

Past Presidents

VGCSA Feature: Course Manager
Barry Proctor



Association involvement

VGCSA Member since 2005

Time on Committee

Eleven terms. Two as President

Turf career

24 years in the industry

11 years as a Course Manager

Course History:

- Vale of Leven GC (apprenticeship)
- Loch Lomond GC
- Saint Andrews GC
- Merion GC
- Shinecock Hills GC
- Royal Melbourne GC
- Metropolitan GC
- Huntingdale GC
- Cranbourne GC
- and now Woodlands GC

Study:

- Diploma Sports Turf Management NMIT
- SVQ Level 4 Sports Turf Maintenance, Gosta College Glasgow
- Internship, Ohio State University (3 months on campus) This was one of the best experiences of my life. It's exactly like you see on TV and in the movies.

- All the usual additional certificates that support our trade

Tournaments:

- Scottish Open
- Dunhill Cup
- US Open - Claim to fame, I was the first man out with a hose during play in the 2004 US Open to water greens between groups as the greens were unplayable. Copped a fair bit of abuse by the thousands of spectators surrounding the 7th green.
- Australian Masters
- Heineken Cup
- Australian Amateur



Give us an overview of your course and some of its unique characteristics

Woodlands is one of the oldest of the sandbelt courses still on its original site. Only Royal Melbourne and Metropolitan are older.

In 1913, the early holes were set out by the Albert Park Professional, Rowley Banks, and Mr M. Morcom, the Royal Melbourne green-keeper, who was engaged as a consultant to help in their formation and maintenance. Three years later, professional golfer, Mr S. Bennett, laid down the rest of the 18 holes.

Golfers will remember Woodlands because it tests all aspects of their shot making ability and for the extremely small greens, in comparison to our sandbelt neighbours.

Take us through your turf management operations and how have you fine-tuned them during your time as Superintendent?

One thing I've learnt over the years is that the only thing that happens quickly when managing turf is death! And, when you have a good program in place, do not deviate from that too much. I do my best not to get side-tracked by the jargon and promises promoted with a new product. What works on one course won't necessarily work on yours, and we all know how varied and inconsistent results can be with products even within the boundaries of our own course. This is why it is so important to stick to what works for you and your property whilst

doing trial work along the way to find new products and solutions that make a difference.

I have been at Woodlands Golf Club for two years and I am now confident with the chemical and cultural program in place moving forward.

Changing courses has been a great challenge. Taking what worked well for the previous Course Manager here at Woodlands and building on that with my knowledge and experiences has been fun. It's great to see the direction the course is heading in the short and long term.

The biggest battle I have had personally in the last two years in regard to fine tuning my management practices was coming to terms with the fact that I can't manage the small MacKenzie Bentgrass greens (0.9 hectares) and Fine Fescue surrounds (2 hectares) with low nutrient inputs when you have 55,000+ rounds of golf per year.

The use of Paclobutrazol applications guided by growing degree days and measuring clipping rates has been a successful part of our chemical program here at Woodlands too, in the never ending battle to control and eradicate *Poa annua* from our cool season surfaces.



Describe your management style

From a staff perspective, I'd like to think I'm pretty calm and measured in my behaviour in how I manage the staff. I guess, once this publication hits the email bulletin, I'm sure I'll hear otherwise if the staff disagree. I am a firm believer of speaking to people in a manner that I wish to be spoken too. I have worked under many course managers/ Superintendents and various other managers over the years. Verbal abuse never delivers the

best outcome or the respect of your staff and peers.

I am a very open and honest person, maybe too much at times, but I believe open honest communication is key to good relationships and staff management. We are only as good as the people around us and so it's super important that the people around you feel supported, valued and engaged. I also encourage the staff to use their initiative and openly share ideas. I don't necessarily have all the answers or the best ideas so I'm open to anything if it ultimately delivers the best outcome for the course and the team.

From a turf perspective, I'd also like to think I approach this in the same way as staff management - calmly and measured in my decisions.



What inspired you to join the VGCSA Committee?

Number one was the committee at the time (I was approached by Nathan Bennett), along with the people I knew who had led the way before them. I figured that anyone who wanted to devote their time to the committee and the industry was doing so because they had a love for turf and the industry like myself.

The opportunity to have close access to such people at such an early point in my career as a course manager (year one), I believed could

only strengthen my knowledge and networks - ultimately helping my self-development and course conditioning.

I felt that if I could contribute in any way that benefitted our industry during my time on committee then I was supporting and giving something back to an industry I honestly enjoy being a part of.

I also thought that I could potentially help open the door for future up and coming course managers to also come forward and help support our Association and the committee.

Most pleasing/rewarding moment during your time as a committee member and VGCSA President?

Number one has to be every time I would extend the bar tab at the country meeting for an extra hour! Only joking (sort of).

Honestly, I truly can't pinpoint one specific moment, but watching the camaraderie amongst peers during events/meetings has been one of my favourite experiences and being involved in the creation of those events.

Life after Committee. What are your future plans?

On the work front, to get my head down and stuck into fine tuning Woodlands Golf Club. That will probably take out the next five years for starters.

Outside of work - My wife and I are getting itchy regarding looking for another renovation project. There are some great opportunities coming up currently in the property market. Fingers crossed we can find the right opportunity in the next 6-12 months.

Favourite spot on your course?

Right hand side of the 13th green looking over the 13th green and down the 7th and 6th fairways, it truly is one of the best green's complexes on the sandbelt.