

In the Region – Neangar Park GC

Superintendent: Brendan Brown
VGCSA member since 2013



of four to maintain the golf course and two bowling greens. We watered fairways with quick coupling valves and a Honda motorbike. We rebuilt one of the bowling greens, only to have it vandalised by someone pouring soil residual herbicide in random areas over the green. The machinery was very old and run down, and I had to repair a lot of the equipment myself.

In 1998, we moved to Bendigo so I could take up the position of head greenkeeper at Bendigo Bowls Club. This was a great decision as the Club was very progressive and I rebuilt three of the four greens. Two of the greens were synthetic and it was great to return them to grass (Tifdwarf couch). With the help of volunteers, we installed a fully automatic watering system to all greens. It was also during this time that I started my own contracting business, doing work for other clubs including the tennis club next door.

In 2007, Wendy and I (and now two children) decided we wanted to move to Maroochydore for a change of lifestyle. I was fortunate enough to be appointed Assistant Superintendent at Horton Park Golf Club. During this time I experienced the sub-tropical weather extremes and learnt a lot about managing staff. Horton Park was one of the courses used in qualifying for the Australian PGA at Cooloom each year. It was a great experience setting the course up for the event.

After living in Queensland for three years, it was time to come home to Victoria and I was fortunate to gain the position of Course Superintendent at Neangar Park Golf Club (Bendigo) in 2010. I have been the Superintendent now for almost eleven years.

Neangar Park GC Staff structure

We currently have four full time staff consisting of myself, the Assistant Super, an apprentice and labourer. In addition, we have a part-time

Turf career

I started my career in turf management 34 years ago at Rich River Golf Club as an apprentice. My first role was working on the bowling greens for two years, during which time we built a new green and new surrounds. I was fortunate to be working at the Club when it was expanding at such a rapid rate. I was then transferred to the golf course staff and experienced the East Course being constructed. Looking back, this was an amazing experience and allowed me to learn so much.

After leaving Rich River, I progressed to head greenkeeper at Echuca Bowls Club and worked there for four years. This was a great experience for a young bloke. It was my first chance to be in charge of my own patch of turf. I enjoyed the challenge and made a few mistakes along the way, and learnt a lot as well. During this time, I married my wife Wendy.

Valley View Golf Club in Kyabram was my next position. This was my first opportunity to be Superintendent of a golf course. We had a team

greenkeeper for three days and a good base of volunteers every Tuesday.

Course Overview / Characteristics

Neangar Park Golf Club is an 18 hole par 71 course located in the regional Victorian city of Bendigo. It is built on undulating land of typical gold mining soil, which is terrible!! Clay, rock, shale and not much topsoil. It is by far the worst soil I have worked on in my career! Having said that, the fairways are very good. They consist of Santa Ana with some annoying patches of Kikuyu. Thankfully, the Club is blessed with a very good water supply from a nearby dam that was constructed in the 1980s by the Club in partnership with the borough of Eaglehawk (now City Of Greater Bendigo). We also have two dams on the course with a total capacity of about 150 Meg. There is approximately 1 Ha of Bent/*Poa* greens that were also built around 1984. The course is heavily treed with a mix of Iron Barks, Yellow Gums and Grey Box.

Turf Management/Operations

My management of the golf course hasn't changed much over the years, I focus on maintaining the greens to the highest standard possible and they get the bulk of my attention. Regular fertilising, grooming and keeping the *Poa* under control with growth retardants, etc. The Club had an architect's report prepared in 2008 and reviewed in 2012 and, from there, I prepared a five year plan. We have been working on the course improvements ever since, rebuilding tees and resurfacing fairways, etc.

What course improvements/alterations have you been involved in during your time at the Club?

The Neangar Park Committee of Management has been very supportive over the past ten years. During my time, we have constructed a new machinery shed and installed a new Toro Lynx Irrigation control system, including new satellites. We have also replaced the old pumps with a new variable speed pump set, installed sprinklers to the surrounds of all greens and replaced the sand and drainage in 22 bunkers.

Currently, we are working on the biggest project the Club has ever undertaken. We are constructing a nine hole Pitch and Putt course. The greens average about 200 m² and the hole lengths range from 50 to 70 metres long. We have also constructed a commercial driving range of about 270 metres long and 50 metres wide. All work has been done in house with some contractor work.

What is the one piece of machinery you could not live without?

The Pro Force Blower. With the course having plenty of large trees we are constantly needing to blow off leaves and gum nuts before cutting greens or fairways.

Describe your management style

Hands on and lead from the front. I do everything that everyone else does. I work on the theory that I treat people with respect and expect to be respected in return. I have a very keen eye for detail and expect the standard of work to be high. In recent times, I have tried not to sweat the small stuff but it's hard not to. I try to let people have personal time if they need it, especially during this COVID-19 period.

If you could change one thing about your job what would it be?

I would like to be able to take more time off over summer and not be thinking about the job seven days a week, 24/7.

Most pleasing/rewarding moment during your time as a Superintendent

Hatching an idea to build a Pitch and Putt Course around one of our irrigation lakes and watching it come to fruition.

Favourite spot on the course

The new 5th hole on the new Pitch and Putt Course. An absolutely beautiful location playing over the lake to the green.

