

Past Presidents

VGCSA Feature: Superintendent
Mat Poultney, Green Acres GC



Association involvement

VGCSA Member since 2008

Time on Committee

Committee member 2011-18

Two terms as President

Turf career

31 years in the industry

Currently in 13th year as a Superintendent

Course History:

Wembley GC

The Vines Resort

Stockley Park GC & Kungsängen GC &

Barseback G&CC (all European Tour Courses
Pty Ltd)

Malvern Valley GC

Freeway GC

Green Acres GC

Study:

Master of Agriculture (Turf Management)

Sydney University

Diploma Sports Turf Management

Cert IV Leadership and Management

Cert III Sports Turf Management

Tournaments:

Heineken Classic

Scandinavian Masters

British Open

Australian Open

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

Green Acres GC is situated on the Yarra River floodplain, 8km from the city. Formerly where cows of Willsmere Dairy grazed and now framed by Eucalypts (large in size & large in number), the golf club was formed in 1948 and was initially designed by Gordon Bernard Oliver. It is a more than busy private course, pumping through many rounds (60-65K per year).

We try to maintain Legend couch on fairways and roughs, Wintergreen couch on tees and three different types of bents on greens (G2, Pennlinks and Penncross) but, as everyone knows, the dreaded *Poa annua* is a tough one to keep in front of.

A modern Clubhouse was built during 2011-12.



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

Even though numerous programs get put into place on course, I have found over the years with some programs - what works one year does not mean it works again. But in saying that, we certainly give fertility, growth regulation and pesticide programs the time they need to see ongoing results and improvement. The golfer traffic, shade and air flow at Green Acres are three of the biggest ongoing issues which turned me years ago into preventative applications for disease control (got burnt a few times in the early days). The fine tuning comes with gaining experience and confidence in the role and site you are situated. We are always searching for new ideas through reading of literature and mostly from talking with your peers.

Describe your management style

Patience has never been one of my strong points so have worked hard over the years on this aspect. Also, probably at times, I am a bit too blunt with the communication delivery over the years and so I try to always start with a positive before discussing the negatives and how we can improve on them. Education of staff, allowing them to have a crack without fear of failure and pushing them to strive for perfection daily is what we are trying to promote at Green Acres. On average, our staff are young in age but they certainly have a crack, work hard and are passionately invested with the course and members. They are also invested in their own development as turf managers, which I feel is the key.

Patience has been a big one lately and a massive part has also been having family who has always understood the life of a turf manager.



What inspired you to join the VGCSA Committee?

I joined the Association firstly because I did not know too many other people in the industry, not being from Victoria. The great Colin Winterton was my very first conversation at a meeting and what he said still sticks with me.

“Don’t be afraid to go up to anyone and talk. They will be very welcoming”.

He has been proved right. Getting amongst it showed me there were some great leaders in the turf industry who were willing to share ideas and problems they have experienced. These leaders inspired me to join the committee and I saw it as a good opportunity to develop further as a turf manager whilst contributing something back.

Most pleasing/rewarding moments during your time on the committee?

I had numerous rewarding moments, with the committee during that time implementing a scholarship for Diploma students, a combined membership fee for Supers and Assistants (I think we picked up 35-40 assistants in the 1st year), developing the 2-3 Club March meeting and re-initiating the 2-day Country meeting plus the research/trial programs. Also developed some cracking friendships.

Any advice to someone considering taking on a committee role?

Yes. If you are unsure, just jump in and have a crack. Believe that you have something to offer. It will be great for your personal development.

Favourite spot on your course?

13th tee looking down the fairway.

