



# SPORTS TURF REFLECTIONS

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Email: [admin@sportsturf.asn.au](mailto:admin@sportsturf.asn.au)  
 Website: [staaus.com.au](http://staaus.com.au)

*WE NURTURE TURF SPORTS OF ALL SORTS...*

## THE *FUTURE* IS IN OUR HANDS.

Covid 19 has prompted a refresh of thinking in many industries. Sports turf included.

At STA-Australia we have accelerated our activities to you as our members and the industry.

Following a workshop in late 2019 the need for closer ties to state STA chapters and members was recognised with the result being the appointing of 2 delegates for each state STA chapter to serve on the national committee. This is now in place as Jarrod Bird (Qld) as the new President of STA-Australia.

Our national committee is now made up of 12 members all committed to the core objectives established for the coming years. Jarrod Bird laid out 18 key objectives at the AGM which received a strong endorsement.

They entail a series of activities to advance the standing, quality, safety, education and recognition of the sports turf industry make for Australia's health and welfare. As the year unfolds many of these initiatives will be seen across the nation.

New members to the committee are John Cann (Vic), Daimon Jones (SA), Chris Bale (ACT), Adrian Onvlee (Qld), Chris Langsford (WA), Damian Curtis (NSW).

## DAMIAN HOUGH JOINS ASTMA BOARD

A well respected member of STA, Damian Hough has been appointed to join the ASTMA Board. This is a significant change from the golfing association with Damian the first non Golf Superintendent being appointed a director of golf. Damian is also Vice President of STA-South Australia. A comment from Damian on his appointment : *"The turf industry has multiple sporting codes and areas we cater for with many challenges. Turf Managers and their staff play a critical role where sharing of information is important. I look forward to working with the fellow board members and support ASTMA and the sports turf industry in a positive manner."*



STA-Australia commend Damian for this role.

## GRADUATE OF THE YEAR 2019

### MATT WOLFE

With a remarkable cluster of outstanding candidates the National Judges were asked to evaluate the 5 candidates and determine the lucky candidate to tour the USA playing fields, receive a remarkable study tour and attend the Toro World Conference in 2021.

Candidates were from a mixed background of sports turf. Jack McAteer (Qld) Qld Cricket Assoc. Jayde Robson (Vic) Citywide, Andrew Hodgson (NSW) Green Options, Luc Hill (ACT) Stadium Turf and Matt Wolfe (WA) Albany Council.

A comment from an experienced Judge on our panel was... *"All these candidates are first class. If these candidates reflect what we have emerging from our TAFE then we are in good hands for the future."*



But eventually, Matt Wolfe (2nd from left) from WA was declared the Award winner. Ironically, Matt had just resigned from Albany Council to seek out greater experience in Perth. He was certainly chuffed to find he was the eventual winner.

His concern was how does he advise his new employer- (who ever that was to be), that next July he will be travelling thru USA on a sports turf study tour courtesy of Toro and STA-Australia.

His new boss, Chris Nation at Perth Racing was delighted to support his further skills enhancement with this sensational trip. In fact Chris said, he would love the chance to take in such a trip. He is not alone in that wish! In fact all the Judges had the same wish.



*STA-across Australia only flourishes due to its many members and our valued Patrons & Sponsors.*

## ARE ROBOTS THE FUTURE?

*Danny Edmunds , Open Spaces Manager City of Casey and President of STA-Vic has been looking to the future of robotics in turf management.*

*Below is a snapshot of his current thinking*

Various futuristic ideas seem bizarre at first viewing, however history has shown what is once an ambitious idea is today's new normal. Let's think about where the technology is heading in the open space realm.



The most obvious advancement we have seen overseas is the use of autonomous mowers in the golf course industry. When they were first introduced many of us critiqued their ability, were threatened by the assumption that it would diminish our workforce and thought of them as gadgets or toys that would never make their way into the shed. Now if we were forward thinking we would be looking at them differently and embracing the timesaving benefits by allowing staff to focus on more skilled tasks, the environmental friendly outcomes by using battery power and subsequently limiting noise pollution to name a few.

The growth of eco-cities and green spaces being planned locally is expected to be a major driver in the global market. Let's think outside the square and look further to see what other options are out there when replacing that new machine, but we need to ensure the technology that is available overseas makes it way to our shores and those manufacturers see the demand from forward thinking Australian turf managers - that already lead the way globally in the industry we all work in.



The arrival of automated/robotic/battery/drone connected machinery is the future for innovative mowing systems in the market, it is mind boggling as you

think about these opportunities, but we must keep our minds open for the technological advances that we will see implemented into our maintenance sheds in the not too distant future.



## “IT IS HOT UP HERE.”



*Our population is dominantly along the eastern seaboard. But our industry lives in every local government area. Brad Baptist took a chance and resettled in Darwin. His move was a positive experience for spreading his wings for a broader industry knowledge and a bonus in lifestyle. Here is what Brad has to say.*

Its 2017, I have been the head sports turf curator at Monash University in Clayton for 10 years Working for Programmed at the time, they also have the contract for looking after Yarra Park for the MCC. With some staff movement there is an opening for a 2-month position at the G on the ground staff which I was lucky enough to be offered. This is a dream come true cutting the paddock at the G. This is what I always dreamt about as young kid rolling out wickets at my local club Parkfield. This experience reminds me of what I wanted to do which was roll wickets at the highest possible level.

I apply for the curators role at the G, 30 years' experience, 15 at premier level, I'm realistically not in the race but I throw in a *Hail Mary*. Matt Page does a walk through the day after I lodge my application. I apply for the curator's position at the now Marvel stadium. And also miss the role. But I have got the bug to try and go higher again. Without the exposure to first class and international cricket that stadiums offer, how can I progress. Darwin head curator required?



The NTC curator gets to go to the CA conferences where the best curators in the industry are. You are involved and accepted by the movers and shakers of cricket wicket curation in Australia. The previous NTC curator has just landed the role at the new Citipower Centre Junction Oval in Victoria.

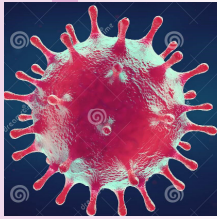
So my partner and I decide to role the dice and move to Darwin to hopefully get exposed to a higher level of cricket and if things go well in time perhaps I could be in a position to challenge for a top job, or at least know I tried everything I could to get there.

As part of NT Cricket we hosted the Big Bash in Alice Springs once again enabling that exposure for aspiring curators to not only work alongside a man of the ilk

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## COVID 19. A BLESSING IN DISGUISE? UMM... MAYBE.



*STA-Australia's committee member Brad Vandam gives a quick overview.*

Many industries around Australia including ours have been significantly impacted by Covid 19. With the shutdown of *'turf sports of all sorts'* for periods of time across Australia, it has been a blessing in disguise for some managers.

This opportunity has seen some facilities complete long awaited renovations, bespoke renovations to all those problem areas etc. along with some of those long awaited projects or facility upgrades.

A lot of high use facilities i.e. council grounds have needed a rest, which has seen surfaces recover to a level that they have not seen for many years.

Danny Edmunds of Casey Council;- *"Grounds are in sensational condition due to the diligent work by the team, but also turf has had minimum disturbance with limited activity due to covid sports ban. It is a silver lining from a dire situation."*



Some surfaces have now seen complete transitioning for warm season to cool season grasses with minimal to no damage caused by usage.

Then on the opposite end of the spectrum some managers were unable to complete their scheduled transitioning due to stand downs, budgetary reductions or a calculated decision.

Some facilities took advantage and have cleaned their warm season turf species up by chemically removing any residual Ryegrass, Winter grass and broadleaf weed infestations. Along with this they have applied pre-emergent chemicals to stop any further germination and establishment of any unwanted species.



Adversity sometimes has a *silver lining*.



## GIRLS ON THE GREEN.

Sports turf is embracing the gender diversity evolution. There is no glass ceiling for females in the field.

We chat to a few up and coming ladies in turf. Their positive attitude and commitment is inspiring.

Jayde Robson joined the industry as a late starter after a successful time with a fast food brand. A driving force for her to join the industry was that it was not indoor, possibly due to coming from a farming family anchored this logic.



But being a mature entrant, her first approach to the local council rejected her. Undeterred she was successful at Citywide. Her boss Leigh Stewart at Citywide states: *"Jayde is a great model for a new entrant. She is keen, asks questions, does what she is asked, and learns everyday. Mechanical equipment has caused her no problems. She has great people skills and has strong management potential."*

Jayde not only committed to a re-education program at TAFE, she also excelled in the field. She is delighted with her career realignment. With soccer, equestrian, football, cricket as some of the sports fields to support has great diversity. She has found no gender issues and loves working with 4 guys in the field as one team.

Would Jayde recommend Sports Turf to another female. *"Definitely. There is a bit of technical & mechanical skills to develop along with enduring the heat and cold. But definitely."*

Her ambitions? To secure a role in the higher profile arenas, Kardinia Park in Geelong or Mars Stadium in Ballarat would be great. As this years Graduate of the Year in Victoria this seems a realistic aspiration.

Another girl on the green, Danielle Hunter (Green Options Qld) stumbled onto this career path when playing AFL. One of her team mates was a dedicated Turfie and suggested she look at it. Her only angst was in digesting some of the technical aspects of the industry. She did not appreciate how much of it science driven, but developed a passion of learning and all whilst working in the beautiful outdoors.



Her only early concern was when the team discuss possible solutions to issue's the female voice is drowned out. However the same solution from a male voice gains credence. She has since learnt how to be heard and recognised as knowledgeable. Now she relishes the opportunity to impart her knowledge on the next generation of female turf entrants. Maybe she can mentor the next Graduate of the Year, an honour she has already achieved.

## IT IS HOT UP HERE!



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and character of Kevin Mitchell, and meeting Marcus Pamplin another big name in curation, but you get to see and be involved first hand with setting up a Big Bash match from scratch- a huge opportunity and great experience.

NT Cricket also has a drop in pitch, which resides on oval 2 ready to be lifted and moved across to TIO Stadium should we host any international matches. The drop in was built 3 years ago in the ground and at the start of this year we undertook its first lift. As we had been earmarked to host 2 ODI's, which would have been played in August of this season. Bloody Covid. The understanding of drop ins can be difficult to access information on if you are looking to advance it is something that needs to be covered. NT Cricket working together with Cricket Australia allowed exposure to that aspect of turf management and to work with another TITAN of turf "Les Burdett" yes I did have a copy of *'turfcraft'* magazine from when he retired which I got him to sign!!! Kev and Les; my childhood heroes ...who needs athletes or rock-stars.



Then on top of all this great stuff ... you have the top end weather. Dry season is exactly that. It stops raining around April and is 32 every day and sunny, that's it until the build-up kicks in between late August/October. and it gets hotter again! Sweaty. Humid. 34-36. But what you do get is some fantastic thunder and electrical storms. They can be disastrous for your decoder irrigation systems and watch the grounds chewed up by the AFL matches we host. But it is the harsh and extreme weather that Darwin can dish up that is the greatest challenge. Not just to your skill as a groundsman but physically demanding.

The other great aspect of Darwin and the isolation it endures/enjoys from the rest of the country is that there is a camaraderie amongst the *turfies* up here. Whether it is Scotty at Palmerston Golf, a guru of turf in the top end, Mark Davis at Darwin Golf an absolute gentleman of the trade and always willing to help his fellow *turfies* if he is



able. Craig Coleman built most, if not all wickets in Darwin. Young Alex Jensen who took over TIO stadium and has shown great passion and hard graft to get the field in superb condition as you may have all seen with the recent Dream Time match here. There are quite a few others and apologies for not naming you all. When you are so isolated to be able to call on our peers for assistance with info, equipment or just a friendly chat to check in on how it is all going, reminds you that together as a turf industry we support each other in these times of uncertainty, we stick together and help each other when we can.

While my time up here has come to an end I'm grateful for the people I've been fortunate to meet up here and thank the entire team at NT cricket. I will miss the life-style, it really is an experience living in Darwin. It feels like you are on a working holi-

day the whole time .... possibly the weather? I had previously spent ten years chasing summers in the UK preparing wickets, but the move to Darwin has exposed me to new aspects and great people in our industry.

I have recently been appointed Head Curator at the Junction Oval Citipower centre working for Green Options. An exciting company that has really taken the cricket turf maintenance business to a new level in recent times.

I'm so excited to have earned the opportunity to prepare first class wickets in my home state for Cricket Victoria. It has been hard work and sacrifice to get to this level. But now we go again and double the efforts to ensure we get the job done to the high standards we all expect.

I've dedicated myself to this trade. We are special units *Turfies*, we complain a bit but we love it! Not many could, or more likely, would do what we do. We are a special breed. Cricket and sports turf has given me so much on my journey.

Now for my next chapter in life.

