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Wimbledon 2016

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TURF MATTERS

The science and the art

I'm absolutely delighted that this issue of Turf Matters boasts a wide ranging interview with Neil Stubley, Head Groundsman at The All England Club, aka Wimbledon, who is currently preparing his courts for the arrival of the world's top players.

Speaking with Neil, it made me proud to be associated, even in a very minor way, with this particular industry. Neil is a top guy, who copes with the enormity of having his work studied by thousands of spectators for an entire fortnight, as well as millions of television viewers.

Neil is very much from the school that if you do everything possible to avoid problems, such problems will be kept to an absolute minimum. Embracing science while trusting his own instincts and experience, something he learned from his predecessor and mentor, Eddie Seaward.

There can be few industries so reliant on the combination of fast moving science and the indefinable qualities that a top Head Groundsman or Course Manager bring to the table and it is those turf professionals who harness the two – the science and the art – who achieve the best results.

For example there are now wonderful weather forecasting software and apps available which can pinpoint to within a few miles and minutes changes to temperature, wind and rainfall, but someone who has lived and breathed on a particular site or golf course for a number of years knows by smell, touch and experience what to expect.

Turf professionals don't arrive at a new job fully formed. It takes time to learn – both from their own experiences and from knowledge that is passed down from older colleagues – and that, coupled with the extraordinary advances in science and machinery, has ensured that our sports surfaces have never been better.

I'm sure you will join me in wishing Neil and his team at Wimbledon every success for the fortnight.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

 You can follow me on Twitter @TurfMatters

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Next magazine distributed July 2016

Parkland bunkers: Growing old gracefully

EcoBunker Ltd has enjoyed a busy time since the trade shows on either sides of the Atlantic – in Harrogate and San Diego – earlier in the year.

“We had well over 300 visitors to our stands over the two shows and we haven’t had a day’s rest since!” said Richard Allen, Founder and Managing Director of Ecobunker.

“Visitors included Carl Mistretta of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Carl and I enjoyed a long and interesting discussion which has led to a link-up between ASGCA and EcoBunker Ltd. We are now very proud sponsors, and I hope that our links will grow stronger over the coming years.”

The Ecobunker team also met a large number of golf course superintendents, greenkeepers and industry experts, and the cost of bunker maintenance was central to most discussions and focussed on bunker edges and the many causes for failure and difficulty of maintenance.

“Visitors to our stand were universally impressed by the natural appearance and resilience of the



Smart: The EcoBunker solution

bunker model. However two questions were frequently raised. Firstly: What do the bunker faces look like after a few years? Secondly: This would look great on links courses but I’m not sure how this concept would work on parkland courses?

“Perhaps the answers are found at Glamorganshire GC (1890). GGC

is probably most famous for one of their members, Dr Frank Stableford, who devised his well-known points scoring method whilst at the club in the early 1900s. More recently, in 2011, GGC became the first parkland course to invest in my design as a solution to crumbling and eroding bunker edges,” explained Richard.

World’s most expensive gold digger

The world’s most expensive gold digger, the special edition KX71-3 produced by Kubota UK to mark the sale of the company’s 50,000th mini-excavator in the UK, is rumoured to have been purchased by an acclaimed American music artist.

Ready for the cargo hold as it prepares to “touch the sky” for its “homecoming” to Los Angeles, CA, USA, the gold digger has been snapped at Oxford airport after the eccentric musician flew in via private jet to view the machinery.



PICTURE: GEOFF CADDICK

JCB's hat-trick of awards

JCB has been honoured with three Queen's Awards for Enterprise for innovation and export sales growth.

Winning its first Queen's Awards was JCB Power Systems, producer of the engine which powered the JCB Dieselmax streamliner to a world diesel land speed record of 350.092mph on the Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah, USA, a decade ago.

The company won the Queen's Award for Innovation for the development of its Ecomax engine family. Fitted with a combustion system using new technology and computer control to meet new global emissions legislation, the feature cuts fuel consumption by 10%.

Completing the hat-trick for the JCB Group was JCB Compact Products, manufacturer of compact construction equipment including micro, mini and midi excavators. In the face of global competition, overseas sales of JCB Compact Products' machines grew by 25% from 2013 to 2015.

The three accolades mean that JCB cements its position as the UK record holder of Queen's Awards – winning a



total of 30 since its first in 1969.

"Product innovation is what drives JCB's success, so we are particularly thrilled that the JCB engine has won a Queen's Award for Innovation. In the 12 years since manufacturing began, JCB has produced more than 350,000

of its own engines, secured a diesel land speed record and developed a great British business which employs more than 250 people, so winning Queen's Awards marking our achievements is the icing on the cake," said Chairman Lord Bamford.

Course Manager joins Lely Turfcare

Lely Turfcare has strengthened its Toro irrigation and Otterbine aeration sales team with a prestigious new appointment.

Pete Newton, formerly Course Manager at Rockliffe Hall, has joined Lely's sales team. Bringing with him a wealth of sector knowledge and experience, Pete is covering North England and Scotland for Toro irrigation golf and sports sales, and nationwide for Otterbine sales.

Having begun his career as a trainee greenkeeper at Rochdale Golf Club in 1997, Pete studied for a HND in Turf Science and Golf Course Management.

After building up experience across numerous courses, including Marriott facilities Forest of Arden and Worsley Park, and the Brabazon Course at The Belfry, he joined Rockliffe in 2008 as Head Greenkeeper.

During Pete's time at Rockliffe, which saw him progress to his current role as course manager, he became the 66th BIGGA member to achieve Master Greenkeeper status in 2015.

"Throughout my 19 years as a greenkeeper, I've been working with Toro

and Otterbine and know them inside out. So it's fantastic, knowing how good these products are, to now have the opportunity to work directly with the brands," said Pete.

Robert Jackson, Irrigation Field Sales Manager at Lely Turfcare, added, "Pete is very well-networked in the greenkeeping circles. Couple that with his background and knowledge of the industry, and we believe he'll do fantastically well in his new role. Pete really understands course conditions, and will be able to advise from an agronomic and irrigation point of view."

**Welcome aboard:
Pete Newton and
Robert Jackson**



Revitalisation of synthetic surfaces is growing business



"We turned to Charterhouse because we knew the kit would be more than capable of doing what we needed it to do" – Adam Green, ProGround

In its 25 years, South East-based ProGround has provided external grounds maintenance solutions to a variety of clients like schools, parks and sports clubs. Initially set up to offer landscape maintenance services, the last five years has seen a dramatic increase in the number of synthetic surfaces they have been asked to maintain. Managing Director Adam Green turned to Charterhouse Turf Machinery for the specialist machinery the company has needed to complete these contracts.

"We were conducting a lot of projects at schools on their natural surfaces and were finding that an

increasing number were installing artificial pitches, which at the time we weren't able to maintain" explained Adam.

"Rather than putting the business in the direction of other companies, we looked into purchasing the kit to be able to do it ourselves."

Luckily, a few of the 20 guys Adam has on the road had experience of managing synthetic surfaces from previous positions. Through trade show attendance and previous experience with the Redexim Verti-Top, Adam contacted Curtis Allen at Charterhouse Turf Machinery.

"We turned to Charterhouse

because we knew the kit would be more than capable of doing what we needed it to do, but also because of the support they offered."

The Verti-Top 1200 was purchased in 2015 and has become the fundamental piece of machinery in their 'revitalisation' procedure for artificial maintenance.

The Verti-Top employs a rotary brush to remove debris and top-layer infill from the turf, then sifts the debris out in a unique vibratory shaker which redistributes the clean infill back on the field.

Finishing the work is a rear lag brush, leaving a clean and smooth playing surface. "It's a great bit of equipment in that depending on the brush depth, we can conduct a deep clean as well as a remedial clean."

Adam estimates that in three to four years the synthetic work is likely to make up a large percentage of their total business, making the investment in machinery very worthwhile.

"The guys have got a good feel for the machine, Curtis has been brilliant going above and beyond to help get them trained up and comfortable with operating it. Everyone, including the clients, are really pleased with what we're achieving. The Verti-Top just backs up our ethos; top quality customer care and service all backed up with a very professional machine."

We've seen the future, and it is pink...

Pink conjures up lots of connotations but who'd have thought about groundcare machinery in Pink – Swiss landscapers Bächler + Güttinger that's who!

Never a company to disappoint, chipper manufacturer GreenMech recently supplied an Arborist 150 in the customer's company colours to match tractors and diggers.

Bächler + Güttinger can be traced back 100 years and has always had 'pink' as their company colour buying machinery for their fleet in this colour where ever possible – no explanation was forthcoming from the them as to why! The 6" chipper was tailor-made and supplied via GreenMech's Swiss distributors 'Iseli'.



Compact tractors that turn heads

The compact tractor is the centrepiece of any groundsman's arsenal. The best compacts balance the need to be tough and powerful with being light and nimble, to ensure it can undertake a variety of tasks, from turfcare to general site maintenance.

The compact tractor market continues to go from strength to strength, yet value for money and reliability are still the key factors for many purchasers.

In more recent times, Kubota has improved and enhanced its compact range, with new key features added which are fast becoming must have additions for operators.

Minimising turf damage may seem an obvious 'must have', but the reality is, it is not always as straightforward, and finding a model that packs a punch but can also leave minimal (if any) marks on the turf can be tricky. Staff at Reading FC, Cardiff Blues

and Northampton Saints have all cited this issue as an important factor, but one that has been minimised by using Kubota tractors as part of daily maintenance regimes.

Kubota's B50 Series is one of the most popular lines in the range, alongside its compact STW Series and mid range L Series tractors. The B50 and STW Series boast Kubota's unique hydraulic bi-speed turn function, which automatically activates when the front wheel turning angle exceeds 35°, which ensures a smoother, faster and tighter turn for operators, and, importantly, reduces turf damage.

With budgets still under scrutiny – despite the market being in a much brighter position – many in the sector will look to streamline fleets and demand more from their machines. Specialist fine turf equipment will always have its place, but compact tractors can facilitate many



maintenance tasks from aeration, vertidrainage and overseedings, so this is arguably one of the most important decisions to make when equipment comes up for renewal.

Compact tractors can facilitate many maintenance tasks

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For Earth, For Life


Cricket groundsmen get insiders' view of industry

The recent Dennis and SISIS Cricket Groundsman's Seminar, held at Durham County Cricket Club, saw 110 delegates in attendance all looking to refresh and enhance their education on a variety of topics.

The seminar, which was supported by Boughton Loam, CricketWorld.com, Turfcare Specialists Limited, Limagrain UK, Greenlay, Stuart Canvas Products and Powerroll, proved to be a resounding success after an impressive line-up of speakers delivered insightful presentations.

It brought together a wide range of cricket groundsmen representing grass roots, schools, local clubs and international test venues. It was a great chance to meet other like-minded individuals, share and gain knowledge, learn best practises and ultimately enhance their education.

Following an introduction by Dennis and SISIS Area Sales Manager Ewen Wilson and Durham County Cricket Club's Chief Executive David Hacker; Ian Powell, Regional Pitch Advisor for the IOG, offered some very helpful tips in his 'Spring Renovation on a Budget' presentation before Vic Demain, Head Groundsman at Durham CCC, presented an entertaining and insightful seminar entitled 'A Groundsman's Life'. Vic detailed his journey to the



top and showed that anything is possible through hard work and determination.

Vic was then joined on stage by Chris Wood, ECB Pitch Consultant, and Terry Charlton, from Turfcare Specialists Limited, to present the 'Past, Present and Future' which focused on the development of the Emirates Riverside Stadium through a selection of great photographs.

Following lunch Dave Leighton, ECB Club Programmes Manager, raised some thought provoking topics in his presentation 'Get the Game On,' – an ECB campaign designed to boost participation in the sport.

The popular Barry Glynn, a former volunteer groundsman, then

filled the room with laughter with his humorous and insightful views concerning the 'Frustrations of a Cricket Groundsman.'

All attendees warmed themselves with tea and coffee before making their way outside onto the Emirates Riverside Stadium's illustrious pitch where Chris Wood revealed the contents of his trusty tool-kit. Complete with practical demonstrations he then proceeded to discuss 'Pitch Rolling' and 'International Pitch Inspections,' and spoke about mowing techniques which could help produce and repair pitches efficiently in the coming years.

The day was brilliantly rounded-off with a question and answers session.

Branson is perfect accompaniment



As a benefactor of Great Waltham Cricket Club, Dave Warn has agreed the purchase of a new Branson 5025R tractor for the mowing and maintenance of the club's pitch.

Recently appointed Branson tractor dealer Grasshopper Ltd, which has branches in Colchester and Chelmsford, Essex, have supplied the club with turfcare and maintenance machinery for more than 25 years from Chelmsford. Paul Hogg of Grasshopper said, "We were attracted to the Branson range of tractors as they represent excellent value for money, the tractors are built to a very high standard with innovative engineering plus the importing agent – Branson Tractors UK of Bidford on Avon – provides excellent after sales service and back up."

Great Waltham Cricket Club now look forward to taking delivery of their new 47hp tractor.

Dynamo Kiev scores with Ransomes Jacobsen

Anatoli Kolosha, the Technical Director at Ukraine's premier football club, Dynamo Kiev, visited Ransomes Jacobsen European headquarters in Ipswich recently to celebrate a 20-year association between the two businesses.

Dynamo Kiev operate a significant fleet of equipment including Ransomes Mastiff walk behind mowers, Cushman Turf Truckster utility vehicles, Iseki tractors, a Ransomes Fairway 305 ride on mower and other turf maintenance equipment.

Ransomes Mastiffs are used to prepare the pitch at the Valeriy Lobanovskyi stadium, named after the club's legendary coach, who had two highly successful spells from 1973-1983 and again from 1996 until his untimely death in 2002.

Speaking through an interpreter, Anatoli Kolosha said, "The Ransomes Mastiff is an excellent mower; it produces an great finish, has very good grass collection, can roll the surface due to its significant weight and has proved to be extremely reliable."

In his role as Technical Director, Anatoli is responsible for the club's infrastructure, which includes the buildings, the stadium pitch, the Training Centre and the Youth Academy. In addition to the stadium pitch, there are six full-size grass



Anatoli Kolosha and colleagues at Ransomes Jacobsen in Ipswich

pitches, two synthetic pitches at the training centre, and another synthetic pitch at the Academy. He is also responsible for eight staff at the Training Centre, four at the stadium and four at the academy.

"Our association with Ransomes goes back 20 years," he said. "I first contacted the British Embassy in Kiev in the early 1990s and they put me in contact with Ransomes. I received a very timely reply and their sales manager, Scott Forrest and

two colleagues came out to meet me and the Vasily Barbichuk, the Club's General Secretary.

"The rest is history. We took delivery of our first shipment in 1995 and have the fleet refreshed every six to seven years. Scott personally recommended the Fairway 250 for our training pitches and 15 years on it is still performing very well. We have five hectares at the training centre and 2.5 hectares at the Academy, so it works hard."

New websites for Complete Group

The Complete Group has launched a range of newly-designed websites for each of its unique services including Complete Weed Control, Complete Ice Control, Complete Invasives Control and Complete Moss Control.

The new websites have been designed to provide the ultimate user-friendly experience with improved navigation and functionality throughout, allowing customers to access detailed service information and videos as well having the opportunity of geographically searching for teams closest to them.

The sites include information to help

customers understand the Complete Group's comprehensive range of solutions. Technical data, videos and case studies provide a detailed overview of the Group's capabilities across a wide range of sectors, including fine turf, industrial, knotweed and invasives, local authority, moss and algae and forestry.

Created with the user experience in mind, the websites have been designed using the latest technology so the site is compatible with all browsers and mobile devices.

Visitors will also have the opportunity to stay one step ahead by reading

regular opinion pieces from Alan Abel, who has been a Complete Weed Control franchisee for over 30 years.

The dedicated Complete Invasives Control website will provide visitors with the chance to improve their knowledge base on invasive species through a research and development blog by NPTC qualified Dan Jones, from Swansea University. Not only could it help land managers identify problematic plants but it will also offer a fantastic insight into the latest technologies and methods used to control invasive species.

Lifting the roof



The Sheffield College Hillsborough Campus, is based in the north of the city offering a mixture of studying, training and recreational facilities over a four hectare site. Overseeing the whole campus is Buildings Manager, Trevor Fox, who also has in his remit the buildings and grounds of the nearby University Technical College Sheffield. To maintain the two

synthetic surfaces within the grounds the college enlists the help of Replay Maintenance.

Used from Monday to Friday as part of the curriculum, and at evenings and weekends for sports clubs and community use, the usage of the synthetic pitches has increased significantly over the last two years.

In line with regulations, the full size artificial pitch on The Sheffield College grounds is included in the FA's 3G Football Turf Pitch register – which in turn enables the site to host competitive games. When the registration was up for renewal, Trevor looked to outside contractors, "because of the specialist nature of the work involved, we would normally outsource all maintenance for the synthetic surfaces. For this renewal we invited 5 local contractors to tender for the work and Replay came out on top. They came in; inspected

and then carried out the remedial work to get us back onto the approved register. Another part of the FA registration process is to have a regular maintenance programme, and Replay won that contract too."

Replay have been contracted to carry out brushing on a weekly basis, and operate their Revive process six times a year. Added extras within the contract means Trevor can utilise the Revive+ three day process once a year as well as the repair services when necessary.

The other synthetic pitch is a small multi-use area on the rooftop of UTC Sheffield. Because of its city centre location, the rooftop pitch solves the issue of space and provides an enclosed, netted surface predominately for 5-a-side football.

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Calais and Etesia, the perfect match

Eric Bouton, Director of Parks for Calais, has praised Etesia for helping him to create a new vision of the northern French port.

"We want to present another image of Calais – different from the one that categorises the city as a 'war zone,' says Eric. "Calais is a historical city with several beautiful parks and gardens, and museums of fine arts.

"My desire is to surprise both locals and tourists – make them want to come back to Calais and so they discover what we have created."

Eric is currently masterminding a number of improvements to the city which he claims will be "profitable to nature," and as the areas of green space increase so too does the number of grass cutting operations. For this, Eric relies only upon one brand.

"We have had Etesia equipment since 1995. We bought eight Hydro 100 MVEHHs which was our first ride-on mower. But we also have about 10 pedestrian mowers from Etesia."

The city of Calais recently added to its collection of Etesia mowers after Eric decided to bring in a fleet of new Hydro 100 III ride-on mowers. Capitalizing on the strengths of its predecessor, the new Etesia Hydro 100 III ride-on mower is innovative, offering commercial users even greater efficiency and operator comfort.

Tea Break Teaser



1. Both Jamie and Andy Murray have Wimbledon titles to their name but which British player with a similar name won the Men's Doubles in 1912?
2. Which Dutch player did Virginia Wade defeat to win the Ladies' Singles title in 1977?
3. How many Wimbledon Semi Finals did Tim Henman play?
4. Who did Bjorn Borg defeat in the first of his five consecutive Wimbledon titles?
5. Who won seven Men's Singles titles between 1993 and 2000?
6. How old was Maria Sharapova when she won her Wimbledon title?
7. Which player has the record for most Wimbledon titles?
8. What was the score by which Andy Murray defeated Novak Djokovic?
9. Who was Jamie Murray's partner when he won the Mixed Doubles in 2007?
10. What was the final set score in the record breaking John Isner-Nicolas Pietrangeli match in 2010?
11. In which year was there a player boycott and the title was won by Jan Kodes?
12. Who was the Dutchman who won the Men's Singles in 1996?
13. Who won the Ladies' Singles the same year as Andy Murray won the Men's?
14. In which year did the Centre Court first have its roof?
15. In which year did Fred Perry win the first of his three Wimbledon titles?

■ *Answers on Page 35.*



The FA Facilities & Investment Team, in partnership with the IOG, has developed a grass pitch maintenance service with the simple aim of improving the quality of grass pitches for grassroots football clubs. Curtis Allen, Business Development Manager at Charterhouse Turf Machinery, sets the scene...

The need for the FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) is more relevant now than ever, given the current economic times and the pressures facing grass roots football.

The key principles behind the service are to provide football clubs with practical solutions and advice on a number of areas. A number of professional football club groundsmen have been identified and signed-up to the service. Selected qualifying clubs, identified by their County FA, can receive a visit from these experts if they own their own site or are responsible for the maintenance of grass pitches.

Some may ask, "What is the difference between The FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) and the IOG Grounds & Natural Turf Improvement Programme (G&NTIP)".

To ensure The FA can be clear in setting measures and targets bespoke to the game The PIP has a specific focus on improving the quality of 2000 natural turf pitches over the lifecycle of the new National Game Strategy (NGS). By having an independent programme it allows The FA to secure commercial partners that meet the organisation's vision and aspiration over the next four years. Having this independence also allows for any income generated by the appointment of partners to be kept within the programme.

The programme is, however, supported by the IOG via the Regional Pitch Advisors (RPAs). In contrast, the IOG led G&NTIP programme has a focus on improving all natural turf pitches and as such has partnerships with the FA, ECB, RFL and Sport England. The FA supports this programme by part funding the eight Regional Pitch Advisor roles, as well as the National Managers role, and has an allocation of RPA days with the IOG to be used to support the roll

Back to

out and development of The FA PIP.

The FA, in partnership with the County FA network, is responsible for promoting, coordinating and delivering the programme across the country with support from the IOG RPAs. The Regional Facilities & Investment Managers will act as the programme lead with support from the respective CFA member of staff with all IOG RPA or associate groundsmen visits being coordinated through the CFA. It is intended that IOG RPA staff will be supported by a developing network of pro-club or other industry professionals to ensure the demand of visits are met. All templates have been standardised to ensure clarity in reporting key measures, recommendations and timelines for re-visit. It is envisaged that the appointed IOG RPA will oversee/check all reports to ensure consistency across the country.

The cost of the initial visit by the IOG RPA, or other appointed person, is £100 per visit being paid to the CFA by the club/organisation – that fee is then reinvested in to the CFA's PIP budget. Each visit is expected to last 90 minutes, although this will vary depending on the site, where a Performance Quality Standard test is conducted across the site. A Soil Analysis Test will also be conducted by Rigby Taylor Limited. Upon conclusion a detailed report will be issued outlining key issues and practical solutions along with a suggested 12-month maintenance plan reflecting key issues and

recommendations relating to machinery and product needs. Other useful operational and management information will be included as well as details of FA Official Suppliers schedule of rates, expertise and networks. An agreed revisit date completes the report.

The process is as follows:

Step 1. A Club submits an 'Expression' to their local CFA

Step 2. This is reviewed with a visit then organised

Step 3. The site visit is carried out

Step 4. A report is produced and a copy sent to the club, the local CFA and The FA RFIM. Feedback is sought within an agreed timescale

Step 5. The Club reviews and discusses the recommendations with local CFA and FA RFIM with recommendations followed up with the appropriate FA partner – machinery, consumables or training

Step 6. A revisit date is agreed with the RPA, CFA and club

Step 7. The revisit report is reviewed and if tangible improvement is evident then pitch can be classed as 'improved' and is eligible to be allocated against the CFA NGS target.

There will also be a programme of FA PIP Seminars coordinated by respective CFAs in partnership with the IOG RPA. The two annual events will cover an end of season renovation workshop (to be held in April/May) and a winter workshop – (November/December). The IOG RPA will be the primary deliverer of these sessions, supported by the extended



grassroots

network of groundsmen (Pro or other suitably qualified individual) as well as representatives from Redexim Charterhouse and Rigby Taylor. These two seminars will be featured on CFA websites and be advertised to leagues and clubs as CPD opportunities. Dates are not confirmed yet but will be arranged to ensure the national diary of events is maintained, thereby allowing key commercial partners to resource accordingly. Seminars will be paid for by CFA and free to delegates.

Other resources available to CFAs, leagues and clubs is a website dedicated to natural turf groundsmanship www.groundsmanship.co.uk. It has been developed by the FA in partnership with the IOG and SE. The site gives useful information on Material, Tasks & Equipment, Seasonal Management, Health & Safety, Football News and a Diary by Alan Ferguson.

The PIP is a key focus for The FA over the next four years and as such they deemed it appropriate to secure two commercial partners to support the roll-out. A tender process was begun and all companies that entered were subjected to the same scrutiny and procedure. The two partners selected, Redexim Charterhouse Limited (Machinery Supplier) and Rigby Taylor Limited (Consumables) have signed four year contracts to support the programme. Both companies have agreed a partnering schedule of rates with

The FA to support the programme, available to all CFAs, FA affiliated clubs and leagues (not Premier or Football leagues) not solely to those clubs/organisations receiving a PIP visit and report. In addition both companies have agreed to support the two seminars previously mentioned with both personnel and associated product and service. As well as having access to a comprehensive schedule of rates to support clubs there is also direct access to a network of local dealerships, contractors and company representatives to support the programmes over the four years of the PIP. No external organisations, other than the appointed Partners, will be taking part in the bi-annual seminars.

If the PIP report recommends the purchase of machinery and other equipment there may be finance available to support these recommendations. All potential applications will be subject to the usual FA & Football Foundation grant support processes and must be supported by a FA PIP report with clearly defined recommendations. In addition, National League System clubs can access financial support via the Football Stadia Improvement Fund. All potential applications to either the FF or FSIF will be asked to fill in a FA Football Enquiry Form to allow The FA to track demand and will be the first official contact point in the process.

A lot of CFAs and clubs have

existing working relationships with local contractors for the larger maintenance procedures. As The FA PIP develops it is envisaged that a list of preferred contractors will be developed in partnership with the IOG, CFAs and leagues – solely for the larger maintenance practices (winter and end of season). If a CFA or league has a formal working relationship with a local contractor, the contractor would also be eligible to access the discount agreed with The FA commercial partners. It is envisaged that over time a number of 'FA Equipment Banks' will be established to provide clubs and leagues access to discounted maintenance services.

FA Equipment Banks will be considered in the right locations subject to all local partners working together to provide the required assurances and framework for operating the service. Some initial pilots have been supported in Northamptonshire and Northumberland. It is envisaged that significant equipment banks will reside at proposed FA Parklife Hubs, however, it has been suggested that a CFA discusses any proposals with the respective RFIM. An application for financial support would be made through the standard channels. Under the terms agreed with the FA PIP 'Official Partners' they will be the sole suppliers of machinery and consumables to support grant applications.

■ If you have any thoughts or comments about the FA's Scheme please email scott@turfatters.co.uk and we will print the responses in a future issue of Turf Matters

Success on





the pitch

(Whatever the score...)



“A great strength of Kubota machines is their reliability. All our models very rarely break down, and the support from Lister Wilder means that if we do have a problem that we can’t deal with ourselves, it will be resolved quickly and the machine in question will be back at work” – Adam Grantham

Championship club's academy facilities compete with likes of Arsenal and Chelsea

Being a key player for your hometown football club is the pipe dream for many football fanatics when growing up. For Adam Grantham, Grounds Manager at Reading Football Club, that dream is very much a reality. Although Adam prepares the Madejski Stadium turf rather than plays on it, he is still instrumental in the day-to-day running of an organisation that holds deep personal value to him.

Long time Grounds Manager, Bruce Elliot moved to Premiership side Crystal Palace, who also boast a Desso GrassMaster hybrid grass surface, handing the reigns to his Assistant Greg Bolton, who then switched allegiance to Fulham FC. The top job opened up for Adam; after an association with the club for over 10 years, he now heads up a team of 11 full time grounds' professionals. Adam's remit means that he is not just responsible for the first team stadium pitch, but also Reading FC's 6.3 hectares at Hogwood Training Ground, where the daily maintenance responsibility lies with Head Groundsman Scott O'nyons and his team, resulting in first rate training pitches that allow the Championship club's academy to compete with the likes of Arsenal and Chelsea in the Professional Development League 1.

Adam Grantham,
Grounds Manager

Adam's contribution to the success of Reading FC's academy facilities is a clear

endorsement of his ability, but it is his success at the 24,000 capacity Madejski Stadium that is all the more impressive due to the challenges he faces there – with the biggest challenge to the turf coming in the shape of the London Irish Rugby Club.

London Irish began its Madejski tenancy back in 2000, moving from the more humble premises of The Avenue in Sunbury-on-Thames, which at the time held a maximum capacity of 6,600. With Rugby Union turning professional in 1997, the demand for the sport has been growing season-on-season ever since, now with London Irish bringing in an average attendance of 11,100 per game, they are a vital financial draw to the stadium and to the Reading FC owners.

Rugby, as a collision orientated sport, poses significant wear and tear on the turf due to higher impacts and use of studs to grip the playing surface during scrums. This can cause issues with the 'carpet' required for professional football games, as the requirements are clearly very different. Adam isn't alone in having to provide a professional quality playing surface for both sports, as other examples include Coventry's Ricoh Arena, which hosts Coventry FC and Wasps, Hull's KC Stadium is used by both Hull AFC and Hull FC Rugby League and Swansea's Liberty Stadium has to cater

for both Swansea City and Ospreys.

With Irish signing a tenancy extension at the Madejski until 2026, they will be at the stadium for the foreseeable future, and as Adam continues his passion for the industry and his club he has supported from a young age, he will continue to provide a top quality surface for both games.

"My aspiration for the Madejski pitch is for it to be viewed as a great football surface in its own right, not just as a good football pitch that has to contend with hosting rugby games.

"Of course London Irish play a part in our success as an organisation and I do enjoy us hosting their home games here, however, as a groundcare professional and a football fan, you are bound to get more satisfaction out of creating a surface that allows the players to play an attractive brand of football."

"Also, it would be unfair to state that the only challenge we face at the Madejski is the rugby games. The 'bowl' structure of the stadium means that we constantly require the use of our SGL lighting rig at the south end of the pitch, to ensure the grass is strongly rooted and healthy, ready for the winter months.

"With this in mind, making sure we have the turf in peak condition in late October and early November is essential to the success of the season – if the





“Rugby, as a collision orientated sport, poses significant wear and tear on the turf due to higher impacts and use of studs to grip the playing surface during scrums.”

Members of the groundcare team with the Kubota kit at the Hogwood Park training ground

whole pitch is not as strong as possible by this point, it can create a significant threat to the surface for the remainder of the season. Of course, the weather plays a huge part in this process also, as that can dictate when we are able to spray and fertilise the turf.”

The machinery Adam and his team deploy on both the Madejski and the training pitches also plays a big role in the quality of the turf and managing the demanding workload the Reading FC groundcare staff face. The team use Kubota tractors and mowers through a 12 year relationship with Kubota dealer Lister Wilder, which includes servicing, maintenance and new product training; all of which is overseen by Lister Wilder’s Stuart Venn Dunn.

The Kubota fleet now consists of five machines, including the L Series 3540 utility tractor – complete with spraying fittings and front loader – B Series 3150 compact tractor, BX2530 sub compact tractor (which has completed a staggering 280 hours of work), G26 ride on mower

and RTV900 utility vehicle.

“We use the Kubota machines for a wide range of applications, here at the Madejski and back at the 6.3 hectares of training facilities we have at Hogwood. For example, we use the Kubota B2530 tractor as a general workhorse at the stadium, shifting the artificial lighting rig, trailing and pulling other pieces of kit, whilst the Kubota L3540 is only deployed at Hogwood, spraying all of the training pitches and making use of the hefty front loader attachment.

“A great strength of Kubota machines is their reliability.” Adam states. “All our models very rarely break down, and the support from Lister Wilder means that if we do have a problem that we can’t deal with ourselves, it will be resolved quickly and the machine in question will be back at work, so minimal productivity is lost. This is essential to our day-to-day operations, as with responsibilities also requiring us to prepare the Reading FC Ladies pitches over at Farnborough FC, we can’t afford for time to be wasted.

“What’s also pleasing, is that the Kubota machines always seem to be progressing in terms of power, fuel efficiency and operation qualities. The new Kubota B3150 is proving a real hit with my team, as it is easy to operate and can deliver excellent results with the 5m brush attachment and the front loader frame.





In search of best practice, despite a growing remit and reduced budgets...

Niall Gibb is not the only local government Head Groundsman who is increasingly faced by the conundrum of a growing workload and reduced budgets. But it is clear that his award-winning turf management routines – and the playing surfaces and open spaces in his charge – are not suffering, thanks to his clever combination of continually working ‘smarter’ with his dedicated team of grounds professionals and the use of a top-of-the-range portfolio of consumable products.

Based just outside Southampton, Niall and his team of four are charged with maintaining a range of Fawley Parish Council sports facilities at a number of sites that are regularly/heavily used. These include five full-size football and rugby pitches, two junior pitches, a cricket pitch and three all-weather five-a-side artificial surfaces, as well as various open space areas.

In addition, as part of Niall’s plan to increasingly offer the team’s skills on a commercial contract basis – to bring in much-valued additional revenue to

“Using the iGO machines is also saving a lot of time; we simply load the machine with a 10-litre drum of XP – there’s no mixing, measuring or wastage”

the council’s budget – the team is also contracted to maintain the sports fields at three local schools and a golf club.

“The task never gets smaller or easier, but by carefully planning our schedules and using products from Rigby Taylor we are not only managing to stay on top of it all but we are also freeing up time to actively seek and complete additional contract work.”

Niall joined Fawley Parish Council in 2011, after a career that started as an apprentice greenkeeper in his native Scotland. There he embraced spells at a number of golf clubs before briefly moving into landscape gardening (following in his father’s footsteps). He then joined Glasgow Rangers FC as a skilled groundsman and, after 18 months or so at the club’s training ground and at Ibrox Stadium, while browsing the IOG website he saw the parish council position advertised.

“It was a big decision to move to Hampshire but I really wanted to get back into team management,” said Niall.

“The remit here has grown year on year, at the same time as budgets have been continually cut, but I constantly review all that we do to ensure we employ best practice at all times.

“In tandem with this, of course, every purchase we make (capital equipment and consumables) needs to be subject to quotes and on that basis I then make decisions on which products offer us the best value-for-money.”

He continued: "I first used Rigby Taylor products at the golf club where I served my apprenticeship. I trust these products; they're cost-effective and they've never let me down. Also, the Rigby Taylor back-up is good and the company's technical representatives know their stuff."

Niall uses R14 CR creeping rye grass on his football and rugby pitches, and R9 cricket rye for the cricket squares, complemented by Delta fertiliser on football and rugby (12-4-8 and 8-6-6) and Maintain PGR, a growth regulator. He finds that the seed mixes Impact XP line marking paint – which won the Queen's Award for Innovation – applied by iGO machines, is used on all pitches. "There's no doubt that the ready-to-use XP paint produces lines that are longer lasting; in some cases two weeks at least," he adds.

"Using the iGO machines is also saving a lot of time; we simply load the machine with a 10-litre drum of XP – there's no mixing, measuring or wastage – and use the red and gold nozzles in sequence for starting/initial applications and over-marking,

respectively. After use, the machine is simply rinsed through." A 10-litre drum of Impact XP can mark up to eight standard size pitches without being re-filled.

Niall continued: "Because of the location of our pitches (built on what were gravel pits) we have some of the driest playing surfaces in the area – they're very free-draining – so it's a constant battle to keep the pitches up to standard. But by regular and professional maintenance routines based on frequent mowing, slitting and vertidrainage, complemented by a set of excellent consumable products, we are able to consistently present high-class playing surfaces."

Going forwards, Niall is increasingly adopting an environmentally-friendly approach, following his early successes with soil biology studies and the use of compost teas. "The initial results have been a reduction in Npk levels, reduced thatch less levels and the elimination of pesticides".



Niall Gibb, Head Groundsman

The strategy will include more Euroflor wild flower seed planting (Euroflor mixes, supplied by Rigby Taylor, have already been successfully applied) "to produce stunning, colourful displays that will also help reduce grass cutting on banks and open areas, for instance". Also on the agenda are plans for the grounds team to be involved in the establishment of more allotment plots and an orchard, for example.

In addition, Niall hopes to be able to make more of his 'How to improve your pitch on a budget' presentation, like the one he made last year for the Hampshire FA. "I really enjoyed the event and the feedback was pleasing," he says. "I'd like to do more of that, to continue to put something back into the industry."

As easy as A, B, seed



It's not just about quality turf: At Essex CCC it's the whole package

Considered one of the best cricket groundsmen in the country, Stuart Kerrison has been with Essex County Cricket Club for 31 years. Appointed Head Groundsman at just 23, he was the youngest on the county scene.

Today, Stuart still relishes the challenge of producing good pitches at Chelmsford, Southend and Billericay—and it shows; with a trophy shelf groaning with accolades.

Stuart offered some tips and learnt that when it comes to running a first-class county club, it's about good products and good relationships with our suppliers.

Today we use BAR EXTREME at our Chelmsford headquarters, and our Southend and Billericay grounds.

We also play the odd first class game at Colchester, so I go and prepare the pitch for that too.

Our Southend ground is our satellite ground. We've got the same situation at Billericay with two squares and two outfielders, maintained by fantastic staff who work under me. We try and do the same thing as we do here in Chelmsford, but with a slightly smaller budget."

Billericay sees around 70 Essex games per year, and 20 to 25 days are played at Southend.

"Here at Chelmsford, we've got about 180 days of the season, from first net to last match, Essex first team have 50+ match days and on top of that, community matches, practice,

kids games. A lot of abuse," explained Stuart.

That's why fast establishment is so important to us. Once you've used a pitch, you need to be recovering it as soon as possible. We need the square back in action ASAP, so speed is a huge plus for us.

And these days, everyone expects the grass to look a million dollars, even in the depths of winter. We're not immune to this. Thankfully BAR EXTREME means the grass never looks tired, it's always green and healthy."

"Dry weather and the high volume of fixtures we have. Also, pressure from coaches to manipulate the turf to give the home team an advantage. It's a big responsibility. I like to think we're producing the best cricket pitch possible, with a good balance of bat



and ball. We've got Sky TV watching; analysing every ball and how it behaves, so we're under pressure. BAR EXTREME ensures we perform every time. It's hardwearing and also pretty drought resistance. You don't get a lot of chance to put water on the square. It's either in play or covered. Barenbrug grass seed ticks all the boxes."

What advice does Stuart have for other cricket groundsmen?

"Keep talking to your peers. Get on social media and chat with other turf experts. Build relationships. If you think about it, if it weren't for that one conversation I had nine years ago, who knows how much we'd have overspent? Every season we go back to bare soil, and reseed from scratch.

"So that saving is a big deal for a club of our size."



Reducing inputs of herbicide, water and fertilisers

Groundsmen and Greenkeepers are always looking out for the highest quality seed products, but they are also looking for ways to reduce inputs of herbicide, fertilisers and water. With an increasing prominence placed on environmentally friendly and sustainable products, the research and development department of DLF, the parent company of Johnsons Sports Seed, have been looking at products that need lower inputs for a longer time. This has led to the introduction of ProNitro.

Johnsons Sports Seed has been offering a number of coated mixtures for the past couple of years, so the concept is not new to them. iSeed, it was developed in collaboration with Yara, and contained 20% Nitrogen (N) and 4% Phosphate (P) – important for early establishment as P is easily fixed in the soil into forms that are unavailable for plant uptake. Through observation, feedback and experience the iSeed coating was constantly being updated to fit the requirements of the end users.

Experts at DLF investigated 'P' in more depth and noticed that, although seeds needed it to establish and grow, 'P' is a strong salt and coating the seed with it might boost initial establishment, but germination could become inhibited. Tests in the laboratory, climate room and in the field confirmed that 'P' was not required in the coating as it is relatively immobile in the soil – so once the seed has established the 'P' stays at the very top of the soil, far from the root tips. Hence the in-house development of the next generation of seed-coating, ProNitro.

ProNitro is Johnsons Sports Seeds' new patented 4G seed coat technology that focuses on improving nutrient utilisation during the early stages

of plant growth. It's another step forward for Nitrogen coated seed, containing no 'P' and 15% Nitrogen – a combination of both fast acting and slow release. By combining the seed and fertiliser, the new seed receives the full benefit and not the surrounding plants – especially important when overseeding into a competitive sward. The roots and shoots grow rapidly, up to 30% increase in root growth, and the seedlings become strong and vigorous with up to 34% more viable plants. The improved root growth also means the seed is then able to source 'P' from the soil when it requires to grow further. In addition, this improves the use of all available soil nutrients and decreases nutrient loss into the environment by fixation or leaching. Nitrogen uptake with ProNitro is up to four times more efficient compared to broadcast applied ordinary fertilisers. Strong establishment can be expected in as little as 6 days.

The launch of ProNitro® will also see the introduction of a number of 'J Nitro' versions of popular Johnsons mixtures for the coming season and beyond. For the golf market, a number of J Nitro mixtures are available including J Nitro All Bent for greens and J Nitro Fescue for greens, tees and fairways. For the sports turf market, J Nitro Premier Wicket and J Nitro Premier Pitch mixes are available now. In trials of J Nitro Premier Wicket at Lancashire County Cricket Club ProNitro® Head Groundsman Matthew Merchant said, "The coated seed gave us good root development and denser, stronger growth than the control plot. The sward had better colour and established much faster across the wicket, including the difficult bowling and batting foot holes."

Growing artwork helps to raise climate concerns

An art installation featuring a pelt of living, British-bred, grasses has been used as part of The Tree Ceremony at the Jardin des Plantes, in Paris, to highlight the danger of increasing city temperatures, damaging flood waters, polluted air and bio-diversity loss.

The living curtain of seedling grass was used to frame a tree during the opening week of the recent COP21 climate convention in Paris, where the aim was to raise awareness of the urban heat island effect and to change preconceptions about how we regard plants and trees beyond their more immediate amenity and ecosystem services.

The grass was grown using Germinal's A26 So-Green seed mixture and sculpted by Dorking-based artists Ackroyd and Harvey.

A26 So-Green is made up of four grass cultivars: 60% AberNile (Perennial Ryegrass), 35% Borluna (Slender Creeping Red Fescue), 2.5% Highland (Browntop Bent) and 2.5% Tye (Creeping Bent).

"A26 is the ultimate Stay-Green seed mixture as it contains the unique AberNile perennial ryegrass," explained Richard Brown, Germinal's Amenity Sales Manager.

"This one-of-a-kind cultivar is the result of Germinal's plant breeding association with IBERS – Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences at Aberystwyth University - where the focus is on breeding the very best and most sustainable grasses.



Limagrain plays integral role in new bowls green

Mark Allen, Midland Area Sales Manager for Amenity Land Solutions Ltd, has reported excellent results from using Limagrain's MM10 grass seed mixture for the construction of a new bowls green in Birmingham.

Limagrain UK produce a wide range of high quality seed products for the amenity industry working with a network of distributors up and down the country. One of these distributors is ALS and the two companies have enjoyed a long working relationship according to Mark.

"As companies, ALS and Limagrain have been working together for many years. We've got an excellent relationship with them. In terms of product quality, it's always very good. Back-up, technical advice and all-round help from the Limagrain team is always excellent."



ALS were asked to construct a new crown green for Hollyfields Bowls Club in Birmingham. The build began in the middle of July and within a week the green was constructed.

Mark and his team used Limagrain's MM10 grass seed – which is perfect for construction, overseeding, renovating and repairing high quality greens. Part of the renowned MM range of seed mixtures, MM10 produces a fine, dense sward, is tolerant to close mowing and as well as providing all year round colour it is also disease resistant and hard

wearing. "It's a quality product and that showed with the grass seed being up and germinating very quickly. We were looking for a traditional bowling green mixture – an 80:20 Fescue/Bent mix – but wanted all the qualities that have come about with the improvements in breeding and grass seed production over the last few years.

"Therefore, we were looking for a mixture of traditional and contemporary and the MM10 offered us exactly what we were looking for," said Mark.

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Thatch removal, cleanliness is key

Another benefit is better germination rates, says Course Manager

In 1990, a farming family called the Hinch's saw the possibilities of the delightful rural setting where Greetham Valley stands today and built a superb golf, hotel, leisure and conference venue.

Two 18-hole championship golf courses criss-cross the valley, with lakes and brooks that meander across the landscape. The Lakes course, par 72, is the longer at 6769 yards while the Valley course, par 68, may be shorter at 5595 yards but still proves a challenging course.

Overseeing the maintenance of the golfing facilities at Greetham Valley is Course Manager Adi Porter, in whom the Hinch family put their faith 21 years ago. Throughout this time Adi has seen the club go from strength to strength and perhaps one of the key factors in the success of Greetham Valley is that Adi believes there is no room for complacency.

"I'd say that the biggest challenge in my role is to continually produce the very high standards throughout my department that are required in order to stay competitive and attract new members and visitors in a very difficult market."

Adi has assembled a highly professional and experienced team which consists of himself, a Deputy

Course Manager, a First Assistant, six assistant greenkeepers, two mechanics and a trainee greenkeeper. The team works tirelessly to maintain the two 18s and 9-hole course, the driving range and bowling green, and while this is going on, the club also offers a contracting greenkeeping service.

"We manage the vast workload by investing in our staff and purchasing good reliable machinery," said Adi.

"Over the past 21 years I have seen the percentage of thatch in the top 50mm rise from zero to 3.5, and I didn't want this to continue, so I decided to look for a solution.

"The criteria for me had to be about the machine's performance in thatch removal and the cleanliness of the operation, but also it had to be productive. The SISIS TM1000 matched all of the above."

The SISIS Rotorake TM1000 is a tractor mounted heavy duty scarifier and linear aerator and is un-rivalled when it comes to removing and controlling thatch. It includes a collector box and floating unit to follow ground contours and its contra-rotating reel throws debris forward ensuring a clean, consistent groove resulting in an excellent finish when the time comes to scarify. With



interchangeable blades and a quick, simple depth setting without tools, it's no wonder why so many greenkeepers and course managers like Adi, have reaped the benefits of using the TM1000.

"Since using the SISIS TM1000; the thatch in the top 50mm has reduced to three percent and I am now in full control. Another benefit has been better germination rates of the bent seed, which has allowed me to reduce sowing rates. And with us altering the direction of travel each time, the new seed integrates really well in the green."

"The machine is more than capable of removing thatch down to 40mm, the collection works really well, and the speed across the green is very impressive, taking around 20 minutes to complete an average size green."





Mark Bell, left, Golf Course Manager at Birchwood Park Centre with John Bignell, Area Manager Groundcare at Ernest Doe & Sons, Dartford

Golf Course Manager comes back for more

Knowing neatness, efficiency and speed are non-negotiable, a leading Kent Course Manager has bought the same Wiedenmann Terra Spike aerator again.

Mark Bell, who heads the team at Birchwood Park Golf Centre, Wilmington, has chosen a Wiedenmann Terra Spike XF6 supplied by local dealer, Ernest Doe & Sons, of Dartford.

"I inherited the original aerator when I came here four years ago but why change when we were entirely happy. The XF gives me choice across the entire course. Particularly in winter it has to be fast across our fairways or the job won't get done and we know what the XF can do; it's a pleasure.

"Last week when it arrived we had it over the tees and some heavy traffic areas to improve the grass coverage. It will be out through the summer on the greens to keep the surface open. We'll go lightly taking 8mm tines down to about 100 mm and follow up immediately with the roller and put the greens straight back into play."

"We do over 53, 000 rounds of

golf here a year and it's important that we do as much aeration and compaction relief as we can," said Mark Bell.

Since Mark's arrival in 2012 each of the tees on 18 holes Main Course have been reconstructed and the bunkering on hole eight has been reconfigured. The facility has also earned its eco credentials by becoming self-sufficient on water. Rainfall that accumulates in the wettest months is harvested from the club house roof and car parks then stored in a reservoir adjacent to the 11th hole for use across dry spells. Last month a £5M million investment got underway to construct additional leisure and gym facilities rebranding as Birchwood Park Golf & Country Club mid-2017.

"An XF is the ultimate aerator if you've got a narrow window of opportunity, a ticking clock and a power of work. The team at Birchwood know the machine well already but we're on hand to support them should the need arise," said John Bignell, Area Manager, Groundcare for Ernest Doe, Dartford.

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In use from spring to late autumn

Shallow aeration and hollow coring to depths of between 50mm to 100mm is a long established management tool in modern sports turf management.

Designed to work at depths up to around 100mm, but more typically in the 25mm to 75mm range, the Toro ProCore wide aerator 1298 can be fitted with a broad choice of Toro solid and hollow Titan tines, making it suitable for use pretty much from spring to late autumn.

A key feature of all Toro aerators is that they leave a clean, even finish that allows them to operate on fine turf with the absolute minimum of surface disturbance.

It is this that has enabled the pedestrian ProCore 648 win over so many greenkeepers.

Being able to aerate the greens without causing surface disruption makes the ProCore 1298 popular with golfers too.



The tractor-mounted variants of the ProCore work in the same way as the pedestrian model but with the potential to cover larger areas. As a very rough guide, holes spaced at a tight 25mm can be delivered at a rate in excess of 2,000m² an hour, upping the hole spacing and tractor speed allowing this machine to cover perhaps 9,000m² or more an hour.

This performance does not come

at the expense of quality of work. Thanks to the design of the ProCore's turf retainers and its ability to follow contours, the finish and work done by the wide 1298 behind a tractor will be of the same quality as the nominal 1.50m tractor-mounted ProCore 864 and 1.20m pedestrian ProCore 648. Going wider does not compromise the job done but it does significantly improve output.

Not such a knotty problem at Knotty Hill

Knotty Hill Golf Centre was founded 24 years ago as a driving range – today it spans 560 acres and comprises three 18 hole courses and 27 holes of football golf! Built by Denis Craggs, the complex is overseen by his son, Ashley Craggs, as Proprietor and Head Greenkeeper, and his team of five full time staff.

With so much acreage to cover, Ashley and the team need their maintenance equipment to be 'quick and easy'. So when looking at aeration three years ago, Ashley purchased a Redexim Verti-Core 1600 from Dougie Archibald, at Charterhouse Turf Machinery.

"We first came across the Verti-Core at a trade show, and again during a demonstration at another club. We were instantly impressed by how light it was, how easy it was to get it on and off the back of a tractor and it's all



round ease of use," said Ashley.

"It ticked all the boxes for us so we purchased one, and shortly after purchased a second larger model."

The whole centre is closed once a week for Ashley and the team to conduct maintenance across all the courses – carrying out aeration of the greens once a month.

"The lads will go out with the two Verti-Cores and will spike all 54 greens in a day. The guys love them because compared to a lot of the machines on the market they're simple to operate - put them on the tractor and off you go;

quick, easy and very fast! The Verti-Cores have delivered fantastic results, our greens have really picked up and are now some of the best in the area."

At around the same time, Ashley also purchased two pedestrian Core Collector 3001HLs. "After you've done the job, you don't want to be driving on the greens with a heavy tractor so these pedestrian models really appealed to us. They're nice and light, and with only five men, it saves them shovelling the cores off 54 greens manually!

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Neil Stubley, Head Groundsman at the All England Club, chats with Scott MacCallum about the work that goes into preparing the tennis courts at the most famous sporting venue in the country.

HOLDING COU

There are some people who are so famous that they only need one name to identify them. Elvis, Madonna, Pele, Eric and Ernie are fine examples.

But here's a test. How famous a place do you have to be that you are known by nothing more than your postcode? M16; EH12; HA9, NW8 are all incredibly well known sporting venues but you may struggle to identify them from the postcode alone. Here's another one – SW19. Yup, you've got it. It's The All England Tennis and Croquet Club, known to

all as Wimbledon.

Wimbledon is such a famous sporting venue that it can be, and regularly is, identified by just its postcode – for your info the others were Old Trafford, Murrayfield, Wembley and Lords.

Wimbledon can lay genuine claim to being the most iconic of all British sporting venues as no other hosts an event which captures the attention and imagination of the public for two whole weeks every year. Even the most casual of sports' fan can

be found at the office water cooler pontificating on the quality of Wawrinka's backhand or whether the balls are coming off the surface faster this year than last.

Those lucky enough to attend tennis' annual showpiece in recent years have been able to enjoy unprecedented British success to accompany their strawberries and cream, as well take in the wonders of modernised show courts and the beauty of the grounds and outside courts.



RT

Neil Stubley took over from the legendary Head Groundsman, Eddie Seaward, four years ago and he has ensured that The Championships have continued to develop and that slip-ups, actual and metaphoric, are kept to an absolute minimum.

Neil was kind enough to offer Turf Matters some of his valuable time in the run up to the 2016 Championships to talk about his role and what it takes to ensure that the top players in the world have the ideal surfaces on which to display their talents. ►

► **Turf Matters** In recent years we've seen the courts coping with the wear over two weeks of The Championships much better than previously – is that down to the improvement in grass species and general maintenance practices or the scarcity of the serve and volleyer?

Neil Stubley Over the last 10 to 15 years the addition of fraise mowing, and the research we do on grass court cultivars, has helped improve the courts. But it's fair to say that although the grass court season is being enhanced it's not as extensive as it once was – three of the four Grand Slams used to be played on grass – the players coming through the ranks now don't tend to be serve and volleyers and they bring their hard court games into Wimbledon.

Although we do see a bit more wear on the baselines than 20 or 30 years ago, much of that wear is outside the playing area so we have better courts inside the lines of play and so fewer bad bounces.

The players are all advancing in their individual sport and we are trying to do the same with our sports turf maintenance. We are continually looking at the ways in which we renovate, our chemical control, our fertilisers, our machinery, our grass seed selection. We are doing all of this just to try and keep up with the game itself.

TM Can you talk a little bit about the grass species and your maintenance programme you've got to do that?

NS For us the one big thing – the big no-no – is poa annua because it adversely affects the playing surface. If left unchecked the courts become soft and spongy which is not very good for ball bounce. Poa annua doesn't wear very well, it's got poor drought properties so all of our maintenance is geared around keeping the amount of poa annua to the bare bones.

We began fraise mowing in 2001 and put the courts on a three year cycle but with the research we do with the STRI demonstrated that by the third year the poa annua was creeping up to a point which we considered unacceptable. So in the 2006/7 season we made the decision to fraise mow every court on an annual basis and we went out and bought a whole new set of fraise mowing kit from Campey Turfcare. We now have two teams which go out and every court is done. So we are giving ourselves a brand new set of courts every year. The research also showed that the rye grass plant is at its strongest between 12 and 16 months so by the time we get to The Championships the perennial rye grass is coming into its optimum level, which hopefully bodes well for the fortnight.

TM Can you talk a little more about the research that you carry out?

NS When the new STRI seed book comes out we take the top ranking varieties which we think would be good for summer sports and put them into our private testing programme. We have a four year programme which includes around 35 perennial rye grass cultivars. The STRI will then approach the different seed houses and test them on our behalf. The data is fed back to the manufacturers. The cultivars which do best will move to our next four year cycle. We simulate a Wimbledon Championships by drying out the grasses, stressing them, using a wear machine on them to see how durable they are. We also test to evaluate them with the fertilisers that we use, growth retardants etc. At the end we have about 10 rye grass cultivars which we choose and whose qualities are similar and we then go to the seed houses and ask for their purity tickets to ensure that what we get is as clean as possible.



We appreciate that we are in a very fortunate position and do have a healthy research budget but we are very open with our data and are happy to let people see what we have been doing. In fact we encourage other tennis clubs to take the information so that they too can benefit from it. If we can help in any way we will do because we know money is tight for other places. And that goes for other sports as well as tennis.

TM Whose seed is currently on the courts?

NS We currently have three Limagrass cultivars on the courts.

TM Are you in effect trying to achieve the grass equivalent of a hard court?

NS We are looking for perfection, as in, we don't want the final point in the Men's Final to be won on a bad bounce. What we are looking for is consistency on ball bounce and a hardness of surface throughout The Championships. If a player goes to one of the 22 practice courts three hours before they are due on the match courts there shouldn't be any

MY GOAL IS ALWAYS TO BE IN THE BACK SEAT WITH THE GRASS NOT BEING MENTIONED FOR THE ENTIRE CHAMPIONSHIPS BECAUSE THEN I KNOW IT'S GONE SMOOTHLY.

NEIL STUBLEY



difference between them in how the ball is coming through to the player.

The one thing which will change is that as the courts start to dry out as The Championships develop the ball will come off the turf quicker. That is the one thing on a grass court that the player has to deal with – for every round of the competition that the player stays in the court will play slightly differently and that means that the player has to learn to adjust to it. If you are playing on a clay court or a hard court they will be the same on day one as they are on day 13. That is why, if you were to ballot the top pros, the one Grand Slam they want to win more than any other is Wimbledon because of the outside factors which go towards being a Champion.

I think we are the only sporting tournament which is played on a single venue over a two week period on natural turf which makes us unique.

TM How has the roof on Centre Court – and soon to be Number 1 Court – impacted on your Maintenance practices during The Championships?

NS During The Championships we normally play until bad light stops makes it impossible and on a nice clear day that will be around 8.45pm to 9pm and the guys then have around half to three quarters of an hour of work to carry out post match. They are normally finished by around 10pm. If it is a wet day the outside courts have been put to bed but we can still play on Centre Court until 11pm – that's the agreement with by the local council. We've gone to the wire a couple of times – both with Andy Murray who came through on each occasion – and by the time the court side press has been finished about 11.15pm means that he guys are here to just past midnight.

We've got lighting rigs and fans for Centre Court, and will have for No.1 Court although the dynamics are slightly different on both courts, which mean that we can recreate everything that happens outside – if it's a nice sunny, windy day in spring or late autumn we can replicate that with the lights and fans.



GLOBAL VISION: Wimbledon is the only sporting tournament played on a single venue over a two week period on natural turf

TM How many people do you on the team during The Championships?

NS We have a team of 16 full time groundstaff, including two full time mechanics and two irrigation engineers, and we take on an additional 12 staff in the summer bringing the team up to 28. We then take on another three groundsmen just for The Championships, so we are up to a team of 32 who work on the grass courts giving us a team of 32 fully qualified groundsmen. Then we have about another 200 staff who report to the Grounds Department and who act as court coverers so at the beginning of the week the team is over 230. Then, as we gradually go through The Championships, and if we are on schedule, the Tournament Referee starts closing down courts and we can let some of the court coverers go. ▶

PHOTOGRAPH: ©AELTC/Roger Allen

► **TM** What are your recollections of the 2013 final?

NS It was actually my first Championships as Head Groundsman and while work commitments meant that I didn't get time to watch much tennis, as I have done since, I consciously made the effort to be on Centre Court for the Ladies' and Men's Final.

Even when Andy was on match point people were saying that we hadn't had a winner for 77 years so he is still bound to lose the match. When he did win I think he was as shocked as everyone else that he'd actually done it.

The next day I was on Centre Court, having a look around and checking the baselines, when Andy walked around the corner. There had been a documentary made with Sue Barker and as he had won they wanted to reshoot the ending. We caught each other's eye and he called me over and asked if he could come onto court. We talked about how he felt after he'd won it. It was nice, just the two of us on Centre Court having a little chat. Then a few of the other groundsman turned up and we all sat for about a quarter of an hour with the new Wimbledon Champion talking about the tournament and how the court played. It was filmed and ended up being part of the programme.

TM You must know him better than most. What is he like as a guy?

NS He doesn't live too far from here so when he's not on tour and in the area he will always use the club's facilities

for practice. We bump into him a few times a year and he will always make a point of shaking your hand and saying hello and he remembers people's names. He is a very nice down to earth guy with a good sense of humour. Like all of the top players, he asks questions about how the courts are playing, how the renovations have gone, the weather etc.

TM Was there an issue peaking the Centre Court twice for the Olympics or Davis Cup matches?

NS To be honest the Davis Cup is not a problem as we can only play them during the grass court season anyway – even if it were late September we still have the air temperatures that allow us to dry out the court and we bring the covers back for it. We can simulate the first day of The Championships for the Davis Cup.

The Olympics were more of a challenge as there was less time between them and The Championships, but because we had four or five years to prepare we were ok. I had been given the Head Groundsman Designate job in March 2011 and the normal procedure was for the new man to shadow the Head Groundsman for the first year and on the second year he would shadow the new man. However, as I'd been here 16 years already it wasn't as critical so, in Eddie's last year, he concentrated on the Olympics and I concentrated on The Championships so as it worked out we had two people to look after two events. Eddie retired straight after the Olympics and it

was great for him as he had a British winner with Andy winning while we also ended up getting a silver medal in the Mixed Doubles with Andy and Laura Robson. So it was a huge success.

TM How long did Court 18 take to recover after the record breaking John Isner-Nicholas Mahut 11 hour five minutes match in 2010?

NS It's still recovering now! That's the beauty of tennis. We have to set up courts not knowing what's going to happen. On Men's Finals Day we could get a total of five hours of play or we could end up with the Men's Singles going for five hours and the Mixed Doubles going for another two or three. Two or three years ago the roof went on and we were still playing on the final day at quarter to 10. You have to set the courts up at the start

A familiar sight as the ground crew races to protect the pristine playing surface from the British weather – while below – a lone groundsman prepares the court to perfection



PHOTOGRAPH: ©AELTC/Bob Martin



PHOTOGRAPH: ©AELTC/Matthias Hangst



of The Championships assuming they are going to get pummelled and if they don't get that, at least you have prepared for the worst.

TM What are the main things, outside of the regular weather issues, which give you sleepless nights in the run up to The Championships?

NS For me, about four weeks before The Championships, you hit the point of no return and if, for example, you were to get a rogue fox getting on to a court or any malicious damage it would be tough. At that point I probably start to get about two or three hours of sleep a night. I'll wake up at 2am with my mind racing about potential issues. When it first started I looked at it as a negative but over the last couple of years I see it as a positive. Not bad that I'm stressing out thinking about potential problems, but good that I'm working through processes in my head – what I'd do in given circumstances. It means that when I go into work the following day I've worked through about 15 different scenarios of what could potentially go wrong and come up with 15 different scenarios about how I'm going to resolve or pre-empt them.

My goal is always to be in the back seat with the grass not being mentioned for the entire Championships because then I know it's gone smoothly. It's a natural surface and because of that it reacts to the weather and that means that no two Championships are ever the same. Last year was a great success for the courts but we had the hottest day in UK history on the first Wednesday – 37 degrees but the grass withstood the stress.

TM Do you ever sit back and think "Good grief, I'm the Head Groundsman at Wimbledon"?

NS I've been here such a long time

that I don't really think about it for most of the year but you really do appreciate it when The Championships themselves come around and the media circus arrives. All of a sudden it dawns on you that it is a big deal around the world.

But at the same time you can't think too much as you just have to get on with the job. All you can do is your best, that's all anyone can ask of you. As long as we are trying to improve and not resting on our laurels, thinking we've cracked it, the better. I think it is the fear of failure which keeps you going. Like a lot of turf managers at a high profile venue I know that if it's not a success, and the surfaces are blamed, we are in a very unforgiving world nowadays.

TM It just needs one player saying something in a press conference when they've just been beaten and it can set off a media storm.

NS It happened to me in my first year in charge. Maria Sharapova slipped on Court 2 and she made an off the cuff remark about the grass courts and it being my first year and all of a sudden it was "Slipgate". In my very first week of my very first Championships I think I did over 100 media commitments. It was very, very intense.

TM What of the future?

NS Our ethos is that we just want to put on the very best Championships we can and we don't want to make a fuss about it. It is so different even year that there is no chance of ever becoming bored so I'll probably be here until they take me out in a box. I've got another 20 years to go until I retire anyway, but I don't like to think too far ahead.

TM Thank you very much for your time and good luck to you and the team for this year's Championships.

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Golfing Nobody's Blog

For one reason or another my clubs have been packed away in the shed for the last six months and I've found myself going the longest period without golf for about the last 40 years. With spring here and the prospect of a better

summer than last year I'm now chomping at the bit to get going again.

What I expect, or at the very least I am relatively optimistic, is that when I start swinging again all the stupid little idiosyncrasies which had conspired to vandalise my swing over the years have disappeared and I'm left with a smooth elegant thing of beauty, more or less along the lines of a Tom Weiskopf or a Neil Coles.

Obviously I'm not deluded enough to think that I'll be transformed from that very first swing. From bitter experience I know that the first few swings after a layoff are more likely to disturb the worms than the wrens but once my innate timing returns I'd like to imagine that the lay-off has strengthened the positives in my swing – its compact nature and my ability to get the ball away before most people have even completed their backswings – and forgotten the weaknesses – that ugly reverse pivot and the fact that no two swings are ever the same.

This rest period has given me a unique opportunity finally to make the most of

my golfing ability. It is said of many sportsmen that they haven't fulfilled their potential. I'm sorry to say that I fall into that category and if I don't take this chance – a clean slate for my swing – I may never improve on that second in that monthly medal three years ago with that nett 69, gross 86.

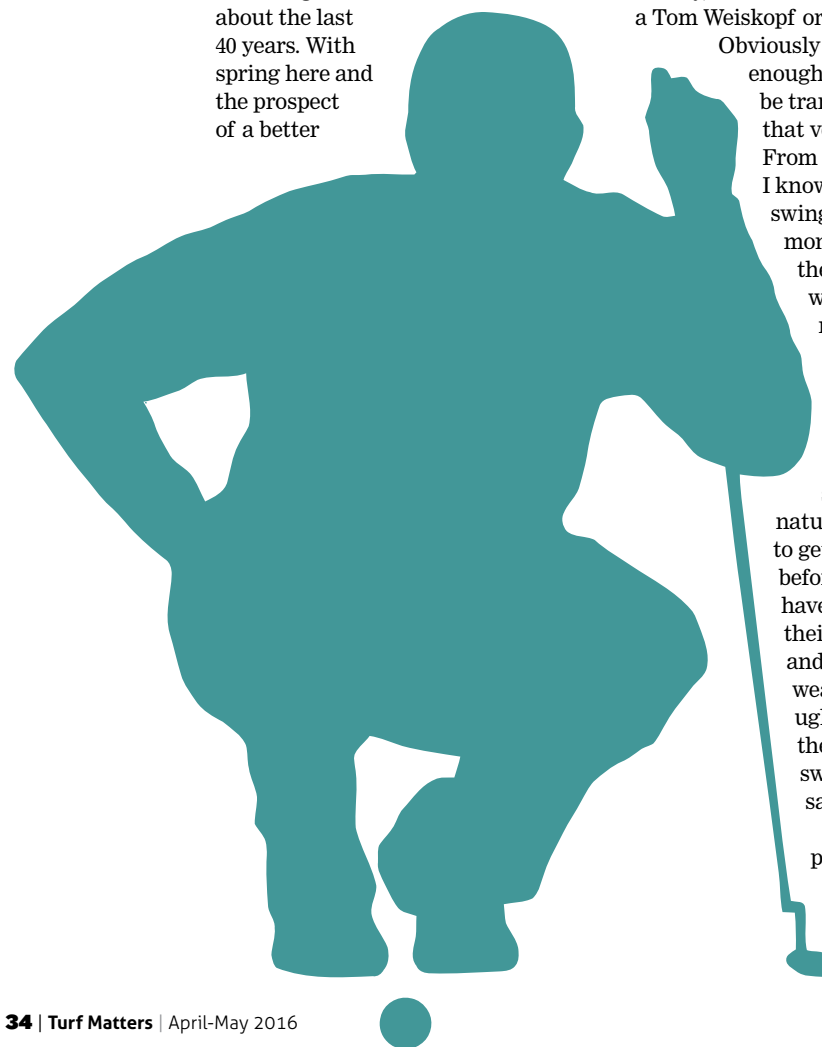
Indeed, I'm not prepared to sit back and accept that that is as good as it is going to get for my golfing career. I'm going to set new goals. Wouldn't it be great to have a handicap of below 15?; to for once not follow two consecutive pars with a triple bogey; to get round 18 holes without losing a ball; to not three putt the last when two would take the money; to not always get a nose bleed when the turn is reached within a shot of handicap and, finally, not always being the worst player in the fourball.

To some these goals may appear pie in the sky but I've always been a believer in aspiration and if you don't stretch yourself you will never know who you might be able to become. My issue has always been that I'm not tied to one interest. As well as being a mediocre golfer, I possess a high break of 16 in snooker, I once made a 180 at darts and have always been shown to have a fairly steady hand for Jenga, so it's not surprising that golf has not always had 100% claim on my attention.

However, that's going to change so when the old clubs are resurrected from the back of the shed – hopefully in good nick and not having gathered any rust – I'm going into the 2016 season with gusto, enthusiasm and a newly acquired lust for perfection.

I don't know why I've been waiting this long to uncover the secret.

*As told to Scott MacCallum



as seen on TWITTER



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The RHSVerified account
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Bearwood Lakes @BLGCagronomy @ToroGolf pro-core
648 aerating greens this morning.

Brian O Shaughnessy @boshaughnessy2 Another great
turnout at the ILI conference in Portmarnock GC today.

Landscape & Amenity @LAPUMagazine Story of the Day
is @CampeyTurfCare's 2016 Pitch Renovation Tour gets
off to a flying start <http://landscapeandamenity.com/news/read/4429/pitch-renovation-tour-gets-off-to-a-flying-start...>

Follow Scott MacCallum on Twitter @TurfMatters



Tea Break Teaser answers
1. Jonny Marray; 2. Betty Stove;
3. Four. 1998, '99, '01 and '02;
4. Ille Nastase; 5. Pete Sampras;
6. 17; 7. Martina Navratilova;
8. 6-4, 7-5, 6-4; 9. Jelena Jankovic;
10. 70-68; 11. 1973;
12. Richard Krajicek; 13. Marion Bartoli;
14. 2009; 15. 1934



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