

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

February/March 2021

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DON'T MISS

Their moment to shine
The widest gap in FA Cup history saw Marine AFC take on Spurs in the third round. Just how excited were the groundstaff?

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Situated on the banks of the River Mersey, five miles south of Manchester city centre, Northenden Golf Club's Course Manager Scott Gardner has just completed his first year and, in his own words, tells us about life on the course and how he has settled in

A harsh reality

Eight months on from the last FIFA Update, Blair Ferguson talks with the world governing body's Senior Pitch Management Manager, Alan Ferguson, and discovers a lot has changed in the landscape of international football due to the COVID-19 situation

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PITCHCARE

When Covid comes calling

You continuously see the news, the stats and the daily figures for people who have lost their lives to this awful virus but, when Covid comes calling, it suddenly becomes very real!

This month has been particularly hard for me as both my mum and step-dad contracted the virus (as well as many other family members). They stick to the rules, they follow government guidance, but when one person got it - it spread like wildfire through my family. I live an hour away from home, but that would be irrelevant anyway, given there was nothing I could do to help. After many worrying days, tears and sleepless nights, they are over the worst - but no doubt with many weeks/months of recovery ahead of them. However, I am truly thankful, and I don't underestimate how lucky they have been.

I'm sure we all have our stories and personal accounts - with probably much worse outcomes than my experience, but it struck me how important it is to be understanding and compassionate with the people you work with and those in your teams. We don't know what personal struggles and experiences each and every one of them are going through or dealing with. We all have daily battles - no matter how big or small - and it's important to take each day as it comes. Something many of you do as a matter of course.

Testament to this saw January bring some of the most brutal weather conditions the country has seen, and it was no small task for groundsmen up and down the country to get games on. Lee Williams looks at some of the positive support and media coverage received on page 12.

As we go to press, the uncertainty of whether the National League football season will be scrapped is going to a vote. The worrying fate of clubs hangs in the balance, with the government confirming that funding to compensate for fans not being allowed in stadiums will come in the form of loans and not grants. If this is the case, it is difficult to see how the season could continue.

A question I have been asked a lot over the past couple of weeks, is whether our industry shows will go ahead this year. I wish I had a crystal ball - as do BIGGA and the GMA I suspect - but it's very difficult to say where we will be in a couple of months. For now, our new ways of doing business continues.

This all sounds pretty grim, but there is a glimmer of light with the vaccine rollout and we must try to stay positive.

Keep going and reach out if you're struggling.

Kerry Haywood
Editor



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"It was hard to plan as you simply did not know when one of the team may have had to go into isolation, there was furlough to think about, and staff still had annual holidays to take"

Gary McKie, Nelson Golf Club

"The great thing for us was when we saw Gareth Bale warming up; Mourinho playing him indicated to us that the pitch was holding up"

James Tomlinson, Marine AFC

"One of my favourite pieces of advice to give to a groundsmen is to stop and think about why you are doing something; if you can't explain why you are doing it, you almost certainly shouldn't do it"

John Lawrence, Edgbaston Priory

"The more we believe in the restrictions, the more we become frustrated and dissatisfied with the people who ignore them"

Frank Newberry, Trainer

"The cleaner cut achieved by relief grinding gives a higher standard of after-cut appearance, which also reduces the stress on components because less horsepower is needed to drive the cylinder"

Clive Nottingham, Hunter Grinders

"I am lucky to have a good network of staff, friends and family that help keep my mind busy and inspire me to reach my goals. Life is too short to be negative and bitter"

Scott Gardner, Northenden Golf Club

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Scott Gardner, Northenden Golf Club

COVER STORY: Taking care of business

Northenden Golf Club survived fires and floods before a complete redesign and reconstruction in 1973. Situated on the banks of the River Mersey, five miles south of Manchester city centre, Course Manager Scott Gardner has just completed his first year and, in his own words, tells us about life on the course and how he has settled in. **P14**

GOLF

Wharfe factor one

In the winter, the number one problem at Ilkley Golf Club is flooding. The course, which nestles in the lovely Wharfe Valley, is situated in a flood plain. With the UK experiencing a significant increase in heavy rainfall, flooding has become more frequent in recent years. Lee Williams met with long-serving Head Greenkeeper Duncan Campbell to discuss how he manages the course after the floodwaters have receded. **P26**

Reaching the Heights

Situated in an area known as Marsden Heights, midway between the Lancashire towns of Burnley and Colne, Nelson Golf Club is an Alister MacKenzie designed course that was skillfully laid out as to avoid any wearisome climbing. Lee Williams met up with Gary McKie, the club's thirty-eight year old Head Greenkeeper. **P34**

Monumental Efforts

It was formed in the late 1800s and still proudly sits under Knockagh Hill near Belfast. Chris McCullough paid a visit to Greenisland Golf Club to meet Head Greenkeeper Mark Middleton to discover how he and his small team look after this 9-hole course set in the shadows of the Knockagh Monument War Memorial. **P42**

WINTER SPORTS

A harsh reality

Eight months on from the last FIFA Update, Blair Ferguson talks with the world governing body's Senior Pitch Management Manager, Alan Ferguson, and discovers a lot has changed in the landscape of international football due to the COVID-19 situation. **P48**

Their moment to shine

Marine Association Football Club recently encountered a once in a lifetime experience, reaching the FA Cup third-round, where they drew Premier League Tottenham Hotspur at home. We could only imagine what it was like for the grounds team of the eighth-tier club to prepare the pitch for the world to see, so we spoke to contractors Gary Powell and James Tomlinson to find out more. **P56**

Turning life and the pitch around

The experienced Head Groundsman at Hednesford Town FC, David Bates, is one of the most experienced men you'll find in the turf industry. In this interview, David tells his extraordinary story of how he entered the turf industry, in a rather unusual way and how he turned Hednesford's poor pitch into one of the best stages in non-league football. **P62**

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Managing the Perse strings

Steeped in history, with a vision to 'strive for the greater good', The Perse School, Cambridge, is a charitable company and one of the country's leading independent day schools. Head of Grounds and Gardens, Ed Ramsden, spoke to Kerry Haywood about how he's adopting the school's vision to improve the facilities and grounds. **P66**

MULTI SPORTS

Juggling sports

Timperley Sports Club is one of the country's oldest remaining community sports clubs. The large site includes two cricket outfield and two all-weather pitches. Andy Horsfield, the club's thirty-three-year-old Head Groundsman, has his hands full (single handily) maintaining the site and juggling the many teams who call it home **P78**

SUMMER SPORTS

A different approach to renovations

To really understand the point of this article, we need to begin at the end. Assistant Grounds Manager at The Edgbaston Priory Club John Lawrence explains that the 'why' is perhaps the most important part of this article. Knowledge gives us the ability to make informed decisions. However, to understand the reasoning for diving so far in to the 'why' you need to know what they have concluded. **P86**

EQUESTRIAN

Small but perfectly formed

At the grass roots of jumps racing, Sedgefield's grounds team aims for improved standards on its tight and steep course. Jane Carley talks to Clerk of the Course Michael Naughton and Head Groundsman Mark Watson. **P98**



The Sedgefield grounds team: (L-R) Michael Pritchard, Andrew Metcalfe, Mark Watson and Michael Naughton

INDUSTRY

From Pigs to Pitches

It all started twenty years ago when pig farmer Alan Chappelow had a 'light bulb moment', and so began Alan Chappelow Sports Grounds Contractors. David Mears chatted recently to Alan's youngest son Ben, discovering how this West Yorkshire based family company came to fruition and has developed. **P102**

TECHNICAL

Choosing value for money machinery

In this article, we talk to Chris Walker, demonstrations manager at Reesink Turfcare, about what to look out for when demonstrating a machine, and how to get the best value for your money. **P108**

The Cost Benefits

Clive Nottingham of Hunter Grinders highlights the benefits of Relief Grinding to improve performance and enhance cost savings. **P112**

Plant stress on sports turf

Drones and remote sensing technology, such as multispectral and thermal cameras, have the potential to detect early symptoms of stress in turf grass. A pilot project was conducted to determine if or how this technology could help sports turf maintenance. This article focuses on the early detection of the turf grass disease Grey Leaf Spot, which is caused by the harmful fungus *Pyricularia* spp. **P112**

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Playing Your Part

Trainer Frank Newberry looks at a simple approach to communicating and implementing change in the workplace. He outlines the four key requirements that will need to be met if change is to be handled successfully (by either team leaders, or by team members - who want to make a difference). **P120**



Ed Ramsden, Perse School



Gary McKie, Nelson Golf Club



John Lawrence, Edgbaston Priory



Andy Horsfield, Timperley Sports Club

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New crumb concerns

New carcinogens discovered in rubber crumb

It has recently been discovered that the rubber crumb in artificial turf contain even more harmful and carcinogenic substances than had previously been assumed. Furthermore, several of these substances are even more prone to leaking than the substances that had previously been identified as being harmful.

This information was revealed by a new doctoral study conducted by chemist Ewa Skoczynska from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU). According to her supervisor, Jacob de Boer, a professor of environmental chemistry and toxicology, these findings mean that the current standards for rubber crumb should be much stricter.

A total of 46 substances have been found, about half of them are new substances, several of which are carcinogenic or otherwise harmful.

In addition to the group of known carcinogens, Skoczynska also discovered a group of suspected carcinogens. There is also a third group of substances, but nothing is known of their toxicity and more research is needed to establish their effects under specific circumstances.

Up until now, research into the health and environmental risks posed by artificial turf has focused exclusively on the 16 polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that are already known to be carcinogenic and harmful. The current safety standards for artificial turf are based on this knowledge.

According to Professor De Boer and Ms Skoczynska, the standards currently approved by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) are in need of an overhaul because an increased number of toxic substances that are also more prone to leaking from rubber crumb not only increase the risks to the environment, but also the risks to health, especially if they come into contact with skin, which occurs when people play sports on artificial turf. "There are, therefore, much

stronger indications of greater risks. Rubber crumb contain many more substances," said Skoczynska.

According to Skoczynska, what is different about the properties of a number of the newly-discovered substances is that, unlike the carcinogens that are already known, these substances leak out of rubber crumb more easily. "This is definitely a problem for the environment."

The cumulative effect of all these substances together is not yet clear. "We still have a lot to learn in this respect," said Professor De Boer. According to the professor there is a real likelihood that these substances reinforce each other.

Shortly after Zembra TV's 'Dangerous Play' programme on the health risks of exercising on artificial turf containing rubber crumb, broadcast in 2016 - VU University conducted a study involving zebra fish. When the fish and their embryos were exposed to water containing rubber crumb, the embryos died and the fish displayed behavioural changes.

VU University found that this study indicated that rubber crumb contains more than just PAHs and the 16 substances that are already known to be harmful and it is necessary to identify them. Until we know more some scientists, including toxicologist Martin van de Berg, said that the government should apply the precautionary principle and prohibit sporting activities on artificial turf. The RIVM, however, maintained that it is safe to play on artificial turf.

The VU continued its research into rubber crumb. Skoczynska used a new method to identify unknown substances in rubber crumb.

Using an ultrasonic treatment method enabled her to extract more substances from crumb, which she then screened using an advanced new technique that had not previously been used to measure substances in rubber crumb.

This new technique enabled Skoczynska to identify 46 substances. If this research is continued, she is convinced that she will find even more substances in rubber crumb.

This doctoral research has come at an extraordinary moment. The European Commission is currently reconsidering the future of artificial turf pitches containing rubber crumb in Europe in its efforts to combat environmental pollution caused by microplastics.

The granules in rubber crumb are classified as microplastics. De Boer finds that the newly discovered toxic substances are crucial to determining the new standards to be set by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA).

The current standard for rubber crumb is 2000 times less strict than the standard for toys. But because many children play sports on artificial turf containing rubber granules, numerous scientists have been calling for stricter standards for some time. "We now find that PAHs are not the only reason why the standard should become more stringent. Rubber crumb contains many more harmful substances, which is an extra reason for a drastic reduction," said De Boer.

The professor expects that sports fields containing rubber crumb will eventually become a thing of the past. "I am pretty sure of this. You do not want to run this kind of risk and these types of sports fields are not even necessary."



OBITUARY - Ron Harrod

Touching tributes have been paid to Ron Harrod, the much-loved husband of 67 years to Margaret, Rotarian and founder of the internationally recognised company Harrod UK Ltd who sadly passed away on the 29th December 2020.

The "Slim Dynamic East Anglian" as he was fondly named by a London PR guru was immensely respected and loved by everyone he came in to contact with.

Paying tribute to her father, Stephanie Harrod said "My father was a wonderful, kind generous, supportive man with an entrepreneurial spirit."

"We had a fantastic working relationship too and he gave us freedom to always try something new."

"My father was very proud of our achievements and always gave us lots of

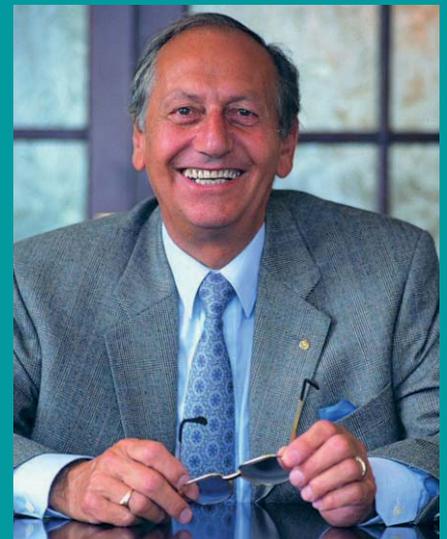
praise and encouragement."

"He was a very principled man who had high standards and values, he genuinely believed his motto 'the customer is king' and he instilled these values in us, his legacy will live on through us and our amazing team."

"Above all he was my dad, kind, caring and always there for me".

Paying tribute to his father, Chris Harrod said, "We managed to have such a good working relationship as well as a true bond as father and son, which is quite rare. I will miss him dearly"

In his personal life, Ron was a highly active Rotarian, and his fundraising raffles and bottle stalls at local events were legendary. Funding all the prizes personally himself, he had a way of getting people to participate because of his endless enthusiasm to local good causes.



New Strategy

Sport England: £50m Extra Funding and a Focus on Children and the Disadvantaged

English grassroots sport is set to receive an extra £50m worth of funding, as part of Sport England's new 10-year strategy. Called "Unite the Movement", the strategy was published at the end of January and outlines the sport body's plans to "transform the nation's fitness levels and tackle obesity".

The £50m extra support will be distributed during 2021 to help sports recover from the impact of the pandemic. The funding is in addition to the £220m that the agency has already invested since the start of the crisis.

The strategy, which will set the course for Sport England until 2031, places children and those most disadvantaged in society at the heart of activities and initiatives. In order to reach these groups, the strategy outlines the importance of providing different types of investment and support, with an emphasis on looking for "new and innovative ways to increase participation" - such as better use of technology and data.

The strategy also calls for "effective investment models" and increased partnerships.

It states: "The right kinds of investment, timed well and delivered skilfully, can stimulate demand, provide opportunities to get active, enable innovation, encourage collaboration, reduce inequalities and enable greater sustainability."



"We will continue to build, establish and grow partnerships and a common purpose across both the government and our sector to join up policies, strategies and approaches."

In the strategy, Sport England also hints that funding will be made available to an even broader range of applicants, in order to engage people from "hard to reach" backgrounds.

"All activity matters, but for tens of millions of people, being active depends on organised sport and physical activity," the strategy paper reads. "By organised, we mean arranged by people - it could be anything from an exercise class or a led walking group, through to a

parkrun or a Sunday league football game."

There will also be funding made available for "investing in new people, skills, and methods" to ensure engagement of disadvantaged groups.

To find out more about the new strategy, visit the Sport England website: www.sportengland.org/news



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2021 Golf Environment Awards Winners

Virtual Ceremony sees the four 2021 winners crowned



Jon Budd



Paul Johnson



Jon Keepen



Richard Johnstone

The STRI announced the winners of the Golf Environment Awards 2021 during their first ever virtual ceremony in late December.

In an odd year, to say the least, the Golf Environment Awards provided a beacon of hope and a sense of community. The awards bring the greenkeeping industry together, if not always in person, and the Golf Environment Awards continue to provide a platform to showcase all that is good in golf.

This year's Golf Environment Awards are:

Effingham Golf Club - Operation Pollinator 2021

Having been a finalist in 2019, Effingham Golf Club finally took the award for Operation Pollinator 2021.

As soon as you arrive at Effingham you are greeted by one of many Operation Pollinator areas created by Jon Budd and his team, showing visitors to the Club what to expect as they head out on the golf course. As a result of the greenkeeping team's efforts, the golf course now supports 21 hectares of wildflower rich grassland, managed with pollinators and viability in mind.

As you enter the car park at Effingham, the audibly buzzing wildflower area that welcomes you was once a tennis court. Three years ago, Jon and his team transformed it into a thriving pollinator patch by removing 2 ft of dense clay and replacing with chalk and nutrient-poor soil. The team enlisted the help of Surrey Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation to create a bespoke wildflower seed mix to benefit local pollinating insects and sowed this alongside fescue to create a rich, diverse and long-lasting Operation Pollinator area.

Jon has also introduced two beehives on the golf course nearby one of the many swathes of nectar-rich grassland. He plans to introduce no more hives, understanding the need to reduce competition for our other native bee species in the UK. He communicates this well, along with the other benefits that wildflowers can bring for biodiversity, via YouTube videos, guided walks and course blogs.

Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club - Outstanding Environmental Project of the Year 2021

A truly landscape-scale conservation project took the title of Outstanding Environmental Project of the Year 2021 at Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club. Over the last few years, the team at GEO Certified® Pyle and Kenfig have been part of the Dunes 2 Dunes project, working with Natural Resources Wales, Bridgend County Borough Council, and other local landowners, farms and golf clubs (Royal Porthcawl Golf Club) to restore and enhance the internationally important dune landscape along the Kenfig National Nature Reserve coastline.

The greenkeeping team, headed by Paul Johnson, have now created nine sand scrapes and three dune slacks in areas formerly occupied by scrub, bracken and coarse grasses to knock back natural succession and create new, important habitats within the golf course.

The Club have worked hard to communicate their efforts within the wider community, engaging with volunteers and local school pupils to show them that golf courses are more than greens, tees and fairways, but that they encompass incredibly important habitats and in-house, detailed knowledge on how to manage these for wildlife.

Jon Keepen of Cumberwell Park Golf Club - Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year 2021

After being a finalist in this category in 2018, Jon was crowned the winner of Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year 2021. Having impressed the judges each time he has entered, this year Jon truly wowed the panel with his incredible efforts to enhance the biodiversity within, and beyond, Cumberwell.

Jon regularly communicates his conservation work, using social media as well as presenting talks for members and other community groups such as the Women's Institute. He has also discussed his important work on both TV and radio in the past, spreading the message that golf courses can be managed to support wildlife and let it thrive.

As Head of Conservation, Jon has transformed over 150 acres of the site into rough grassland, creating extensive green corridors throughout the three courses to not only provide important habitat for invertebrates, ground nesting birds and small mammals, but also provide definition to golf holes through the main playing season and reduce management requirements.

Outside of his role as a greenkeeper and conservationist at Cumberwell, Jon regularly assists other local wildlife groups to boost his knowledge, engage his passion for wildlife and continue working towards his own bird ringing licence.

Nairn Dunbar Golf Club - Environmental Golf Course of the Year 2021

A club that has seemingly done it all! Richard Johnstone and the team at GEO Certified® Nairn Dunbar Golf Club have proudly won the award of Environmental Golf Course of the Year 2021. With a sustainable approach across all departments, the Club have seen improved performance thanks to their efforts to reduce environmental impacts and enhance biodiversity.

Out on the golf course, Richard and the greenkeeping staff work tirelessly to manage the difficult links landscape surrounding the golf holes as well as maintaining excellent playing surfaces. Scrub invasion has been reduced year on year with the creation of naturalised sand scrapes and dune grassland, creating valuable habitat for a range of wildlife and reducing maintenance requirements. Other existing habitats within the golf course have been enhanced too.

Reducing waste of all kinds is one of Nairn Dunbar's goals. Recycling bins can be found throughout the links for golfers and visitors to use, and this continues in the clubhouse and maintenance facilities ensuring that very little goes to landfill. Paper use is discouraged throughout the business, reusable water bottles are preferred and bamboo tees are now sold, instead of plastic.

Standing against suicide - Bayer supports CALM

Raising awareness and destroying the taboo around mental health

Following growing concern in the industry around mental health in the turf and amenity sectors, Bayer has teamed up with suicide prevention charity Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) to raise awareness of the support they can offer to anyone struggling.

"Alarming, suicide is the biggest killer of men under 45 in the UK," explains Alan Morris, Bayer environmental science country head.

"In an industry that is largely male dominated which, by its nature, often results in lone and isolated working conditions, the turf and amenity sector presents some big mental wellbeing challenges."

"The last twelve months have been unbelievably tough for everyone in the industry and, as a result, Bayer wants to pledge its support, so this is why we've partnered with CALM to help raise awareness of the services available and destroy the taboo around mental health and suicide," he says.

"We believe that CALM is the right fit for the industry because it not only offers independent support, but it also provides positive practical solutions which resonate with practically minded people."

"In a world where 6,500 people die by suicide in the UK every year, with 75% of these being male, we believe this collaboration could make a difference and help those who are going through tough times," says Alan.

CALM runs a free, anonymous helpline and webchat from 5.00pm to midnight, seven days a week, for anyone who needs to talk about life's problems, including those at a point of crisis.

Maria Kuzak, senior philanthropy manager at CALM, explains that CALM is leading a movement against suicide providing vital, life-saving support, impactful campaigns and collective action.

"On average, 125 people take their own lives in the UK every week. With 75% of all suicides being male. That's unacceptable," she says.

"CALM exists to challenge and change this by offering life-saving services, provoking national conversation, and bringing people together to empower everyone to reject living miserably, so that we stand together against suicide."

"We are grateful for Bayer's support which will help us reach thousands more people who could be struggling with their mental health, as



well as raising awareness of CALM's vital life-saving services," explains Maria.

"That is why we are delighted to kick things off with a series of virtual events, and over the course of the partnership create genuine change by removing the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide."

CALM services helpline: 0800 58 58 58

Webchat: <https://www.thecalzone.net/>



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Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards entries open for 2021

Toro and Reesink determined that the Awards will go ahead in 2021



2019 winner Jason Norwood visiting The Toro Company headquarters in Minnesota as part of his prize for winning

If there's ever been a time when the industry needed something to look forward to and a reason to applaud greenkeeping talent, 2021 is it. And the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards is back and the way to do just that.

2020 was a tough year and there are undoubtedly so many greenkeepers who coped stoically in the face of furlough, put in the extra mile on a reduced team, used lockdown time to further their learning or just shined in adversity.

David Cole from award sponsor and Toro distributor Reesink Turfcare says: "Think back over the last year to which of your members of staff have demonstrated their mettle whether in the actual or virtual classroom or out on the course. Let's make sure all of those young people are recognised with a nomination, give them a chance to look back on this time and remember it for something positive."

"It was hugely disappointing not to have a competition last year, but we're determined the 32nd Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards will be even more valued, and no one should miss out because of the unforeseen pandemic. Therefore, we're welcoming new entries for 2021 who will join the entries from the postponed 2020 event."

It's important to remember that it's not just the students who benefit from winning, their nominators do too. Not only do they receive an all-expenses paid trip abroad the following year, but the winner's success is testament to the excellent support they receive from their employers and lecturers, who Reesink and Toro are also delighted to be able to recognise.

Entries are open now for both the main and young awards. All those who entered the 2020 competition will automatically be put forward for the 2021 awards. If someone is currently twenty-one and has their birthday before the

Campey Turf Care say farewell to David Briggs



Campey Turf Care Systems have announced the passing, just before Christmas, of David Briggs, who had been suffering with Parkinson's disease.

David joined Campey Turf Care Systems in 2000 and retired in 2017. He was a successful product specialist for Southern England. He made a subtle but significant impact on industry methods of creating dealership networks and direct customer contact, both in the UK and abroad.

David was instrumental in establishing a highly effective dealer network for Campey machinery, in Southern Europe. He was always a popular and much respected member of the team. David was also highly regarded and well respected amongst his colleagues and customers alike.

We offer our sincerest condolences to his wife Diane and all the family at this incredibly sad time.

next application stage, they can choose whether they would like to stay in the young group or move up to the main award.

David concludes: "For thirty-one years, the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards have supported the brightest young professionals in the UK's greenkeeping industry and never before has there been a cancelled event. We do not plan on that being two! If the regional stage, usually in July, has to be held virtually, not a problem, we're all au fait enough with Zoom now! We are confident that the September Finals can happen in a positive and engaging format and, excitingly, at a new location, yet to be revealed."

Both employers and lecturers can make nominations. Visit reesinkturfcare.co.uk/sgoty to find out how to make a nomination into the 2021 awards.

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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SOIL sign up for Gore

Gore sign up to S.O.S. Soil

The Solid Waste Treatment Team of W.L. Gore & Associates (Gore) signed the Manifesto of the international initiative "S.O.S. SOIL - Save Organics in Soil". This initiative aims to highlight the importance of soil organic matter to encourage policy makers to develop instruments to move Europe towards implementing sustainable, climate proof soil management practice.

Gore welcomes this initiative, that is led by the European Compost Network (ECN) and the Italian Composting and Biogas Association (Consorzio Italiano Compostatori, CIC) and has not only signed S.O.S. SOIL's Manifesto to demonstrate support, but also contributes through its GORE® Cover business solutions to the initiative's goals.

High quality composts play an essential role in maintaining, improving and also recovering soil health and substitute synthetic fertilisers. As a major component of Covered Aerated Static Piles (CASP) Systems, GORE® Cover System Technology enables operators of more than 300 installations in thirty countries around the globe to convert more than 4,5 million tonnes of organic waste into high quality compost, including organic farming grades even.



"Our cover product technology is recognised as Best Available Technique under the European Emissions Directive and, through its business, we help make composting a more attractive waste treatment option for communities and private companies. We welcome the initiative of ECN and CIC and contribute not only with our signature but first and foremost through our cover business solutions," says Thomas Terpetschnig, Product Specialist for GORE® Cover.

Ban on bee-harming pesticide lifted

Following lobbying from the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and British Sugar, a product containing the neonicotinoid thiamethoxam was sanctioned for emergency use on sugar beet seeds this year because of the threat posed by a virus.

Conservationists have described the decision as regressive and called for safeguards to prevent the pollution of rivers with rainwater containing the chemical at a time when British insects are in serious decline.

The decision by eleven countries to allow emergency use of the product comes amid a growing awareness of the harmful role played

by refined sugar in the development of long-term health problems.

Matt Shardlow, the chief executive of the invertebrate conservation group Buglife, said it was an "environmentally regressive" decision that would destroy wildflowers and add to an "onslaught" on insects.

"In addition, no action is proposed to prevent the pollution of rivers with insecticides applied to sugar beet," he said. "Nothing has changed scientifically since the decision to ban neonics from use on sugar beet in 2018. They are still going to harm the environment."

Seagrave opens



An exciting new chapter in the history of Leicester City began last month, as the Football Club relocated to its brand-new training complex in north Leicestershire.

Following the transition to the site, Seagrave will now become home to the club's entire men's professional and Academy football operation for generations to come.

To mark the landmark occasion, here are some of the key numbers involved:

7 - buildings in total, including the King Power Centre and Sports Turf Academy

21,593 - the number of new trees and conifers planted across the site, to aid an abundance of natural wildlife

1.5M - litres of water stored on site for irrigation of all pitches, which will be recycled through irrigation lines stretching 9km in total

30 - bedrooms provided for the overnight stays of players and football staff

7,140 - tonnes of grass seed

185,000 - bricks used in the formation of the seven buildings and surrounding structures

200 - televisions installed throughout the centre's various buildings, including in conference rooms, offices, bedrooms and recreational areas

86,000m² - seeds planted in 'off pitch' areas to provide a safe habitat for indigenous wildlife.

The club has said the move to the complex, the former Park Hill Golf course near Seagrave, will boost it on and off-pitch performances.

Trump National stripped of 2022 US PGA Championship

Trump National in Bedminster has been stripped of the US PGA Championship in 2022 as its organisers felt using the course as host would be "detrimental".

The PGA of America voted to terminate the agreement in January.

Former US President Donald Trump, who owns the course, has been accused by Democrats and some Republicans of encouraging the riot in Congress ahead of the inauguration of the incoming President Joe Biden.

A representative for the Trump Organization said they were "incredibly disappointed" with the decision.

"It has become clear that conducting the PGA Championship at Trump Bedminster would be detrimental to the PGA of America brand and would put at risk the PGA's ability to deliver our

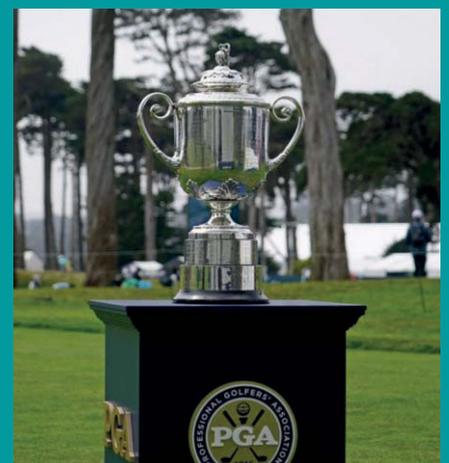
many programmes and sustain the longevity of our mission," said PGA of America President Jim Richerson.

"It was a decision made to ensure the PGA of America and PGA professionals can continue to lead and grow our game for decades to come."

The course in New Jersey, one of seventeen courses around the world owned by Trump, was due to host the major in May 2022.

Another of his properties, Turnberry in Ayrshire, Scotland, has not been selected to host an Open Championship by the R&A since Trump bought the resort in 2014 - with the host venues now finalised up to 2024.

Turnberry's Ailsa course has hosted The Open on four occasions since it first staged the championship in 1977, most recently in 2009.



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Backing and support for battered groundsmen

Lee Williams looks at some of the positive support and media coverage groundsmen received during January's brutal weather

January brought some of the most brutal weather conditions we have seen in recent years. From heavy rain to snow and frost, it has taken some monumental efforts from our groundsmen up and down the country to get matches on.

As a former head groundsman at Oldham Athletic, I know first-hand the pressures they face and the amount of scrutiny they are under, and it is not easy to sit back and be criticised by fans on social media when they do not know the facts. Unfortunately, when working in football, your hands are tied and, often, you cannot defend yourself and explain why your pitch may be struggling.

This generally comes down to lack of investment in the playing surface and not the groundsman's skill. All groundsmen want the best pitch they possibly can throughout the season, no matter what tier of the football league pyramid they are in, and if you do not, I would say you are in the wrong job.

So, it has been a breath of fresh air over the last week to see articles on clubs' websites and in the media supporting groundsmen and explain why their pitches may be worse for wear after what Mike Keegan describes in the Mail as the 'Perfect Storm' - brutal weather, a shortened summer window to renovate and reduced staff.

Premier League Leeds United are a great example of this, with Chief Executive Angus Kinnear coming out in support of their Head Groundsman Kiel Barrett, who I have known for some years now, who has worked wonders with the dated Elland Road pitch since taking over.

Angus Kinnear said; "The criticism should not be levelled at our head groundsman Kiel or his excellent staff. They are managing a pitch which is 25-years-old and suffering from decades of under-investment."

"The fact the pitch is even playable is a testament to Kiel's skills and should win him a Groundsman of the Year award."

"Everyone knows, with the right investment, Kiel and his team will make the Elland Road



Cheltenham Town's pitch ready for kick-off against Man City

surface the best in the country."

Luckily for Kiel and his team, the club is investing in £300k installing a hybrid pitch in time for their fixture against Everton on 3rd February, which is the club's short-term solution. Plans are already in place to work with Hewitt Sportsturf on a complete pitch reconstruction at Elland Road, including a brand-new state of the art drainage system, and this work will begin in May.

Another club which has seen scrutiny over the state of their pitch is Championship side Blackburn Rovers. They are another club who have supported their head groundsman and enabled Trevor Wilkin, who has been at the club since summer 1982, explain the problems they have.

"With just a small window of opportunity to complete the necessary close-season renovation work, we fraise mowed the pitch, before seeding it, but we always knew that, as the season wore on, the pitch would become harder to maintain and withstand the intensity of the fixture schedule due to the lack of growing time in the summer."

"The pitch is nearly thirty years old now and obviously ready to go to the next level, but that comes at a significant cost. However, I feel that if we can just nurse it through February, we can eventually turn the pitch around again, giving the team a reasonable playing surface for the season run-in."

Chief Executive Steve Waggott says Rovers are not alone in having an under par pitch this season, which is something that will be addressed in the summer.

"Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on all our lives and routines over the last eleven months," he said.

"As Trevor has stated, the very short turnaround time afforded to him and his staff -

just over a month rather than the usual ten weeks - to prepare the Ewood Park pitch for this season meant they were unable to carry out the normal full renovation of the pitch due to circumstances out of our control."

"It is worth noting that we are not alone in encountering pitch problems, with other clubs at all levels experiencing the same issues due to the lack of preparation time last summer."

The FA Cup has seen Gareth Bale playing in front of fans in back gardens at Marine, Chorley beating Derby County in the third round and losing in the fourth round to Wolves, plus Cheltenham giving Man City an early shock.

But the main highlight has to be Ben Kay, Chorley's Head Groundsman, sleeping under the SS Stadia MacLeod cover to ensure the Magpies' game against Derby could go ahead after days of wintery weather. It did not get any easier for the club's rising star, who has been invited to work the FA Cup final which he describes as a dream come true. With storm Christoph causing havoc, which brought heavy rain and snow to most of the country, the MacLeod cover was called upon once again to help get the historic Wolves game on, but this time Ben did not have to sleep under the covers!

As much as January has been difficult, it has helped highlight the tremendous work our groundsmen carry out each week and the lengths they are willing to go to get their games on so the players can fulfil their fixtures and give the fans something to look forward to in these difficult and testing times when we are all stuck at home.

I wish all our groundsmen the best of luck through to the end of the season and hope the spring is much kinder to you all and, most of all, stay safe.



Leeds United returning Elland Road



Blackburn Rovers Ewood Park pitch



MacLeod cover at Chorley FC

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PROFESSIONAL X



Northenden Golf Club

Taking care of business

Founded in 1913, Northenden Golf Club survived fires and floods before a complete redesign and reconstruction in 1973. Situated on the banks of the River Mersey, five miles south of Manchester city centre, Course Manager **Scott Gardner** has just completed his first year and, in his own words, tells us about life on the course and how he has settled in



I was first given an opportunity to work as an apprentice greenkeeper at Rishton Golf Club. My role before Northenden was as course manager at Swinton Park Golf and Country Club. I also had some varying experience in similar fields (pun intended), ranging from contracts manager at a UK leading landscaping firm, to draining the family farm's meadows and rough pastures. Along the way, I have gained many qualifications including NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf, PA1, PA2 and PA6, CS30 and 31 chainsaw certificates and Level 2 Health and Safety in the Workplace. I also hold football coaching qualifications as I used to work as an academy goalkeeper coach at Blackburn Rovers.

I have worked and continue to work with some great people, but my main inspiration comes from my late grandfather. Seeing the amount of hours he used to put in on the farm, day in day out - 365 days a year, laid a foundation within me that only few can relate to. Getting up at 2.00am from a young age was my normal and, looking back now, it seems like madness. It set me on a good path with my work output and belief that hard work pays off. Another great inspiration

for me is golf - I have played from a young age to a good standard.

The soil type at Northenden is mainly silty clay. We have two holes that were built on an old tip, so they prove to be a significant ongoing challenge in prolonged dry spells, due to hydrophobic soil conditions. This is created by sunken ground finding its way deeper into the pockets of space, as rubbish beneath decomposes and creates very shallow soil and a rather strange unevenness on two fairways.

The greens are constructed to USGA standard and they were built in 2005. We have a mixed sward, including poa, bents and some fescue. The tees vary from native soil to 50/50 rootzone and a few which are something inbetween. The tees have been confirmed for renewal in the long-term development plan and it was agreed that we could strip, level and turf three holes of tees per year. The construction means that the level of precision required with nutrient inputs and disease pressure, leaching etc. is greater. Given our wet, shaded site, our location and the amounts of rainfall we receive, chemicals leach through the sandy soil profile at a much faster rate than in a



The more golfers that appreciate the level of work, regulations and finance involved, the better chance we become respected and appropriately rewarded



In the summer, it is becoming more and more all about moisture too because of increased long persistent hot and dry spells!

poor draining clay push-up green.

STRI conduct a soil report and I also use two independent companies to test the soil profile twice per year. I test the pH myself and remove soil samples to inspect the core visually.

In terms of being sustainable and not wanting to waste chemicals unnecessarily, I try to time chemical-based applications on growing degree days, and I use Microsoft Excel to analyse data that I input into graphs.

For the microbiology side of things, we brew compost teas fortnightly (predominantly throughout the summer months), to help balance out our nematode activity. We are trying to become more environmentally friendly with our practices overall.

In summer, on the greens, our day-to-day cutting heights are 4mm, sometimes more and sometimes less depending on circumstances such as big competitions, weather or disease etc. We look to carry out at least one form of aeration per week, which is generally a micro-tine with the Toro ProCore or sarrel rolling on a varied schedule. We also use the Air2G2 twice a year and verti-drain often - using various

tine sizes and depths. We scarify and core our greens and overseed 2-3 times per year with varying cultivars to suit our growing environment. We try to verti-cut once a fortnight in summer, followed by topdressing.

We have recently invested in a fleet of Baroness machinery through GGM Groundscare, which has helped us dramatically. We are fortunate enough to have almost all the supporting kit we need for all the none day-to-day tasks such as overseeding or aerating greens. Most of our machines are owned by us after completion of the five-year finance term (seven years for the rough mower due to its higher value).

I have to say that, throughout my career, I have used most brands of machinery and dealt with many companies, but the service from GGM and the quality of cut from Baroness would now take some matching. The greens mower is the best thing the club has purchased for years, in my opinion. It's a very light and capable machine.

In terms of soil biology, we fortnightly use Symbio compost teas which are brewed in-house as well as a liquid endo mycorrhizae before overseeding plus various



I would love for the likes of Sky Sports Golf to interview guest speakers/course managers, to raise awareness for the incredible amount of preparation that is put into a championship venue



New pond



Changing weather patterns (due to climate change) have definitely affected us. Warming weather patterns and more flooding make managing a golf course more difficult year upon year

biostimulants. Our chemical programme is carefully cherry-picked based on our current requirements. I use Excel spreadsheets and graphs for data cross-referencing with moisture levels, rain, soil temperatures, disease levels and types etc. so that I know exactly what to put into the greens and how long certain chemicals will last.

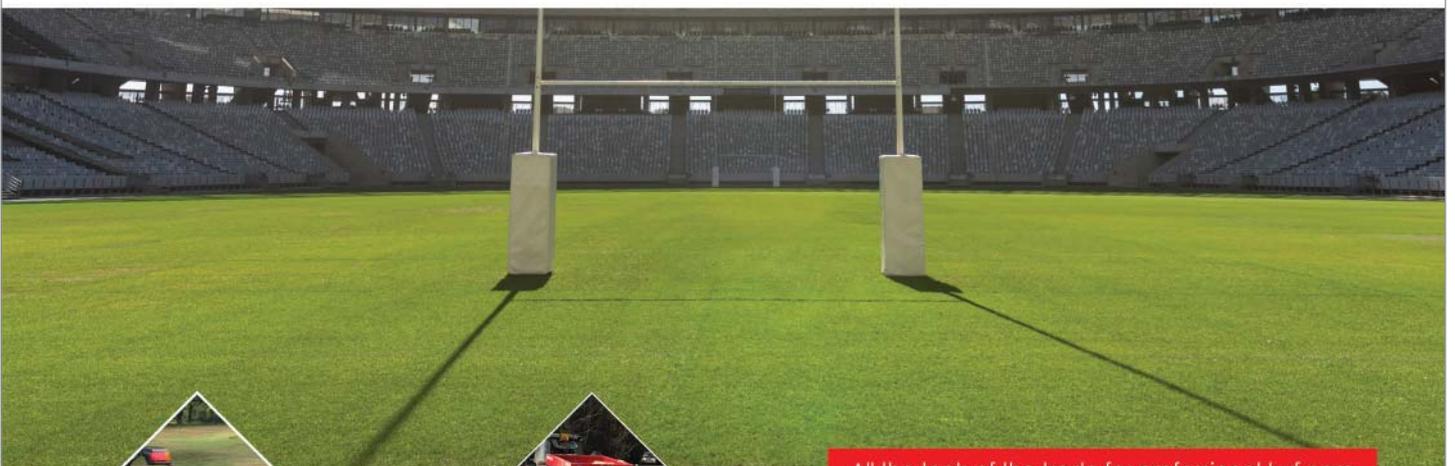
We occasionally suffer from localised flooding after heavy rainfall, resulting in saturated soil conditions for most of the

winter. This can be frustrating as it often means hole closures and taking backward steps in maintenance practices. I have only been at Northenden for eighteen months, but I have learned fast that the ground conditions can be tricky to manage.

In an effort to combat the flooding, we have so far installed 1000m of drainage and a pond that was excavated expertly, using laser levels. We are also currently in the process of submitting plans to the

Environment Agency for a new headwall and flap valve in the River Mersey. After a recent GPS survey, we established that we only have 3 inches of fall from our inlet into the water holding area to the flap valve in the river - over 400 yards away. So, I have developed a plan to pump water from the holding area to a new area on the high ground of the course which sits above the River Mersey. This will basically be a pump station (with filtering systems) to service and

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Recent woodland project

clean the pumps, and a trench of pipework underground to another holding pond 6 metres above the Mersey, where it will then exit into the river.

We are currently working with Dobells Professional Tree Care to thin out trees which are healthy enough to have reductions, without impacting other areas such as wildlife and other trees in the immediate surroundings. Shade and air flow are a major issue at Northenden and something we are keen to develop a long-term strategy for. We have the Forestry Commission on site regularly, as we have many species of protected trees.

We have varied skill levels across the team and I am a big believer that all staff should be given the opportunity to progress and master each job on the golf course. We have recently enrolled two staff members on to their level 3 greenkeeping qualifications and one member of the team has just completed his PA1 and PA2. I think this type

of progression through education avenues, increasing staff's leadership opportunities and overall skills are important things to offer a team if you are keen to progress as a group.

The current team of six includes: Scott (32); 1st Assistant, Steve Preston (54), thirty years' service; Assistants; Sean Doyle, ten years' service; Steve Darby (50), four years as a greenkeeper, five years as the club's handyman; Adam Barton (29), 3 month's service (previously my deputy at Swinton Park) and Luke Johnstone (31), 3 month's service. We also have additional help from a long-standing member who, now and again, clears ditches etc. which is a particularly good help.

All staff have appraisals twice per year and have the opportunity to present their training requirements so that I can set them goals and targets. I can then adjust my training budget accordingly, if it's realistic to do so.

I report all budget plans to the club's

directors monthly. However, I am fully responsible for setting out yearly categorised plans, keeping track of how it is spent every month, along with a monthly expenditure sheet.

As with most courses, renovations are worked into the overall budget. For us personally, we are incredibly fortunate as we have a full membership and have the 500-Club Charity where members pay £5 per month and can win cash prizes monthly. The remaining money goes into the course, which proves remarkably successful for projects and renovations. This all helps improve communication with members, whilst I also send out a blog four times per year. We use emails for day-to-day communication and have our Twitter feed for the hardier members - who like to know that little bit more. I also play regularly at the club, so I listen to what members have to say and take their opinions on-board.

Changing weather patterns (due to climate



It has become a very fast-paced industry; one that requires serious evaluation and a voice from those with the best communication avenues, e.g. BIGGA etc



Left to right: Scott Gardner, Adam Barton, Steve Darby, Luke Johnstone, Sean Doyle and Steve Preston



Clubhouse



The course construction means that the level of precision required with nutrient inputs and disease pressure, leaching etc. is greater

change) have definitely affected us. Warming weather patterns and more flooding make managing a golf course more difficult year upon year, but I think a big part of being a greenkeeper is how you learn to adapt to new circumstances. More recently, my plans seem to be focused solely upon water management in the autumn/winter due to flash flooding; all with the goal to increase or at least flatline the length of the playing season, by improving our drainage system.

We try to start and finish projects earlier in the year, almost knowing the rain will hamper our progress if we start them too late; not always an easy thing to achieve when the playing season is still upon us! In summer, it is becoming more and more all about moisture too because of increased long persistent hot and dry spells! So, we are focusing on better and more effective irrigation practices and patterns. This is becoming one of the key areas for me,

ensuring we move forward with the times and adapt to the ever-changing regulations. We have a Bailly irrigation system to the greens and tees, with mainly Toro heads on the greens.

In 2020, we completed around 500m of drainage across three holes and created some new walkways, as well as many other projects including; the relevening and turfing of 800sqm across five tees, moving irrigation on two of the newly laid tees, a new pond,

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Getting Personal

Scott Gardner - he used to dress up as a ghost!

Who are you? Scott Gardner - Course Manager at Northenden Golf Club.

Family status. Married with one son and lots of animals.

Who's your hero and why? My grandad, he taught me a lot growing up on the farm.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Reaching my goal to become a Course Manager.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? He looks tired ha-ha.

Which famous people wind you up?

Social media influencers. Are they even famous?

What job would you love, other than your own? Professional golfer.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? There has been a few to be honest. I used to dress up as a ghost on the Clitheroe Ghost Walk with Simon Entwistle every Friday night for my weekly £5 wage and one time, on Halloween, as I came out to scare all of the ghost walkers I slipped and nearly broke my neck ha-ha. I wish I was actually a ghost that night then I could have drifted away into the darkness.

What's your favourite smell? Cow shi4 - I always know I'm home when I can smell that ha-ha.

What scares you? My wife, no just kidding. I would say my dreams as they are very ambitious.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? Healing tough times. I think this would suit me well after spending a few years in care as a young lad. Played by Jean Claud Van Damme.

What is your favourite sport? Golf.

What would you cast into Room 101? Negativity.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? I would love to go back to 1591 to view the farm where I grew up in the year it was built.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? There are three types of people in the world; ones that can count and ones that cannot.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? My ambition is to work on a top 100 golf course in the world.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? My wife, my son and my late grandad.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Hard work pays off ... this is so true.

What is your favourite film? Kickboxer is one of a few.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? None, I would embrace my surroundings.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? So, you just cut grass? No, just kidding this one is old now. Recently a member asked me if the pond we have just installed on the golf course to help cope with localised flooding was exiting the outlet into a septic tank. I mean, that's a poor question considering it holds 200,000 litres and has an average flow rate of around twenty gallons per minute.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Our 3-tonne digger, it enables us to achieve so many tasks.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Busy, intelligent and organised.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Do not be scared to vary your work experience in various jobs for a couple of years each role. Value education and qualifications. Also, you will do lots of work for little money initially.

What talent would you like to have? I wish I could sing, then my wife would stop telling me to be quiet!

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? All stray dogs must live at my house.



New drainage going in at 700mm below ground level

new pathways etc.

I would love our drainage system to work normally by water flowing downhill, rather than being pumped uphill. I also would love another tractor with a set of big galaxy floating tyres - currently, on the model we use for our verti-drain, they are not available and create a little too much mess for my liking.

We have an environmentally-friendly washpad, where the surface wastewater and rainwater circulates back through the system after being cleaned, with the addition of bugs into the holding tank. The idea being that the microbe additives in the water neutralise it by eating away at the contaminants.

Our weed control is carried out manually; we trim path edges where possible and try to avoid unnecessary use of glyphosate in other general areas, in a quest to promote wildlife. We have wild areas around the golf course that we manage by hand and avoid chemical usage whilst promoting habitat for wildlife. We spray beneficial nematodes on areas that need treatment, but as long



Bug hotel



Hole 17



In an effort to combat the flooding, we have so far installed 1000m of drainage and a pond that was excavated expertly, using laser levels

as the crows, magpies and starlings don't create a mud bath on our turf, I believe they play an important role in helping us remove unwanted pests from our turf.

Fusarium is our biggest enemy. Our wet site and riverside location make disease management a tough but rewarding task. I feel this can offer a good sense of achievement when outbreaks are nullified. Positively, we have much less disease visible than this time last year. We always try to be proactive in our approach to disease management, we were fungicide free from October 2019 until September 2020, but I think it was too much too soon for our greens, so I developed a management strategy this winter to spray systemic fungicides in the high-risk months only.

We have introduced almost 200sqm of wildflower turf around the course to renovate areas and supplement removal of dangerous shrubs whilst helping to promote habitat for bees and butterflies. We have several bird boxes, bug hotels and, with the recent construction of our new pond, we are hoping to construct a duck hotel in the not



Wildflowers

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I am lucky to have a good network of staff, friends and family that help keep my mind busy and inspire me to reach my goals. Life is too short to be negative and bitter

too distant future as the population of ducks is said to be declining in the UK.

Another major problem for us is worm casts. There is an incredible amount on our fairways and greens surrounds. Managing these can be tricky, as I am sure many people are aware. We try to do the small things well, like boxing off grass clippings as much as possible. We are planning to treat the surrounds more like a greens complex moving forward with a little more attention and cultural practices and increased chemical input, initially lowering the soil pH to discourage casting.

Flora and fauna on our site is incredibly important. Of course, each site has different levels for different reasons, such as pollutants and levels of wildlife habitats affecting other local habitats to the point of local extinction. It's an area that fascinates me and an area that I am continuing to increase my knowledge. At Northenden, we have many species of birds present on-site, and we try to promote our wildlife habitats to, in turn, encourage food source

for the various birds etc. We have also been replacing areas of removed shrubbery with native species.

We have an environmental policy in place - working with government legislation for certain things like LERAPS, used for protecting waterways. The rest is done with the best interests of the site and many surrounding needs. Our number one goal is to try to become a more sustainable golf club year upon year.

We have local bird rescues that send out specialists to help us manage our population when we have birds of prey nesting. Quite an amazing site when you get certain birds such as Kestrels homing baby chicks on the course.

I think the industry has changed a lot due to course closures, lower staffing levels and expectations higher than ever. Something has inevitably had to give. Usually, under these sorts of circumstances, cash is king and, sadly, with lower membership numbers and debts increasing, it often means courses are closing for good. The remaining courses

What's in the shed

Baroness LM315 greens mower
 Baroness LM2700 4wd fairway mower
 Baroness GM2810 rough mower
 Toro sidewinder
 Toro 3250 for tees
 John Deere tractor
 Toro Workman
 Toro ProCore
 Charterhouse Verti-Drain
 Trilo S3
 Three-tonne digger
 Bernhard grinders
 ... and many other bit and bobs



Progress on the 8th tee complex



will continue to adapt and develop moving forward and I think the main focus must be: how do we progress golf courses/ businesses at the lower levels and move forward in a more sustainable way, to include all aspects of the club.

It has become a very fast-paced industry; one that requires serious evaluation and a voice from those with the best communication avenues, e.g. BIGGA etc. The more golfers that appreciate the level of work, regulations and finance involved

(even in preparing a very normal golf course), the better chances guys and girls working in difficult circumstances, often producing miracles, become respected and appropriately rewarded.

We are managing green spaces that are becoming under increased threat from things such as housing development and climate change. This poses a very real and modern challenge as a business. Whilst we try to be sustainable and develop our spaces, it is essential to try and gain

accreditation and, where possible, get sites protected for future safeguarding of the industry.

Then, there is the issue of raising awareness of the industry. I would love for the likes of Sky Sports Golf to speak with more greenkeepers in the lead up to big events. Also, for them to interview guest speakers/course managers, to raise awareness for the incredible amount of preparation that is put into a championship venue.







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COVID-19

How was your club affected by Covid-19?

We went down to two staff in the first lockdown. Then, when it ended, we saw a rapid increase in the amount of golf being played, resulting in 145 new members and an average of 1,150 rounds per week. We were then back up to full strength of four staff. Of course, this wasn't ideal with the level of play we had, as it gave us very small cutting windows to work with and we started at 5.00am most days ready for a 7:30am start sheet. Fast forward a few months and the club have invested in two new greenkeepers and another two machines.

Were you or your staff furloughed at any stage?

I was not furloughed and I am incredibly grateful to my employers. It is a tragic time for all affected by what is going on, and my heart goes out to them. We have had all staff furloughed at various stages, but I am hopeful we will get back to normal soon.

How did this affect you, both personally and at work?

I have not been affected by COVID and I have been pretty busy on a construction project at home. My staff getting furloughed and the loss of revenue for the clubhouse are the main negatives. However, the boom in golf is a great positive and the industry in general in my opinion, so all my focus and drive comes from the positives.

Were you able to continue working on the course?

Yes, we did just about manage to keep the place tidy, as we didn't quite have the early flush of growth given our location. When this finally started, we had no option but to call in another team member to help us keep up.

Other than the governmental restrictions in place at the time, did your club/facility place additional restrictions on you?

No, but I did implement health and safety procedures where we were only using



specific machines - each allocated to one staff member and we sanitised machines and washed hands more often than usual.

Did club members/players offer any assistance?

We have a member who helped by walking his dog on the course at night, limiting criminal damage.

What condition was the course in once you were able to return full-time?

It was in particularly good condition; we struggled once play came back initially, as the tee sheet was so busy continually halting progress. We adapted by varying start times to suit the needs of the business.

Have any projects been put on hold as a result of reduced income to your club?

Our plan for a new headwall in the river is the project that has been put to the side temporarily. This suits us as it requires lots of finance, planning and dealing with local authorities.

Have you still been able to purchase sundries such as fertiliser, topdressing, hire in machinery/contractors etc.?

My budget hasn't been affected dramatically. We have to be sensible though and prioritise tasks appropriately, without just spending money unnecessarily.

Have there been any positives arising from the current situation?

The increase in members has been the most significant positive for us as a club. As a team, I would say we always look at the positives daily and this has brought us all together. The most notable positive during a lockdown is no golfers on the course, meaning we can finish projects that had been started before lockdown.

Has your mental health suffered?

Mental health in greenkeeping and the whole turf industry is a challenging topic. I recently lost someone I know well through suicide. Very sad. I had a tough upbringing and was in care homes for a while, so this taught me resilience from a young age. With the industry itself, expectations are rising, and greenkeepers salaries are not. Most are underpaid and not fully appreciated for what they produce daily and often in brutal weather conditions too. Sometimes, all it takes is a pat on the back, for any green's chairman reading this.

I like to set goals and write down achievable targets. You have to believe you can progress and move forward fully. After all, we are a product of our environment - whether that be at home or at work and, therefore, I try to create the right work environment for my staff, so I know I am doing my bit towards their progress and wellbeing. I am lucky to have a good network of staff, friends and family that help keep my mind busy and inspire me to reach my goals. Life is too short to be negative and bitter; one thing I continue to work on is becoming a better me today than I was yesterday.

I would like to add: I will always be on the other end of the phone, or go for a coffee or a pint with anyone who feels like they are struggling to deal with their mental health ... or anything else for that matter.



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EXPERTS FOR GROWTH



In a beautiful summer's day, a round of golf at one of Yorkshire's oldest golf courses, in a picturesque setting along the banks of the River Wharfe, is hard to beat. The river provides a natural water hazard and a challenge to all golfers; coming into play on eight holes, it has wrecked many a scorecard. But the beauty of the river is one of the Club's biggest assets and creates unique holes like the par three 3rd which is situated entirely on an island with the river meandering down both sides of the hole. Ilkley Golf Club lies at the southern

boundary of North Yorkshire, just outside the town of Ilkley in West Yorkshire; the River Wharfe forming a natural boundary between the two counties. It was founded in 1890 and is the third oldest golf club in the historic county of Yorkshire.

In 1898, as golf started to grow in popularity, work began on a new course alongside the River Wharfe, one of the fastest rising and falling rivers in the country. Today's course is mainly a tribute to the combined architectural skills of Alister MacKenzie and Harry Colt.

As you might expect, the biggest problem in the winter months is flooding. The club

suffered major flooding last year with the water levels on the course as deep as six feet in places. Head Greenkeeper Duncan Campbell tells me each flood brings problems, but the main issue is the amount of silt left behind on the greens, tees and fairways that have to be cleared up once the flood subsides. "Clean up comes with practice, and we do have a system in place that we have developed over the years," begins Duncan. "We start with the greens. This, for us, usually means pressure washing the silt out of the greens with the drain jetter that has an adaptor for the power washing. Other methods we use are running the

Ilkley Golf Club

Wharfe factor one

In the winter, the number one problem at Ilkley Golf Club is flooding. The course, which nestles in the lovely Wharfe Valley, is situated in a flood plain. With the UK experiencing a significant increase in heavy rainfall, flooding has become more frequent in recent years. Lee Williams met with long-serving Head Greenkeeper **Duncan Campbell** to discuss how he manages the course after the floodwaters have receded

irrigation and squeegeeing the silt off and, if we are lucky, we may only need to switch a green off.”

“There are different clean-up levels depending on how long the river stays up, how fast the silt settles and various other things. Once the greens and tees are clear, we will assess the situation and work out the best route for the tractors to reduce any damage when clearing up the fairways and bunkers, which are done last. The main thing is to get as much done as you can to get golf back on the course as quickly as possible.”

I asked Duncan how high the floodwaters

can get and how much of the course ends up underwater when they get a significant flood. “A golf flag is six foot, and you can barely see the top of it on some greens. Out of eighteen holes, there are two holes - fourteen and fifteen - that are unaffected. We have sixteen greens that will end up under the water.”

Whilst on our walk of the course, I asked Duncan to show me where they dump the silt they have cleaned up. I was shocked at the mound's size and how many tonnes of silt they must have to move. What was more shocking is that it was only what they had moved last year. “In February, it flooded



There are different clean-up levels depending on how long the river stays up, how fast the silt settles and various other things



The River Wharfe running through, and often over, the course



The 18th green. Floodwater almost six feet high



Looking across the 18th from the clubhouse



That is the nature of Ilkley Golf Club; it does not bother me. I have been there many times and got the t-shirt. Over the years, we have got the clean-up operation down to a fine art. As I say, it is nature and we can now get the majority of the course back in play within a few days

twice within ten days, and we took around two hundred and fifty tonnes off one fairway. When it flooded on November 2nd last year, we took another one hundred and fifty tonnes off."

"We have devised an operation which includes using our three-tonne digger to scrape and remove it. We have a power brush to help us brush it clean, and we hire in a fourteen-tonne digger to pile it up into a big heap."

After seeing the pictures of the mess left behind, hearing about the amount of work he and his lads must do to clear the course and the floods becoming a more regular occurrence, this must have a demoralising effect on Duncan and his team.

"That is the nature of Ilkley Golf Club; we have become accustomed to it over time. We have been there many times and got the t-shirt. Over the years, we have got the clean-up operation down to a fine art. As I say, it is nature and we can now get the majority of the course back in play within a few days. The members are happy with this and accept that it is a flood and the course is not going to be perfect."

Duncan and his team certainly seem to take any flooding in their stride. "I am fortunate to have a great team working alongside me, many of whom have been with me for over twenty years. Even the newer members of the staff are not afraid or phased by the amount of work involved in

cleaning up after a flood and just get on with it and get stuck in".

This positive attitude is crucial in returning the course to play as soon as possible, but also to a high standard for the busier summer months when the Club often play host to regional and county matches and events. It is also a popular venue for corporate golf days and visiting parties.

This was never more evident than last year when, following the floods in March and the challenges presented by the first national lockdown when only essential course maintenance was permitted, the Club were offered the opportunity to host a major Senior Professional tournament at only nine weeks' notice. The inaugural Welcome to Yorkshire Senior Classic, hosted by Ian Woosnam, attracted some of the biggest names in Senior Professional golf to Ilkley for a two-day event with a double shotgun start Pro-Am on day one, followed by the Professional tournament on day two.

With an intensive works programme in place and lots of hard work and overtime, Duncan and his team prepared a course that was widely acclaimed by the professionals, including former Ryder Cup Captains Ian Woosnam and Mark James, as well as current Solheim Cup Captain, Catriona Matthews. Many of the Club's members also commented that they had never seen the course in better condition. All this in the most turbulent of years.



The clean up begins



The 18th green looking as though nothing had happened - a testament to the experienced greenkeeping team



The Ilkley team from left to right: Duncan Campbell, David Featherstone, Craig Ramplin, Tom Day, Nick Holmes and Marcus Orrell

Duncan, perhaps modestly, said; “we got a bit of a break with the weather in the run up to the event and it worked well for all the maintenance and preparation work that we had planned. The team worked extremely hard and put the hours in, working evenings and weekends at times. We were also very grateful to the team of volunteer members that turned up on the week of the tournament to help put the finishing touches to the course. It all came together, and I think everyone was pleased with the result. It was a

real highlight in a difficult year”.

Being next to the river, the general soil structure ranges from predominantly sand for the first seven holes to clay further up, then silt, and stone and silt at the top end. The greens are soil-based push ups which have not changed since the club first opened. The fourteenth and fifth greens had a drainage system installed long before Duncan joined the club and the other sixteen have no drainage at all. “The ones with no drainage seem to drain alright but, because we are in a flood plain, our



Head Greenkeeper Duncan Campbell



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Getting Personal

Duncan Campbell - somewhat understandably, not a fan of rain!

Who are you? Duncan Campbell, Head Greenkeeper at Ilkley Golf Club.

Family status?

Married, two sons.

Who's your hero, and why?

My father. He taught me right from wrong.

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

Hosting the Northern Counties Ladies Final.

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

He would be proud of my achievements.

Which famous people wind you up?

Boris Johnson.

What job would you love, other than your own?

Farming.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life?

Pass!

What is your favourite film?

Smokey and the Bandit.

What scares you?

Snakes.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film?

'It be rey't' ... Sean Bean.

What is your favourite sport?

Rugby.

What would you cast into Room 101?

Rain!

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

Back to the 60s.

Do you have a lifetime ambition?

To live long enough to draw my pension.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party?

Peter Kay, Paddy McGuinness and Tiger Woods.

What's the best advice you have ever been given?

Be confident in yourself.

What's your favourite piece of trivia?

A bolt of lightning contains enough energy to toast 100,000 slices of bread.

What's your favourite smell?

Roast Beef.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island?

Status Quo, Elton John and Rod Stewart.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked?

Is the course open? (When the course is totally flooded!)

What's your favourite piece of kit?

Baroness Hand Mower.

How would you describe yourself?

Laid-back and honest.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper?

It's a good life, but you will never get rich.

What talent would you like to have?

To play piano.



Silt piled up after the November floods

drainage levels are governed by the river and are hellishly low. Richard Sharrock from Danvic Turf Care Ltd has just recently been in to look at a drainage job for me, and I have just learned from him that the river authorities take a dim view of you draining directly into the river. They want it to flow into a slow-release area, so if we want to drain a fairway, we will have to drain it into a pond or wetland that then releases the water slowly into the river."

As we talk through Duncan's maintenance regime on the greens, one thing stands out to me is that he insists on hand mowing them all year round. "We cut with Baroness LM56 hand mowers; we do not use a triple. We do have one in the shed for emergencies or if we are pushed for time, but it is very rare. Three lads will cut the greens seven days a week in summer at the height of 4mm. In the winter, we will cut when needed, lifting the height to 6mm. We do not undertake as much scarifying as we used to; we moved towards using the verti-cutters once a month, but we have recently been using the rotary and zig-zag brushes. I do not see the need to stress out the plant, especially at the start of the year when it is already under stress from its natural environment. After the floods in February last year, we did not get any growth until the back end of June."

"Aeration wise, we have a Toro ProCore, and we try and spike them once a month with 8mm tines at full depth. I am a great believer that, if you are spiking, you want to go down as deep as possible. A lot of greenkeepers

now focus on the surface and not what is underneath. If we are verti-draining, again, we will go to full depth. You have to be brutal in your approach and get as much out of it as possible. That is why they design and manufacture tines as long as they do. It may be a bit old school now with the advancements in machinery, but I like to do a lot of slitting, which we have done for years using our old Huxley slitter attached to the Cushman. We have to have blades made up for it, and they are big and brutal and give us a depth of seven to eight inches. I am a great believer in slitting as much as you can when it is dry from September to October. Once we get to the end of October, we do not touch the greens with any spiker until the end of March. The key when aerating the greens is to vary the depths to avoid creating a pan. A machine I have been very impressed with is the Charterhouse OxyShot which we have been hiring in to treat our problem areas, and it has done a great job."

Duncan likes to take advantage of the school summer holidays. As soon as they come around at the end of July, he carries out his renovations on the greens as he believes most people seem to go on holiday then. "This is the best time for us to make a mess of them so to speak and, by the time everyone is back in September, they are back to their best. We have used the Graden on the greens for the last six years, but we missed last year for the first time. The process has benefitted our greens tremendously with them being push-ups."



A river runs through it!

The club is investing heavily this year in a new irrigation system to replace the old Toro system initially installed in 1976. In 1996, they replaced the wiring and valve boxes, but they have been getting a lot more breakdowns and leaks in recent years, and it was decided it was time to replace the whole system.

“Full Circle started work in January and it will be a sixteen-week project if all goes well. If we get a flood it could be twenty weeks and, if we get another after that, it could be twenty-four! It will great once the all singing all dancing system is put in as we have a mish-mash of sprinkler heads around the course and some are forty years old.”

For many years, the club's policy has been to buy all their machinery outright, no matter what it is or the cost, but this may change. “We are now starting to look towards a little bit of leasing with machines getting more expensive, along with other expenses around the course like the new irrigation system and drainage work. Machines we would look to lease in the future would be what I call frontline machines, for example, the fairway, rough, surrounds and greens mowers. Machinery such as tractors tend to last longer, and you could even lease them for over ten years.”

“The bulk of our equipment is Baroness, and we do have a little bit of Toro. I would not say I am loyal to any one manufacturer, but we do like the Baroness brand as we find the machines are well built, the quality of the cut is excellent, and they are reliable. Some people might not like this, but I believe you should not look at the name on the bonnet or the colour of the machine, instead look at what each machine gives you and choose what is best for your site.”

Worm casts have become a big problem for many golf courses since products that we knew were effective have been taken off the market and Ilkley is no different. “I have trialled six or seven different worm products that are currently available, and I have not seen good enough results from any of them where I would be comfortable in asking the club to spend thousands of pounds. We have had to look at cultural control methods, and we have bought a big 18ft, Wiedenmann Terra Rake which does a great job on the fairways when the worm casts are dry. We also use it to clear up after the floods. The unfortunate problem is that, since June last year, the weather has not wanted to turn dry, so you end up smearing the worm cast out when you have to cut.”



I would not say I am loyal to any one manufacturer, but we do like the Baroness brand. Some people might not like this, but I believe you should not look at the name on the bonnet or the colour of the machine, instead look at what each machine gives you and choose what is best for your site

What's in the shed?

Baroness LM2700 fairway mower
 Baroness LM331 tees mower
 Baroness LM56C pedestrian mowers x 2
 Baroness GM2800 rotary mower
 Allett Buffalo 24 cylinder mower
 Toro Greensmaster 3250 x 2
 Toro Reelmaster 3100D x 2
 Toro Reelmaster 5610D
 Toro Procore 660 aerator
 Toro ProCore 648
 John Deere hydraulic gang mower
 Cushman Turf Truckster
 Iseki TK546 tractor
 Kubota RTV 990
 TYM T443 tractor
 Deutz Fahr Agroplus 310 GS tractor
 Lely greens iron
 Wiedenmann Terra Rake
 SISIS HD spiker
 SISIS Varibrush
 SISIS Veemo MkII
 SISIS Scarifier MkIV
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Nelson Golf Club

Reaching the Heights

Situated in an area known as Marsden Heights, midway between the Lancashire towns of Burnley and Colne, Nelson Golf Club is an Alister MacKenzie designed course that was skillfully laid out as to avoid any wearisome climbing. Lee Williams met up with **Gary McKie**, the club's thirty-eight-year-old Head Greenkeeper

Being on a plateau, Nelson Golf Club offers the finest panoramic views of the surrounding Lancashire countryside and the former industrial towns of Nelson and Burnley.

As a young local boy, Gary McKie was a keen golfer who knew he would never be quite good enough at the sport to make it as a professional. Whilst at school, he did two weeks of work experience as a greenkeeper at Green Haworth Golf Club, where he was a member. After what he would describe as 'the best two weeks weather-wise you can ever imagine', he was lured into a career in greenkeeping. On leaving school, Gary

managed to get a greenkeeping apprenticeship at Rossendale Golf Club. "The day after my last GCSE exam, I started my first day at work. I stayed for two years at Rossendale until an opportunity came along at Pleasington Golf Club for an assistant greenkeeper. After two good years at Pleasington, the deputy head greenkeeper's position at Green Haworth became available, with a view to becoming the head man in time. With it being my home club, I already had a keen interest in the course, so I applied and got the job. I gained a lot of experience working in a team of two on a nine-hole course in the four years I was there. I never got the opportunity to become



the head greenkeeper though as I moved back to Pleasington as deputy course manager. When the position for head greenkeeper came up here at Nelson Golf Club, I was not actively looking to move on after twelve years at Pleasington. What led me to put my CV forward was that I had played the course many times and always loved the place. Luckily for me, I got the position, and the rest is history.”

Over the years, Gary feels he has gained a lot of knowledge from those head greenkeepers and greenkeepers he has worked with. “We all do the same job, but it is surprising how we all have our own spin on different things. You can take something

from everyone you work with, along with your own ideas, and amalgamate it into one. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. We have a great little team with a great mix of talent and enthusiasm.”

The team comprises: Forty-nine year old Deputy Head Greenkeeper Tim Randall who holds a National Diploma in sports turf. He has been at the club for twenty months; Josh Monk assistant greenkeeper, Level 2 and 3 Diplomas in sports turf, twenty-four years old and has been with the club for two and half years; Zak Smith, assistant greenkeeper, NVQ Level 3 sports turf, twenty years old and eighteen months service; and Richard Briscoe, assistant

greenkeeper, NVQ Level 2 sports turf, aged forty-one and twenty years service.

The club had some big ideas for projects in 2020 but, with the COVID-19 pandemic, their plans had to be scaled back. Gary has had to prioritise what work his team was able to take on. “It was hard to plan as you simply did not know when one of the team may have had to go into isolation, there was furlough to think about, and staff still had annual holidays to take.”

“In the second national lockdown, it made sense to get on with the project on the first tee. This involved relevelling the tee as the levels were all over the place, making it wider and extending it at the back. We have also



It was hard to plan as you simply did not know when one of the team may have had to go into isolation, there was furlough to think about, and staff still had annual holidays to take

realigned the path, so it aims down the hole. After this work is complete, I hope to re-drain five bunkers and do a sand exchange, plus we have two more tees to relevel.”

Gary has been working with STRI on an annual basis since joining the club, but they did not have their visit with the pandemic going on. “Unfortunately, the visit was unable to go ahead because, at the time, they should have come in (March), we were in lockdown. Since then, the club has had to reduce costs, so we have postponed the visit until 2021.”

The course’s soil profile is predominantly clay, but Gary tells me that, with it being on top of a hill, it does tend to drain quite well, especially with the wind. However, his priority when he arrived at the club was to install drains in seven of the greens. “They are clay-based push-up greens, and there was nowhere for the water to go, so to improve the organic matter, we had to do that first. We have no plans to install drains into the remaining greens as they drain quite well except for in some localised areas.”

The current irrigation system was state of the art when installed in 1976, but now its age is catching up with it, and it needs some improvements. “It was originally automated, but we are only able to turn the greenside sprinklers on manually. Over the last year or so, we have been changing the original heads to new Hunter pop-ups. Looking forward, we want to replace all the wiring and go back to a fully automated system over the next few years.”

“Even though the seasons seem to be changing and we are experiencing a lot heavier rainfall recently, Nelson Golf Club is 800 feet above sea level and is still guaranteed to get a dump of snow every year. When it comes, it generally only hangs around for a day or two. The amount of rain we are experiencing is more challenging than the snow. Being so high up and so close to Pendle Hill we unfortunately get a lot of rain. I have noticed that Pleasington,



Even though the seasons seem to be changing and we are experiencing a lot heavier rainfall recently, Nelson Golf Club is 800 feet above sea level and is still guaranteed to get a dump of snow every year

who are thirty minutes down the road, have an online rain gauge so, every time it rains, we check our gauge against theirs, and we always get a lot more.”

“Since I started greenkeeping, I have definitely seen a change in the seasons, and the winters are a lot milder and damper.”

After walking the course, I could see that the club has a temporary green policy,

something that I feel is getting a lot rarer in recent years with golfers demanding to be on the greens and with the area experiencing fewer frosty mornings. “We do still use them for frost. With the modern golfer demanding twelve months of the year play, the main goal when I arrived was to turn winter greens into frost greens. So, basically, only use them for when there is a

frost, making the greens good and firm enough to withstand play all year. When we have a frost, we try to get them back on the original greens as soon as it has lifted.”

Gary talks me through the seasonal maintenance of the greens. “We cut the greens every day in the summer months with the John Deere 2500E, with the cutting height set at 3.7mm. As we get to autumn,

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Getting Personal

Gary McKie - a lot of things scare him ... and he's not overly fond of hay fever or Katie Hopkins either!

Who are you? Gary McKie, Head Greenkeeper at Nelson Golf Club.

Family status? Married to Adrienne with two daughters Eadie who's four and Annie one.

Who's your hero, and why? My grandad, he's my male role model and someone I said I would love and be happy to be like.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Probably working at Royal Lytham with Paul and his team for the 2012 Open Championship, where I met some great people, and it was a great experience. Then becoming Head Greenkeeper here at Nelson.

If your younger self saw you now, what would they think? I think I'd be very happy and proud of where the path has led me, both in my career and my personal life.

Which famous people wind you up? None really, I don't let them bother me. However, if I've to say one, it would be Katie Hopkins. She's not very nice at times, saying some nasty personal things to people, just to be heard and be famous for no reason at people's expense.

What job would you love, other than your own? Definitely a pro footballer or a pro golfer, either I would love, I'm not fussy!

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? When myself and my wife were ready, packed for the airport for our holiday and she realised I'd booked the wrong month! Probably wasn't my best moment.

What is your favourite film? Man on Fire.

What scares you? Don't love heights, snakes, rats or fish. But losing someone really close is my greatest fear.

What is your favourite sport? Golf and football, can't choose between them.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? The World Cup final at Wembley in 1966.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Nothing specific but to do the best I personally can and, most importantly, enjoy it.

What would you cast into Room 101? Hay fever, it's pointless!



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party?

Denzel Washington, Gazza in his heyday and Elvis.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Enjoy yourself, and what you're doing at work, you spend a large percentage of your life there.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? Which club did Alan Shearer (one of the best Premier League strikers ever) win his only piece of silverware? Blackburn Rovers - the Premier League title.

What's your favourite smell? At work when we're spraying iron and seaweed mix ... and being on the beach on holiday.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Morning Glory by Oasis, Favourite Worst Nightmare by Arctic Monkeys, and I'm currently liking Erratic Cinematic by Gerry Cinnamon.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Richard at work asks me one at least once each day, so too many to say.

What's your favourite piece of kit? I do like the Toro ProCore, plus the GKB dresser we have is a great piece of kit.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? I hate these questions. Easygoing, hardworking and happy.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Enjoy what you're doing, it's not a job you will make lots of money doing but it's one that can be very rewarding and one you can take a lot of pride in what you do. Plus, you can only do your best.



we gradually start to increase the height of cut to 5.5mm by the winter months, cutting once a week, or when the weather allows, with the old Jacobsen hand mowers. Four weeks ago, in the first week of the second lockdown, we scarified with an old SISIS we have and applied over seventeen tonnes of sand. Our yearly target for topdressing is one hundred tonnes. It will go on in three large applications. At the front end of the year we will hollow tine and topdress, then solid tine in the summer with some light dustings in between following a sarel roll or verti-cut."

"I like to aerate the greens at least once a month using our Wiedenmann Terra Spike using 8mm tines in season and vary the depths from ten, seven and five inches; this ensures we do not end up with a pan. We regularly

sarel roll, plus we use our John Deere Aercore with micro tines."

"In the past, we have not had the seedbed to carry out overseeding as we had readings of thirteen percent organic matter, but this will soon change as our recent test results have been much better with readings of six percent. We are on the right side with the thatch layer on the greens now, and they are looking good. In the past three years, it would have been a waste of time, plus the financial aspect comes into it as well. It is something we would like to look at doing in the future."

In summer, Gary likes to use a liquid feed programme on the greens which includes Microflow, Primo Maxx and Consolidate Turf. At the front end of the year, and in the autumn, he will switch to a conventional granular feed.

When Gary first joined





We ran with one member of staff always on furlough. We have managed in such a way that a staff member could not take holidays while someone was furloughed

the club, a lot of the machinery needed replacing or upgrading. "We needed a new topdresser, verti-drain type aerator, sweep and fill brush and a new rough cutter, so we did a deal on finance over seven years. Our frontline machinery is a mix of Toro and John Deere equipment which is also on a finance agreement. When looking at new machinery, I would not say I am loyal to any one manufacturer. I like to invest in the machines that are best suited for a specific job on this course. Our John Deere equipment is

serviced by our local dealer in Burnley, Balmers GM Ltd, for our Kubota tractors we use GGM and, for our smaller machinery, we have Stuart from 'down the road' come in."

I asked Gary is there one piece of machinery or equipment he would like to invest in that would help improve the course. "I would like a Wiedenmann Super 500 to scarify the fairways and collect at the same time. With the same machine also as we have quite a few areas of long rough which could become thin and wispy, making

it more manageable. I would also love to have the money to install a new automatic irrigation system."

Ecology around the course is essential to Gary and his deputy Tim, and they do what they can to attract new wildlife with what they have available to them. "We are looking at introducing some wildflower areas, and we have built a bug hotel with the logs from trees we removed between holes three and five. The course has quite a bit of heather that we would like to regenerate. For us, it is

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I have two young daughters, a one-year-old and a four-year-old who has just started school in September, so it was great for her to get the first term at school; she needed that child interaction



What's in the shed?

TRIPLES

John Deere 2005e

Toro Greensmaster 3150 petrol x 2

Toro Reelmaster 3100D Sidewinder

UTILITY VEHICLES

Toro Workman petrol

Toro Workman diesel

ROUGH AND FAIRWAY MOWERS

John Deere 9009A TerrainCut

Toro Reelmaster 5110 CrossTrax

Allen National 68DL x 2

PEDESTRIAN MOWERS

Jacobsen PGM22 greens pedestrian mowers x 3

Ransomes Certes tees mower x 2

Protea 510 tees pedestrian mower

TRACTORS

Kubota L5030

Kubota ST30 loader

Kubota BX2200 with deck

John Deere 3045 with turf tyres

HANDHELD / PEDESTRIAN

Stihl FC410c brushcutter

Stiga SBK450 brushcutter

Kawasaki KBH 43A brushcutter

Efco Stark42 brushcutter

Stihl chainsaw

Tanaka ECV 45010 chainsaw

Sisis Rotorake

Efco chainsaw

Stihl D-71336 blower

Stihl BR430 blower

TRACTOR ATTACHMENTS

John Deere Aercore1500

Wiedenmann Terra Spike GX18

AFT 45 Trencher

Sisis Veemo scarifier

Gambetti 400l sprayer

a matter of getting the balance right; we would like to do more in the future."

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected clubs and people in so many ways and Gary and his team are no exception and have had their own difficulties in dealing with the situation since the first lockdown in March. "We ran with one member of staff always on furlough. We have managed in such a way that a staff member did not take holidays while someone was furloughed; they waited until their furlough week. This meant we have never got down to three members of the greens team; we were always at four. It has been hard managing the furlough. It made it difficult to plan a schedule of work each week. For me, it has been frustrating that we were not able to pick up on those final details. Still, we have managed to maintain the bulk of the course and the greens have been good this year. Hopefully, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and it will be great when all five of us are working together again."

"Personally, the pandemic affected me in much the same way as everyone else, but I was over the moon when the schools reopened. I have two young daughters, a

one-year-old and a four-year-old who has just started school in September, so it was great for her to get the first term at school; she needed that child interaction."

"Financial spending has been put on hold at the moment to see where we are because the situation has been so unpredictable. The clubhouse has, like all the other clubs around the country, not been able to generate any income. One benefit though has been the influx of seventy new members as more people have taken up golf to get them out of the house."

The final question I put to Gary is what he considers to be the state of our industry and does he believe golf can thrive once the pandemic has died down? "It could always be better. On the golf side, it looks like we could be in for a good couple of years with the renewed interest in golf and the influx of extra members since the start of the pandemic. Fingers crossed, golf is on the up and people will sustain their interest once it's all over."





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Greenisland Golf Club

Monumental Efforts



It was formed in the late 1800s and still proudly sits under Knockagh Hill near Belfast. Chris McCullough paid a visit to Greenisland Golf Club to meet Head Greenkeeper **Mark Middleton** to discover how he and his small team look after this 9-hole course set in the shadows of the Knockagh Monument War Memorial

Nestled under the escarpment face of Knockagh Hill on the outskirts of Belfast lies Greenisland Golf Club, which is one of the most historic golfing venues in Northern Ireland.

When the popularity of the sport took off in the country during the late 1800s, Greenisland Golf Club was later formed by a group of like-thinking men in 1894 in the very same spot the club occupies today.

Naturally, since that time, the club and course has undergone a few changes and there have been a number of characters that came and went, making a name for the club.

Like at every other club, the Covid-19 pandemic has certainly affected the playing



schedule at the club, but the job of maintaining the course is still very much an important one, players or no players.

Greenisland Golf Club hosts a nine hole parkland type course with a practice area stretching to 6,000 yards. Tight tree-lined fairways, water, sand and slopes all play a part in making this Par 71 course a challenge for all levels.

The club sits in a 100 acre site, but around 65 acres are unusable due to the extreme elevation that it lies on. When playing or working the course, on a clear day it is possible to see Scotland, across County Down and beyond Belfast to the Mountains of Mourne.

Today, the man in charge of keeping the



greens in tip top shape is Head Greenkeeper Mark Middleton who has worked at the club for the past twenty years.

Mark's entry into the industry came after he noticed a job advertised in the local media for someone to help out on the golf course and he decided to go for it.

He said: "I saw an ad in the local job market and thought it would be a good industry to get into. Now, some twenty years later, I'm still here."

"I've undertaken a lot of training to keep me abreast of all the skills and regulations required for the job, including the NVQ Level 2 Amenity Horticulture which incorporated sportsturf maintenance. Also the ANCH Level 3 in sportsturf management and the

PA1, PA2 and PA6 sprayer courses. I've also attended many other training courses, such as chainsaw use and machinery maintenance."

It's quite a small team that looks after the greens and Mark reports to others who control the purse strings. "I report to the greens convenor who in turn reports to the greens council," said Mark. "We only have two full time staff working at the club, myself and Peter Thompson who has fourteen years of service in the industry."

"We carry out most of the machinery maintenance work ourselves, but anything too major is outsourced and that includes any grinding work required."

"We also have a part time worker who is

currently undertaking his NVQ Level 2, whilst a few of the club members help out when they can, as required," he added.

Describing the soil profile at the club, Mark said the ground has about eight inches of loam and then heavy clay beyond that. "The greens are constructed on a stone carpet with drainage running six feet apart, mostly comprising 70/30 sand soil mixture, and are predominantly fescue although we have been introducing some bent varieties and, of course, some annual meadow grass. Some of the tees we have constructed ourselves on a stone carpet and drained where necessary."

Due to its location at the bottom of a steep hill, the course is prone to some



I feel greenkeepers in general are underpaid in comparison with other professional trades and are frustrated by restraint brought about by councils who often have no background in sports turf management or turf maintenance

flooding in excessive rain, but the land seems to handle the extra water well.

“We have some drainage on the course, but only on our problem fairways,” said Mark. “When required, we irrigate the course using pumps, taking water from the few streams that run through the course, but this can also be problematic during our recent long dry summers when the streams dry up.”

“Flooding can be a problem as we are located at the foot of a large hill and any rainfall can take a while to percolate down through the course. In order to combat this, we dig temporary open drains that are only in place through the winter in the most problematic of areas. This seems to work well in directing the water flow,” he added.

“One of our newer greens was built to USGA specifications. However, this green seems to give us the most problems with a lot of moss and fertiliser leaching.”

“Another green in particular, the ninth, has a micro climate as it is surrounded by trees, meaning the green is almost in constant shade and air flow is a problem. We have removed some trees from around this green to help alleviate the problem. I hope to remove a few more throughout the winter to aid the air flow on the course. There is also a practice facility, which is a fairly small area with one green and bunker for short game practice,” said Mark.

The team at Greenisland Golf Club has a fairly comprehensive maintenance programme in place to look after the greens to

keep them in good shape no matter what season it is.

“I try and keep the grass on the greens cut to 3mm during the summer months and 5mm during the winter months using the Toro Greensmaster 3250 mower,” Mark said.

“We ‘thatchaway’ the greens on a bi-weekly basis, topdress and then solid tine once a month. If there are any problem areas that surface on the greens, we seed them as they appear to try and keep on top of it.”

“During the spring, we hollow tine the greens and also have been grading the greens coming into the autumn. Fertiliser is applied as necessary using 14:5:10 during the summer and 6:5:10+Fe during the winter months.”

“We were quite lucky with disease last year, only getting a minimal amount, but when it comes we use Agate EW which seems to keep it at bay,” said Mark.

“The tees are kept at 10mm using the Toro Greensmaster 3250 and the Jacobsen TR320. Tees are divoted every Monday and fertilised as required.”

“Fairways are mowed to 12mm using the Jacobsen Fairway 250. These are scarified once a month during the summer and spiked throughout the winter. We normally would fertilise the fairways with 9:7:7, but last year they didn’t need it. The rough is mowed at 35mm using the Jacobsen AR3 and the Kubota BX2350,” he said.

Presentation of the course for Mark and Peter ranks very highly and both of them get stuck in to all the jobs, sharing the tasks as



The drier summers have definitely been a problem with our limited capacity to water and I can only see the situation getting worse

much as possible.

At the end of each season, Mark embarks on a number of jobs to help the greens recover from the busy few months of players tackling the course.

Mark said: "I have been 'gradening' the greens the last few years and found it is unmatched for thatch removal, although this can be tough on the greens. I follow up with a light dose of fertiliser or liquid iron to help them recover. We then overseed and

topdress, and continue solid tining and topdressing throughout the winter. This year, I plan on renovating some of the tee boxes as some of them need levelled out and some extra drainage added to them."

"Renovations are unfortunately affected by budgets. Our budget is always tight and many times we just have to make do with the materials we have to hand to maintain the course," Mark added.

Over the past few years, Northern Ireland

has endured its fair share of changing weather patterns which gives greenkeepers and groundcare staff alike some headaches.

For the crew at Greenisland Golf Club, the weather does challenge the number of days players can actually get onto the course.

"The drier summers have definitely been a problem with our limited capacity to water and I can only see the situation getting worse," Mark said. "The wetter winters have meant more closures in the winter months

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If I was allowed a machine of my choice, I would choose a Ventrac tractor as it seems to be a very versatile machine and has a lot of attachments that would be very useful to us

as well. Unfortunately, the last soil samples we had analysed were about five years ago and that's something we need to rectify very soon."

On top of all the regular work, Mark has set up a number of new projects on the course to improve it practically and aesthetically.

All of the bunkers around the course have had the sand replaced and a few of them have been filled in back to the fairway. A new open drain has been installed across the ninth fairway.

"The big hitters were able to drive the green, but now the drain has made them have to play short or risk dropping a shot. We also have a number of flowerbeds around the clubhouse to maintain to make the place pretty," he added.

There is a decent range of machinery available to Mark and the other helpers to work the course, representing a number of different brands.

"We have a real mix of machines in the



shed, some of which were bought new outright and some that came to us as second hand equipment. We tend to buy where the best deal is but do try to stick to one dealer for the new machinery."

"I'd say one of the best machines we have is the Graden as it seems to do a good job and greatly reduces the organic matter on the greens."

"Also, if there are any specific tasks that we need doing and cannot carry them out ourselves we will bring in outside contractors for that purpose. Just recently, we hired in contractors to add some new drainage on the problem areas of the course."

"If I was allowed a machine of my choice to help out on the course, I would choose a Ventrac tractor as it seems to be a very versatile machine and has a lot of attachments that would be very useful to us," he said.

Greenisland Golf Club also has its fair share of pests and diseases to contend with.

Most of the weeds can be treated by using chemicals, but the pests present their own problems.

"Weeds are mostly controlled with chemicals," said Mark. "We mainly have fusarium although, last year, we only had a few light outbreaks."

"Badgers are a major problem here and can cause a lot of damage around some of the greens. Foxes are also an issue and seem to like playing in the bunkers. Obviously, it is hard to control these animals as badgers are protected, therefore we just repair the areas on a regular basis."

"The ecology and environment is very important to us so we try to keep the local flora and fauna intact as much as possible. We have a number of bird boxes placed around the course which are always occupied, which is a very good sign," he added.

When it comes to discussing the state of the greenkeeping industry, Mark has his own views about educating golfers.



Badgers are a major problem here and can cause a lot of damage around some of the greens. Foxes are also an issue and seem to like playing in the bunkers





I find golfers are very critical about operations being done on the course, yet with very little understanding of the science and why it is being carried out

“I think golf will always be a very popular sport or recreational hobby, but I think golfers could do with a little more education on what we as greenkeepers are trying to achieve. I find golfers are very critical about operations being done on the course, yet with very little understanding of the science and why it is being carried out in the first place.”

“If you take a look at any greenkeepers forum, you will read many thoughts about our industry. I feel greenkeepers in general

are underpaid in comparison with other professional trades and are frustrated by restraint brought about by councils who often have no background in sports turf management or turf maintenance.”

“More needs to be done to educate others on what we are trying to achieve on the courses. I think BIGGA could also help raise our profiles,” he concluded.



What’s in the shed?

- Toro Greensmaster 3250 mowers x 3
- Ransomes Greensplex 160 greens mower
- Jacobsen Fairway 250
- Kubota B6200 tractor
- Kubota BX 2350 tractor
- Jacobsen TR320 mower
- Jacobsen AR3 rotary mower



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FIFA Update

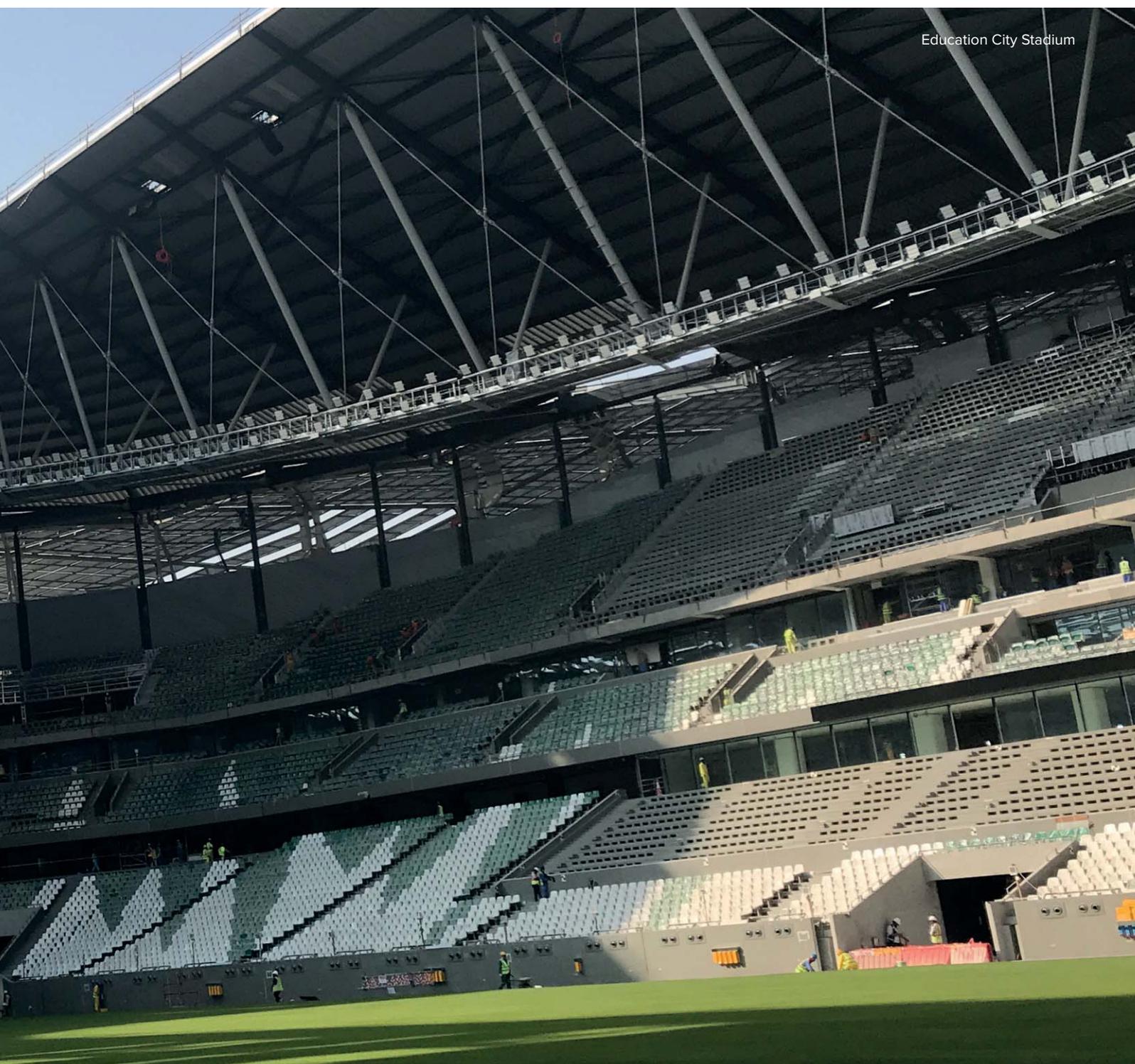
A harsh reality

Eight months on from the last FIFA Update, Blair Ferguson talks with the world governing body's Senior Pitch Management Manager, **Alan Ferguson**, and discovers a lot has changed in the landscape of international football due to the COVID-19 situation

Recent statistics show that, in 2019, one thousand and eighty-two full international matches were played across the globe. This was the highest number of international matches to be played in a single year since official rankings came into use back in 1993. Compare that number to the three-hundred and fifty-two games that were able to be played in 2020, which is the lowest number since 1987 when only 323 were completed, and you start to get a sense of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had.

The harsh reality is that, for much of the past year, hosting international football tournaments has gone against the available medical advice. Whilst domestic football, European club competitions and elite international qualifiers and play-offs have continued, there has been an ever-increasing number of positive COVID-19 tests in late 2020 and early 2021, especially with the second variant that originated in England.

Like many football fans, proud Scotsman Alan Ferguson saw the domestic game's return as a small sign of normality returning



and something that anchored life in lockdown, with Scotland ending their twenty-two-year wait to qualify for a major tournament a highlight of an otherwise flat eight months.

On the work front, the aim is to be ready when needed, but cancellations and a reconfiguration of the international football calendar have been ongoing, with the difficulties of international travel and player and staff safety the most significant challenges to be overcome.

Alan explains: "The issues we have faced since May have been two-fold. Firstly,

international travel was almost non-existent for a time, making the movement of teams almost impossible. Even if we had been able to move teams and keep them safe, ensuring they were in COVID secure environments on the ground was a more significant issue. It is not like bringing one team to another country to play a Champions League tie. Our tournaments involve as many as sixteen, twenty-four or thirty-two teams from all around the world, with all the support staff that brings. You hear the term 'bubble' used now to describe a safe environment, but it would have been

a considerable bubble to cope with a FIFA tournament with all the games and training, and, at that time, we did not know enough about the virus."

"In many cases, that didn't even become an issue because the qualifying tournaments had not been completed, so there were no teams to participate!"

"We had been due to deliver the Olympic football tournament in Japan as well as the Women's U17 World Cup in India and the Women's U20 World Cup in Costa Rica and Panama. The Club World Cup was also due to be played in Qatar in December, but has



The competitions team at FIFA decided very early that the qualifying competitions and confederation tournaments should take priority when the playing of games resumed

now been moved to February 2021.”

“One of the hardest jobs at FIFA recently has been for the team who controls the international calendar deciding who would play when. The competitions team at FIFA decided very early that the qualifying competitions and confederation tournaments should take priority when the playing of games resumed. Whilst a plan has started to take shape for 2021 and beyond, the full impact from the COVID-19 crisis will be felt for several years, with many not expecting football normality to be back until 2023 at the earliest.”

“As it stands, I’m receiving updates from the FIFA Bureau of Council who are the body within FIFA responsible for rubber-stamping all football related decisions. The Bureau will have received recommendations from the various project teams who manage the tournaments advising the best way forward. As you can imagine, this is a very involved process which relies on all six confederations assistance with the date



Al Gharafa stadium

planning.”

Whilst the overall logistics for hosting a tournament have remained next to impossible, making sure pitches will be ready when the time comes has remained Alan’s issue. Working from his home office, he has regularly spoken to colleagues in Qatar, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Japan, Peru, Indonesia and the United States.

Having a network of consultants and contacts in these countries has already gone a long way to keeping preparations on track. An essential factor for Alan was not losing any progress made for the original tournament dates while trying, where possible, to take the first steps in other countries.

“To ensure conditions were safe enough for youth tournaments to go ahead, FIFA decided to move them all into 2022. This was the year when the next editions of the U17 and U20 Women’s World Cups were due to be held anyway, so the simple part of

the decision was to offer the 2020 hosts the next edition of both tournaments. India accepted the 2022 edition of the Women’s U17 World Cup and Costa Rica the U20 edition.”

“For us as the pitch team, in an odd way it helped as it created eighteen months plus build-up, which allows pitch projects in both countries that had been impacted by the pandemic to be completed. This was more of a bonus in India where several training sites were being built as new. All the work that has already been done by our consultants, iTurf Management and Labosport, is still relevant and we can still work on that.”

“My main part in this was to extend the planning schedules and amend the budgets to take in the additional eighteen months to the new dates. We had already built the schedules, so extending was reasonably straightforward. We also had established counterparts on the ground in all countries who were working with our consultants, so



For us as the pitch team, in an odd way it helped as it created eighteen months plus build-up, which allows pitch projects in both countries that had been impacted by the pandemic to be completed



Alan working from his home office



Al Janoub Stadium

having the network already set up was a huge bonus. We had also met all of the people involved before the pandemic began, so meeting online was easy. The more time has gone on, the more you come to see the value in meeting people face to face to initially talk through things, and I think that's been a massive benefit for us in this situation."

"That initial contact, coupled with our ability to capture information in GrasPro, has

put us in a really strong place. The system has been activated in all the host countries so we are able to track the progress of operations and support local contractors with advice based on what they tell us and what we can see in the data."

The eight months from May to January have mainly been hypothesising on how events will pan out, but the most significant sign of recovery came on 1st January 2021 when it was announced that the FIFA Club

World Cup would become the first tournament of the year to be played.

As the smallest tournament FIFA hosts, Alan feels it is an ideal starting point in a bid to find a sustainable solution and learn for larger-scale tournaments.

"The size of the Club World Cup, and the fact it is in Qatar where we have been preparing for the Men's 2022 World Cup, makes it a good starting point for me," Alan began.

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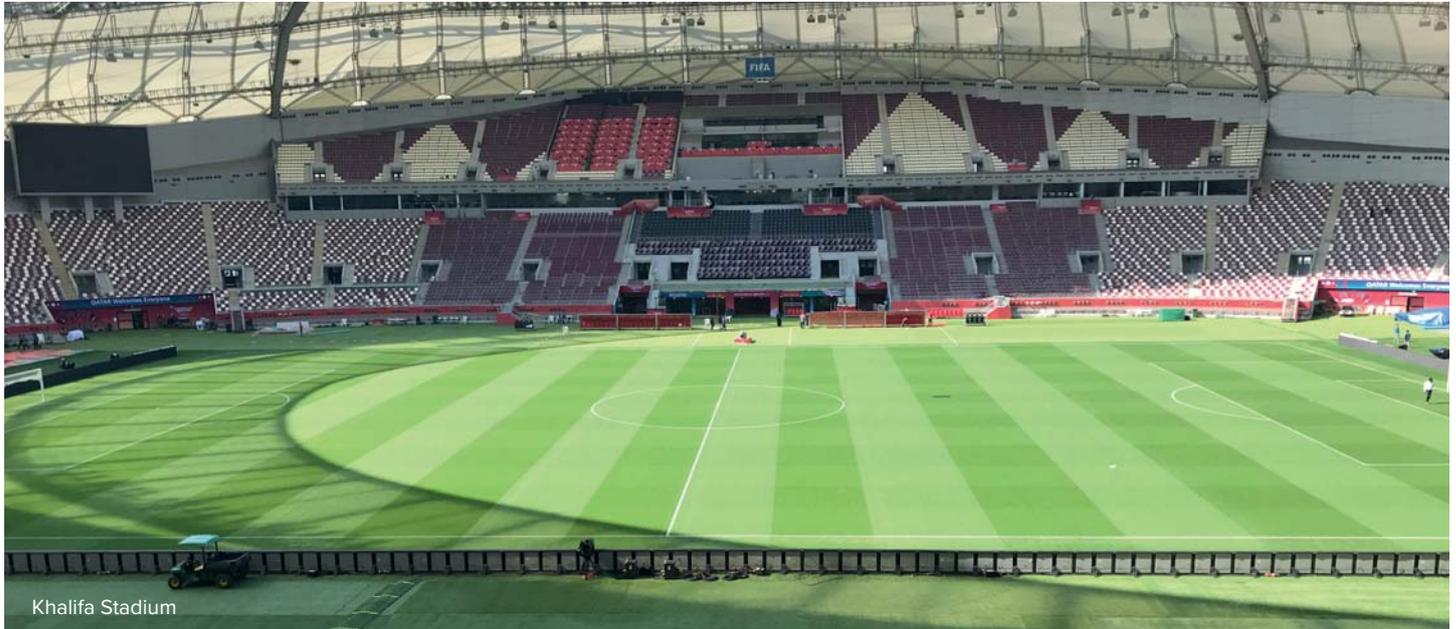


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“We will also benefit from Qatar’s experience of hosting several tournaments during the pandemic with little COVID-19 related issues. It will be my and many of my colleagues first time back in action for over a year, ironically since the last Club World Cup in 2019. The FIFA team on site will be capped at around thirty-five, but will have the support from the FIFA part-owned Q22 entity. The people operating Q22 have gained valuable experience working under COVID-19 conditions, which will help us. I’m hoping we can take what we learn from this event and use it for others going forward, because it will take some time for normality to return to the game worldwide, so some of the measures will become part of the norm for a while.”

“The Club World Cup will also offer the first chance to test some of the stadiums already completed for the 2022 finals. Although vacuum and ventilation systems and pitch stitching have still to be added to

all eight stadiums, myself and the team from Aspire Sports, who are the in-house consultant for the host country and who manage the contractors on site, will have the first chance to thoroughly test the operational delivery under FIFA tournament conditions.”

“Three stadiums - Education City, Khalifa International and Al Rayan - will host the eight-game match schedule. The tournament will open in Khalifa and finish in Education City. For me, it will be slightly different because, during the tournament in February, I’ll be getting remote support from the pitch team who would usually be on site. There is no substitute for having the core pitch team in the country with me, but these are exceptional circumstances. With the tournament being hosted in a well-established set up and having a small match schedule, I think it is doable.”

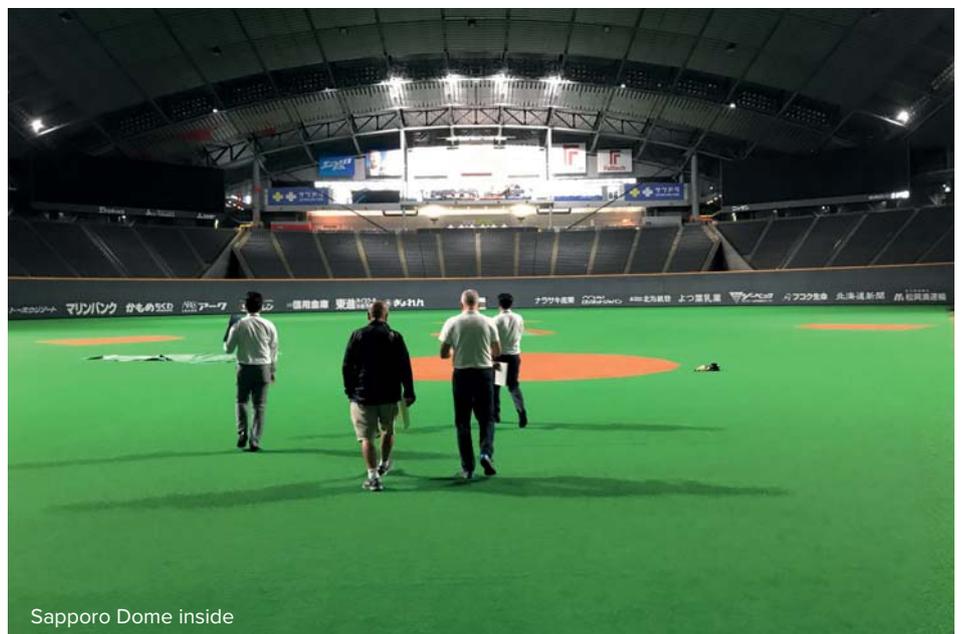
The second event scheduled for 2021 is the Olympic Football Tournament which,

along with the full Olympic Games, was the largest casualty in the 2020 sporting calendar. The FIFA pitch team had carried out full inspections in Japan and were well set for the games, but with the one-year delay comes another full season of J1 League action for the pitches. Alan has been in continued contact with the Japan FA, and Local Organising Committee who are confident games will go ahead. But, much like football worldwide, the chance of having fans attend relies heavily on vaccination programmes and local COVID-19 restrictions in the country.

The J1 League season ended in late December and will get underway again towards the end of February 2021. Travel restrictions are currently still preventing travel to Japan, and an early inspection of the pitches has already been put back to April. Alan is confident that, given the vast amount of work that has already been done, inspections being delayed to as late as April



During the Olympics, the Sapporo Dome is scheduled to host up to ten games in eleven days and, being an indoor arena, it means the pitch will be inside for up to sixteen to twenty days



Sapporo Dome inside



Sapporo Dome outside

//

I know that when they come out of the Arab Cup, the pitch plan must be almost complete with only very fine-tuning left to be done

shouldn't prevent successful delivery.

The biggest job outstanding on the list is the stitching of Sapporo's pitch in the North of the country. Sapporo Dome is an iconic venue in the country that hosted 2002 World Cup matches. During the Olympics, it is scheduled to host up to ten games in eleven days and, being an indoor arena, it means the pitch will be inside for up to sixteen to twenty days.

Alan explains there is no opportunity to slide the pitch out during the tournament, so stitching is a must to ensure a quality surface. Previous issues regarding the tray system's four tonne weight limit were solved with a successful trial of two smaller SIS Pitch machines which are scheduled to begin work in June 2021.

The final tournament for 2021 will be the newly created FIFA Arab Cup to be played

in Doha. It will also act as the full test event for the 2022 World Cup when seven of the eight stadiums and the majority of the forty-three training sites will be tested.

"It is crucial we know what we will test and how we need to test the various elements during the Arab Cup," commented Alan. "I know that when they come out of the Arab Cup, the pitch plan must be almost complete with only very fine-tuning left to be done.

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The Arab Cup tournament will be played over the same period as the World Cup, so it is as close a simulation to the main event as we can get, and that will benefit everyone involved

The tournament will be played over the same period as the World Cup - from the end of November to the 18th December - so it is as close a simulation to the main event as we can get, and that will benefit everyone involved."

"The pitches for the 2022 tournament will feature the most advanced technology available. The team will be looking to identify the optimum growing conditions for the warm season grass, ensuring billiard table levels which will provide the perfect surfaces for the world's top players."

Specialised workshops to ensure the grounds teams have the best available training have already begun and will continue right through 2021 and beyond. Each company successful in supplying equipment or turf systems to the tournament have to participate in delivering training.

After sales service also has to see full support set up in the country. This has not



Alan Ferguson in Qatar

always been the case and, despite significant sums of money being spent on the pitches for previous tournaments, they have not always seen the full value for the money spent. This is one of the key areas that Alan has moved to improve on, and already those involved have given full support to the FIFA education initiative.

During lockdown, FIFA delivered virtual workshops to the Aspire team. These will be rolled out to the contractors, ensuring that everyone in the five-hundred plus strong turf team looking after all the pitches receive the best training. Alan's aim is that providing this training will ensure the best group of pitches to date are prepared for the 2022 tournament.

Alongside preparations for the upcoming tournaments and monitoring the youth events due in 2022 alongside the Qatar World Cup, future tournaments such as the 2023 Women's World Cup in Australia and

New Zealand, and even the Men's World Cup 2026 in America, Canada and Mexico, are well into their planning stages.

Alan's optimism is that the tournaments beyond 2022 will take place in a more familiar way. For now, he is taking it step by step, starting with The Club World Cup. For him, a small return to normality which he hopes will gather pace as the year goes on.



The team will be looking to identify the optimum growing conditions for the warm season grass, ensuring billiard table levels which will provide the perfect surfaces for the world's top players



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Marine AFC

Their moment to shine

Marine Association Football Club recently encountered a once in a lifetime experience, reaching the FA Cup third-round, where they drew Premier League Tottenham Hotspur at home. We could only imagine what it was like for the grounds team of the eighth-tier club to prepare the pitch for the world to see, so we spoke to contractors **Gary Powell** and **James Tomlinson** to find out more





The great thing for us was when we saw Gareth Bale warming up; Mourinho playing him indicated to us that the pitch was holding up - he would not have risked him on a ploughed field when he had just come back from injury

The team's outstanding achievement in reaching the FA Cup third-round brought its rewards when Premier League Spurs were pulled out of the bag. Obviously, the game would be different without a crowd of supporters, but there was still a lot to get excited about.

Gary and James, both directors of Grasshopper Sports Ground Maintenance Ltd., have looked after the pitch for many years and they commented: "It was exciting for us to be able to work a match against a team like Spurs and welcome them onto the pitch, but we were more pleased for the club. There have been a number of postponements (due to the pandemic and lockdown) and they lost a lot of revenue, so this fixture could not have come at a better time."

In the weeks leading up to the game, preparations did not go to plan though, as the weather was unkind and SS Stadia were called in to cover the pitch. "Frost covers were put down on Sunday at 7.30pm, but

the following week (on New Year's Day), that fixture was postponed, and nobody thought to tell us that the team had trained on the pitch instead. Before they had put the covers on, they did a bit of divoting, but we never had the chance to give it a full divot and roll."

The covers were removed from the pitch the day before the Spurs game was due to kick off at 5.00pm Sunday, which didn't allow much time for preparations. "Once the covers were removed, we found a small area (which is frequently in the shade) was frozen. So, in the next few hours, we hand forked it and, by the time we got back in early Sunday morning, the temperatures had risen and it had thawed out. To guarantee we could get the work done, we brought in some extra help; three of us cut and rolled with hand mowers, whilst the other two divoted and, somehow, we managed to have it all prepared and marked out for 1.00pm."

"You could already feel the tension and excitement building. Obviously, no fans





It was exciting for us to be able to work a match against a team like Spurs, but we were more pleased for the club

were to be allowed inside the compact 3,185-capacity ground, but small gatherings of supporters had taken their positions as well as very local fans, who could watch from their bedroom windows, already taking a sneak peak. Others climbed trees and scaffolding to get a better view of the action."

No fans wasn't all bad though! The club managed to sell 32,202 virtual tickets, meaning they collected over £320,000 - roughly £290,000 more than they would



have earned with a full stadium!

Gary continued: "We went onto the pitch after the warm-up and during half-time and there were no deep divots to repair. It helped with there being five of us, as we managed to get around the pitch in those few minutes break."

Debutant Devine became Tottenham's youngest-ever scorer aged sixteen years, after signing to the Academy from Wigan in July 2020. Due to Covid, both sets of players were unable to swap shirts, but Tottenham provided their opponents with a set of fresh match shirts as a souvenir.

After watching highlights of the game - which was the biggest league gap ever in the FA cup - Gary and James thought the pitch played brilliantly. "The work we managed to do before the game, along with a bit of drizzle, helped the ball's movement, which was ideal for Spurs, but not so much for Marine. The great thing for us was when





we saw Gareth Bale warming up; Mourinho playing him indicated to us that the pitch was holding up - he would not have risked him on a ploughed field when he had just come back from injury.”

Despite their success in the cup, Marine had played just seven times in the league this season as their Northern Premier League Division One North West division does not fall under the ‘elite sport’ category that is allowed to continue under the

national lockdown. The loss to Spurs means their season is over and it’s now just a matter of keeping the pitch ticking over until they are told what the future plans will be.

“If it is left to us to renovate the pitch, we usually get an outside contractor in as we do not have the appropriate equipment to carry out the work. We will apply between eighty to one hundred tonnes of 70/30 rootzone, Verti-Drain, brush-in the rootzone, then overseed with fifteen bags of R14 perennial



They may install a hybrid pitch, with a fully automatic irrigation system - that would be game-changer



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We brought in some extra help; three of us cut and rolled with hand mowers, whilst the other two divoted and, somehow, we managed to have it all prepared and marked out for 1.00pm

ryegrass mix with a Vredo disc seeder. Finally, we will apply a granular spring/summer feed. We don't carry out any form of scarification. By the time it comes to the end of the season, with Marine AFC and AFC Liverpool both playing their home games at Rossett Park, there isn't much grass left. They play so much football on the pitch, that the players act as a form of scarification. This season we had to carry out the renovation ourselves and only had enough money to spread two tonnes of rootzone in the goalmouths and linesman's runs."

The pitch is soil based with no drainage and a limited irrigation system, with three connection points running at low pressure, making it difficult to get water on the

pitch in summer.

So, what does the future hold for Marine now they have had a cash injection? James concluded: "I have spoken to some members of the committee and they are currently talking to a contractor about what options are available to improve the playing surface. The option we are most excited about, is the chance they may install a hybrid pitch, with a fully automatic irrigation system - that would be game-changer! If all goes well, work could be carried out as early as this pre-season if not, it will be the pre-season after."



Grasshoppers Sports Ground Maintenance Ltd was set up in 2002 by three friends James, Gary and John Peterson - who has since left to pursue a greenkeeping career. Since getting their first maintenance contract at Merseyside Civil Service Club (now Liverpool County FA), they have built up a portfolio which includes Marine AFC, Northern Cricket Club in Crosby, Bootle CC, Mossley Hill Athletic Club and a few schools.



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Hednesford Town FC

Turning life and the pitch around

The Head Groundsman at Hednesford Town FC, **David Bates**, is one of the most experienced men you'll find in the turf industry. In this interview, David tells his extraordinary story of how he entered the turf industry, in a rather unusual way and how he turned Hednesford's poor pitch into one of the best stages in non-league football



//

We're not earning millions with our job and we never will. But, it's the passion to produce something for the players to get the most out of their skills

The club is famed for its home ground: Keys Park, but most importantly for its outstanding pitch at non-league level. However, David Bates had never intended to manage a pitch. His goal had always been to play on a pitch, a cricket pitch that is.

A hidden talent was found

It's been nearly fifty years since David decided to enter the world of turf. It wasn't particularly a well-considered choice at first. As a talented cricket player, his dream was to break through in professional cricket but, fairly early in his sports career, he suffered from a chronic back injury. This left David no other choice than to quit the sport he

loved. He even feared that this injury would keep him from ever getting a job at all. He thought his life was wasted, until his brother in law asked him to become a supervisor in general parks maintenance works. After only one month on trial his boss told him: "You have a bit more in your can than most people. Would you like to go back to college? We will finance it for you". David was astonished by the news and it did not take long before he found his hidden talent during his horticultural studies: Turfgrass management.

"There must have been a natural

//

I never win anything, so I was dumbstruck when they called to tell me I'd won



Before



After

element in me that I didn't know of at first. A natural aptitude of touching the soil, smelling it and coming up with an answer. I'm pretty sure my parents and grandparents, who also had experience in this type of work, passed this on to me!"

From that point things started to fall into place for David. He graduated, joined the GMA (IOG back then), started his own businesses and even became a teacher at his old school. After many years of turf consulting at sports clubs, he wanted to prove to himself, that not only he was able to support people in making the best decisions for their grass, he was also able to take full responsibility of a ground himself. Hednesford Town FC was the lucky one, as he was able to turn their pitch into one of the club's greenest revenue streams, and one of the best pitches in non-league football.

The joy of dealing with challenges

But it wasn't easy for David. "I encountered a pitch with a bare construction consisting of

95% weeds, no drainage system and a small budget to work with. We had ninety-one matches on our pitch in one season, and eighty-nine the year before. So, apart from the fact the pitch is being overused, it also doesn't have a solid structure to endure it. Yet we managed to take the poor pitch up to Football League standards."

And that is exactly what David likes most: "Taking something that is a mess and turning it into something beautiful. Presenting the pitch, seeing the reaction on the people's faces, and the praise that we get for what we've achieved with our budgets. That's better than any payment. And yes, of course, you get frustrated. Mother nature will always keep you on your toes. You get something perfect and the next day something destroys it and you have to start over again, but that's all part of it."

Non-league clubs and events

Despite the ninety games a season, David and the club still manage to attract additional events to the stadium for extra revenue.

U18s World Cup Qualifiers, the Women's Euro Qualifiers and Premier League youth team matches amongst them. David believes all clubs in non-league Football should be able to increase grass quality despite the limited budgets: "If David Bates at Hednesford Town FC can do it, everyone can. With a bit of knowledge, passion and technology, every club at our level should be able to host more games and increase the quality of play."

Discovering a new technology

David was introduced to grow lighting technology last year, as he was lucky enough to win a BU10 grow light in SGL's Basic Line contest at Saltex. He participated because he believed he needed all the help he could get to get through the winter months: "I never win anything, so I was dumbstruck when they called to tell me I'd won! With ninety matches a season, the plant is already under a great deal of stress. What we needed was photosynthesis to take place



Before



After



David Bates with the SGL BU10

to give it a chance of surviving under bad growing conditions in winter. The quicker I can get grass back, especially in the goalmouths, the better.”

As a result of using the grow light extensively, David’s goalmouths are looking better than ever at this time of year (see pictures). It gives him the confidence to have the pitch better prepared for the games to come and more. “Our season doesn’t stop when our competition is finished. At

Hednesford, we all want to host more events to bring extra money into the club. So I know I’m going to have short period of time to get renovations done. With the grow light I have the maximum input of warmth and light to have a quicker turnaround time to get grass back in the most damaged areas.”

Exploiting talents

In the end, as a former cricket player, all David cares about is delivering an end



Mother nature will always keep you on your toes. You get something perfect and the next day something destroys, but that’s all part of it

product to those who have to show their talents on the pitch: “We’re not earning millions with our job and we never will. But, it’s the passion to produce something for the players to get the most out of their skills. These players want to have the best possible pitch, for as long as they can, in order to give the best return to the club and themselves. If we can help them exploit their talents, then it’s all worth it.”



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The Perse School

Managing the Perse strings

Steeped in history, with a vision to 'strive for the greater good', The Perse School, Cambridge, is a charitable company and one of the country's leading independent day schools. Head of Grounds and Gardens, **Ed Ramsden**, spoke to Kerry Haywood about how he's adopting the school's vision to improve the facilities and grounds

Surrounded by world-class academic resources on its doorstep, The Perse School offers education for three to eighteen-year olds across its 88-acre sites; 27 at the Upper (senior school) site, 6 at the Prep school site, 10 at Porson Road (Prep sports fields) and 45 at Abington (Upper sports site), plus gardens at the Prep, Upper and the Pelican (infant school) sites. In the last decade, they have invested heavily, across all sites, on new facilities offering rugby, cricket, netball, tennis, hockey, athletics and football pitches and a pavilion.

Ed tells me about the vast maintenance regimes involved. "For our cricket outfield/ rugby pitches, we aim at 15-19mm during summer and 35mm in the winter. We are a very free-draining site, so I like to keep some grass length over the summer to help with drought tolerance. During summer months, we like to cut the outfields three times per week. This drops during November, but I still

like to maintain grass length - cutting weekly/ fortnightly at a minimum."

"I aim to undertake weekly aeration in some form. We have our own Verti-Drain, but we are now looking at a Shockwave, coupled with a Sisis Multitiner or Quadraplay, to allow us to keep the surface open. For the cricket squares we cut at 15mm. Last year, we vertidraind our squares at the Upper, but generally use a pedestrian spiker to a depth of 4 inches."

"End of season renovations usually take place in July or August, however, last year (due to Covid), they took place mid-October - which was less than ideal. Once the final usage of the squares was over, we got a week of rain which further delayed our seeding and topdressing. We were able to complete the squares at Abington and the Prep a couple of weeks earlier so, here, the rain was welcome. Now, when we look at the squares, I am very happy with how they have turned out. It was a very unpredictable year so, to be at this point



I have tried to become pro-active in my approach to work, so that when things are sprung on you, or something changes, you have done all you can to be prepared for the unexpected



Prep school



of the year, in the position we are in, I am very proud of what we have achieved and how the team are beginning to develop our grounds and gardens.”

The current team includes six groundstaff; George Skinner, Richard Reynolds, David Naylor, Reza O'Donnell, Karim McIver, Ben Scott and gardener Tom Middleton.

Ed continues: “Currently, one of my main focuses is the fertiliser programme. Even through Covid-19, I'm happy with how this has been implemented on the main pitches at the Upper site. We kept these pitches the best we could with skeleton staffing, as we never really knew when pupils would return. We fertilised with ICL Sierrablen Plus in March and overseeded at the same time. Due to a very dry spring, it took some time for the seed to germinate but, once we got the rain and everything kicked in, we managed to get a few applications of Primo Maxx down mixed with liquid iron. In August, we fertilised again with

the Sierrablen Plus (to get us through winter) and also got one spray of the Primo Maxx down again. Now, when you look at these pitches, we have great grass coverage and the sward is really thickening up. Over the winter period and into spring, I plan to spray with biostimulants and iron to keep the plant healthy and recovering.”

“Sadly, due to staffing levels and what was likely to be in play, this process could not be rolled out over all sites and the biggest hit was at Abington. With this site being out of town, and mainly used for fixtures, it was clear that it would not be in use for quite some time. However, we now have one of the team (Richard) up there full-time. He has got back on top of the site and, as a result of the attention, it really is looking good. We still haven't fertilised there, as we still can't see fixtures being played anytime soon. What we are trying to avoid is a big peak in growth and to be under pressure, when we just don't know what the



A well-presented pitch is not just a stripe on a pitch, it shows that work has been carried out and pride has been taken whilst doing it



Left to right: George Skinner, Tom Middleton, Karim McIver, Reza O'Donnell, Ben Scott, Ed Ramsden and David Naylor



In grounds, there is so much to deal with that is not in your control and this is something I have had to work hard on to accept

short-term futures could be like. Abington is a site that is looking at being used a lot more in the future and we are in the early stages of planning some reconstructed pitches to lift the standards. This is a really exciting prospect and a project that I'm looking forward to undertaking."

"In the past, I have tested many fertilisers to get to where I want to be, and I now look for longevity; in a school setting, I cannot always get on the pitches during term

time. When I fertilise in our Easter break, I want to know that I have something down all the way through to August. This avoids peaks and troughs in the plant growth and, ultimately, its health. I then have the option to spray feed over the top, if we want to perk things up for fixtures or events. I also want a product that I can put down that will not scorch - I don't want to be in a position where I have waited until a window of opportunity, only to find I can't carry out

the fertilising because there is no rain due that night. Thirdly, I want the colour; a well-presented and healthy-looking pitch goes a long way. Even if you are not completely happy with your surface, when it presents well, you can still take pride in what you have achieved. When you get everything right, it will generally be healthy and improving anyway, so the colour becomes a bonus. I have received a lot of advice and knowledge to set up the optimum programme from

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I am slightly restructuring how we achieve these results, by getting away from the all hands to the pump approach



Emma Kilby of ICL, Tom Weaver at Agrovista Amenity and Geoff Little at Core Amenity.”

The soil profile across all sites is a sandy loam, which Ed describes as ‘great in the winter as it is very free draining’. ‘The downside is during summer when we dry out very quickly. The common problem with this is that you leach nutrients; we have used slow release fertilisers, which seem to have kept things ticking over, and held on to colour really well. We annually send off soil samples for testing and, on top of this, we have our own sampler to regularly check the profile. So far, there haven’t been any major issues highlighted through these, so I am not dictated by this.”

“However, compaction is a big problem on all of our sites, especially at Abington. This is an area of concern, particularly at the beginning of the rugby season, which we are looking to rectify in the short-term with more aeration, to really loosen the profile. We have introduced a new fertiliser programme using slow release products so, along with the aeration, I believe we can improve the root depth. I strongly believe that going back to basics will make a big difference.”

“The Upper also suffers from quite a bit of thatch in a few areas, so scarifying is an area we need to address on the outfield, and we are looking into additional equipment to carry out this procedure. Verti-cutting is currently undertaken out on our main cricket squares and it’s also a big part of our pitch preparations.”

As well as the new fertiliser programme, Ed has made small changes to his seed selection and introduced growth regulators, which he believes will also make a big difference. “Last year, we used Masterline PM81 on all the outfield which have irrigation and I’m waiting to use Masterline PM80 on all the other areas, but this has been delayed due to current circumstances. The reason for the PM80 on non-irrigated areas is due to the claim of better drought tolerance. My knowledge is that it contains 20% 4Turf tetraploid perennial rye grass, which means it has four sets of chromosomes (which in turn means it has twice the chloroplast in each cell). This allows the plant to produce more chlorophyll, which creates a healthier plant that is more tolerant of stress.”



Sometimes, people’s general opinion of the industry is not a good one and I don’t feel that it is classed as a skilled trade





We all understand that our work can be the first impression when people come through the school gates, so it is imperative that we present the school well

The city of Cambridge typically has very low rainfall as well as high average temperatures, so these two things combined (along with free draining soil) can prove tricky in summer. The school has two boreholes; one on the Upper site and one at Abington. Ed continues: "This allows us to at least water our main areas with the travelling sprinkler system. I believe slow release fertiliser application and achieving good grass coverage is a big part of coping

with extremes. I have also looked into more drought tolerant grass seed and Geoff Little has been a great help on advising and working with me to find solutions for this. I also use Primo Maxx on pitches where possible which, again, I think really helps with the stress of drought."

"It would be great to use wetting agents, but to have a programme in place to spray is very difficult, due to high usage of the site. We spray during holidays, but it is

not consistent enough for wetting agents. I would like to see the spraying of growth regulators and wetting agents increased across all sites, but fitting this around a busy school is not easy. A sporadic approach would not be a good use of money and resources."

Ed works with his manager, the Director of Estates Paul Kingston, to control the overall budgets. They work together to develop it and Ed manages it day to day,



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Aeration in December

as well as providing an annual Capital Expenditure budget.

Having met Ed a few years ago at a European conference, it was clear that he had a strong passion and interest in the job, and I was keen to learn how it all started. "Upon leaving school I didn't really know what I wanted to do, so I looked around for courses that suited my enjoyment for working outdoors and came across Myerscough College. In the first year, I studied a first diploma in Horticulture and I realised that turfcare was my main passion so, in year two, I studied my National Certificate in Groundsmanship and Greenkeeping. During this time, I undertook work experience at Mount Skip Golf Course in Hebden Bridge, and what a place that is; amazing views of the valley, where you can see the weather coming in from all angles."

"After college, my first position was at Calderdale Council in Halifax. I was there for seven years and covered all manner of roles such as working in the plant

nursery and on the mowing team - cutting verges at schools and parks, but my favourite role was bowls green maintenance. This job overall was a big part of my development and it gave me a realistic broad experience. I realised that sometimes things are out of your control and it is how you deal with them that counts, i.e. repairing damage to greens that you have spent time and effort preparing. Following this, I went to Leicester Racecourse and I learned how presentation is so important; I loved the preparation of the paddock and the build up to the race days."

"Circumstances at the time, led me to take a groundsman's role at Leicester Grammar School and I quickly realised that a school environment really felt like the place for me. Standards are high and the variety of sports surfaces, lawns and gardens are a big part of selling the school and its facilities. I got promoted to head groundsman and built up all areas to a standard I was very proud of. After a few years, I felt I had got as far as I could at the school, but it will always be a big part of me; it was where I proved to

myself what I could do. Mike Hood is taking that school forward now, with a solid team around him, and I am confident standards will just get better. My journey went on to Churchers College in Hampshire for a short stint and nine months later I moved here to The Perse School."

"What I also love about a school environment is the ecology side of things, which is a big passion of mine. We have an Ecology Society at the Upper School that have started to develop a wildflower strip on the site and they are also building some bug hotels alongside this. Future plans are that we create a wild space at our Abington site which would include a woodland with various trees for different uses. Our outdoor pursuits department at the school work a lot with wood, so hopefully we can start to support this by growing trees to work with and having a coppice. Within this, there would be a big focus on wildlife with habitats being developed to support various animals and insects and we will also be looking at having a wildflower meadow in this area.





This is a very exciting prospect for Abington and something that will be put in place for students to enjoy for years to come.”

Given Ed’s background, it’s clear to understand that presentation ranks very highly! “A well-presented pitch is not just a stripe on a pitch, it shows that work has been carried out and pride has been taken whilst doing it. I am obsessed with how to present things. When I look at all the different sports fields, lawns and gardens that pop up on

my Twitter feed, it amazes me the pride and effort that goes into it. I believe that, in a school setting, the importance of the groundsperson’s role can sometimes be forgotten. I feel very lucky here at The Perse, that what myself and my team achieve is recognised and everyone appreciates the top-quality surfaces we achieve and they understand what it takes to get there. There is also a desire to improve right throughout the team. We all understand that our work



There is a big focus on what we call the ‘Perse Pride’ and support and understanding is always offered

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Karim McIver with his recent qualification



Once the final usage of the squares was over, we got a week of rain which further delayed our seeding and topdressing

can be the first impression when people come through the school gates, so it is imperative that we present the school well.”

“I am slightly restructuring how we achieve these results, by getting away from the all hands to the pump approach. Instead, we are putting in place site specific teams including different areas of expertise to cover each area of their site.”

“The team are all fantastic and there is a big focus on advancing their careers and working closely with HR to ensure everything is in place. Personally, I would like to go out more and meet people (as soon as it’s safe to do so), as I feel seeing other schools and facilities can only be a positive thing in sharing ideas and methods of working with the whole team.”

“Sometimes, people’s general opinion of the industry is not a good one and I don’t feel that it is classed as a skilled trade; ‘you just cut grass’ is still a common view of what we do. It’s a very difficult topic of how to promote our industry. When it comes to schools, I think talking directly to bursars would be an option. I know that they have a seminar every year and maybe this could be a platform to use as a sales pitch? I believe we are a big selling point to any school and, given the right support, training etc., we can lift our profile, whilst also lifting the school’s. Recognising skills is also key. Employing someone that can cut grass will get you someone that can cut grass. Employing a groundskeeper gets you someone who wants to improve the surfaces as a whole and create something which is their pride and joy. This will pay back in abundance.”

“Here, there is a big focus on what we call the ‘Perse Pride’ and support and understanding is always offered for us to achieve the results and standards required.”

Ed concluded: “Media has been my inspiration. Seeing sports pitches on TV or on social media really pushed me to achieve better with what I have. Anyone who prepares pitches or grounds that people admire are an inspiration to me!”

Hear hear Ed.



Ed Ramsden

COVID-19

Were you or your staff furloughed at any stage?

I live onsite so I haven't been furloughed at any point during the pandemic. At first, we had myself and one other person on site and the rest of the team were furloughed. This improved over the next few weeks allowing three of us to be in. The team then went on a rota of three weeks on - three weeks off increasing throughout the summer.

How did this affect you, both personally and at work?

I have only been here since January 2020 so, I have to say, this wasn't an easy start. As a family, we were unable to get out and explore the area and make friends. Workwise, I was really thrown in at the deep end; I hadn't had time to properly know my way around the sites, let alone get to know the team around me. After a short time, when others returned, it was just a case of trying to keep on top of things. This was so

frustrating; when you arrive at a new job you want to show what you can do. It felt at times like I just couldn't win and things were going backwards. When team members came back in, it was great to see the support that they gave me and they just got on with anything that needed doing. The site was very quiet and it was just a generally strange feeling.

Were you able to keep on top of things?

Yes, to a point. The school never closed, as we were open to Key Worker children, but we were aware that the school could fully reopen at short notice, so our main sites had to be kept at a good-to-go standard.

What condition was the surface in once you were able to return full-time?

Everything was good, apart from Abington. This site had a lot of catching up to do but, after a few weeks back, apart from colour and presentation, we were on top again.

Have you still been able to purchase sundries such as fertiliser, topdressing, hire in machinery/contractors etc.?

We have still been able to purchase what we needed. It was the staffing levels that dictated what we did or didn't do.

Have there been any positives arising from the current situation?

We are getting through it and, despite everything, we are still making progress.

Has your mental health suffered?

Sadly yes. In my past, I have suffered with depression and I have found things really hard to deal with. I had two big moves across the country (in twelve months), which was a big ask in itself - but, to throw Covid in there as well was a bit much. I am really hard on myself when it comes to work and constantly want to push things forward. For everything to be taken out of my hands, and see things going backwards, was really hard for me. We also have three children, who needed to be home-schooled, whilst my wife and I both worked throughout. I attended a cognitive behavioural therapy counselling course in the spring (via Zoom) to try and find a way to deal with things. I have also ended up on medication to try and





get myself back in some kind of order.

In grounds, there is so much to deal with that is not in your control and this is something I have had to work hard on to accept. I have tried to become proactive in my approach to work, so that when things are sprung on you, or something changes, you have done all you can to be prepared for the unexpected. Covid blew all this out of the water, as it was never achievable to be on top of everything. What you do now can improve how things will be next year, and so can what you don't do! For example, if the square plays badly next summer, no one will understand when I blame Covid - from eight months earlier.

I put far too much pressure on myself, which is something that I believe is common in the grounds industry.



What I also love about a school environment is the ecology side of things, which is a big passion of mine

How do you see the future panning out?

I'm genuinely really excited about the future. There is so much I want to achieve and I think I am in the right place to do it. I am feeling a lot more positive in myself and things are back on track. I really hope that we have a much more settled year and we can build on what we have started.



THE PERSE
SCHOOL
CAMBRIDGE

History

The Perse School was founded in 1615 by the will of Stephen Perse, M.D., a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College. It was first established in Lorteburn Lane, later called Free School Lane, to provide for 100 free scholars from all backgrounds. The original site is now the Whipple Museum of the History of Science.

The school quickly established its academic credentials, sending a regular flow of scholars to Caius College. During the 18th century, however, it fell into a long decline. The governors of the school, Caius College, neglected to increase the salaries of the Master and Usher for over a hundred years. Unsurprisingly, staff of talent were not attracted, nor were pupils. The posts became sinecures for junior fellows of Caius and the surplus endowment was pocketed by the senior fellows. This torpor and corruption was not uncommon at the time - Harrow and Rugby also nearly closed. Protests in the local paper forced the governors to keep the School open but it took a court case in 1837 to reform the College's abuse of Perse's Trust and to put the School back on a proper footing. In 1881 the complementary Perse School for Girls opened with funding from the town, the University and the Perse endowment.

A series of more energetic headmasters restored the fortunes of the school during the late 19th century and it moved into new buildings at Gonville Place in 1890. The experimental teaching methods of Headmaster W.H.D. Rouse (1902-28), notably the Direct Method of teaching foreign languages, attracted attention and talented teachers. The Perse established an international

reputation in a matter of years, and Rouse also set up a Prep School and two boarding houses (including Hillel House, a Jewish boarding house). He also secured the ground on Hills Road on which he hoped to build a new school. The Upper School eventually moved to Hills Road in 1960 under the Headmastership of Stanley Stubbs (1945-69).

The Perse received grants from the government as early as Rouse's time, in respect of its experimental language teaching. From 1945-1976 it was a Direct Grant school offering free places to some 40% of pupils. Following the government's withdrawal of the grant, The Perse became independent.

The Sixth Form began welcoming girls in 1995 and the school's move to full co-education was completed in 2012. During this time The Perse School for Girls became a separate entity, evolving into The Stephen Perse Foundation, a diamond school group in Cambridge and Saffron Walden.

The Perse celebrated its 400th anniversary in the academic year 2015/16.

The Times placed The Perse top of the league table of 193 independent co-ed schools' I/GCSE results in 2019. This was the fourth time in recent years that The Perse achieved this feat which is testimony to the year-on-year success of Perse students in their I/GCSE and A level exams. In 2020, 93% of A level entries were awarded an A* or A grade (or the Pre U equivalent).



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Timperley Sports Club

Juggling sports

Timperley Sports Club in Altrincham, Cheshire, is one of the country's oldest remaining community sports clubs. The large site includes two cricket outfield and two all-weather pitches - one of which has seen significant investment in the past year. Head Groundsman **Andy Horsfield** spoke to Lee Williams about how he single handedly maintains the site



Founded in 1877, starting life as a cricket and lawn tennis club, it has grown to incorporate Timperley Cricket Club, Hockey Club, Lacrosse Club and Football Club.

Andy (thirty-three) starts by telling me what led to the club installing a new Astroturf, which has just been completed during the third lockdown. “Since 1991, we have had two Astroturf pitches on site, which were first relaid around 2005. In recent years, we were having real problems with one of the surfaces and, basically, it had come to the end of its lifespan.”

“It was capped off and there was a lot of sludge coming up to the surface; the usual things that happen. We have a specialist machine that sucks up the sand, cleans it

and then redistributes it. This operation is carried out three times a year on both surfaces to keep them refreshed, but this will only help for so long.”

In 2019, the club decided to look into funding the new surface. With money in the bank (through the help of grants to fund the project), Covid-19 provided a window of opportunity.

“After looking at the recently relaid Astroturf at both Liverpool University and Formby Hockey Clubs, we appointed Charles Lawrence Surfaces Ltd to carry out the work,” Andy added.

It took the contractors three weeks to complete the project from start to finish, but it was not all plain sailing, as there was an interesting twist to the story. “There are

two types of shock pad; rubber crumb and the old material one which looks a bit like plasterboard scrim tape. In previous fittings, they just laid over the old type of shock pad which, over time, shrinks and they had filled in around the edges with rubber crumb. Apart from that, everything else went smoothly and they have done a great job. It’s just a shame we can’t show it off and let the members use it.”

The soil profile across the site is heavy clay, which Andy points out caused a real problem with flooding, even though primary drains have been installed. “Despite the primary drains at five-metre centres, it wasn’t enough with the rainfall and the soil profile. We installed secondary drains, which have helped alleviate the problem and we



Even though we have a big site, it doesn't feel big enough when we have all the sports running. If junior football and lacrosse continue, we have got a massive problem with cricket



do not suffer from flooding anymore.”

Andy's biggest headache is juggling the amount of sport he must accommodate at the weekends, and it is only getting more complicated. “Even though we have a big site, it doesn't feel big enough when we have all the sports running. We have two hundred car parking spaces (which is more than most sports clubs), but it is just not enough when everything is being played on weekends. If junior football and lacrosse continue, we have got a massive problem with cricket, because we will have clashes everywhere.”

“We have six men's cricket teams and six junior football teams who all want to play simultaneously, which is not possible as the winter sports pitches are situated at the side of the square. Last year, because of the weather, we ended up playing football before cricket in the morning. So, the football parents would put the sight screens away, pull the boundary rope to play their

football games and then put it all back out, so that cricket could play as soon as they had finished.”

“The club expect the pitches to be marked and cricket to be ready, so it can be a lot of pressure on myself. We try and set a date when there will be no more football or lacrosse on the main cricket pitch and everything is played on the back. However, I cannot see us having any leeway this year to do that; depending on where we stand with playing in the Cheshire County Premier Division but, as things stand, no one knows.”

Maintenance becomes a challenging and tricky situation when having to accommodate different sports on one site. “In summer, I will cut the outfield at 15mm. I know a lot of people cut shorter but, because we have a good percentage of ryegrass in the outfield, it doesn't particularly like being below 20mm. I did try 18mm, but there were quite a few comments



**Take me for example;
I'm a lower-level groundsman
with a small pension pot,
which will do nothing to
help me later in life**





We have six men's cricket teams and six junior football teams who all want to play simultaneously, which is not possible as the winter sports pitches are situated at the side of the square

that it was too slow. In winter, I will lift the height of cut to 30-35mm, to help protect the surface. In the past, I have dropped it to 25mm, but I feel this is better suited for professional sport or someone who can cut every day. Lacrosse absolutely shreds the pitches. The majority of play is all in the air and it is a very quick-paced game; they run and turn on a sixpence which causes some real damage. During winter, if it is too wet to cut after games, I will go over with the ride-

on cylinder mower - without the cylinders engaged - to give it a roll and flatten it out in between games."

"Once a year, I will try and scarify the pitch in March/April when we do a renovation. During the season - in between games when the mud starts to rise up - I will pass the tractor-mounted SISIS rake over (if suitable), in an attempt to stand the sward up to dry it out. I do like to pass it over in the summer cricket season, but that all depends



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Getting Personal

Andrew Horsfield - he just wants to be happy and see plastic banned



Who are you? Andrew Horsfield - Head Groundsman at Timperley Sports Club.

Family status. Married.

Who's your hero and why? Terry Hearn - he's a carping legend.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Managing £400,000 of projects in the last two years.

Which famous people wind you up? Most of them.

What job would you love, other than your own? Carp fishing.

What is your favourite film? Caddyshack.

What scares you? Linch pins.

What is your favourite sport? Cricket.

What would you cast into Room 101? Humans.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? Redmire 1957.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To be happy.

What's your favourite piece of kit? The SISIS Combrake.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Terry Hearn, Bill Hicks and Richard Ashcroft.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? What goes around comes around.

What's your favourite smell? Cut grass.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Urban Hymns - The Verve, The Stone Roses and Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not - Arctic Monkeys.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Do the brakes stop the tractor?

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Hard-working, fun and loyal.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsman? Pursue a different career path.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Plastic banned!



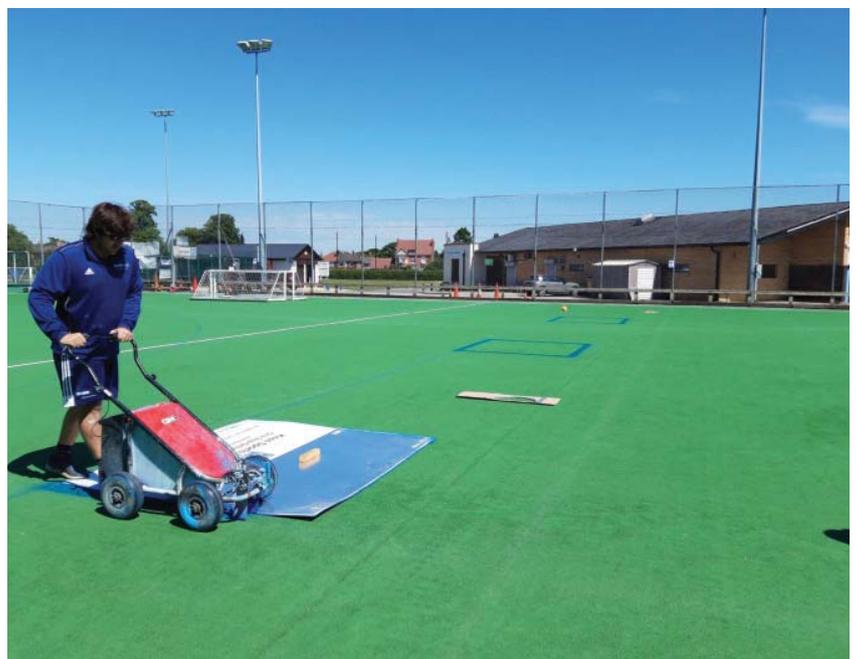
on the time available."

Aeration is a vital part of Andy's maintenance regime as he explains: "A contractor will come in after the cricket season, to relieve any compaction from constantly cutting. Between September and December, I have a small Shockwave which I like to use as often as possible, at a depth of nine inches, then possibly once before cricket comes back (however, that is leaving it late because clay has a memory and does open up). In addition to this, I have a slitter with worn tines that go down about three inches, which I will run over the site every week."

Andy moves on to tell me how he prepares his wickets ready for this season. "I spiked them just before I was furloughed in December; I managed to get a period where I could

get the pencil tines on my little SISIS Autocore. Then, I sprayed them with GO Green Select, to harden them up for the next few months. When I get back, it will be a case of cutting with the rotary mower at 25mm - until I get the Dennis cylinder mower back from a regrind. As the temperatures pick up around March, I will start to cut more regularly with the Dennis, but keep the height of cut at 25mm as we get into the summer months, then gradually cut down to 18mm. In between cutting, I will reseed any bald patches that have not germinated from the end of season renovation."

"Once I get to 18mm, I will start to do a bit of pre-season rolling with the Lloyds Paladin. Then, I will switch over to my square mower and get the heavy roller on to consolidate the square. If I still have any areas that have not





The club expect the pitches to be marked and cricket to be ready, so it can be a lot of pressure on myself. We try and set a date when there will be no more football or lacrosse on the main cricket pitch

entirely filled in, I will overseed them again and apply Marathon Spring 16:4:8 organic fertiliser. Many people would say they do not do this, but I like to use Marathon; it is a fantastic product. If temperature are right; It helps to increase the number of beneficial bacteria in the soil. This is followed by Evolution5, which gives a slow-release feed over the next four to five months then, once the season starts, I like to use liquids.”

It is difficult for Andy to fit in all the maintenance he would like to carry out on the wickets and the whole site. Even though he works independently, he prides himself on setting up the best wicket possible for a match day. “I like to start prepping a cricket pitch two weeks in advance of a game. On the main pitch, I will try and get water to a depth of 100mm. I will test the surface with a screwdriver or pin and water the night before using Reguflow lay flat hoses from Agrovista Amenity - which are lightweight, irrigation hoses that work under low pressure. I believe this is the best product for watering a cricket wicket. They saturate the pitch consistently all the way through at the required depth; in fact, I do not know how people do it without them. I get the bar

staff to turn the tap on at ten o'clock before they go home and I will turn it off in the morning when I arrive, then cover the pitch with flat sheets or roll-on covers.”

“Once it has gone through the drying stage and it is a more plasticine type of state, I will start to roll out. After carrying out the initial cut at 10mm, I will give it a good verti-cut in two directions and brush with the SISIS Combrake. Every two weeks, I will gradually reduce the height of cut to the required playing height of 6mm as I'm not a fan of shaving pitches down to 3mm. I think a lot of cricketers think that, because a pitch is golden and hard, it will play well - but that is not the case. I tend to use each pitch three times, with one practice, then move to the next.”

After leaving school, Andy started his career at Connections. He found an apprenticeship position at Leigh Golf Club in Culcheth (through Myerscough College) and gained his NVQ Level Two in Sports Turf and started his Level Three, before leaving the club after six years to set-up his own contracts business. “As well as doing the contracting, I was looking after some local cricket pitches, which helped me



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I like to start prepping a cricket pitch two weeks in advance of a game. On the main pitch, I will try and get water to a depth of 100mm

build up my experience maintaining and prepping the wickets. After six years, I decided to come back into the industry for personal reasons, and I joined Timperley Sports Club.”

On a final note, Andy was keen to tell me his thoughts on the sports turf industry and where he feels it's heading. “Working conditions, wages and no union to support us make it a tough industry to promote. We all go to work for money, and inflation is probably set to go higher with Brexit and the pandemic. The GMA is lobbying for a 1.5% raise, but that will not touch the sides for groundsmen - who are on low wages and below what they recommend. Most of the time, there are no pensions in the industry; unless you work for larger organisations. Take me for example; I'm a lower-level groundsman with a small pension pot, which will do nothing to help me later in life. I believe we will struggle to attract the younger generation to come and join us.”

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The Edgbaston Priory Club

A different approach to renovations

To really understand the point of this article, we need to begin at the end. Assistant Grounds Manager at The Edgbaston Priory Club **John Lawrence** explains that the 'why' is perhaps the most important part of this article. Knowledge gives us the ability to make informed decisions. However, to understand the reasoning for diving so far in to the 'why' you need to know what we think we've concluded, and for that reason we'll start with our conclusion:



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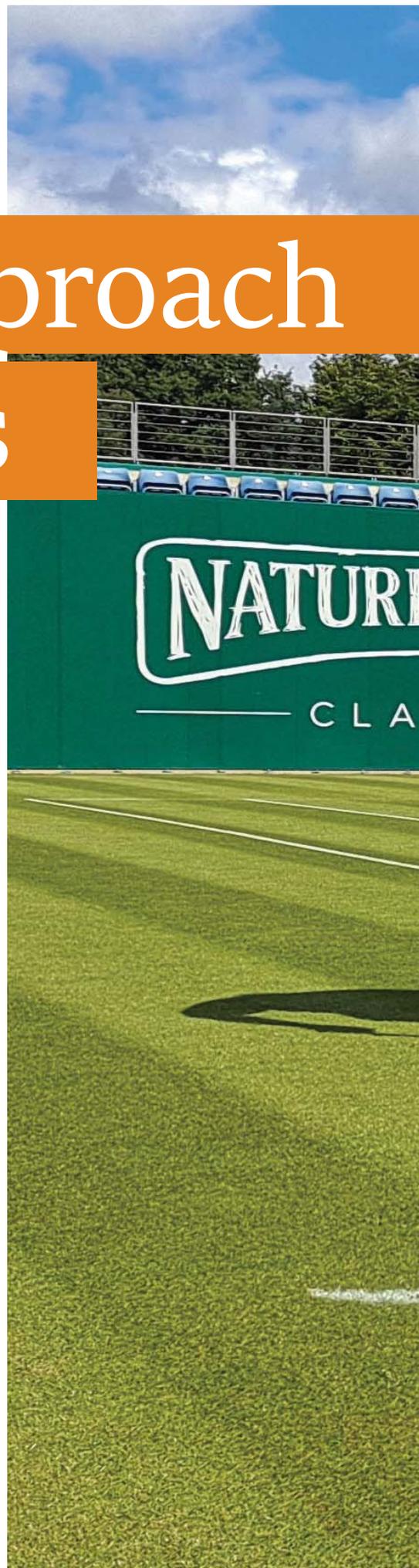
Now we accept that we're making a bold claim, but that bold claim really is the justification for this article. The story began back at BTME in January 2020. In the full context of 2020, Harrogate feels like an eternity ago. That being said however, it was the point at which we first came across Attraxor, through Dan Hughes (Head of Commercial for Agrovista Amenity) who was keen to introduce us to the product and some of the BASF delegates who were also attending the show.

Of course, anybody who knows my father Dave (and by proxy myself) will be well aware that selling 'product' to us is a tricky proposition. Dave in particular is proud of his reputation amongst sales reps for being, to put it politely, immune to a sales pitch, and so it stands to reason that the work Dan, and Mark Allen (Technical Sales Manager at Agrovista Amenity), have put in to building a relationship to a point where they can

suggest a product to us without an upset word is quite an achievement!

Based on the level of trust we have in Dan and Mark, we left the show with plenty of literature to review, and having had conversations about some potential trial work with Attraxor to assess its effectiveness as part of the management of our eight grass courts. In a normal year, we'd have likely looked at establishing how we'd progress things in relation to Attraxor, identified some areas we could use it, and started a slow assessment of the product in order to decide if it complemented what we aim to achieve with our courts. However, 2020 wasn't a normal year!

The Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on our 2020 season; for one our main spectator event of the season, the Birmingham Classic Ladies international tennis tournament, was cancelled, along with the rest of the grass court season, including the Wimbledon Championships.





Centre Court being mown during the playing season by Grounds Manager, David Lawrence



Post renovation Poa



Centre Court sward after scarification, prior to Attraxor application, seeding and topdressing

This change in our calendar necessitated a change in focus on our part, and as facilities were allowed to re-open post lockdown, it became evident that we would need to extend our member grass court season in order to increase the number of courts available for use. Firstly, because indoor facilities (which make up a quarter of our available courts) would be off limits, and secondly, because for large parts of the year doubles was not permissible, meaning that court capacity effectively dropped during these periods by 50%, as only singles tennis could be played.

This need to create additional capacity meant that we needed to extend our playing season, firstly at the start of our season. We worked hard to ensure that as soon as restrictions facilitated a re-opening of tennis we would have grass courts ready, and this is indeed something we accomplished. It also meant stretching out the back end of our season, in turn pushing back our end of season renovations, thus reducing our window to complete works on the courts to ensure their readiness for the 2021 season. Whilst this was a trade-off

that had to be made, it created areas where compromises needed to be made. For one, could we risk heavy, invasive works if the courts would not then have time to recover prior to the winter?

For example, in a normal year, we would start renovating our centre court in early August, our three practice courts in mid to late-August, and then our four match courts sequentially through September, with the last two generally coming out of use in the last week of the month. With 2020 not being a 'normal' year, and capacity pressures mandating a longer grass court season, we put ourselves in a position whereby we would keep all eight courts open, including Centre Court, until the 1st of September, at which point we would start dropping courts out sequentially, but still leaving some in play until later in the month.

That decision, whilst in the best interests of our members and therefore the club, did create some challenges. Most obviously that we would be condensing down works that we would normally spread over eight weeks into just four! This put pressure on manpower, especially as we were



One of my favourite pieces of advice to give to a groundsman is to stop and think about why you are doing something; if you can't explain why you are doing it, you almost certainly shouldn't do it





Top dressing of Court 4 during autumn renovation



In a normal year, we'd have likely looked at establishing how we'd progress things and started a slow assessment of the product. However, 2020 wasn't a normal year!

still open, and as well as maintaining the wider grounds, still had to maintain any courts that hadn't yet been taken out of play. Additionally, the time frame meant equipment became a precious resource.

The obvious way to counter having half the time to do a job is to somehow double productivity. However, our financial position doesn't dictate a bottomless pit of money (in fact, reality is far from it!) and so we weren't able to increase productivity by using twice

the manpower with twice the equipment!

The other issue with condensing the works down later in the year is weather. As you move later into the year, rainfall becomes more prevalent and temperatures begin to decrease; not exactly the ideal combination for completing renovation works and getting grass seed to germinate!

These challenges meant we needed to think outside the box in terms of our approach to renovations; doing exactly

what we normally would in different circumstances would likely lead to a less desirable, different result. However, in most cases, processes can't be altered without having a negative impact on the end result. For example, we couldn't realistically save any time on reseeding, as this would mean not seeding at all!

The only area where it would be realistic to make alterations was in the way we clean the court out, prior to aeration, seeding and

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Match Court 4, ten days after completion of renovation (including seeding and top dressing)

dressings. In a normal year, we would make a number of passes with a tractor mounted Graden scarifier to remove any thatch build up from that year's playing season, and combine that with some intense verti-cutting and mechanical brushing to remove any undesirable grass from the remaining sward. In simplistic terms, and while there is some cross over in what the operations achieve, we scarify to remove the thatch, and verti-cut and brush to remove undesirable grasses - namely Poa Annua (Annual Meadow Grass).

We therefore made a decision to scarify at a lesser depth than we normally would, with a view that, as our courts are heavily scarified every year and there is very little thatch build up through the season because of our other maintenance practices, a one off less intense renovation would yield, at worst, a negligible negative impact on the quality of the playing surface. This less deep and intense scarification would also allow the courts to recover more quickly after renovations were complete, giving us more time before winter fully set in to carry out any additional

autumn works we deemed necessary.

The other area that we altered was to reduce the amount of time spent verti-cutting and brushing as part of our autumn renovations. However, the impacts of this decision could be more challenging. As everyone in the industry will know, anything more than a small percentage of Poa Annua in a sward can have a negative impact on the performance characteristics of a sports surface, as well as being significantly detrimental to the aesthetic quality of the turf. This is a particularly big problem when you consider that we host an international ladies event which is televised around the globe!

To put some context to the Poa Annua problem, we aim to start our season with swards which are made up, as closely as possible, of 100 Perennial Rye Grass. However, in the real world 100% is a major challenge, so whilst we're never happy to have any Poa Annua within the sward, if we can keep the levels below 2% we'll consider the sward composition to be acceptable.

Of course, as anyone who has dealt with Poa Annua will know, if left unattended a

2% sward presence in one year can very easily become 20% or more in two, and so whilst we needed to make compromises in our approach to renovating the courts, given the time constraints we were working with, we still needed to address the Poa Annua problem. The solution we looked to was Attraxor.

Circling back to the start of this piece, and our trip to BTME, Attraxor was recommended to us on two key points:

- 1) Its qualities as a plant growth regulator - such products are used widely now within amenity horticulture, and the arrival of a new active ingredient is always going to be of interest.
- 2) Its qualities as a Poa Annua suppressant - primarily through suppression of seed head production, but also for its ability to weaken even established plants over time.

To be clear, we know this doesn't sound like revolutionary stuff. Trinexapac-ethyl, the active ingredient in products such as Primo Maxx and Clipless makes similar claims. In



The ability of Prohexadione to knock back Poa Annua means that, on swards which contain Poa, it is going to be a risky application



Dan Evans on Centre Court during 2020 season



Gloucester Rugby showing effect of Attraxor application on Poa in sward



We caveated the decision to move to Attraxor with a safety net of sorts, that if we began to see any adverse results, we would withdraw from using the product

fact, we'll vouch for its effectiveness as a plant growth regulator, and as such Primo Maxx has been a staple of our in-season chemical application programme for many years now. However, while we've always noted some seed head suppression associated with Poa Annua when using Trinexapac-ethyl, we've always viewed this quality as being a bit more hit and miss. Admittedly, Poa Annua suppression has never been the main aim of our Primo Maxx programme, and so any suppression has been a welcome side effect, but a product that could achieve a high level of Poa suppression while allowing us to manipulate growth would be a hugely impressive tool.

At the end of July, with the planning for our end of season renovations having highlighted the Poa problem, and armed with the knowledge of Attraxor's claims, we got in touch with Mark Allen (Technical Sales Manager at Agrovista) to see if he was aware of any venues that had been using Attraxor in the UK. Mark came back armed with some anecdotal evidence of the effect Attraxor had where it was applied in a stadium environment, and also shared

images displaying its usefulness. The stadium in question was that of Gloucester Rugby, who had chosen to trial Attraxor on the strength of its Poa suppression claims. The photographic evidence we reviewed, coupled with the verbal testimony that we received from Gloucester's Groundstaff, via Mark, confirmed to us that Attraxor would be worth investigating further.

At this point, it's useful to get a better understanding of how Plant Growth Regulators, and in particular Attraxor work. It is generally accepted that there are five main types of Plant Growth Regulator:

- Auxins;
- Gibberellins;
- Cytokins;
- Ethylene;
- Abscisic Acid

Anyone familiar with products such as Primo Maxx, which utilise the active ingredient Trinexapac-ethyl, will know that the majority of Plant Growth Regulators that we use in the UK sports turf sector relate to Gibberellins, or more specifically, are Gibberellin synthesis inhibitors. Gibberellins



Court 1 growing in after renovation with Courts 2 and 3 part scarified



Centre Court set up for play during the playing season

are of particular interest to those of us who maintain turf because one of their main functions is to promote cell elongation within grass plants. In basic terms, they make the grass grow vertically.

The major upside to Trinexapac-ethyl has always been that it only inhibits vertical growth. Old school growth regulators were really growth retardants; they had the effect of holding a plant in a sort of suspension, effectively mothballing it, until the active ingredient had worn off. These sorts of products were purely made with the intention of reducing the need for more frequent mowing, and in many cases negatively impacted the overall health of the turf.

However, with the advent of active ingredients such as Trinexapac-ethyl, which only stop the vertical growth, we've been able to be more precise in how we regulate, or to be more accurate, manipulate the growth of the plants we look after. By inhibiting the Gibberellin activity within grass plants, we can pause vertical growth. However, the plant will still be carrying out all its other normal functions, and so the energy it is generating needs to be utilised in other ways. This is why these sorts of products are able to thicken grass swards; they cause the individual grass plants to push more resource into creating broader plant leaves which make the sward denser, as well as encouraging greater development

of root systems.

Ultimately, this has been the reason why we've used Primo Maxx as part of our management of our courts for so long. We'd use it regardless of whether or not it induced a reduction in clipping yield (mowing); we're after the physiological changes it makes to the structure of the grass plant. It makes the surface denser, more wear resilient, and more aesthetically pleasing due to the improved uniformity.

In this context, it would be more than reasonable to ask us why we've decided to look at a different Plant Growth Regulator. After all, we've had no qualms with the effectiveness of Trinexapac-ethyl since we began using it. Indeed, one of my favourite pieces of advice to give to a groundsman is to stop and think about why you are doing something; if you can't explain why you are doing it, you almost certainly shouldn't do it!

For us though, the potential advantages of moving to Attraxor were too great not to at least consider using it, while the risks associated with moving products were minimal. On top of this, we also hypothesised a potential advantage in our scenario from using Attraxor, which would



Centre Court during 2020 playing season



With 2020 not being a 'normal' year, and capacity pressures mandating a longer grass court season, we put ourselves in a position whereby we would keep all eight courts open



Lighting rig over Centre Court early morning

justify 'why' we were doing what we were.

The reason that the risks associated with at least trying Attraxor were, and continue to be, so low, is because it works in (certainly as far as we can tell!) broadly the same way as Trinexapac-ethyl. It inhibits the production of Gibberellin in the plant, causing a reduction in cell elongation or vertical growth, and redirecting the energy that would have otherwise been used for this into other processes within the plant. In that

sense, our view was that Attraxor would have broadly the same effect as products such as Primo Maxx as far as the physiological structure of the plant and sward were concerned. Therefore, there would be no concern that we would lose the benefits we have gained from Trinexapac-ethyl.

The reason for trialling Attraxor then, was actually connected to its reported ability to suppress seed head production in Poa

Annua. As we've stated, our biggest concern with our condensed renovation programme was going to be our ability to control Poa Annua going in to the 2021 season. This is what caused us to need to think differently, and possibly more swiftly than we normally would. There have been plenty of new things we've brought into our management of the courts over the last few years, but generally we introduce on one court and monitor, and then if results are positive

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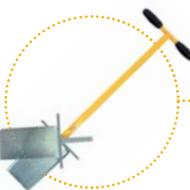
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Centre Court two weeks after completion of renovation (including seeding and top dressing). The effect of Attraxor can be seen on Poa along near edge of the court

we'll trial on a few more courts and keep increasing until we're comfortable using the new technique or product everywhere. However, the timeframe presented to us for 2020 meant that we needed to make a decision quickly, based on other people's anecdotal evidence, and any research we could find.

Fortunately, the body of research out there on Prohexadione was substantial enough to convince us that bringing Attraxor straight into use across all our courts during the end of the grass court season, and into our renovations, was the right thing to do. In interpreting the research we came across, we made two key observations.

Firstly, academic studies seemed to suggest that Prohexadione affects different grass species to a greater or lesser extent at a fixed dose rate. In the sources we read, the sort of range of difference indicated Poa species only required about a third of the amount of active ingredient that Ryegrass would require to illicit the same level of growth regulation. In other words, at a given

dose rate Poa Annua is impacted around three times more than Perennial Ryegrass. By comparison, Trinexapac-ethyl seems to induce a fairly uniform response across different species at a fixed application rate; something we've noted when using the active ingredient, as well as being reflected in the reading we did.

Secondly, we came across sources that suggested Prohexadione created a more 'instant' effect on grass plants compared to Trinexapac-ethyl. These sources hypothesised that the fast-acting characteristic of Prohexadione, coupled with the relative strength of the product in its ability to effect Poa Annua caused a greater level of seed head suppression.

Equipped with this research, we therefore made the decision to switch to Attraxor for the applications of Plant Growth Regulator associated with our end of season renovations. For several years now, we've applied Primo Maxx after the courts have been cleaned out, but prior to seeding and topdressing. This has allowed us to slow the

growth of existing grass within the sward in order that the new seed can establish, and topdressing settle before we need to get on to the surface to carry out initial mowing. This process has worked extremely well, and given our knowledge of Attraxor, we saw no risk in switching products to accomplish this.

We also caveated the decision to move to Attraxor with a safety net of sorts, that if we began to see any adverse results as we worked our way through the courts, we would withdraw from using the product for this year and revert to our normal way of slowly experimenting with new innovations until we were comfortable with the product's effects.

The first court to be renovated was our Centre Court; if we're honest it's the last court we would want to trial a new product on. However, with our hand forced, we carried out an initial application once the court had been scarified. We opted to utilise the full dose rate for a single application as set out by the product label (1.5kg per hectare) and applied with a small amount of



Sue Lawrence overmarking the Centre Court base-line during 2020 playing season



Dan Evans on Centre Court during 2020 season

nitrogen. We then completed the rest of the renovation procedures before leaving the court to settle.

Within a few days, we began to see evidence of the Prohexadione taking effect. On grass tennis courts, it isn't unusual for Poa Annua to be concentrated around the edges of the surface where the grass meets the surrounding concrete ring beam. Generally, this is because it is the most difficult area of the court to use mechanical equipment to remove poor growth, whether that is a tractor mounted scarifiers or pedestrian verti-cutting/brushing equipment. That problem is amplified on our courts, as when they were constructed just under a decade ago, the contractor did not allow for sinkage, and so we're still slowly, year-on-year addressing the fact that the perimeters of our courts sit higher than the grass! This means that we have a small strip of grass around the edge of our courts that has to be hand cut occasionally, and raked out manually if we want to thin it out at all.

This strip came in incredibly useful though, as it offered the first sign of some incredibly encouraging results. As the included pictures show, the Poa Annua around the edge of the court was, within days, beginning to suffer. Within a week or so, when we were able to get on to the court itself, we also found evidence of smaller patches within the main body of the court

where Poa was starting to suffer, and be outcompeted by the new grass plants we had sown just a week or so prior.

Unsurprisingly, with those observations, we didn't hesitate to continue rolling out Attraxor across our other courts as we renovated, and with weather proving favourable we applied a follow up dose to each court at twenty-one days after its initial dose. Visual results continued to demonstrate an ability to knock back the Poa, and allow the new grass to outcompete and take over where Poa populations were already thin, whilst on surround strips where mechanical works are trickier we were able to manually rake out the Poa before topping up seed and dressing. We should also point out that we saw no ill-effects with regards the desirable grasses within the sward.

With these observations, we circle back to our original point at the start of this article; We believe that Attraxor will prove to be the next revolutionary product to become commonplace in the turf manager's arsenal.

Despite that grand prediction, we should though issue some words of caution. Firstly, that our prediction is based on two applications made as part of our autumn renovations. While we see no reason to predict a significantly different outcome from using Prohexadione earlier in the growing season, we personally haven't done so yet,



No chemical replaces good, basic turf management, and there is no point applying the marginal gains that a chemical offers if there are significant deficiencies in basic maintenance



Post renovation Poa



Our financial position doesn't dictate a bottomless pit of money (in fact, reality is far from it!) and so we weren't able to increase productivity by using twice the manpower with twice the equipment



Centre Court set up for play during the playing season

and so it would be wrong for us not to apply some caution to our words.

Also, while we've made quite a bold claim to the potential significance of Prohexadione, it isn't a silver bullet that is going to rid fine turf of the Poa species. No chemical replaces good, basic turf management, and there is no point applying the marginal gains that a chemical like Prohexadione offers if there are significant deficiencies in basic maintenance that will otherwise greatly undermine the chemical benefits.

That being said, we fully intend to continue experimenting with Prohexadione when spring arrives. It may well be the thing we need to keep the Poa at bay, and if it can do this while offering the same benefits to plant physiology that Trinexapac-ethyl has then we'll be on to a winner!

However, we wouldn't suggest that Prohexadione and products like Attraxor are going to be fully replacing Trinexapac-ethyl anytime soon. The ability of Prohexadione to knock back Poa Annua means that on swards which contain Poa, it is going to be a risky application, and while Attraxor

offers label rates that appear 'safer' for Poa, applicators may be more comfortable using a product which has proven not to significantly impact Poa Annua. For example, on our site, many of our ornamental lawn areas and surrounds contain significant amounts of Poa, where it is perfectly acceptable as a species, as these areas aren't experiencing high levels of wear. While it would be advantageous to remove Poa from the site to prevent seed migration, the simple fact is our local geography would make this pointless - we're in a very green area where Poa would continue to come in from areas out of our control. For these areas, we'll continue, happily to use Primo Maxx as our chosen growth regulator, at least in the short to medium term.

Additionally, Attraxor may in some ways be too good at knocking back Poa. Imagine, for example, that hypothetically we had a court with a significant amount of Poa present during the week of our major televised event. Applying Attraxor may not be the best idea as it would likely highlight the Poa in the sward, by knocking it back and causing discolouring! Hopefully this

won't be a problem for us, but it's definitely something to consider. In that scenario, it could be that Attraxor would be the right choice, up until a few weeks out from an event, at which point a switch across to Primo Maxx may be a good idea.

As we've said previously in this piece, and indeed as we've said previously about other products, Prohexadione, or Attraxor, isn't going to be a silver bullet that just eradicates a problem, never to be seen again. At the same time, we don't think Trinexapac-ethyl will be disappearing from our arsenal; there are far too many situations where it has proven to be invaluable to our industry. But, we really do believe it has the potential to revolutionise the way we maintain turf surfaces in this country. With the number of sports now that aim to play on 100% rye surfaces, or perhaps more importantly 0% Annual Meadow Grass, whilst also utilising a Growth Regulator Programme as part of a turf management strategy, it only seems natural that the two should converge. In that sense, don't be surprised if, in a few years time, Attraxor becomes a go to tool for turf managers in the UK.



The body of research was substantial enough to convince us that bringing Attraxor straight into use across all our courts was the right thing to do



Clubhouse lawn set up for outdoor catering - adapted with social distancing grids (and stripe pattern in grass) to reflect Covid-19 pandemic



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Sedgefield Racecourse

Small but

perfectly formed

At the grass roots of jumps racing, Sedgefield's grounds team aims for improved standards on its tight and steep course. Jane Carley talks to Clerk of the Course **Michael Naughton** and Head Groundsman **Mark Watson**



The Sedgefield grounds team: (L-R) Michael Pritchard, Andrew Metcalfe, Mark Watson and Michael Naughton

When a small team is preparing for racing, it's all hands on deck and, at Sedgefield, Clerk of the Course Michael Naughton can often be seen cracking on with that most scintillating of jobs, manning the irrigator. "It's a good opportunity for some peace and quiet," he jokes.

In common with all sporting venues, Sedgefield has had more than its fair share of peace and quiet over the past twelve months, but racing has continued behind closed doors, and there's always been plenty to do for Michael, head groundsman Mark Watson and groundsmen Michael Pritchard and Andrew Metcalfe, who joined in the autumn.

Michael Pritchard was furloughed in the

summer of 2020, so then we were down to three.

Originally part of the Sands Hall Estate in Durham, racing began at Sedgefield in 1732, with formal meetings taking place by 1846. The course now hosts twenty days a year, the pinnacle being the Durham National in October, won back in the 1980s by Rubstic, who went on to victory in the Aintree Grand National. Other notable Sedgefield winners include Paddy's Return, successful in the Triumph Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival.

"The track is very undulating and quite tight, so lends itself well to National Hunt racing," explains Michael Naughton. "Trainers will travel some distance to bring horses here, including the Tizzards from Somerset and Gordon Elliott from Ireland. We seem to have attracted a better class of

horse in recent years."

Mark explains that, whilst the majority of the track drains well, the home straight is over clay, so holds water more than the back straight.

"We move rails to produce fresh ground where possible, particularly for the take off and landing of fences and in wet areas like the home straight."

"The track is 10 furlongs round, and only 25m wide in places so there's not much room, but we put in lots of work between meetings to improve the ground, especially on the bends," says Michael. "While it was disappointing to lose our January meeting to frost, it has saved the ground for the rest of the season."

Mark has been at Sedgefield for six years, starting out as a casual, and he comments





Men at work...Michael and Mark tackle dandelions in the parade ring by organic methods, the trusty fork!



Mowing down to 10cm with a front-mounted deck and rear blower all summer encourages the grass to thicken up



Even Sedgefield sometimes needs watering - the Upton irrigator is soon to be replaced with a Briggs system



Racing is still the same and our work is not affected. If the horses go home safe and happy, we have done our job

that they are still benefitting from a programme of drainage carried out shortly before he arrived, along with work to build up the roadside bend to alter its camber.

"We're looking at additional drainage along the stands to get water away, and we've also put in a request to add an all-weather canter down," explains Michael. "Currently for all but the 2m 5f start, horses turn right out of the parade ring and gallop down the course to the start, so it's getting lots of traffic."

After the final meeting of the season in May, once treading in is complete, the jump wings and hurdles come off the track ready for renovations, and the whole course is gone over with a heavy roller to level it out.

"We vertidrain and overseed, using GNN Sportscare - they are local contractors that we have a really good relationship with, and it makes sense for us not to have to maintain such specialist machinery. They also keep a close eye out for pests and diseases and can advise if any additional treatments are needed," explains Mark.

"We apply fertiliser and then water through the summer if necessary. I've switched to putting three applications of 1200kg fertiliser on, and the 'little and often' approach seems to be paying off. Michael and I

will also apply fertiliser by hand to the bends before treading in to encourage grass growth."

"Sedgefield was always known for being a bit bare as the track is so narrow," comments Michael, "and we're now getting seventy runners a meeting, so it's great that we are able to maintain the growth."

Mark also likes to keep the grass down over the summer, mowing to 10cm to encourage the sward to thicken up.

"We use a Votex front mounted mower with a blower on the back of the tractor to spread the clippings," he explains. "It's a mower we inherited and it wouldn't be my choice - there are lighter and more manoeuvrable mowers on the market now. It takes five hours to cut the track and I'm mowing twice a week in summer and once a week as we get near to the start of the next season in August. My dream mower would be a big ride-on but that's not on the horizon at the moment!"

A second Votex is kept to cut the larger areas in the grass car parks, and a pair of small ride-ons do duty on more fiddly areas; the parade ring is generally striped-up with a push mower.

At the end of the 2020/21 season, Mark plans to scarify the track for the first time in several years, to remove thatch and



Fence rebuilding in progress

further improve the turf quality.

Watering equipment is also set for an upgrade, he explains: "We have a Briggs system ready to replace the old Upton irrigator, but we needed to change the hydrants, so we're still waiting for that. It can take 8-9 hours to put on 8-10mm, so it takes a man out for a full day. We actually had a bit of a panic last year as it had been so hot during the first lockdown, the grass was looking a bit brown but the pump had seized and it was difficult to get repairs done. However, it was fixed in time and we were able to crack on!"

He rates the Sisis slitter as the most valuable piece of kit in the shed.

"I wouldn't be without it in the racing season. If I can get on the course with it, I will - I'll do the whole track if there's time, or just the racing line, and it has a rear roller so gives a nice level finish."

Multi-tasking is a must for such a small team and Michael Pritchard has been promoted to senior groundsman this year, whilst Andrew Metcalfe joined the full-time ranks having worked at the track as a casual for six years.

"We're all friends outside work which makes a difference and I'm

keen to give someone a chance if a job comes up," says Mark.

In a normal year, the workload includes preparing for outdoor functions such as caravan rallies held in the centre course, whilst the buildings host weddings, parties and conferences. "We don't get too involved in those unless they need a bit of muscle!" says Michael. He adds that the team is looking forward to getting back to 'normal'.

"It's a very different atmosphere with no racegoers, and now, no owners. The lack of income makes it hard to plan any developments - we're lucky, we've been able to make some improvements and we'll keep asking where we think it's necessary, but we understand that the money may not be there."

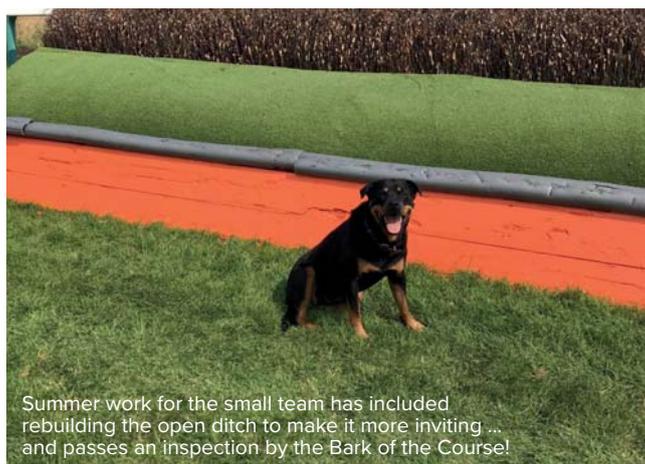
Mark adds: "Racing is still the same and our work is not affected. If the horses go home safe and happy, we have done our job."



**SEDGEFIELD
RACECOURSE**



Adjustments made to the turfcare regime at Sedgefield have reaped rewards with a thicker sward which stands up to the demands of jumps racing in the worst of the winter weather



Summer work for the small team has included rebuilding the open ditch to make it more inviting ... and passes an inspection by the Bark of the Course!

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From Pigs to Pitches

It all started twenty years ago when pig farmer Alan Chappelow had a 'light bulb moment', and so began Alan Chappelow Sports Grounds Contractors. David Mears chatted recently to Alan's youngest son Ben, discovering how this West Yorkshire based family company came to fruition and has developed



Renovations at Barnsley Football Club

It was in 2001 when Alan was approached by his neighbours, Dewsbury and District Golf Club, and asked if he could help them with some greenkeeping/contracting work. It was not a problem to Alan, so he fitted this in around his work at his farm and, after a short period, won a contract with the club for mowing work.

Whilst working on the course, Alan observed various contractors coming on to the site from time to time and saw the work they were undertaking. This was when the realisation came: 'what an opportunity'; contracting, surely, was the way forward for him!

Inspired by the golf club, and folk there he now knew well, purchasing a Verti-Drain was the first investment in his new venture, along with flotation tyres to fit to the Case tractor he had. Word got around and Alan was soon undertaking work in the immediate area, working for local cricket, rugby and football clubs. As work developed so did the need for extra kit; an overseeder and spraying kit was added enabling more tasks to be undertaken, which aided expansion of the business.

The first five years saw good natural growth and it was decided to form a limited company; Chappelow Sports Turf Ltd was incorporated on 2nd November 2006. Sons



Edward and Ben had always enjoyed being involved, spending time helping out in the business whilst at school and today, well established and working full time, are directors, along with Alan and his wife Helen.

Eldest son Edward, now 32, attended Myerscough College straight from leaving school and on a day release basis, attaining a Foundation Certificate in Sportsturf. He was clear on what he wanted to do from the start! On the other hand, the now 29-year-old Ben, didn't go straight into the business however. His parents had high aspirations for him and encouraged him to take A levels and seek a university place. He secured a



The Chappelows left to right: Ben, Alan and Edward with some of their kit ... and dogs

place at Lincoln University to study marketing which was a subject he was interested in and one that would help his career. He remembers that he managed Fresher's week and perhaps a week or so more but, as he said; "This just wasn't for me; I needed to be working, I'm very much hands on!"

Ben returned home and quickly fell into the contracting work and loved it! It's not all work though as the team do make time to study and/or attend courses to stay abreast of the latest legislation, product developments, latest techniques and, of course, Health and Safety requirements.

All three men hold the necessary

certification for the variety of work undertaken and ongoing training is carried out with all employees; the Chappelows are ably assisted by ten to twenty, with the total number depending on work load and seasonal work. The company also holds registration with the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS) providing extra peace of mind for clients, as all staff carry CPCS cards.

The company, throughout the last twenty years, has not only grown in employee numbers and variety of work, but in the area covered. Yorkshire was developed initially and then beyond and, as Ben said, "if there was a good job we could do and it was

worthwhile, we'd travel!" Ben thinks one of the first away jobs was when he was young and before he was fully involved in the business; "It was draining a school pitch in Swindon. 'Where's that?' I asked! I knew it was a long way down south. Off went Dad and Edward with four lads." Long journeys and overnight stays seemed a confirmation that the business was growing.

Chappelow's work now is varied and includes more construction work, but in the early days main tasks were remedial and renovation projects and drainage (primary and secondary). Civils work followed; mainly pitch construction, etc.

Now with a number of years' sports pitch



Fairway aeration at Moor Allerton Golf Club

construction under their belts, the company offers a complete range of services from renovation to brand new design and build projects. They work with many different clients and work usually splits as follows: April to June - football and rugby, August to September - cricket, and winter - golf (particularly tees and greens).

The company's clients fall into eight categories: football, rugby, cricket, golf, bowls, equestrian, schools, colleges and universities and local authorities. Ben said that they generally work directly with clients but also through consultants or charities and others administering grant aid.

Clients range from small sports clubs through to Premier League football clubs. The company has longstanding business relations with, for example, Leeds United, Huddersfield, Barnsley and Sheffield Wednesday football clubs; all reasonably local. However, they also work with some a good distance away, such as Brighton,

Exeter and Colchester! Ben believes that the furthest they have been, however, is Dublin! Clontarf Cricket Club had heard of Chappelow's reputation and asked if they wished to tender for what they called 'a once in a generation project to relay the entire square'. Chappelow tendered and were awarded the work which they carried out in 2019.

Chappelow's impressive kit list keeps expanding (see machinery list) and features a number of specialist machines. One favourite that really stands out is the CAT D6 Medium Dozer, Ben tells me. "The dozer is equipped with a fully automated dual grade laser system," Ben explains. "When set up, the blade follows the laser without operator involvement; such precision, it's been tremendously beneficial to us!"

The company does not have allegiance to any one particular brand of machinery and each purchase is thoroughly considered for value and utility. There seems to be one

exception to the brand allegiance however; all their eleven tractors are John Deere and Ripon Farm Services supplied these along with other cultivation equipment. Ben tells me that they all find John Deere tractors reliable, user friendly and cost effective. As he says: "You don't need loads of tuition to get going!" He said that kit is a mix of agricultural and amenity and, on occasions, there is a cross-over. Agricultural machinery he feels is more robust than amenity items in a number of cases and often without the amenity price tag!

Dedicated and purposed machinery is sourced from specialist distributors. Servicing is carried out in-house as they have their own facilities and trained personnel. The company seldom needs to hire machinery, but there are odd occasions; usually it's for a 360 Excavator. On the matter of a wish list: "Our own fleet of different sized 360 Excavators!" says Ben with a smile.



We were fortunate that other projects, already booked in, could be brought forward to fill the holes in the diary



Installation of secondary sand slits at Huddersfield Town FC's training facility



Siddal ARLFC topsoil spread



Siddal ARLFC cut and fill

Asked about changes in working practices, Ben commented; "There have been a growing number, and a good example is in pitch construction; technology has advanced in this sector at a tremendous rate! The introduction of artificial and hybrid pitches is probably the biggest change I've witnessed in my time in the business. Most Premier League clubs now boast hybrid pitches, for instance".

Best practices to renovate had to be learned and, as Ben added, "we need to stay on top of our game!" Asked how can you improve and what kit is needed? Ben said that one item that sprang to mind was the need for a Universe Rotor to fit on to the

Koro Field Top Maker; "A great piece of kit!"

We then turned to projects; biggest, best, etc? Ben immediately thought that the most innovative and rewarding project that the company had undertaken was the installation, last year, at Siddal ARLFC, Halifax, of a HATKO Hybridgrass carpet pitch, achieved with grant support. This, Ben said, is the very latest technology as it differs from, but is comparable to, stitched pitches. The work entailed laying the carpet on a constructed and drained surface with a carefully selected rootzone layer, then filled with a specifically defined rootzone mixture, before high quality sportsfield grass was seeded into the surface. The natural grass

grows between the synthetic grass fibres, creating a strong and vigorous playing surface. The 'open' texture of the backing ensures that the grass roots are not obstructed in their vertical movement downwards starting from the day of installation. Ben believes that, although there are now a few examples of this product, this was the first of its type in the UK.

The company's biggest project, completed in 2020, was the construction, for York City Council, of seven pitches on the Ashfield Estate adjacent to the A64. The land was low-lying old agricultural and marsh. Chappelow reshaped and created



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The Kit List

Tractors

John Deere 4720 50hp x 2
 John Deere 6230 100hp
 John Deere 6120M 120hp x 2
 John Deere 6125R 125hp x 3
 John Deere 6130R 130hp
 John Deere 6155R 155hp
 John Deere 6210R 210hp

Wagons

Volvo 500hp
 DAF 340hp
 DAF 7.5 tonne

Telehandlers

JCB 531-70 Agri Super x 3

Dozers and Dumpers

Caterpillar D6 dozer
 Caterpillar D3 dozer
 Forward tipping 9 tonne dumpers x 6

Implements

Koro Field Top Maker 2.5m x 3
 Universe Rotors x 2
 Kuhn power harrows 3m wide x 3
 Blec Stone Rake 4m wide x 2
 Blec Stone Rake 4m wide - laser guided
 Contra rake
 Charterhouse Verti-Drain 7626 x 4
 Charterhouse Verti-Drain 7315 x 2
 Imants shockwaves 2.5m wide x 2
 Vredo Overseeder 2.5m wide x 2
 Vredo Double Disc Seeder
 Drop sand spreaders 4m² x 2
 Agri-Spread disc 6 tonne sand spreader
 Dakota 414 sand spreader
 Bargam Gambetti sprayer 12m
 Bargam Gambetti sprayer 6m
 Kirpy stone burier 2m
 Rotodarian stone burier 2.5m
 Kuhn EL 282 rotavators x 2
 Blec laser box graders x 2
 A fleet of Toro cylinder and rotary mowers
 Major mowers x 2
 Amazone Groundkeeper SmartCut
 Kuhn MDS 19.1D fertiliser spreaders x 2

Drainage

Koro Top Drains x 2
 Blec Sand Master 2.5m
 Blec Vibra Sand 1.6m
 Blec Vibra Sand 1m
 AFT 75 Whizz Wheels x 2
 AFT100 Chain Trencher
 AFT 45 Chain Trencher
 Shelton 6 tonne Gravel Hoppers x 4
 Plus a range of small implements



First cut phase one at Westfield Sports Hub, Sheffield

several plateaus, installing primary and secondary drainage. Because of the nature of the land and location, extra sustainable drainage was also necessary which included attenuation ponds. "This was, by far, our biggest and most challenging project," said Ben, "and made more difficult by some really bad weather!"

As with many companies, the Coronavirus has had an impact on the business. The company managed to sustain work pretty well last year, but now it's beginning to bite. "Last year's end of season football pitch renovations caused some issues as a number were hesitant to undertake large scale work when no one was sure when play would resume!" said Ben "But, we were fortunate that other projects, already booked in, could be brought forward to fill the holes in the diary."

The third lockdown has definitely focused minds and just when confidence had started to creep back! Some of Chappelow's clients are hesitant to confirm work at present with so much uncertainty around, but as Ben said, "looking on the bright side, there is work booked in for the summer, football is continuing and so confidence is slowly returning."

The company has plans for the future and the focus is on bigger projects, particularly stadium construction. They see the opportunities to respond to what they believe will be a growing demand from customers new and existing in the industry

to develop their grounds using the new technologies. Not being able to use a pitch because of weather or damage is becoming unacceptable and investment in hybrid pitches, allowing 24/7 play and training, is gaining momentum.

Changing weather patterns have had an effect on the business. For example, handling greater rainfall has meant altering drainage specifications. Extremes of weather do cause problems and 2020 has seen periods of persistent rainfall! Ben also commented that the seasons have changed and seem to last longer and to start late.

Chappelow has built a good reputation over the years, gaining most work through 'word of mouth' and recommendations, but social media helps too and is used alongside modest advertising in prominent industry magazine Pitchcare. The company works closely with a number of consultants who provide help and information. This often leads to work from clients seeking a reputable contractor for projects. Staying in contact with people from all sectors within the industry is definitely important.

The company, like so many in the sports turf industry and elsewhere, will be pleased to see the back of Covid (won't we all?) and regain some semblance of normality. Meantime, it's a case of soldiering on to the best of their abilities, conforming with the latest regulations and continuing to provide the service and quality their clients have grown accustomed to.



Charterhouse Verti-Drains in action at Moor Allerton Golf Club

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Machinery Demonstrations

Choosing value for money machinery



When choosing machines to demonstrate, speak to your dealer or sales representative, as they will have the in-depth product knowledge needed to find the best machines to suit your needs

In this article, we talk to **Chris Walker**, demonstrations manager at Reesink Turfcare, about what to look out for when demonstrating a machine, and how to get the best value for your money.



Chris Walker, demonstrations manager at Reesink Turfcare

With online shopping becoming ever more popular, more and more companies are offering a 'try before you buy' option, giving customers a fixed period of time to decide whether they want to return an item or purchase it. The reason this is gaining popularity is clear; customers want to see a product in person before committing to a purchase. And the same can be said for turfcare machinery.

Demonstrations have played a large part in turfcare machinery purchasing for some time. It gives customers the opportunity to test out machinery on their own playing field, pitch or golf course to determine if it's the right fit, before making any final purchasing decisions. With so much work expected from your turfcare equipment, and with it often representing a significant investment, demonstrations are a must.

How do demonstrations work?

If you're looking to get a demonstration, the first step is to speak to your local machinery dealer or local sales representative for the brands you're interested in. This is where you'll have the conversation about the machinery you already have, what you think you need, what type of turf you're working with and what you need your machinery to deliver.

From there, your dealer or sales rep will be able to recommend the machinery that you should demo. This may consist of one

machine, or it could be several. Reesink Turfcare has a dedicated fleet of machinery for demonstrations, most of which come with all the attachments and features so you can test the machine to its full capability and find the right spec for you. The demonstration team will be able to talk you through how to use the machinery and all of its features before you get started and, with the team's excellent product knowledge, all questions can be answered comprehensively.

Depending on the number of machines that need to be tested, a demonstration can take between one afternoon to several days. For example, if you're testing out the ProCore 648 on your greens or pitch, it doesn't take long to see how well it works on that one area. On the other hand, with Toro's new all-electric eTriFlex 3370, some customers have tested it for longer to really get a feel for how long the battery can last and how many greens it can do in one charge. That said, there have been customers who have purchased it after just a day's demonstration they were so impressed with its technology and cutting quality!

No matter what machine you would like to demo, rest assured that Reesink will always allow enough time for you to properly test all the features of the machinery in all the places you need, to help make a final decision that's right for you.

What to look out for when demonstrating a machine?

When you're demonstrating a machine, there's probably a lot that you'll want to do with it to understand its capabilities. However, my main piece of advice would be to prioritise the problem areas of your course or pitch.

A brand new greensmower will cut grass on flat greens easily all-day long, and if you're demonstrating a couple of different brands or machines it might be difficult to really see the difference in quality and build from just that one area. Where you really need to test a machine is on the hilly areas, where it gets boggy or where the turf is undulating. This will weed out the machinery that isn't the right fit for your requirements, and hone in on the equipment that is built to last and will do the job well. There's no point investing money into a machine that you realise a couple of months down the line can't do what you need it to or the job properly.

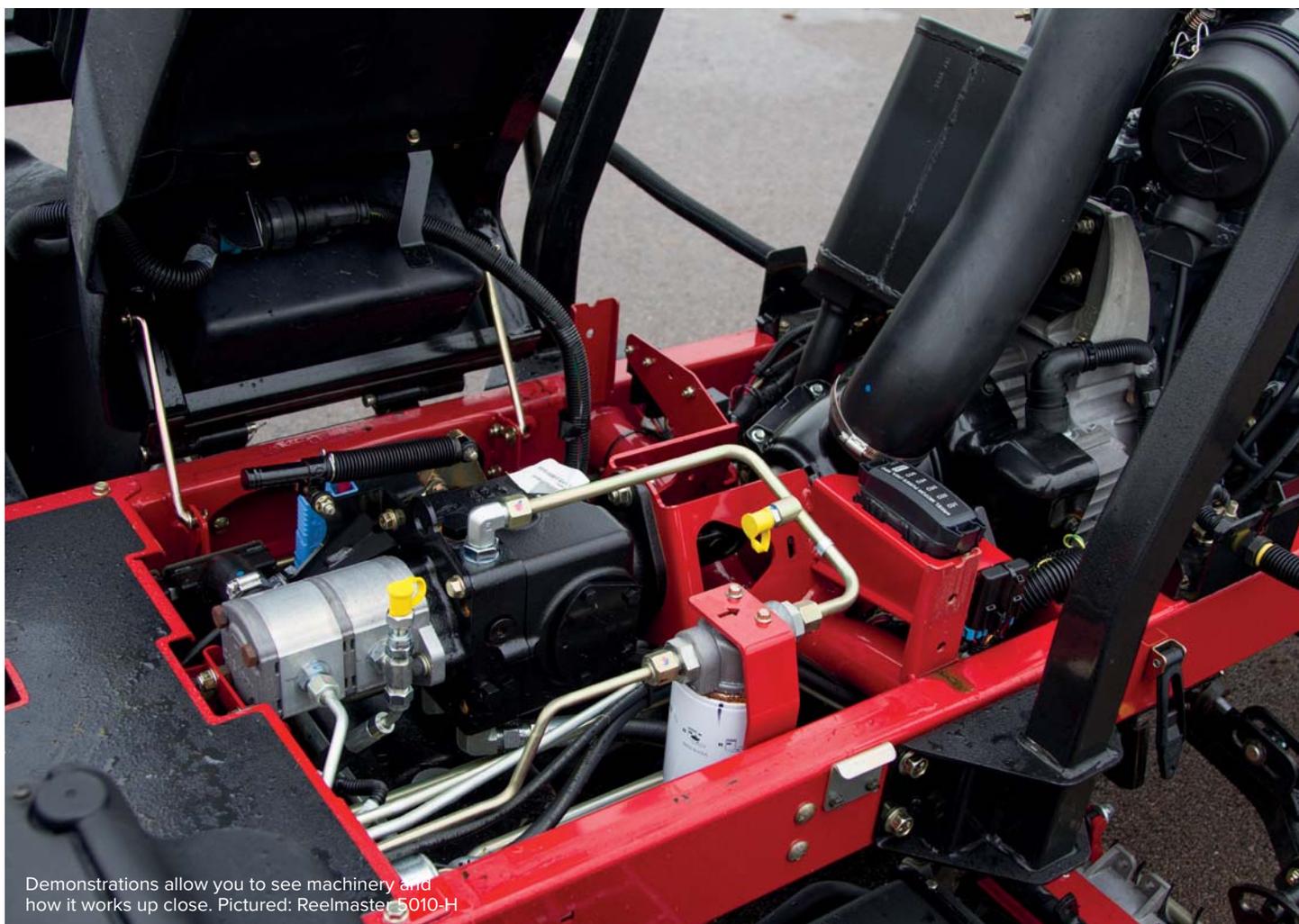
How to make the right decision

In an ideal world, there would be one machine that does everything, but of course that isn't the case. If you expect the machine you have on demo to achieve everything you want it to, you're going to be disappointed, no matter what brand or machine you're looking at. The key is to take

the time to speak to your dealer or sales representative, as they will have the in-depth product knowledge needed to find the best machines to suit your needs. It may be that they recommend one machine that can tackle the most important jobs you need doing, or perhaps they bring a wider range of machinery that combined can achieve everything you want. Either way, working with them to focus in on what you need from your machinery will only help.

Once you've had the demonstration, a key factor that always comes into play is cost. With the tricky economic situation due to the pandemic, it's more important than ever to make sure you get value for your money with any purchases you make. However, don't let a focus on cost become the most important consideration. There is a temptation to demonstrate a machine and, once you've seen it works exactly how you want and does everything you need it to, then try and find a cheaper model that on the surface appears similar.

This may seem like a great way to save money up front, but there's always a reason why a particular model is cheaper. It won't take long to find out it can't do the same job, or that you really needed the higher spec machine. That cheaper machine will likely not work on those tougher hilly areas, or it won't be robust enough to do the hours you need. Usually this tactic ends with an



Demonstrations allow you to see machinery and how it works up close. Pictured: Reelmaster 5010-H



Whilst there are many factors to consider when purchasing turfcare machinery, a demonstration is the fastest and most effective way to answer so many of your questions



Most demonstration machinery will come with all the attachments and features so you can test the machine to its full capability and find the right spec for you

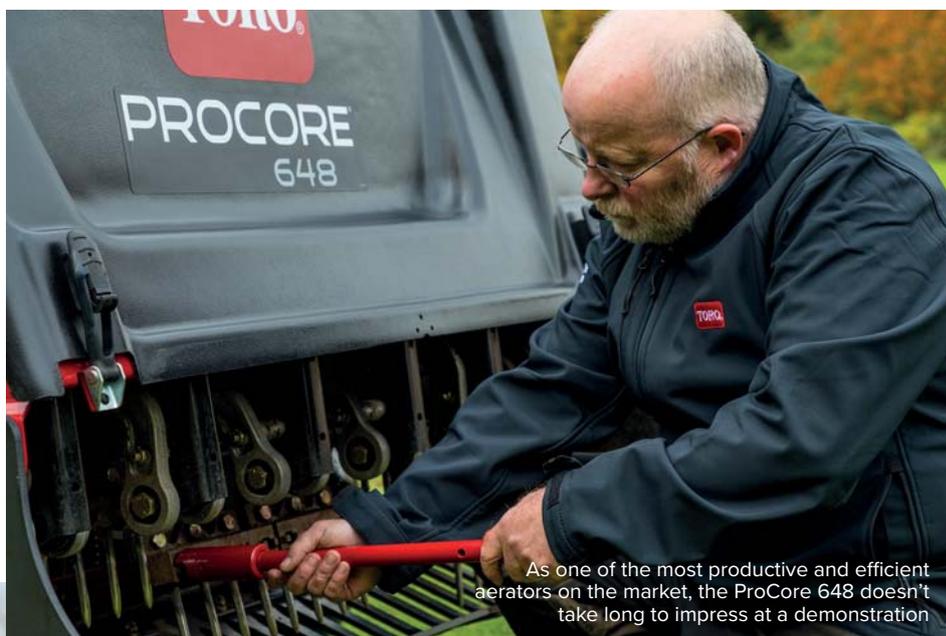
unhappy customer, and a machine that needs upgrading sooner, or needs constant maintenance as it's continuously pushed past its capabilities. This only makes it costlier in the long-term and leaves important jobs on your course or pitch incomplete.

How to get the best value for money

Before you even have a machinery demonstration it's important to do your research. Figure out what your maximum budget is and work from there to find the best options available in that price range. There's no point taking the time to demonstrate a machine if you then realise it's beyond your reach.

However, there are ways to get higher quality machines at a reduced price. With used machinery, you can get quality, robust machinery without having to compromise and opt for a lower-quality brand.

Reesink recently launched Ree.Own, an online nationwide network, providing access to the best used Toro machinery available in the UK. All machines listed have been certified for sale through a network of authorised Toro dealers and Reesink branch



As one of the most productive and efficient aerators on the market, the ProCore 648 doesn't take long to impress at a demonstration

and would increase the hours on its clock.

By bringing both the machine you are looking to purchase for you to view in person, and the same model from our demo fleet to test on your turf, we can protect the quality of your used machinery purchase, whilst still giving you the opportunity to test that machine on your terrain, so you get the best of both worlds.

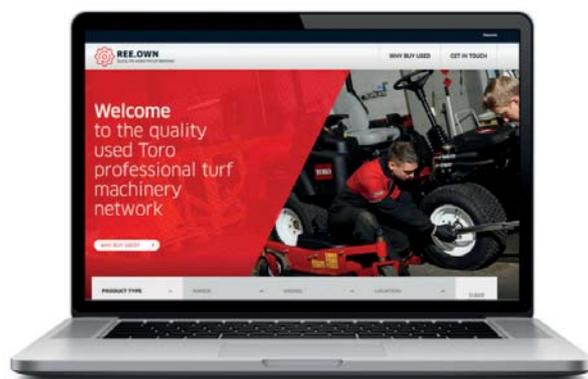
The importance of demonstrations

Whilst there are many factors to consider when purchasing turfcare machinery, a demonstration is the fastest and most effective way to answer so many of your questions. There are some things you just can't tell about a machine on paper and, when it comes to getting the best possible value for money, by demonstrating machinery you can know for certain that what you invest in will work for you.

locations and are no more than seven years since first use, with less than 3,000 hours use. Plus, all machines will have a minimum ninety day warranty.

Purchasing used machinery is becoming an increasingly popular route to take, but if you're worried about not getting to test a machine before buying it, don't. If you're interested in a used machine or ex-demonstration machine from Reesink, it can be arranged.

We can bring to a demonstration the exact model you are looking to purchase for you to test on your turf, and the used machine itself to view. You might wonder why you can't demo the used machine itself? That's because all used machines for sale on Ree.Own have undergone a thorough check by trained technicians, and that inspection guarantees the machine is in top condition. By using this machine for demonstrations, the guarantee of the machine's quality would be compromised

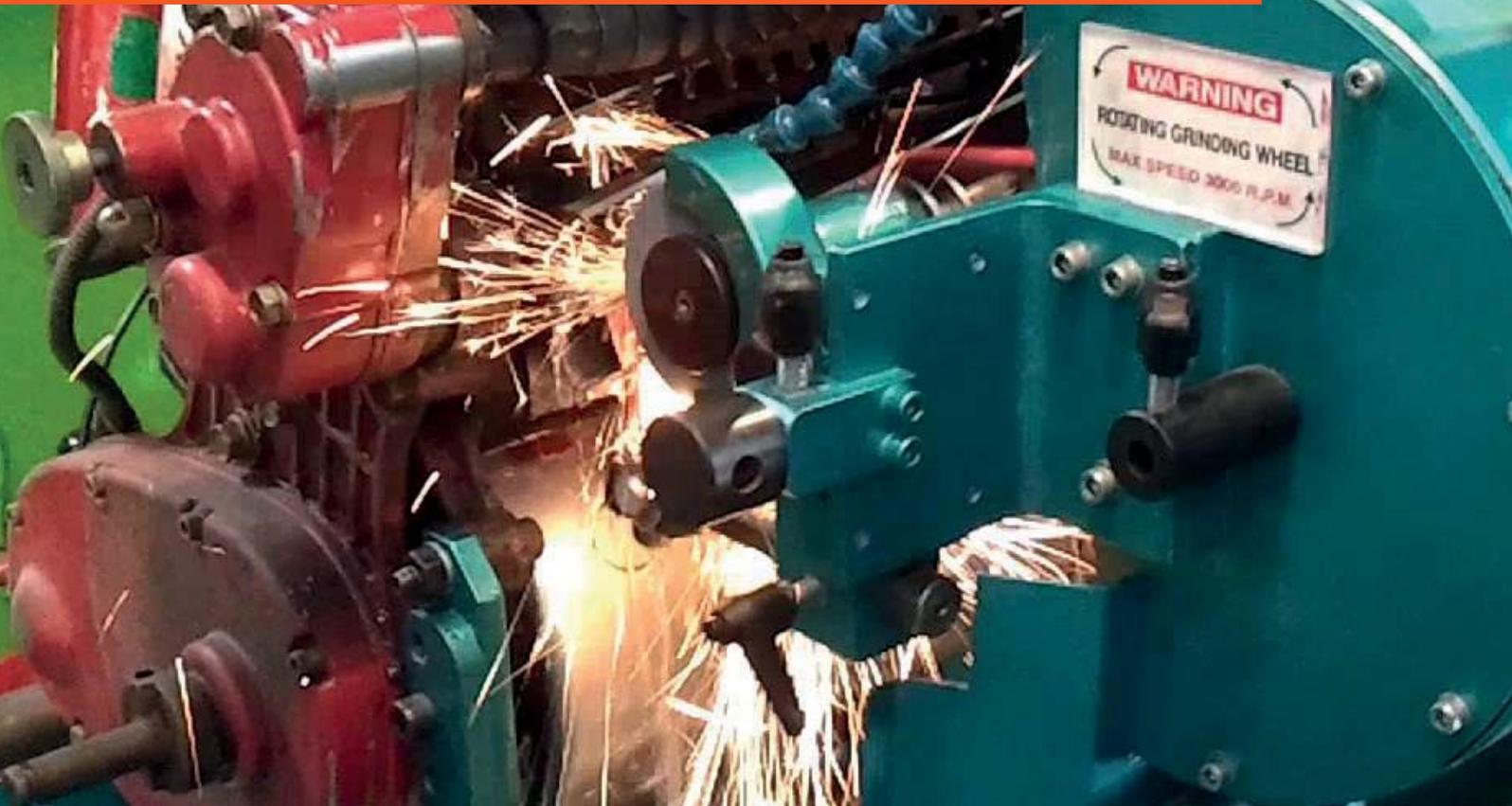


For further information on the Toro machines mentioned, or to request a demonstration, visit reesinkturfcare.co.uk, call 01480 226800 or email info@reesinkturfcare.co.uk



Relief grinding

The cost benefits



Clive Nottingham of Hunter Grinders highlights the benefits of Relief Grinding to improve performance and enhance cost savings

How to bring relief to tighter budgets and improve cost savings will be the focus of many organisations, golf courses, service and equipment managers under pressure to maximise efficiency and minimise labour and maintenance equipment costs. A major factor in achieving excellent savings is to look at how you maintain the sharpness of your equipment's cutting units.

So, let's look at why we need sharp blades/cylinders/reels.

Condition of the turf is paramount to a good playing surface; unhealthy turf brings countless problems and other issues which are costly to correct. Therefore, prevention

is better than cure and provides a more economic approach.

Manufacturers of grass cutting equipment supply new units relief ground. They have spent a good deal of time and money on research and development to discover that relief grinding is by far the best method for cutting units to produce the cleanest cut possible with the least amount of damage to the plant.

So, what are the reasons we need to relief grind?

Tests carried out by leading manufacturers have established that relief ground cylinders stay on cut up to 3 or 4 times longer than spun ground ones and require less horsepower to drive the unit.

The resulting factors are greater fuel efficiency and less stress on the hydraulic power systems.

Another major advantage is a relief ground cylinder will deal with abrasive effects of topdressing.

The relief edge on both the bed-knife and the cylinder allows the top dressing to clear

the cutting blades easily, preventing the dulling effect seen with only spin grinding units, due to the wider contact area.

Continual spin grinding of cylinders/reels results in more frequent replacement due to the material removed each time; whereas the relief ground will be replaced less often.

Another major and important consideration is to retain the original factory specification by returning an as new cut as quickly as possible.

The cleaner cut achieved by relief grinding gives a higher standard of after-cut appearance, which also reduces the stress on components because less horsepower is needed to drive the cylinder.

We need to acknowledge how relief grinding does this for a cylinder/reel, by removing metal from the trailing edge of the blade in turn forms a relief angle, which reduces the contact area of the cutting edges, resulting in less friction, longer wear life.

Improved horsepower results

When a cylinder/reel and blades wear, or are



The cleaner cut achieved by relief grinding gives a higher standard of after-cut appearance, which also reduces the stress on components because less horsepower is needed to drive the cylinder

spun ground, it has a flatter, larger contact area. Also, it can become coned or tapered which causes more stress and strain on the drive system.

The normal or expected horsepower requirement with a relief ground unit is 0.88hp, therefore a 5-unit machine can require up to 4.5hp (5 x 0.88hp = 4.5hp) to drive the cutting units.

A 35hp engine has 30.5hp remaining to drive the rest of the machine system. A 5-gang unit, which has been spun ground only, can require up to 13hp (5 x 2.59hp = 13hp), leaving only 22hp to drive the machine along.

So, it is established that relief grinding cutting units saves you money, not only by reducing workshop maintenance and downtime with far fewer grinds, but a reduction in fuel costs and replacement

parts which can often be a hidden saving cost that is easily missed.

A Hunter Grinder is the ultimate all-in-one mower grinder, combining precision spin and relief operations in one machine, although both methods can be used independently if the user desires.

Hunter Grinders' all-new Jupiter ATI 6000 relief grinder is one machine that can fully relief, or spin and relief grind, returning cylinders and bottom blades back to the manufacturer's original specification. Other models in the Jupiter, Juno and Amazon ranges give lower cost and alternative options.

The ATI 6000 specification is technology



rich. It enables the operator to programme the machine then carry out other work. The time mowers spend in the workshop has a huge impact on turf maintenance operations, especially at the height of the season, so the choice of grinder is a significant one for any organisation.

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Remote sensing technology

Plant stress on sports turf

Drones and remote sensing technology, such as multispectral and thermal cameras, have the potential to detect early symptoms of stress in turf grass. A pilot project was conducted to determine *if or how* this technology could help sports turf maintenance. This article focuses on the early detection of the turf grass disease **Grey Leaf Spot**, which is caused by the harmful fungus *Pyricularia spp*

Figure 2: Field 11 in North-South orientation with area in question (white outline)

The St. Jakob sports facility in Basel was flown over by a drone equipped with a multispectral camera once a month. The remote sensing images were evaluated, compared with observations on the ground and conclusions were drawn to inform ongoing maintenance.

Field number 11 of the junior campus of Basel Football Club was severely affected in August due to the rapid spread of the fungus, and images taken with a multi-spectral camera, in combination with the NDVI index, allowed early detection before the damage



became visible to the human eye.

Sports fields and golf courses are often criticised for their use of pesticides, fertilisers and water consumption. If turf problems are detected at an early stage, it should be possible to strengthen the plants through mechanical procedures and biological inputs and to avoid excessive addition of chemicals, fertilisers and water. Remote sensing techniques could be beneficial in this early detection. To this end, an initial pilot project, lasting over a year, was launched at the end of 2018 in collaboration with the Sports Department of the City of Basel and FC Basel 1893.

The work was undertaken between February 2019 and January 2020. The aim of this pilot project was to investigate the potential applications of remote sensing technology in sports turf maintenance, using practical examples to find out how effective it is in the early detection of plant stress - with the ultimate aim of reducing the use of pesticides and irrigation.

Materials and Methods

Locations and test set-up

In the summer of 2011, the field 11 (main FCB match field - Figure 1) at the St. Jakob sports facility in Basel was completely rebuilt as a Lavaterr pitch, including new drainage pipes, in-ground heating, automatic irrigation and seeded with a sports turf mixture consisting

of *Lolium perenne* and *Poa pratensis*. After eight years, the pitch also contained a high percentage of *Poa annua*. In autumn 2018, the entire middle third of the pitch was repaired and sodded with new turf with a high proportion of *Lolium perenne* (see dark green area in Figure 2). To begin with, a test flight was undertaken over the entire St. Jakob sports facility in order to establish a “zero measurement” and 16 georeferenced control points (GCP), measured in Basel and stored in the project database in order to locate, overlay and compare the flown results precisely.

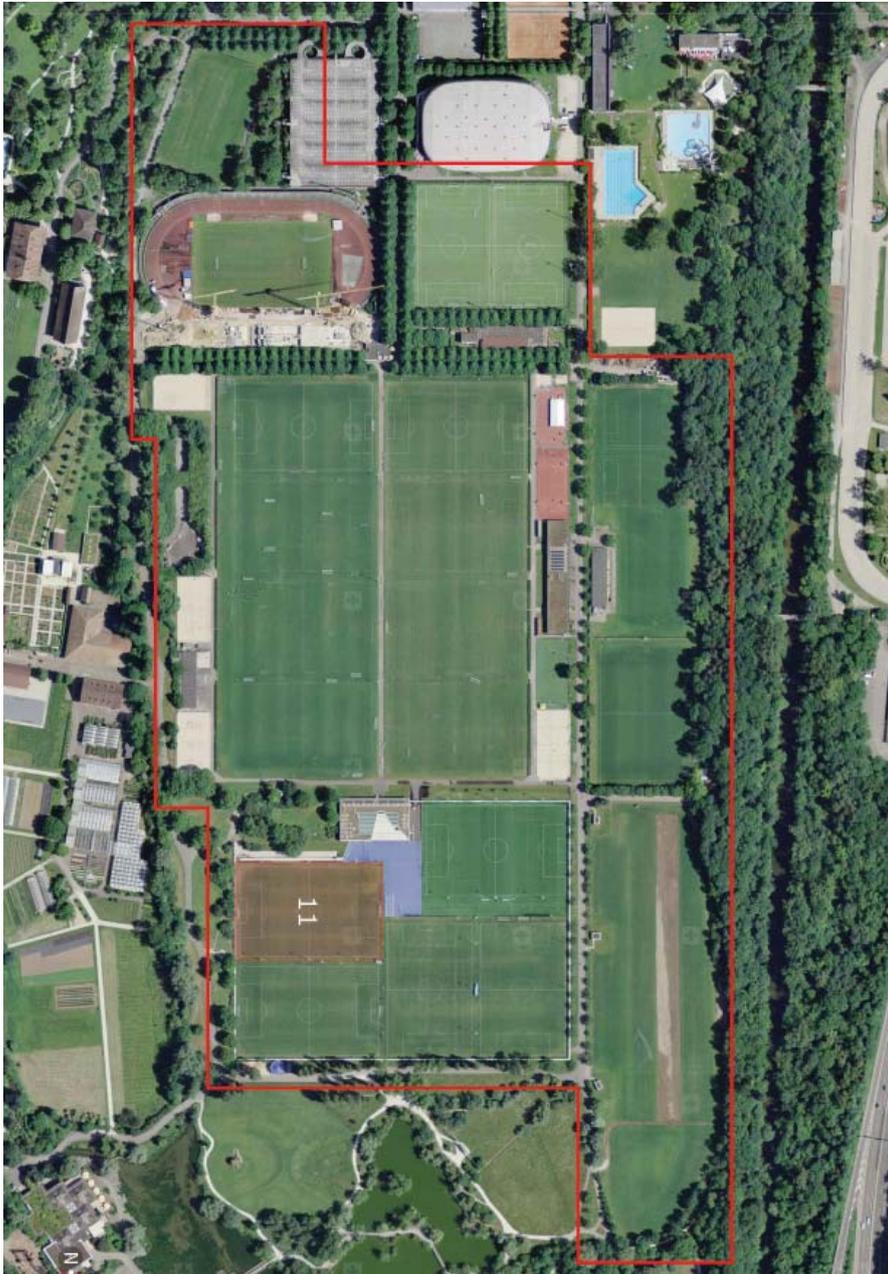
Drone Flights

Following the test flight, the official data collection flights were flown once a month with the drone (DJI Matrice 210), equipped with both multispectral camera sensors (MicaSense RedEdge-M) and an RGB camera (DJI Zenmuse X5s). All recordings were made automatically, using pre-programmed flight paths and the following parameters: flight altitude of 80m, overlap of 78% / 78%, 20 rows (north-south), total distance covered ~14km, flight time ~38 minutes (2 flights + battery change), approx. 8'800 single images per flight (5 channels with 1700 images each). Flights were always done in the middle of the day between 12:00 to 13:00 and, to compensate for any changes in the light quality, a calibration measurement was

carried out before and after the flight using a reference disc from MicaSense. This made it possible to adjust the acquired images to the specified values during processing and to obtain a comparable result.

Multispectral camera and processing of the acquired data

The images were captured by the five spectral-specific designed and calibrated lenses and stored as jpg files. Multispectral image data is composed of several spectral channels that capture reflected electromagnetic radiation in green (497-530nm), red (620-780nm) and near infrared light (780-1'400nm), however, before processing, the image files initially appear in pale grey scales. The representation in the known colour gradients of the NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) results from the algorithm-based calculation of the individual spectral ranges and the programmed colour presets. The final NDVI images illustrate the reflection of the green, red and near infrared light reflected off the turf surface, with greener colours indicating healthier plants with, for example, a greater percentage of chlorophyll in the plant leaves, and red indicating stressed or sick plants with a weaker vitality. The photogrammetric evaluation was then done with Pix4Dmapper and from there the software Pix4Dfields allowed the superimposition and comparison



Left: Figure 1: Flight perimeter at the St. Jakob sports complex in Basel with Field 11

Right: Figure 3: Diagram showing weather data and maintenance practices on Field 11



The ultimate aim in the early detection of plant stress is to reduce the use of pesticides and irrigation

of recordings and indices. After processing, the data was uploaded to Pix4Dcloud to make it available to all participants via the browser.

Meteorological data and weather conditions during the recordings

At the same time, weather data was obtained from the Federal Office for Meteorology and Climatology (MeteoSwiss) via the BAS Basel/Binningen weather station at 316 metres above sea level, and the following measurement parameters were used for the evaluation: precipitation in mm, temperature 2m above ground in C°, temperature 5cm above ground in C°, sunshine duration in hours, relative humidity 2m above ground in % and wind speed in km/h. The comparison of the weather data with the maintenance plan of field 11 was an important basis for the analysis of the plant indices.

Maintenance, irrigation and occupancy

Also, all maintenance measures, with the exception of irrigation, were reported daily and were thus available for further processing and evaluation (see Figure 3). To date, the greenkeeping team has not yet collected any data on irrigation, so no evaluable figures on irrigation days and quantities were available. The maintenance data received from the greenkeeping team included mowing intervals and cutting direction, aeration and sand topdressing, the various fertilizer applications, the use of pesticides and wetting agents, overseeding, etc.

Results

Evaluation of NDVI data

In the analysis of the NDVI data during the period July 2019 to November 2019, the change in plant vitality and growth can be clearly identified by the discoloration from the green to the red colour range. As determined by the software and user preferences, the greener the colouring, the healthier the sports turf is, the redder the more the turf sward suffers from stress. The sequence of pictures below illustrates (through this evolution of colour) how dramatically the grass stand changed over almost 4 months under the influence of the



Image captured on 02.12.2019, RGB Orthophoto

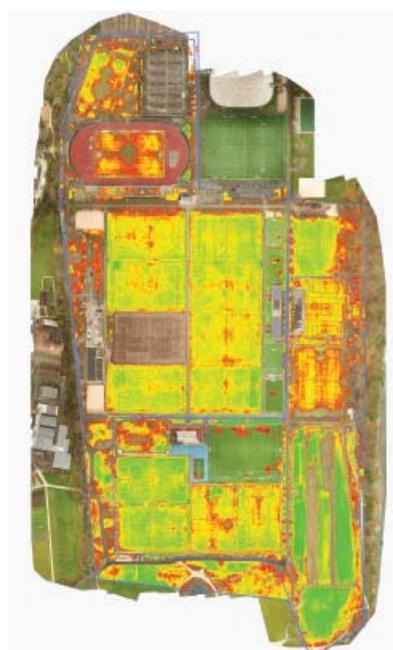
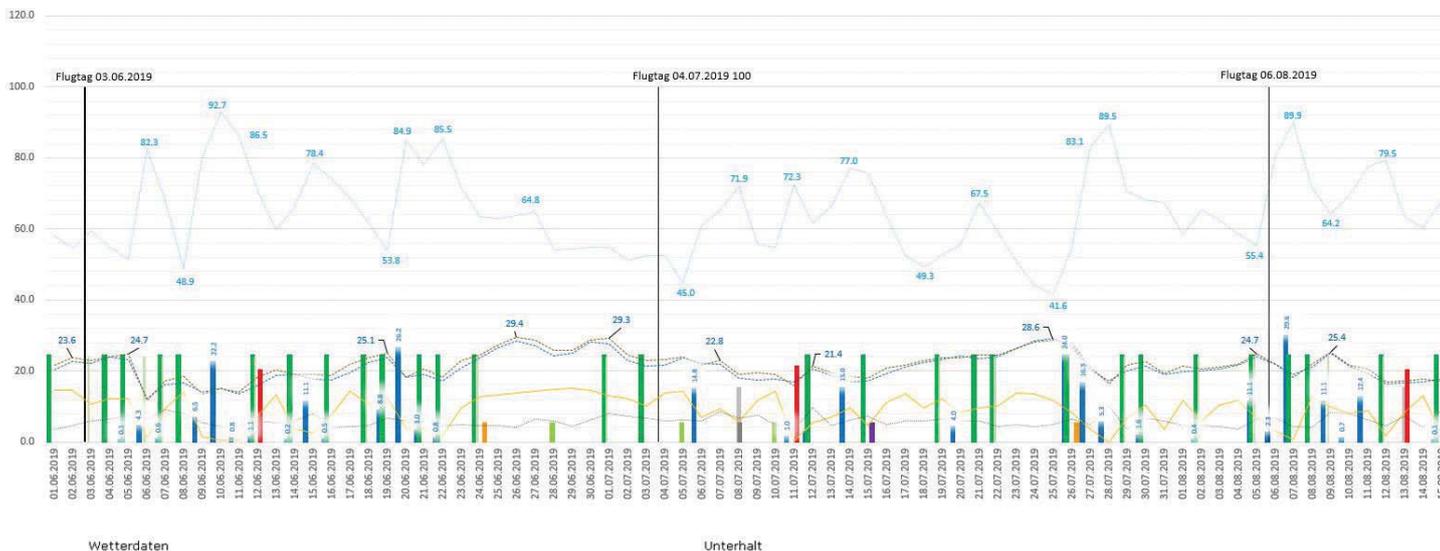


Image captured on 02.12.2019, NDVI-Index



fungus *Pyricularia spp.*; the highlight of the spread being at the beginning of September.

The NDVI measurements indicate that the grass plants were under significant stress between the period of July to September and this stress was not uniform across the entire field. In comparison with the climate data during this same period, it could be surmised that the high temperatures during the summer months, between the end of June and early September, were a major stress factor for the grasses, specifically in the older turfed area. The heat tolerance of the different grass species would appear to be different and, if we look at the areas on the pitch which were most strongly stressed, the high temperatures seemed to put more pressure on the older areas which contained a high percentage of *Poa annua*. On August 5, 2019, the multispectral data on this older turf illustrates the severe decline in vitality of the overall grass sward containing a high percentage of *Poa annua*.

On the other hand, the newly sodded area in the centre of the pitch shows a significantly better vitality up until August 5, despite the stress signs due to the pressure of heavy use. Only the northern area towards the side line shows an anomaly, due to unknown factors, but which may be the first signs of a general change in the vitality of the *Lolium perenne* cultivars (signs which are visible in the NDVI index images).

Looking back, temperatures had risen sharply from June 22 and excessive artificial irrigation was necessary because of the lack of rainfall, creating conditions conducive

to the occurrence of Grey Leaf Spot (L.B. McCarty, 2005).

On August 6, these stressed areas were analysed on site and identified by Bernhard Schenk (Division Manager at UFA-Samen PROFI GRÜN) as the turf disease Grey Leaf Spot.

By September, the area covered with sodded turf had been almost completely destroyed by the Grey Leaf Spot. The clear demarcation from the older area with a significantly lower proportion of *Lolium perenne* is clearly visible, illustrating that *Lolium* is affected by Grey Leaf Spot, whereas *Poa* species seem to be less affected. Results which are corroborated by L.B. McCarty (2005).

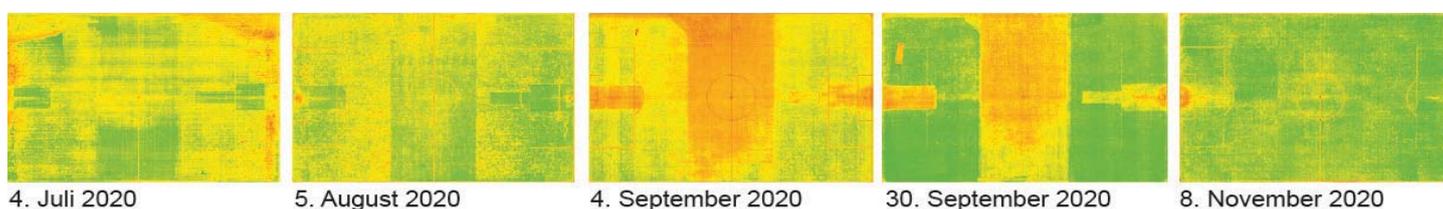
Evaluation of weather data and maintenance measures

The weather data from the weather station BAS Basel/Binningen shows the last precipitation on June 20 with 26mm. After that time, the weather turned hotter and dryer with many hours of sunshine and only sporadic precipitation was measured between the end of June and the beginning of August. Due to the low rainfall, the pitches had to be irrigated daily in the early morning hours. The measured wind movements can be defined for the entire period of the measurement as a light breeze (2-9km/h) to a gentle breeze (10-19km/h), providing little air for surfaces to dry out following irrigation. During the same period, the greenkeeper cut less often and, on June 24 and July 27, fungicides were applied due to a summer

fusarium infestation. The site was over-seeded for the first time on June 28. The hot, dry period continued into July and with total rainfall of only 80 mm the need for irrigation remained high. Relative humidity remained high, averaging 61%. On July 5, the entire site was over-seeded again and on July 8 it was aerated and then sanded. On July 10, the site had to be over-seeded a third time and on July 11 it was fertilised.

Analysis/discussion

By early July 2019, conditions in Basel were theoretically ideal for the Grey Leaf Spot. It was hot and humid and the turf was intensively irrigated and kept moist for a long time. The pitch had been freshly fertilised and there was no strong air movement on and around the pitch to dry it out following morning irrigation. Although the Grey Leaf Spot disease probably started at this time, the NDVI image from July 4 doesn't necessarily reveal any particular indication that would point to a disease outbreak. The images indicated that much of the pitch was stressed, likely due to the hot dry conditions and wear and tear from daily practice. It was therefore difficult to differentiate between stress due to wear and tear or weather conditions and the beginnings of a disease outbreak. However, the August 5 image (below) does seem to show the beginning of some stress on the north-west corner of the central portion and, looking back, this is likely the first signs of an infestation on the *Lolium perenne* cultivars of the newly sodded area, which was confirmed



Overview of the NDVI measurements on Field 11

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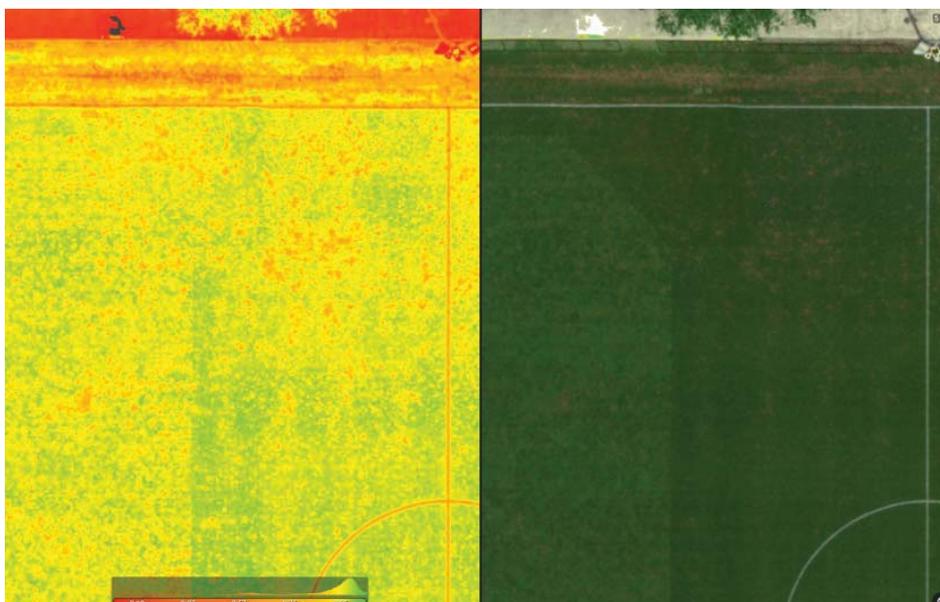
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Field 11 on August 5, 2019 (NDVI-index and RGB image)

by Bernhard Schenk of UFA-Samen on August 6. The September 4 NDVI image clearly shows that the outbreak had almost exclusively infected the new *Lolium perenne* sods and hardly touched the older surface high in *Poa* species.

In fact, on July 27 the greenkeeper had sprayed for *Fusarium* which had affected parts of the older *Poa* surfaces, not yet knowing that Grey Leaf Spot was also present. If the greenkeeper had received this additional knowledge earlier, he might have been able to react in time with some practical measures which could have saved or at least mitigated the spread of the disease over the central sodded portion of the pitch. However, due to the widely spaced flights, one month apart, the remote sensing images were only partially useful and it became clear that one flight per month in the main growth period, and in the months with a high incidence of disease, is far from sufficient to respond quickly and effectively to turf problems.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the monthly recorded images revealed clearly visible damage caused by stress and, overall, a clear visualisation of the vitality of the grass sward. The maintenance measures of the greenkeeping team and the weather influences could also be made visible and comprehensible.

Conclusions

The case study presented here, with a possible early detection of the turf disease Grey Leaf Spot, illustrates how valuable it is when a greenkeeping team becomes aware of anomalies on sports turf in good time and can react accordingly, especially with a turf disease like Grey Leaf Spot which spreads rapidly and can only be chemically suppressed at an early stage. Overall, the comparison of the NDVI images with the on-site inspections was very revealing. Based on our observations, the camera images were clearly able to indicate a weakened vegetation earlier than the human eye was able to see changes on the ground. To conclude, vegetation indices and their evaluation, in combination with an analysis of local weather data and applied maintenance measures, could prove to be a valuable tool for future-oriented and resource-saving sports turf maintenance.

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Reto Weiss - pixmap gmbh



If turf problems are detected at an early stage, it should be possible to strengthen the plants through mechanical procedures and biological inputs and to avoid excessive addition of chemicals, fertilisers and water

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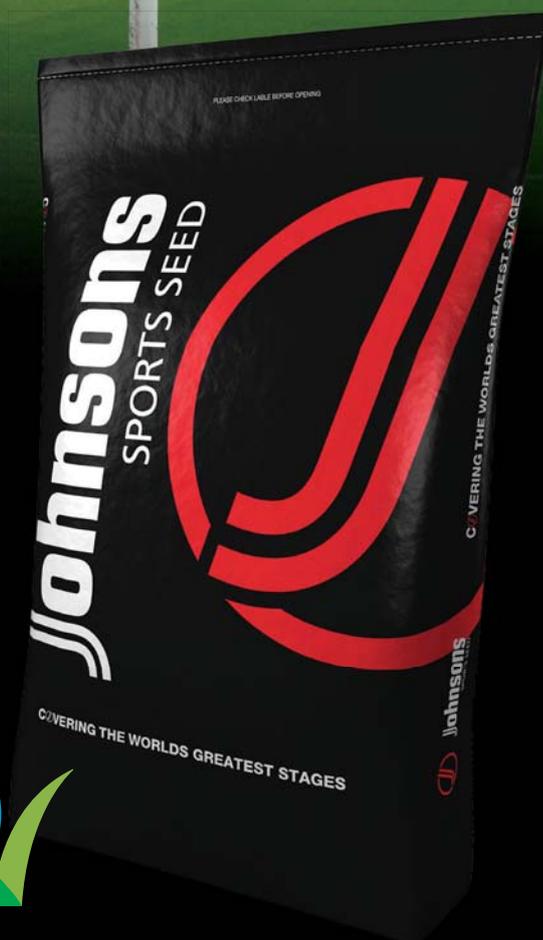


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Frank Newberry

Playing Your Part

The Turfcare Professional's Guide to Managing Change at Work

Change at work may be forced on us by many things, e.g. technological advances, new legislation, economic worries, or environmental considerations - including most recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

Successful change management can hinge on how well we (i) communicate change, (ii) implement change, and (iii) set a good example to others during the change.

Trainer **Frank Newberry** looks at a simple approach to communicating and implementing change in the workplace. He outlines the four key requirements that will need to be met if change is to be handled successfully (by either team leaders, or by team members - who want to make a difference)

You may have heard the phrase: 'people don't like change'. Sometimes it is expressed as 'people resist change'. These sayings have been doing the rounds for many years now, and they can be useful if they cause the authors (or agents) of change to devise strategies that will overcome any resistance to change in the workplace.

I would challenge the notion that people resist change

Personally, I would challenge the notion that people resist change. My evidence? How about gambling in the UK? On 13 November 1994 approximately ten million people gambled in the UK. Around 17% of the UK population had a flutter - mainly on the football pools.

The next day (14th November 1994), the National Lottery was launched, and 49 million lottery tickets were purchased. The UK population was then about 58 million people.

The National Lottery caused millions more people to become gamblers! The number of gamblers has now settled down to just less than twice the pre-lottery figure with the National Lottery still the UK's favourite gambling option.

Millions of people have made a significant change in their lives

This suggests to me that millions of people have made a significant change in their lives, and they have remained changed - for a quarter of a century. Around 1.7% of the UK population still do the football pools; about one tenth of those who were doing the pools back in 1994.

Why did millions of people change their behaviour? Is it that people just need to know whether a proposed change will bring them benefits, or the prospect of benefits? Another popular phrase seems to apply here, the notion of 'what's in it for me?' or 'what may be in it for me?'

In this article, we will look briefly at the National Lottery as an example of a successful change that was structured and implemented to succeed. Then we will look at how we might help to manage change when it comes to our workplace.

Everyone is now an agent of change

There are four key features that need to be in place if we are to successfully manage change at work. Now, you may be thinking that change in the workplace is nothing to do with you - that change is a senior management problem, not my problem - it is, as you might say, 'well above your pay grade'.

Well, that might have been the view in the middle of the last century. But change is now so frequent, and so necessary - for our employers' survival and our own employment prospects - that everyone is now an agent of change. From apprentices to senior managers.

So what do we have to do? Well, I believe that we all have a part to play, and ultimately we could be shaping the future of our team, our organisation and maybe even the future of our profession.

Let us look at the part we can play in change management at work, especially helping meet the requirements for successful change.



Why did millions of people change their behaviour? Is it that people just need to know whether a proposed change will bring them benefits, or the prospect of benefits? Another popular phrase seems to apply here, the notion of 'what's in it for me?'

Four Key Requirements of Successful Change

1. A shared dissatisfaction with the present situation
2. A vision of the future that we can all see clearly
3. A route to goal
4. A plan with dates

First Requirement: A shared dissatisfaction with the present situation

The National Lottery succeeded because a sense of dissatisfaction with the football pools was not difficult to locate and then exploit. The Lottery was quick and easy, you could participate when you went shopping, the prizes were much bigger, and you were contributing to worthwhile good causes through the Lottery Fund. By contrast, the football pools took longer to do, the prizes were smaller and no good causes seemed to benefit.

How can you help with change at work?

To meet this first requirement at work - a shared dissatisfaction with the present - we need to identify the problems, weaknesses and irritations that could be fixed by the introduction of a change. We can assist this process by helping people to become more dissatisfied.

How do we do this? By getting people at work to talk about why we need to change our ways, make improvements etc. Now, change may be forced on us by many things, including technological advances, new legislation, economic or environmental considerations - including, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Note how the government imposed the Tier system across the UK in late 2020. This was one example of how our leaders use legislation to help us to become sufficiently dissatisfied with our present situation that we want to change our behaviour - and beat the Coronavirus.

The more we believe in the restrictions, the more we become frustrated and dissatisfied with the people who ignore them. Our desire to conform to the restrictions becomes greater, and our tolerance of the poor behaviour of others is reduced. We have learned that the example of leaders is key also!

Second Requirement: A vision of the future that all can see clearly

The National Lottery had a clear vision and simple key messages that were promoted in the mass media. The Lottery was even supported by HM Government. The promotional campaign just had to stress how easy it was to play, how cheap it was, how huge the prizes were and how we were simultaneously donating to good causes. Irresistible.

How can you help?

To meet this second requirement at work - a vision of the future - we need to ensure that all affected by the change can see



The more we believe in the restrictions, the more we become frustrated and dissatisfied with the people who ignore them. Our desire to conform to the restrictions becomes greater, and our tolerance of the poor behaviour of others is reduced

themselves being successful in the new ways of working - from the outset. Then successful again all through any transition period, and finally - working successful after the change(s) have taken place. You may need to work with people who need convincing; a few may even be hostile to the idea, but several will be all for the change(s) from the beginning.

Third Requirement: A route to goal

The National Lottery had a clear route to its goal. The promotional campaign started early, everyone knew what to expect and there were no surprises.

How can you help?

To meet this third requirement at work (a route to goal), we need to ensure that all affected by the change know how we will transition from the current (old) way of working to the new way. This might mean scheduling short meetings to get across key messages about what will change, and what will stay the same.

The route should also take in the training or development needed by people so they can be productive straight after the change. Regular one-to-one meetings with individuals and teams should be held - where progress can be celebrated, and problems raised and resolved.

Fourth Requirement: A plan with dates

The National Lottery had a plan with dates. Everyone could see the massive infrastructure developing. Machines started appearing in convenience stores, newsagents, supermarkets etc. Thankfully for the UK, other countries had pioneered lotteries on a massive scale. The first modern lottery was launched in Puerto Rico in 1934. The first lottery in the UK (called the Million Adventure) was run in 1694 during the reign of William and Mary. The UK in 1994 could pick and mix from the best lottery systems around the world.

How can you help?

To meet this fourth requirement at work - a plan with dates - we need to ensure that all the dates, or milestones, in the change programme are known to everyone. Actual events with actual dates.

Questions you might ask include: When do we start the change programme? When does the change programme end? When do we review our progress during the programme? How do we go about changing dates if there is any slippage?

So, whether you are a team leader or a team member who wants to make a difference, I wish you good luck with the communication and implementation of change at work. You can do it!

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If you have questions about communication at work and in your career, you can reach Frank Newberry at his personal website www.franknewberry.com. Just click on the Contact tab



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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



The new Eclipse 360 ELiTE from Jacobsen has been designed to combine the next generation of ELiTE lithium-ion batteries with a signature cut that has been trusted for a century.

ELiTE batteries have powered E-Z-GO vehicles for over 15 million hours, and that technology has been adopted by the E360 ELiTE to make a mower that can cut 50+ large greens on a single charge.

Noise during operation is reduced to virtual silence, meaning the machine can be used to cut anywhere early in the morning without disruption. The significant reduction in noise pollution is combined with zero air pollution with the all-electric model, while fuel consumption is reduced when cutting with the diesel hybrid.

Attention has also been paid to the access and maintenance aspects of the machine. A swing-out centre unit has been added for quick and easy cleaning, maintenance or swapping the unit. No tools are required to swing the unit out with the removal of a lynchpin that is then used to hold the unit in the swung-out position all that is needed.

Seven, nine, eleven or fifteen blade reels are available for the E360 ELiTE to allow for varied applications of the machine from golf greens and tees to football pitches and ornamental gardens.

www.ransomesjacobsen.com/europe



Redexim has extended its Verti-Cut range with the introduction of two larger working widths - the Verti-Cut 1600 and Verti-Cut 2000.

Developed in direct response to customer demand and to complement their existing offering, both of the new models offer scarification to depths of up to 50mm (1.95").

The Verti-Cut employs specially designed carbide-tipped blades which encourage healthy turf by cutting the lateral growth of grass roots and removing dead plant material, providing more room for roots and shoots to grow and allowing for better water penetration and airflow. This improved downward movement of moisture and nutrients delivers far more uniform, vigorous and vibrant growth in return. The new Verti-Cut 1600 offers a 1.6m (63") working width which makes it ideal for



The FM48 is a powerful, towed, long grass cutter with a working width of 1220mm (48"). A reliable 13Hp Honda engine with an electric start drives two 'V' belts and 42 cutting flails. These sharpened flails are easily replaceable to extend the lifetime of the machine.

The FM48s transport wheels are situated at the rear of the machine, instead of the side. By mounting the transport wheels in the new position, the mower cuts closer to the edge and can squeeze through narrow pathways.

Mounted at the rear of the cutter is a one-piece roller. This roller is easily adjusted to fine-tune the cutting height and alleviates scalping by ensuring the flails lift above the highest peaks on uneven ground.

A screw jack effortlessly raises or lowers the transport wheels, allowing you to travel to and from storage on pneumatic wheels, before dropping the mower onto its steel roller. The tow bar is typically mounted central to the vehicle when it's desirable not to flatten the grass by running it over.

The throttle control and engine emergency stop switch are reached easily from the tractor seat.

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STIHL has enhanced its extensive range of high-power pressure washers with the launch of the RE 150 Plus, a new premium model ideal for extensive heavy-duty domestic and semi-commercial applications.

Designed with versatility in mind, the new 13A RE 150 Plus offers robustness and powerful performance with 612 litres per hour maximum water throughput and 180 bar of pressure. Whilst powerful, the new model also offers flexibility and control thanks to individual pressure, flow rate and detergent dosage controls.

The new pressure washer features a soft grip and rotating spray lance for maximum comfort over long periods and simple adjustment to the cleaning task at hand. In addition, the quick

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Colour Splash: Limagrain UK's range of Colour Splash flower mixtures have been used in a broad range of landscape and amenity areas throughout the UK.

The Colour Splash mixtures are particularly popular with those who not only enjoy a delightful array of colourful flowers but also highly appreciate the effect they have on the landscape.

Designer amenity grass seed and wildflower: The Designer range from Limagrain is one of the leading brands in the UK turf industry. With an extensive range of amenity grass mixtures which meet the exact requirements of varied end users, the popular brand is used by the likes of landscapers, local authorities and sports clubs throughout the country.

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connection system allows users to get the machine up and running in next to no time.

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smaller, undulating surfaces such as golf greens while at 2.0m (78.7"), the Verti-Cut 2000 lends itself to the scarification of larger spaces such as sports fields.

Both new models are tractor mounted and PTO driven, with the drive system utilising chains to ensure constant drive to the blades - even when working at depth. The adjustment of the Verti-Cut's working depth can be done accurately and with ease through alterations to the front roller, which also helps to negate scalping when working on undulating ground.

As standard, the Verti-Cut comes with 2mm blades operating at a spacing of 30mm (1.18"), though this can be increased to 58mm (2.28") if required. 1mm and 3mm blades can also be specified as an optional extra.

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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side
of the industry

Ally McCoist disguised as a groundsman

Rangers fan John Haughie got the shock of his life when he discovered the groundsman, who was yelling at him to get off the pitch during an Ibrox stadium tour, was Ally McCoist.

The Gers legend disguised himself in a hi-vis jacket and woolly hat to surprise the unsuspecting dad-of-two with a Pride of Scotland Award for Outstanding Bravery.



Image: Daily Record

John, 33, from Alexandria, who rescued a mum and three children from drowning when they were swept out to sea, was left speechless when Ally ripped off his beanie and presented him with his trophy.

John said: "I knew who it was before he took off his hat. There's no mistaking the voice of Ally McCoist. I was so taken aback. He is such a legend. The passion he had as a player and manager was immense."

Ally McCoist told the humble hero: "On behalf of everyone in the country, I want to congratulate you and thank you mate. I want to give you a cuddle, but I am not allowed."

Skating on thin ice

Forfar Golf Club bosses were stunned to find skaters using a frozen green at the historic course as an impromptu rink.

The shocked head greenkeeper found them skimming around the icy surface of the 10th green at the Cunninghamhill course on Saturday afternoon.

Club officials say it could have caused costly damage to the putting surface.

The unwelcome antics are an early blot on what is a milestone year for the club.



© Kenny Smith

Forfar is the fourth-oldest 18 hole course in the world and celebrates its 150th anniversary this year.

The back garden of cricket dreams

A man from Australia has converted his backyard into a pristine cricket pitch, and we're all extremely jealous of this glorious creation.



Dylan Hadfield, a 27-year-old Exercise Physiologist from Melbourne, is a self-confessed 'cricket nuffie' who has grown up with the incredible lawn on his doorstep.

"The pitch started out when my old man put a turf pitch in the backyard to have throw downs on when I was a kid. He is a golf course superintendent and used to be a cricket groundsman, so he built it with his expertise. It essentially cost nothing!"

The high spec backyard has received some high praise from several big names, including England and Middlesex batsman Eoin Morgan and World Cup hero Jofra Archer.



Tackling climate change

The much-loved combination of beer and crisps is being harnessed for the first time to tackle climate change.

Crisps firm Walkers has adopted a technique it says will slash CO₂ emissions from its manufacturing process by 70%.

The technology will use CO₂ captured from beer fermentation in a brewery, which is then mixed with potato waste and turned into fertiliser.

It will then be spread on UK fields to feed the following year's potato crop.

Creating fertiliser normally produces high CO₂ emissions, but the technology adopted by Walkers makes fertiliser without generating CO₂. So, the beer-and-crisps combo performs a dual function - which we are fully on board with!

As seen on social media ...



Ginger Billy on Facebook was excited about his 'fancy new mower'.

Great white and Nessie at Banbury United

With the strange year we have had, the above headline would be just about crazy enough for 2020!

With the flood waters causing problems all over the area, volunteer groundsman at Banbury United FC, Roger Davis, has been back in the workshop creating 2D cut-outs.

Roger started making the cut-outs of animals to deter rabbits and crows from damaging the pitch, but it soon turned into an unusual fundraising initiative for the club, with people keen to buy the monkeys, penguins, lions, kangaroos and even alligators.

Now, with the pitch flooded, Roger couldn't resist adding some new creatures to the local zoo - a great white shark and the Loch Ness Monster!

The cut-outs are made using redundant hard polystyrene advertising boards seen usually around the pitch perimeter.



QUOTE ME HAPPY

He's not at the level where people start calling him a 'Rolls Royce of a defender' just yet but he's certainly a Vauxhall Insignia. Borderline Passat." **BBC's Tom Rostance** praises Leicester defender Wesley Fofana.

"The ball has landed in a bucket of whitewash! I have never seen that before. It is absolutely soaked in it. This is incredible. The ball is ruined. It looks like it has been dropped in a bag of flour." **Jonathan Aggers' Agnew** commentating on **BBC TMS** as a **Jonny Bairstow** six finds an unusual resting place during the second Test against Sri Lanka.

"They've admitted their goal should have been disallowed and our goal should have stood. That's a big, big momentum changer for us. You hit the post, it goes in or it goes out, sometimes you're lucky with decisions, sometimes you're not." **Ole Gunnar Solskjaer** has claimed that the referee's report admitted to two key errors which cost Manchester United in their defeat to Sheffield United last month.



"I think the boss is doing a great job. I think the young boys are progressing a lot, they are fantastic. I think we start to create a real team, a real atmosphere. That's why we have to keep going. Football is (clicks his fingers), if you don't focus and concentrate, if you don't work hard every single day, things can change." **David Luiz** is optimistic about Arsenal's performances of late.

"I'm so embarrassed by what's happened. I pressed the live button on my YouTube stream and I've let out this giant fart - honestly, the longest ripper I've ever let out in my life." **Joe Wicks** accidentally farted in front of 800,000 people during one of his online PE lessons.

Interviewer: "What would you be if you weren't a footballer?" Peter Crouch: "A virgin." **In a recent survey by Metro**, this classic comment from Crouch was voted the greatest sporting one-liner of all time.

"Tried all tricks including Steve Smith trying to remove Pant's batting guard marks from the crease." **Former India opening batsman Virender Sehwag** slammed Steve Smith after he was caught removing Rishabh Pant's guard during the Australia vs. India test match.

DIARY DATES

MARCH

11th: Rugby League - The Betfred Super League begins, Old Trafford (superleague.co.uk)

13th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round four, Italy vs. Wales, Stadio Olimpico, Rome; England vs. France, Twickenham Stadium (sixnationsrugby.com)

14th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round four, Scotland vs. Ireland, BT Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh (sixnationsrugby.com)

16th: Horseracing - Cheltenham Festival begins (thejockeyclub.co.uk/cheltenham)

20th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round five, Scotland vs. Italy, BT Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh; Ireland vs. England, Aviva Stadium, Dublin; France vs. Wales, Stade de France, Paris (sixnationsrugby.com)

APRIL

5th-11th: Golf - Masters, Augusta (masters.com)

10th: Horseracing - Grand National, Aintree (thejockeyclub.co.uk/aintree)

MAY

8th: Football - Scottish FA Cup Final (scottishfa.co.uk)

15th: Football - FA Cup Final, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com)

17th-23rd: Golf - US PGA, Kiawah Island Golf Resort, South Carolina (pgatour.com)

22nd: Football - Women's FA Cup Final, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com/competitions)

29th: Football - UEFA Champions League Final, Atatürk Olympic Stadium, Istanbul (eufa.com)

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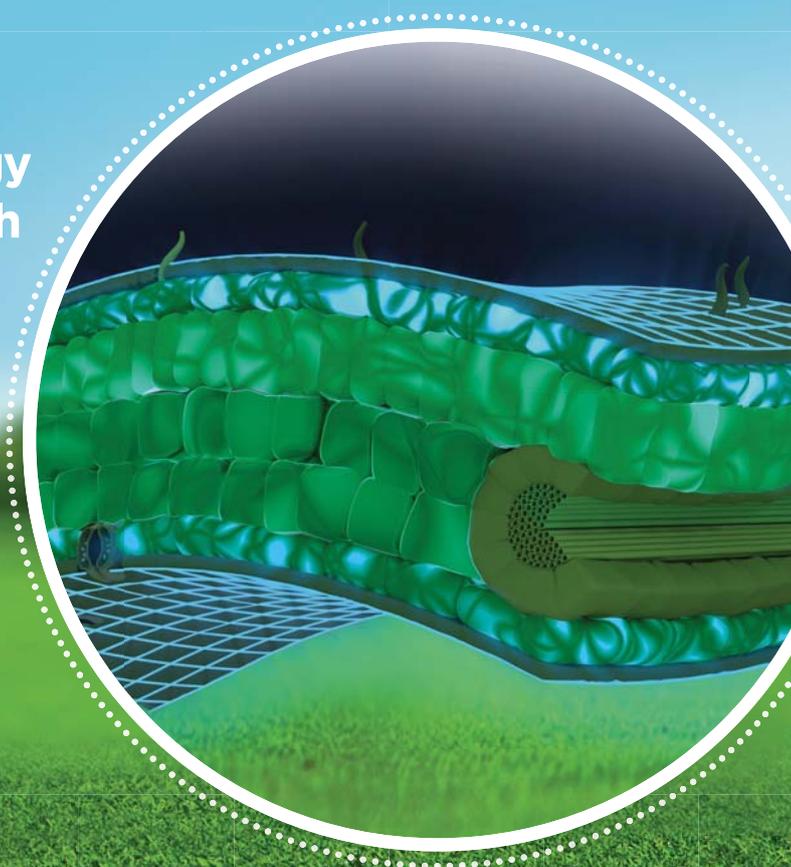
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