



**Sep 2015 Vol. 11 (3)**

## Cheers From Your Chair

Spring means the end of the drab weather for most but for our industry it also means time to gear up for the busy period of code changeover on our sports parks and making the most of the ever decreasing renovation window, it seems these days if you blink you may miss it. See below for details of the STANZ field day at Mt Smart Stadium in November where we plan to discuss the working relationships we hold with our sporting codes and the challenges these bring.

In this newsletter we touch base with a few of our members who are maintaining the standards and utilising their skills to 'turn around' nightmare sports fields and preparing them for play at the highest level. Karl Johnson from Waikato Stadium recently undertook the challenge of upgrading Apia Park for the Manu Samoa vs All blacks game and Dave Biddle from Recreational Services took on the mission of converting the racetrack in Bay Park back to an ITM cup standard playing surface, see both their articles in this newsletter with project details.

It's also time to start thinking about the Turf Conference and Trade show scheduled for Auckland at Sky City in June 2016. Less than a year away now and we all know how fast that's going to fly. This conference has been pushed back to a three year interval, so start planning for this now and think about what staff you have that may benefit from attending this event. The theme for 2016 is 'Innovation and technology transfer to create step change', something as an industry we have always excelled at. I have been interested to see the use of reinforced turf beginning to occur in our council fields, historically the domain of our stadia and a very good example of working smarter with what we have to increase those playing hours, see article below.

**Kellie Rose, Chair**

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Thank you to our  
Sponsor Members for  
their continued  
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The logo for PGG Wrightson Turf, featuring the company name in white and green text on a dark blue background.The logo for Recreational Services, featuring a green circular icon and the text "Recreational Services" and "YOUR PARKS AND GREEN SPACES SPECIALISTS".

## Project Apia Park

The All Blacks hadn't ever played Manu Samoa in Samoa up until July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015. I was requested by the All Blacks to assist with the preparation of Apia Park to ensure the history making match was a success.

I first visited Apia Park with the AB's Management team in late April. The ground was in a better shape initially than I was imagining although there was about 60% weed content in the Bermuda 419 Couch. I was concerned that trying to eliminate the weeds with the limited time wasn't achievable, and prioritisation being the safety of the field and its presentation.

Unfortunately on my return for the second trip in early June I faced a pitch that hadn't seen a mower for some time! Given I was only there for 2 days I had the pitch weedeated back to some sort of normality so I could laser measure the agreed pitch dimension of 94m x 66 m with 5m dead ball. Both Rugby Unions agreed to these dimensions due to the pitch being within a newly installed athletics track. I installed Fleet Pliflix's as legacy items so in the future all rugby events could easily be line marked correctly.

Match day preparations started when I arrived 7 days prior to the match. The Samoan staff had found a ride on rotary mower from somewhere (although it needed to be hot wired to start it, and it had seen better days!) so I trained the Groundsman "T" to mow the pitch every morning prior to our daily work. I shipped up line marking equipment and paint to ensure I had everything I needed. The latest Kombi Line marker from Fleet and their world class paint "Blinder" was sitting awaiting my arrival. I line marked 3 times within 5 day's to ensure the lines 'shone' which assisted the presentation of the venue. They had never painted numbers on their pitch before so I applied these in Manu Samoa colours which they absolutely loved. Small areas on the pitch needed some attention to eliminate possible player safety risks.

To eliminate team concerns about a player hurting themselves if they slid through the dead ball or side lines I had a NZ company "Super Turf" install over 1000 metres of artificial turf around the perimeter of the pitch. I also included installation of artificial turf in both changing rooms and other player related areas. I wasn't very keen on seeing a player slip or trip on the Italian tiles that were everywhere!

My personal goal with this gig was for all Samoans to be proud of Apia Park. Temperatures were in the low 30's and the humidity was very high so it was challenging conditions. No irrigation system meant hand watering the pitch with a garden hose at night which wasn't easy but we managed to get through. I am sure the Samoan workers loved the extra overtime!

Overall the experience of being a Kiwi preparing a pitch for his home country's rugby team in another country is something that won't happen too many times in one's career! The Samoan people were fantastic to work with, and made me feel very welcome. Also spending time inside the All Blacks environment was something that I will never forget. I was treated as one of them, and was welcomed into their family environment with open arms. I have to be honest and say watching both Manu Samoa and the All Blacks walk past me onto the ground for the start of the match was something that did choke me up a bit. I felt honoured to be given this opportunity and hope both countries were proud of the job I did on this occasion.

Karl Johnson  
H3 Group, Waikato Stadium



Apia Park, Samoa



## Bay Park Upgrade

Recreational Services (RS) has been contracted to manage the Bay Park Stadium rugby pitch maintenance for the second year now since the inaugural Jet boat event was held in 2014. This article goes through the challenges RS has worked through to re-construct and grow in the fields for ITM cup rugby over this period.

The first year saw a host of problems to work through with RS only being contracted to repair the ground after the jet boating event when the track had been re-instated by the organisers. No thought was given to the rugby pitch and best practices for removing and re-instating the material for the actual jet boat track which meant the natural sandy top profile was now mixed and contaminated with the underlying soil. There were also a lot of stones as the material taken out for the building of the track had been stored on a gravel surface outside the Stadium. The digger operator on the job obviously wasn't a rugby man either as the concrete sleeves that he ripped out for the rugby posts were then back filled in to the middle of the field! After digging these out and going through the rest of the pitch to pull out other large stones and rocks the Koro top maker was used to remove 35 to 40mm of the existing surface that was not affected by the jet boat event. These areas had a very thatchy Kikuyu grass cover with clean sand underneath so removing the kikuyu allowed us to work with the underlying sand. The Koro top maker machine was then used to loosen the sand so it could be dragged and moved into the re-instated jet boat track areas as part of the levelling and creating of an even sand carpet layer (budget constraints meant we couldn't bring sand in).

## Around the Traps

Recreational Services have obtained the following Turf Managers for their new Christchurch City contract; **Brett Siphthorpe** from Westpac Stadium, **Matt Stove** from NZ Cricket, **Hamish Parker** from Ready Lawn Industries and **Troy Hale** from Clearwater Golf Resort. We wish them well for their new endeavours.

Also congratulations to **Hagen Faith** for his promotion to Turf Manager at Westpac Stadium, **Ed Hadfield** for obtaining the position of Contract Supervisor for Delta in Christchurch and **Matt Alswailer** for his new role as Sports Turf Adviser North for Auckland Council.

Due to there still being a lot of smaller stones littered in the surface the decision was made to bring in a stone burier implement to push the stones into the surface prior to seeding so that there wouldn't be a potential issue for players coming into contact with them. It did a great job in pushing this problem into the soil profile and away from the surface.

500 kg/ha of Sports Oval seed along with 250kg/ha of DAP and 500kg/ha of Calcium was applied. The rest of the process went extremely well with a great establishment of Ryegrass and 12 weeks to have it ready for the first game.

Our second year enabled us to learn from the first and be involved in the jet boat track construction. The surface of the jet boat track had the top 50mm taken off first and put to one side with the rest of the sandy soil profile being taken out as one. The material was stored on a farm paddock that had been sprayed with round up to make sure we minimised weed contamination coming back into the stadium. After the event the material came back onto site and was compacted. The rest of the field not affected by the jet boat track was sprayed out with round up and the Koro top maker was used to remove about 15 to 20mm of the surface. Due to using the Koro to remove the surface again, 92m<sup>3</sup> of sand was needed so that the natural dome shape of the pitch wasn't lost

along with the concrete edge of the speedway track not being exposed.

The renovation/reconstruction work went well second time around but it was the weather that gave us all the problems this year with heavy rainfall throughout May providing a lot of washout and corrugations during seed establishment. A further 250 kg of seed had to be applied 3 weeks after the initial seeding which did help to even up grass cover but with the weather going from heavy rainfall to cold and frosty it has been an absolute battle getting root growth to establish before the first game. Seasol sea weed applications along with an upfront fertilising programme every 2- 3 weeks has given a healthy grass cover but with root growth only at about 60mm as we head into the first round of ITM cup, its far from ideal.

**David Biddle**  
Recreational Services



Fig 1 Bay Park, Jet Boat event



Fig 2 Bay Park, ITM Cup





The NZ Turf Conference & Expo will be held at the SKYCITY Convention Centre Auckland.  
27 – 28 June 2016

<http://www.turfconferenceandexpo.co.nz>

## The use of reinforced turf in our council Sports Fields

When it comes to innovation and technology in our industry you can't go past the use of synthetic reinforcement of turf. Something that has been standard practice in our stadia for years but gets really interesting when utilised in our council sports fields as a tool to manage high wear areas.

Darren Kalka, Sports Turf Advisor for Auckland Council and Mark Perham from Fieldturfnz were never in any doubt as to how beneficial this technology would be in managing high wear areas such as Soccer goal mouths but of course like all new things, others also needed to be convinced. So in order to get the buy in from stakeholders, Rogers Park was chosen to test the technology in 2015 by installing Xtragrass™ in one goal mouth and leaving the other as standard sand carpet.

Xtragrass™ is made up of a woven mat with synthetic fibres to a height of 50ml, infilled with sand and over sown or stolonised with natural grass species, performs well with both Rye and Couch cultivars. The results at Rogers Park were quite dramatic as shown in the photos below and not surprisingly

gained a rapid buy in from Bucklands Beach AFC who wanted to know how fast the other goal mouth could be installed. Turns out pretty quick, establishment times are fast with the turf being open to play within a month of installation (depending on the usual seasonal factors).

So for Darren who works for Auckland Council in the South Sector, this was a no brainer, fields performing really well with blow outs a thing of the past and a reduction in the level of renovations required. Hence they installed the reinforced turf in goal mouths of a further 11 soccer fields this year and into the high wear areas of one softball diamond with plans to try it out for cricket block run ups and nets as well. "This technology is at the forefront of where turf is at in the world" says Mark Perham, "as it's reinforcing the turf surface, not the root zone, it's perfect for protecting against wear".

The fact that the use of goal mouth protector bars are no longer required on these reinforced fields sums it all up really.

### **Kellie Rose, Chair**



**Fig 1. Rogers Park, sand carpet goal mouth**



**Fig 2. Rogers Park, Xtragrass™ goal mouth**

STANZ Field Day 2015  
Mt Smart Stadium  
25<sup>th</sup> November 10am to 2pm  
\$20 Admission

Mark Perham - Managing the logistics of a multi fixture  
Stadia

Warriors Management - The use of Mt Smart as a home  
base

FieldturfNZ - Working with FIFA for a major event

Tour of the stadium facilities

Lunch and drinks (kindly provided by FieldturfNZ)

Discussion panel on 'Collaborative relationship with our  
sporting codes'

If you wish to read any past newsletters our most recent ones are available on the Sports Turf Association's website at [www.sportsturfNZ.co.nz](http://www.sportsturfNZ.co.nz). All contact details for the STANZ Executive and their responsibilities are also listed there.

Any queries regarding our Newsletters, Website, Sponsorship and membership please email [sportsfieldforumnz@gmail.com](mailto:sportsfieldforumnz@gmail.com)

Best Wishes  
Shona Calder – Editor

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