedgehogs to live as sustainable communities, the theory seems not to apply in London.

The Regent's Park now ranks alone in

supporting a hog population and even that is estimated to be in single figures, surveys show. Night time vigils and research studies of the park's numbers by leading specialists such as Dr Nigel Reeve, whose work with the mammal trace back to the 1980s, and the Zoological Society of London, whose London Zoo base falls within the park perimeter, chart hedgehogs' shifting fortunes.

Camera traps are a cost-effective and key

Ten tips to encourage hedgehogs in your neighbourhood

- Link green spaces and gardens with fence and wall holes
- Make any ponds safe for hedgehogs to climb out of
- Create wild corners, leaving growth uncut
- Use rigid structures rather than flexible netting, which can entangle hedgehogs
- Put out food and water to supplement their natural diet
- Check before undertaking strimming and other margin cutting
- Build bonfires on the day you burn them as hedgehogs favour piles of debris
- Make them a home - log piles, nestboxes or bespoke hedgehog houses are ideal
- Become a hedgehog champion and promote their cause
- Avoid chemicals such as pesticides where at all possible

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The PTES and BHPS run courses for the commercial sector, targeting those who directly or indirectly manage larger areas such as parks and other green spaces in towns and cities, also and providing free land management guides.

Those who might want to attend include groundskeepers, parks managers, contractors and consultants, developers and planners - certainly a broad cross-section of sectors impacting hedgehog habitats.



Camera trap - London HogWatch

method of tracking hedgehog movement across the Zoo and the park - the ZSL uses 40 or 50 of them.

ZSL senior research fellow Chris Carbone heads up the Society's Hogwatch project and has conducted several golf club surveys of hedgehog population activity.

From his experience, he can offer key guidance on how to attract and sustain hedgehogs. "Having dense, low shrubs in some areas around the course is a must," he stresses.

Reducing or eliminating use of pesticides and catering for hedgehog prey species are other excellent recommendations, he adds.

Hedgehogs are the grounds professional's friend, as Chris confirms: "They feed on a wide range of invertebrates such as beetles, slugs, chafer grubs and worms, also feeding on frogs and toads, so limiting the application of treatments that reduce their abundance is critical."

ZSL head curator of plants, Sven Seiffert, who is also active in hedgehog studies, continues: "The Regent's Park study is the longest of its kind anywhere and involves two nights observation in May and

September. Hedgehogs spend their days in nests constructed from leaves and other materials, while they hibernate in winter nests."

"They are often found in this type of dense low-growing vegetation, as well as ivy, brambles, leaf litter, log piles and other structures, and under sheds."

Leaving such rough areas for them to utilise will encourage a stable habitat for them, he adds.

"It's worth knowing that hedgehogs frequently change nest sites between days. We have found that they will also utilise nest boxes such as those sold by NHSB, although London Zoo uses bespoke longer-lasting nest boxes, made by HabiSabi.

"They also like night feeding for slugs on short grass and we've spotted them on the park's sports pitches." However, they don't dig, he says, so are not intrusive on close-mown playing surfaces as some wildlife is.

"Hedgehogs enjoy no special protection," Sven continues, "and they have similar diets to badgers. When food is short, they are competing for the same prey."

"Latest studies show The Regent's

Park population to number just nine - five females, four males, with a litter of between one and four - compared with a high of 34. The situation is really worrying."

Connectivity is another important aspect to consider, Chris Carbone states, "as are hazards such as the risk of trapping in materials like netting or litter, steep-sided water bodies, bonfires or injuries caused by machinery."

Lack of connectivity may have been the cause of their disappearance from Hyde Park for example. "Hedgehogs have no way to travel into it," Sven says.

Is reintroduction a possible remedy?

"That's difficult, as habitat management has changed over the years and simply placing them in what could be an alien environment may prevent them gaining sustainability." As Sven states: "First of all, we need to know what's causing the decline."

Increasingly viewed by ecologists as wildlife oases, golf courses can have a major role in nurturing hedgehog populations, and they surely can co-exist in harmony with the sport.



We have many barriers to overcome and are tackling a complex topic that involves changes of behaviour and training





© Matt Haworth



There’s still much we don’t know about hedgehog habits and how they use the natural environment

On a wider front, the issue of declining numbers embraces small and large green space alike. A link between the two promises to be the Wildlife Trust, now working at local level through its engagement teams to woo a new target audience of homeowners to buy into the importance of making their gardens friendlier places for the likes of hedgehogs and other fauna.

“It’s about bringing nature into more urban

settings and trying to attract more people to engage with it,” says Rachael Nellist of Cheshire Wildlife Trust, which is targeting Stockport, the recipient of £1bn regeneration funding, with a

‘Wilding’ initiative

Working closely with the local council and businesses from its base in Norris Park, CWT is already making headway in “making green spaces more friendly”.

Within the Cheshire catchment lie many golf courses and sports sites that the Trust could approach with its message - one that directly impacts the hedgehog’s plight. But, as Rachael notes: “We have many barriers to overcome and are tackling a complex topic that involves changes of behaviour and training. The Hedgehog Street toolkit for landowners and managers is valuable in creating the most favourable habitat to ensure the population recovers.”

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Nigel Allison, Grounds Manager, Newby Hall & Gardens, Yorkshire.

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Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year

And the award goes to..

Jason Garlick was this year's winner of the prestigious overall title of Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year (ASOOTY). Syngenta Technical Manager, Sean Loakes met with Jason to find out more

How long have you been working in the turf grass industry?

I've been in the industry for over fourteen years. I used to work for a publication company with clients based in London and dreamt of being a greenkeeper. As I had no experience in greenkeeping, I decided to get my qualifications in pesticide application to make my job application more credible. In the meantime, I was approached by a contract pesticide application company. I worked there for two years, before deciding to go it alone and developed into JMG Amenity Limited.

What qualifications do you hold?

I hold NPTC PA01, PA02, PA06, PA06AW, NPTC qualified NSTS pesticide sprayer tester, BASIS qualified in Invasive and Injurious Weeds as well as Hard Surfaces.

What spraying equipment do you use, and what and how often are spraying?

We mainly operate a 450 litre Team Sprayers demount sprayer, fitted onto a Kawasaki Mule 4010. I also use Cooper Pegler knapsacks and a 30-litre pedestrian sprayer. I am out most days spraying; it all depends on the season regarding what products I'm applying.

What are your top five challenges with application?

- Client expectation
- General Public
- Pesticide timing
- Weather
- Machinery

What have you done to address the challenges?

I would like to think that we meet our clients' expectation by sitting down with them to find out what the problem is and come up with a solution that works for all parties.

Whether on a golf course or on a council open space, it is very important to keep the general public aware that you are applying pesticides. For this reason, we place signs on the course, in the club house or at the entrances of parks.

We speak at great lengths to our pesticide suppliers in order to use the correct product at the correct time to ensure the correct results.

Weather plays a major part in my job and is one of those factors that you cannot control. It can be, and often is, too windy, too wet, too rainy, too dry, too sunny, too frosty - it makes you wonder who would do a job that is so weather dependent in this country!

Machinery is another big factor, therefore all machinery is serviced on a regular basis and sprayers are NSTS tested once a year. We have spare ATVs just in case of a bad breakdown, the sprayer unit can be



Jason Garlick



removed and fitted onto a new ATV within minutes.

How do you minimise risk of environmental impacts?

By only using a pesticide product if it is absolutely necessary. If we have to use a pesticide product, then we follow the strict rules of LEARAP. If treating in or near water, we will work closely with the Environment Agency and gain authorisation.

Do you have a IPM strategy?

Yes, of course. Having a well-defined IPM strategy is very important and is based on prevention, monitoring and control to at least reduce the use of pesticides. When approached by a client, the first question asked by us is - does a pesticide need to be used to solve the problem?

What record keeping do you use?

We use a very detailed record keeping system. Operators will take an application sheet to the job and will use the information on it to tell them how much product/water to use, what nozzles, pressure and speed to apply at.

The application sheet details pesticide active ingredient, product name, product application rate, water rate, size of area to be treated, total pesticide used, total water used, nozzle type, nozzle colour, pressure setting and speed. This way there is no confusion.

After the job has been completed, the

operator will fill in the application sheet with date, start and end times, wind speed and direction, weather conditions, size of area treated, amount of water and product used, nozzles used and a comments box for any additional information. Because we have numerous clients, the application sheet will detail the client's full contact details including contact name and telephone number.

How do you ensure you keep up to date with new developments?

We subscribe to a lot of trade publications. We also attend Saltex, BTME, Amenity Forum and the Amenity Forum updates.

We have attended training and are BASIS registered and hold qualifications in Invasive and Injurious Weeds, Hard

Surfaces, We are looking to attend more training to gain additional qualifications in Sports Turf, FACTS (fertiliser) and Water Courses.

What bit of spraying do you personally find most enjoyable?

I get called in by clients that are over-run by turf disease, Japanese Knotweed, broad or small leaf weeds on sports turf. I enjoy sitting down with the client to find out what the problem is. I can come up with a solution that works for all parties, whether that is the client or the environment, and finally seeing the end result.

You can nominate yourself or someone else for the ASOOTY 2022 awards by visiting: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PWB729D



Plant Protection Products

What you need to know

You have, hopefully, already heard of the new Official Controls (Plant Protection Products) Regulations 2020. They have recently (June 22nd 2022) come into force in Great Britain and Northern Ireland for businesses, organisations and sole traders who use Plant Protection Products (PPPs) as part of their work, whether that work is either commercial, not for profit or volunteer run.

If you use PPPs within any of these contexts, it is classed as professional use. But what are Plant Protection Products, why are they being officially controlled and how do you register?

1. What is a Plant Protection Product (PPP)?

Plant Protection Products (PPPs) are also known as pesticides, but the more formal definition of PPP helps to better define the specific use, i.e. to protect plants that we want to grow from harm caused by other organisms. This separates out pesticides that are used to protect plants from other types of pesticide that might be used to

protect human or animal health for example. Specifically, PPPs include the following main product groups:

- Herbicide
- Insecticide
- Fungicide
- Plant growth regulator
- Molluscicide
- Vertebrate control

The Official Controls (PPP) Regulations also relate to the use of registered adjuvants as these are intended to be used alongside PPPs in order to enhance their effectiveness.

Used as part of an integrated approach

to pest management and plant health, PPPs are one of the key tools available to assist with maintaining and improving our recreational, transport and amenity areas.

If you want to find out about the authorisation status of particular PPPs or registered adjuvants, then the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provide separate databases which can be used by anyone looking for information relating to registered products. For example, you can use the databases to look for products that are authorised on particular crops (e.g., managed amenity turf). The databases can be found on the HSE website.



2. Why are Plant Protection Products being officially controlled?

Pesticides, including PPPs are already amongst the most strictly regulated of all chemicals. Legislative control on the advertisement, sale, supply, storage, and use of pesticides has been in existence in Great Britain since the introduction of the Control of Pesticides Regulations (1986). This statutory control of substances aimed to avoid risks to people and to limit risks to the environment from the use of pesticides. Plant Protection Products are now regulated under the Plant Protection Products Regulations 2011 and the Plant Protection

Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.

The new Official Controls (PPPs) Regulations 2020 is intended to work synergistically alongside the existing legislative framework to:

- Enable the government to better understand how PPPs are being used by businesses and organisations
- To assist decision making relating to taking a risk-based approach to monitoring and inspection of activities

The aim is to ensure that PPPs are used sustainably and in accordance with their conditions of use.



**You will need to register
if your business or
organisation uses any type
of PPP or registered adjuvant
in a professional capacity**



The more formal definition of PPP helps to better define the specific use, i.e. to protect plants that we want to grow from harm

3. Who should register?

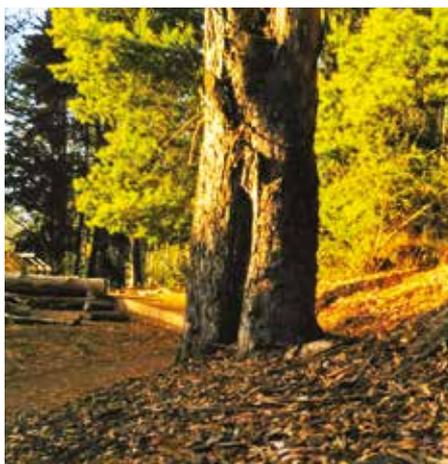
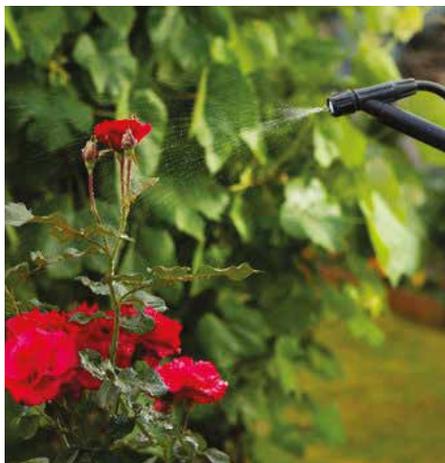
If your business or organisation uses Plant Protection Products (PPPs) as part of their work, then you should have registered this fact with DEFRA (England, Scotland and Wales) or with DAERA (Northern Ireland) by June 22nd 2022. This is because the new regulation, The Official Controls (PPPs) Regulations 2020, has now come into force. If you have not yet registered, then it is important that you do so as soon as possible to ensure that you are operating legally. Alternatively, if your organisation started

using PPPs or adjuvants after June 22nd 2022 then you need to register within three months of the time you started using them.

Businesses and organisations using Plant Protection Products or adjuvants for professional use could be operating in agriculture, horticulture, amenity or forestry and within a commercial, non-profit or volunteer run organisation. Amenity settings where PPPs are used might include:

- Sports turf facilities and clubs
- Schools, colleges and universities
- Parks
- Public and private property
- Infrastructure (e.g. roads, railways and waterways)
- Utilities (e.g. transport and water companies)

It is the business, organisation or sole trader that should register rather than each individual within the business. The definition extends both to businesses and organisations that apply PPPs and adjuvants themselves, as well as to those that have PPPs and adjuvants applied by a third party as part of their work in agriculture, horticulture, amenity or forestry.



During a visit from a Pesticide Enforcement Officer they may ask for more information about what you do and how you use, store and dispose of PPPs



What this means in a practical sense is that when using PPPs and registered adjuvants you should always adhere to the existing guidance

The regulation covers both products that have a professional authorisation and those with an amateur authorisation, so you will need to register if your business or organisation uses any type of PPP or registered adjuvant in a professional capacity. The only users of PPPs that don't need to apply are those that are not using them for professional use. An example of this could be using a weedkiller in your own garden.

4. How do you register?

The application process is pretty straightforward. For businesses and organisations based in England, Wales or Scotland that use PPPs, the application form is a spreadsheet which can be obtained from the GOV.UK website. Once you have completed the form, you simply need to save it and return it to DEFRA by emailing to: GB-OCR-notification@defra.gov.uk.

For businesses and organisations based in Northern Ireland that use PPPs, there is an online registration process hosted on the DAERA website.

Registration requires you to provide some basic details about the use of PPPs and adjuvants, including:

- Your organisation name and contact details

- Details about whether you store, apply or use a third-party organisation to apply PPPs and adjuvants
- An estimation of the quantity of PPPs and adjuvants used in a typical year
- Details of the main sector you work in when using or applying PPPs and adjuvants
- Details of assurance schemes that you are a member of covering PPP use

5. What happens after registration?

DEFRA in England, Wales and Scotland will use the information provided to give them a starting point for deciding which organisations receive Pesticide Enforcement Officer visits first. They have said that they will do this using a proactive risk-based approach. The purpose of the visits is to



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PPPs are one of the key tools available to assist with maintaining and improving our recreational, transport and amenity areas

check that businesses and organisations using PPPs and registered adjuvants are complying with current PPP laws to ensure that these products are being used safely to minimise risk to people and the environment.

Pesticide Enforcement Officers will usually contact you before visiting but they are authorised to visit without doing so. During a visit from a Pesticide Enforcement Officer, they may ask for more information about what you do and how you use, store and dispose of PPPs including asking to see:

- Relevant certification
- Details of what records are kept
- Details of how products are being used

Further information about what to expect during a visit from a Pesticide Enforcement

Officer is available on the DEFRA website.

DAERA in Northern Ireland have also stated that they will use the information provided in the registration forms to help them to apply the Official Controls (PPP) Regulations 2020 through the implementation of a pesticide official controls programme. However, the programme is still in development and further details can be expected in due course. Check the DAERA website to find out more.

What this means in a practical sense is that when using PPPs and registered adjuvants, you should always adhere to the existing guidance such as in the Code of Practice for Using PPPs. Downloadable copies are available from:

DEFRA: https://www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/resources/C/Code_of_Practice_for_using_Plant_Protection_Products_-_Complete20Code.pdf

DAERA: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cop-plant-protection-final.pdf>



Spraying at Epsom College



Article by Agrovista UK Technical Manager Dr. Abigail Graceson



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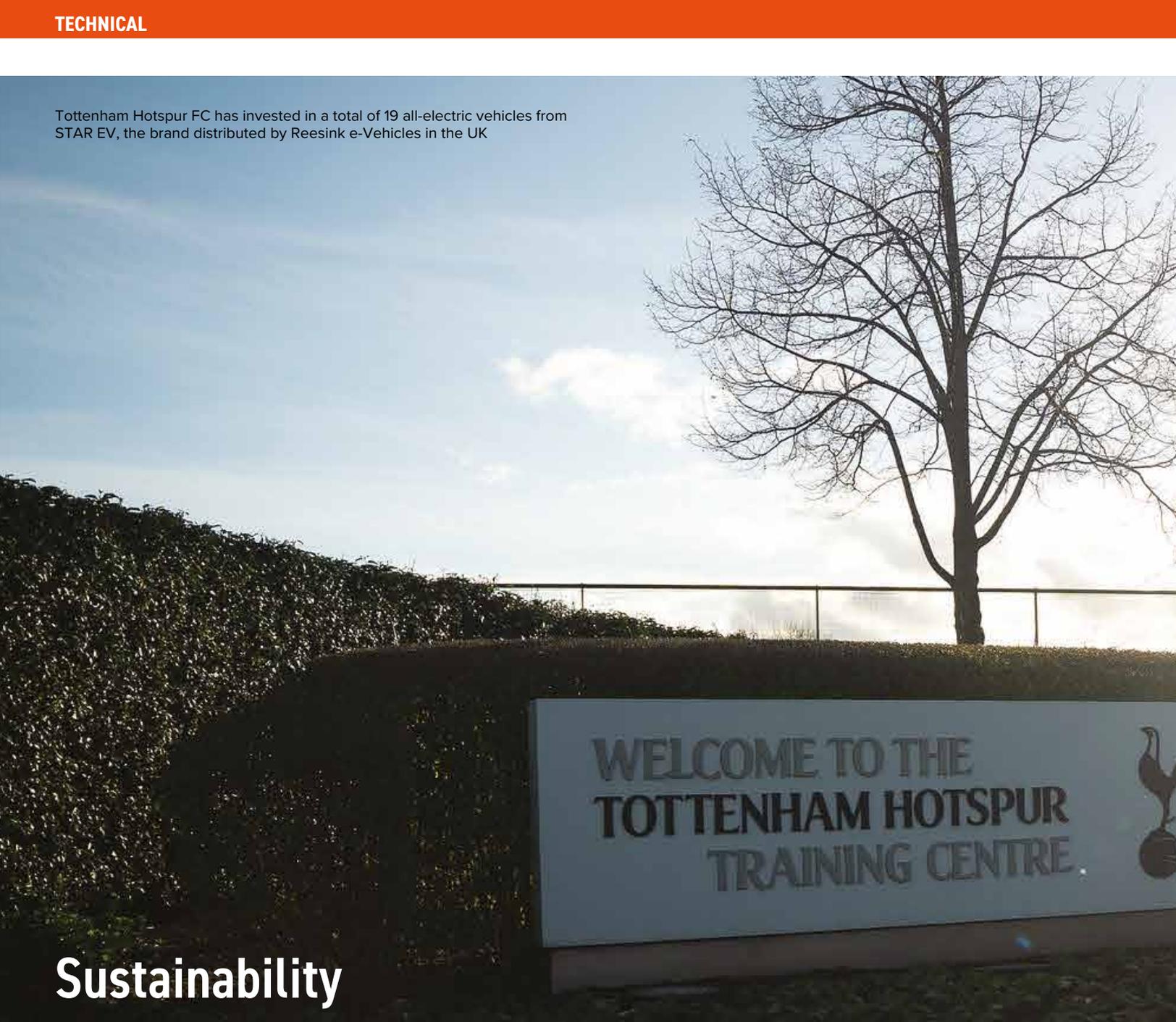
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Tottenham Hotspur FC has invested in a total of 19 all-electric vehicles from STAR EV, the brand distributed by Reesink e-Vehicles in the UK



WELCOME TO THE
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TRAINING CENTRE

Sustainability

Top of the agenda

Sport's role in helping tackle the climate crisis came under scrutiny following COP26 in Glasgow at the end of last year. Now, as part of the UN Sports for Climate Action Framework, which brings together sports organisations from all over the world to achieve climate change goals, all UK clubs are being asked to reduce their carbon footprint - targeting a 50 percent reduction in emissions by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2040. **Dave French**, sales manager for Reesink e-Vehicles, looks at how the distributor can help clubs achieve a better future for football



Dave French



STAR EV fits in exactly with what Spurs is all about and that's having the best available game-changing equipment on the market there is. STAR EV meets the expectations we have for the club and the expectations we have for achieving climate neutrality

Darren Baldwin

With every aspect being strictly monitored (homes for bats, on-site allotments and recycled kits are just some of the ways Premier League clubs are continuing to improve their 'green' credentials), it's a move supported by a sustainability table (devised by BBC Sport and the United Nations-backed Sport Positive Summit) and the recruitment of a 'Head of Sustainability' - a first-of-its-kind position in the world of football in February.

Three of the 11 categories in the sustainability table - clean energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport - are related to the long-range battery transport solutions Reesink e-Vehicles provides for its customers.

Travel can account for up to 90 percent

of a club's overall carbon footprint, meaning that turning attention to sustainable transport is key to making a difference. Encompassing how players and fans travel from city to city and country to country is a significant challenge; what is not, however, is how groundskeeping teams and players move around their own clubs.

Electric work machines, utility vehicles and golf buggies are an easy way to tick the three boxes in the sustainability table - and the electric versions of these machines more than meet up to their diesel counterparts; as Darren Baldwin, head groundsman at Tottenham Hotspur, the only club in the Premier League to have a sustainable transport policy, says: "It's not rocket science, but it's not always done right." Well, as Darren can attest to, that's where STAR

EV's range of lithium-ion phosphate battery-powered vehicles differ.

Tottenham Hotspur Football Club in North London is a proud member of the UN Race to Zero, committing to halve its carbon emissions by 2030 and become net zero carbon by 2040. It has topped the Premier League sustainability table, produced by the UN-backed Sport Positive and published by BBC Sport, for three years running and Darren was looking for a brand that could aid his grounds team of 45 in continuing its journey to carbon neutrality.

The club needed an alternative form of transport for staff and VIPs around the Training Centre, with a reduced impact on the environment. Having already invested in electric options for tending the pitches, what they needed next was an electric solution



Branding can be added



“When it comes to the quality, the finish and the details of STAR EV, it’s above and beyond what other brands offer.”
Darren Baldwin



It would have been a hard hit to sacrifice productivity for being electric, but with STAR EV we haven’t had to

that encompassed golf buggies, people carriers, utility vehicles and ambulances.

Darren and the management team wanted a brand that could rival the highly productive ‘mules’ in the utility vehicles category that are petrol and diesel without sacrificing on performance, and able to take on the 80-acre site and a wide range of jobs. They had concerns about battery power and the range it could provide, as they needed a reliable as well as efficient

transport solution.

First, Tottenham did a great deal of research into the right partner to work with. And when they heard Reesink UK, with whom they maintain a successful relationship for its turfcare machinery, had a new e-Vehicles division focusing solely on electric utility vehicles, they trusted them with delivering the Training Centre with the best possible solution for an all-electric fleet.

Tottenham Hotspur acquired 15 Capella Work Machines utility vehicles to load various materials and aid in housekeeping and maintenance duties, three all-electric ambulances (two Capella CP-4 and an AP48-4) to assist the medical teams, as well as a Sirius 2+2 four-seater people carrier to help transport staff and host VIP tours - a total of 19 all-electric vehicles from STAR EV, the brand distributed by Reesink e-Vehicles in the UK.

The grounds team now fulfils its many day-to-day tasks knowing the work is done quickly and efficiently, whilst also helping the club reach its sustainability goals by using only all-electric power. They provide a quiet and smooth ride, are easy, quick and comfortable to use and produce no fumes. And with a range of up to 75 miles, a day’s



The ambulance gurney, seen here, is applauded for how it slides on and off and locks in securely with just two clicks of the handle.



They are market-leading when it comes to towing capacity, and the amount of payload they can handle competes with all the others we’ve ever used

Darren Baldwin



work is never interrupted.

The team has found charging is both easy and reliable: there is no need for any expensive infrastructure as they can be used with any regular socket and topped up when needed, and there are clear controls to show what charge is left so that the buggies never run out of power and are ready to be used at a moment's notice.

The role of sustainability in the management of sports recreation and leisure facilities can help drive down running costs and make a real contribution in the battle against climate change.

The training facilities and stadium may make up a small proportion of the

overall travel requirement of a club; but the suitability of electric utility and passenger transport in these environments is unprecedented. The noise reduction is markable, and the complete elimination of emissions has to be an advantage to any top level club. As all sectors of all business strive to reduce their carbon footprint, it's not always easy to know where to start. But as any football manager will say, 'there is no such thing as an easy win'. I beg to differ when it comes to swapping from petrol or diesel to electric utility vehicles at the training ground and stadium: it's an easy win for all.

Travel will always be a part of professional

football, but by taking concrete steps towards sustainable mobility, the game can continue to please audiences around the globe with a much reduced footprint. It only takes a bit of commitment - from the likes of Tottenham Hotspur - and innovation - from the likes of STAR EV - to make a big change.



To talk to Reesink about the STAR EV range, call 01480 226800 or go online at reesink-evehicles.co.uk



"They are market-leading when it comes to towing capacity, and the amount of payload they can handle competes with all the others we've ever used." Darren Baldwin

Frank Newberry

All feedback is good feedback

Popular trainer and conference speaker Frank Newberry explores the notion that all feedback and complaints (from colleagues and customers) are good. He looks at how even the most vicious, negative feedback can be good for the individual, the team and the organisation. He suggests that we should use 'feedback contracts' with colleagues at work and encourage more complaints from customers!

I am grateful to a Pitchcare reader in the golf sector who, during a consultation, mentioned that he had got a complaint not long before, and he (in his own words) 'took it personally'. I imagine that this meant the criticism was painful, and the pain lingered, and stayed on his mind for a long time.

I suspect that this happens to a lot of people in the golf, grounds, landscaping and horticulture sectors.

He took it 'professionally' rather than personally

After a discussion, we agreed that he might like to consider that perhaps he 'took it professionally' rather than personally. After all, such strength of feeling about performance and results is the mark of a true professional. It is of course worth saying that a professional knows whether s/he has done a good job or not - in a variety of circumstances.

Why then is ALL feedback good feedback? Good, whether or not it is helpful or brutal, unsolicited or well placed, undeserved or fair comment?

If feedback is handled well and is fair comment - I would say that was good. If we can set up feedback mechanisms that reduce the damage caused by vicious and negative feedback - that would also be good. If we just shut up and do nothing, or worse still, become resentful of the feedback giver and get de-motivated at work - then I would say that was bad.

Why we should encourage people to complain

Retail pioneer Marshall Field (1834-1906) seemed to think that we should celebrate getting complaints at work! If a colleague or a customer notices an error or a mistake in our performance and takes the time and trouble to point it out - we should thank them for their efforts. Thank them for going out of their way to help us do a better job or provide a better service. The complainer is on our side, s/he is part of our team - that is why we should encourage people to complain!

In the UK and some other countries, many people are polite and perhaps rather shy. They would rather not make a complaint, and risk embarrassing themselves - or others. Worse still, they could get themselves into an altercation - when they are just trying to be helpful. So they say nothing. The mistake or error goes uncorrected until it is noticed at a later time.

I have seen research that suggests that many people would never complain to an individual or to an organisation. They never-the-less tell up to three or four other people about the problem they experienced - and these people (potential customers) then each tell up to three more people. So now an ever increasing number of people know about the problem, but no one tells the person who can correct it! S/he remains ignorant of the error.

People seem to be too nice to complain

I once explained these research findings to an Italian restaurant owner in the UK - who was shocked that people seem to be too nice to complain. His angry reaction was along the lines of: 'You mean that my



restaurant could be going out of business? All because British people are too nice? ... Not in my country!

I suspect that given this 'niceness' situation, many of us may need to make it easier for people to complain. We might have to put up friendly notices, hand out flyers and send emails that say that we really welcome feedback. We want them (our customers) to help us be the very best we can be. We may need to make our feedback processes simpler and keep them non-confrontational.

Some of us may need to be more positive and show greater understanding when we get feedback. Thanking the complainer and enthusing over them taking the trouble to help us be the best we can.

I think we all need to remember Marshall Field's famous words:

*Those who enter to buy, support me.
Those who come to flatter, please me.*

Those who complain, teach me how I may please others so that more will come.

Only those who are displeased - but do not complain - hurt me. They refuse me permission to correct my errors and thus improve my service.

Problems with Feedback

Turning now to some of the main problems with feedback from colleagues in the workplace:

- 1 Sadly, criticism from a work colleague can often cause performance to get worse before it gets better. This can often be because the feedback was not given for some time - perhaps well after the performance problem became evident. The feedback therefore came as a surprise because the individual thought they were doing OK.

- 2 The self-esteem of the person being criticised can go down immediately - despite the repeated reassurances of the feedback giver. The reassurances are seen as fake and seem only to be being given because the individual has been upset by the criticism.
- 3 Some people see 'constructive' criticism as 'destructive' criticism - dressed up as 'constructive' criticism. Previous damaging criticism given by a past colleague may have caused the individual to lose confidence and trust in feedback being given by everyone else since.
- 4 The individual can feel threatened and defensive, often from the outset of the feedback discussion. Typically denial ('it wasn't me') can be the immediate reaction.

I have experienced each of the above problems, both as a giver and receiver of feedback. Sadly, like many people I did not have a good example to follow, so I adopted the 'tell me how you want me to handle it' approach.

This meant holding one-to-one meetings with each member of the team to ask them:

'How do you like your feedback?'

'If you make a big mistake - how do you want me to play it?'

'If you feel I have made a bad mistake, or let you down - how do you want to play it?'

Unsurprisingly, the last of these three questions was a tricky one for my team members. Five of them needed time to think about the question, and one outright refused my request for feedback - saying that it was not part of the job.

Feedback Contract

After time to think, my team agreed a Feedback Contract that had these features:

- 1 The feedback had to be given in a private place (the pub was the most popular choice)
- 2 The feedback had to be by appointment - no surprises, no ambushes, no UVF (unsolicited vicious feedback)
- 3 In strictest confidence - no discussions or disclosures to anyone else
- 4 A chance to respond (or think about it first - and then respond)
- 5 Use of an agreed method, e.g. 'give it to me straight', 'a praise sandwich' i.e. praise-criticism-praise, 'get me drunk and then tell me'
- 6 A review at the end, and a follow up later in the day - to check everything was OK.

© 2022 Frank Newberry

Training Module

I have some good news. If you would like to learn more, and even practise constructing feedback contracts and giving and receiving feedback - I am running a three hour training module on this topic at BTME on Wednesday 25th January 2023.

The module is called 'Criticising and Correcting People at Work'. If you have never been to 'Continue to Learn' at BTME - follow this link to a slide presentation on Continue to Learn classes:

www.btme.org.uk/continue-to-learn/classes.html



Getting feedback right is so important and I wish you well in this important part of the work that you do



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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side
of the industry

Southend United to hold talks with sponsor

Southend United have found themselves the subject of mockery after the renaming of one of their stands resulted in an unfortunate name check of notorious serial killer Rose West.

New sponsors Gilbert & Rose estate agents have given their name to the West stand at Roots Hall stadium.



It is common for naming rights for stadium stands to be sold to companies, and it is an important source of revenue, particularly for lower league clubs. But, it appears that the National League side did not foresee the issues that might arise from naming a stand the "Gilbert & Rose West Stand".

The unfortunate name check of Rose West has caused something of a storm on social media; she is currently serving a whole life term for the 10 murders after being arrested in 1994.

Southend are now set to discuss 'a different arrangement of words' with the sponsor.

Golf game leads to \$250,000 lottery win

A North Carolina man said a good day on the golf course led to his winning a \$250,000 lottery jackpot.

James Bock, 79, of Raleigh, said he decided to buy a \$5 Mega Bucks Limited Edition scratch-off ticket after he won \$15 the day before playing golf.

Bock said he was stunned to scratch off a \$250,000 prize. "I'm still shaking, I can't believe it. Holy cow."



Bock said his oversized ceremonial cheque will have a new home beside his two hole-in-one trophies and that he would be buying himself a new set of clubs.

Scammers arrested after fake IPL

A fake version of cricket's Indian Premier League - set up to con gamblers in Russia - has been broken up after police arrested the gang behind it.



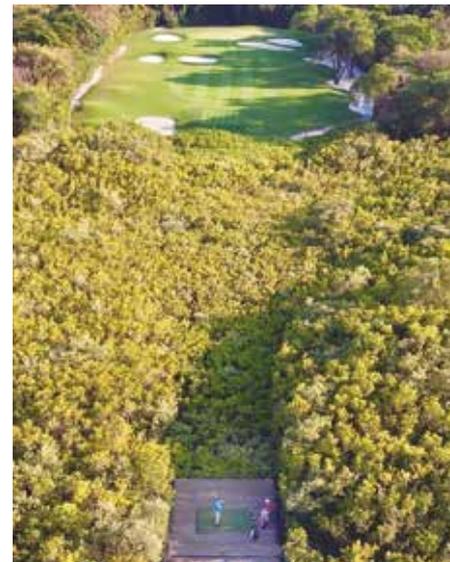
The elaborate hoax saw the conmen hire a farmer's field in Gujarat and set up cameras to film the bogus games.

According to reports, labourers and local unemployed people were hired to masquerade as players and created fake team names, with the players wearing official IPL kits.

The games were then streamed live on YouTube to unsuspecting betting operations in Russia.

"Crowd noise sound effects downloaded from the internet made the ambiance appear authentic," the paper reported.

As seen on social media ...



Erm...I think I'll skip this hole at the Ocean Reef Club, Florida



If John Deere made fungi



Extreme grass cutting

If you spot anything you think might give readers a chuckle send it to:
kerry.haywood@pitchcare.com

DIARY DATES

SEPTEMBER

2nd: Golf - Women's World Cup qualifying: Luxembourg v Northern Ireland; Greece v Wales (uefa.com/womensworldcup)

3rd: Football - Women's World Cup qualifying: Austria v England (uefa.com/womensworldcup)

6th: Football - Women's World Cup qualifying: England v Luxembourg; Latvia v Northern Ireland; Wales v Slovenia; Faroe Islands v Scotland (uefa.com/womensworldcup)

7th: Industry - RTM Live 2022 (rtmachinery.co.uk)

8th-11th: Golf - PGA Championship, Wentworth, Virginia Water (europeantour.com)

8th-12th: Cricket - England v South Africa third Test, The Oval (ecb.co.uk)

11th: Athletics - Great North Run, Newcastle (greatrun.org)

9th-11th: Rugby Union - World Cup Sevens 2022, Cape Town (rwcsevens.com)

22nd-25th: Golf - Presidents Cup, Quail Hollow Club, Charlotte, North Carolina (presidentscup.com)

22nd-27th: Football - Nations League group stage featuring England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland concludes (uefa.com)

23rd-25th: Tennis - 2022 Laver Cup, The O2, London (lavercup.com)

24th: Rugby League - Super League Grand Final, Old Trafford, Manchester (superleague.co.uk)

OCTOBER

2nd: London Marathon (tcs londonmarathon.com)

8th-12th November: Rugby Union - Women's World Cup, New Zealand (rugbyworldcup.com/2021)

15th-19th November: Rugby League - Men's, Women's and Wheelchair World Cups, England (rlwc2021.com)

17th-14th November: Cricket - Men's T20 World Cup, Australia (t20worldcup.com)

29th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, Scotland v Australia, Murrayfield (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

31st - 6th November: Tennis - 2022 WTA Finals, Shenzhen, China (wtatennis.com)

NOVEMBER

2nd-3rd: Industry - GMA SALTEX, Birmingham NEC (saltex.org.uk)

5th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, Scotland v Fiji, Murrayfield; Wales v New Zealand, Cardiff; Ireland v South Africa, Dublin; France v Australia, Paris (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

6th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, England v Argentina, Twickenham (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

8th-13th: Tennis - Billie Jean King Cup Finals, Glasgow (billiejeankingcup.com)

12th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, Ireland v Fiji, Dublin; England v Japan, Twickenham; Wales v Argentina, Cardiff; France v South Africa, Marseille (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

13th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, Barbarians v All Blacks, Tottenham Hotspur Stadium; Scotland v New Zealand, Murrayfield (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

19th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, Wales v Georgia, Cardiff; Scotland v Argentina, Murrayfield; England v New Zealand, Twickenham; Ireland v Australia, Dublin (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

20th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, France v Japan, Toulouse (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

21st-18th December: Football - FIFA World Cup, Qatar (fifa.com/worldcup)

26th: Rugby Union - Autumn Internationals, Wales v Australia, Cardiff; England v South Africa, Twickenham (autumninternationals.co.uk/2022)

QUOTE ME HAPPY

"It was hot from the temperature, hot between the benches, hot on the field and hot between the spectators - everything you want and hope for in a match like this early in the season" **Blues boss Thomas Tuchel and Tottenham head coach Antonio Conte went head-to-head, face-to-face, even nose-to-nose in an escalating squabble that ended with both receiving post-match red cards in their recent 2-2 draw.**

"I knew I was playing a physical game and I expected to get injured. My body is wrecked. But nobody said there was a chance I would get dementia within a decade, nobody was talking about concussion." **Justin Wring spoke out after his recent dementia diagnosis.**

"I had gone a bit crazy in my head and I thought extra time finished at 115 mins. I'd been screaming at the ref for five mins to blow the whistle, so when it finally went it was a massive relief." **Women's England captain Leah Williamson on hearing that whistle in the Euros final.**



Leah Williamson

"We were little bit more casual about the whole thing, as opposed to some of the athletes who had worked for four years. Although, there were high jinks from other teams. I remember some Canadian athletes got hold of this big slingshot and they were using it to pepper people with oranges and whatever else they could find." **Spinner Brad Young reminisced about the Commonwealth Games back in his day.**

If Erik ten Hag did not already appreciate the task he has taken on, he does now. If he is to transform United, he needs the Glazers to help him do it." **Reporter Chris Wheeler after Manchester United's manager got off to the worst possible start, as his side slumped to a 2-1 defeat against Brighton & Hove Albion.**

"Sixty-five rugby sevens matches were played at the Arena in three days and a pitch, new or established, could not withstand that amount of wear and tear, and then be in pristine condition a week later, regardless of the efforts of the ground staff." **Wasps Group chief executive Stephen Vaughan says he is "saddened" by the criticism aimed at the Premiership rugby club about their "unsafe pitch".**

"I'd describe the Northern Ireland cricket team which took part as a cross between Cool Runnings and the Dirty Dozen," **joked ex-Northern Ireland seamer Paul McCrum when they made their one, and so far only, appearance at an international cricket tournament as a separate nation.**

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