

Riordan's River



After worrying times, the future now seems assured for the Patterson River Country Club, but achieving it has taken a land deal, clever planning and one very shrewd superintendent.

To be a member at Patterson River Country Club these past four years has meant calling on all one's reserves of stoicism.

A few gave up and walked away, but everyone else endured what no other golf club in the country has ever experienced – the building of an entirely new course on top of the existing one while the members kept playing.

To be course superintendent there? Well that's another matter completely!

Meet Michael Riordan, superintendent for nearly 20 years and possibly just a little bit greyer than he was when he scored the job at Patterson River back in 1999.

It has been an extraordinary feat to say the least, but the end is in sight with construction due to be finished by the end of March, an incredible 12 months ahead of schedule.

"It has been a challenge but one which has been hugely rewarding," says Riordan.

"We've still got the entire 13th hole to do and 9th green but the finish line is in site. Everyone can see what the finished product will be like now and everyone's very pleased with it.

"The further we go the better we get at doing things. At this stage it is making sure that we don't take any shortcuts to finish it on time."

To keep the course open throughout was a seemingly endless test of ingenuity, determination, perseverance and much hard work.

Almost from the moment the earthmovers and giant tip trucks began assaulting the old 6300-metre, par 73 layout, members and guests were confronted with an ever-changing, contrived course.

Anyone returning from a long holiday could have been excused for losing their way around the track, but Riordan and course architect Phil Ryan, from Pacific Coast Design, ensured 18 holes always remained in play. And in all the re-jigging, members have played briefly to only one temporary green and played off two temporary tees.

Patterson River superintendent Michael Riordan surveys the radically reconstructed course from the 16th

Club captain Peter Bleazby is high in his praise for what Riordan and Ryan have achieved. "They have done a mighty job."

For Riordan it was a case of the wheel having turned full circle. After serving the earlier part of his career at Patterson River, he left in 1985 and went to Whittlesea until 1989. From there he moved to the Mornington Peninsula and acquired the job of construction superintendent at Eagle Ridge.

It was the experience he gained there that landed him the superintendent position back at Patterson River in 1999.

"At times it has been tough but I've been a superintendent for nearly 20 years and I think you would have needed a bit of experience behind you to do something like," says Riordan.

"There are lots of pressures, lots of people want to push you around, and being able to take no shit from anyone certainly helps.

"But the club really went out on a limb doing this. For them to stay competitive in the Melbourne metropolitan region they had to do something pretty radical and that was to get their turf surfaces up to the quality of other clubs in the area.

"I worked here as a kid so I sort of knew what the problems were and what was going to be involved. The job has been bigger than what I thought when I applied. I would have put another \$50,000 on my salary if I had known!"

The mammoth operation began back in November 1999 shortly after Riordan came on board. The first thing he did was plant a hectare nursery of Santa ana before embarking on the first three holes (14, 15 and 17) in February



Ground staff work on the bunkers on 160m par 3 7th

Riordan's River



The new par 3, 8th



The par 4, 5th hole takes shape

2000. After they opened in December 2000, work began on 10, 11, 12 and 18 which involved a lot of lake work.

The next stage involved what Riordan describes as the most difficult part of the project, providing almost 200,000 cubic metres of fill to Australand for their housing development adjacent to the course.

The practice facilities were next, all 8000sqm completely sodded with turf brought in from Sydney, before serious construction began in 2002. During that year holes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 16 were constructed.

"2002 the course was like a moving minefield," recalls Riordan. "We were putting up barriers one day, taking them down the next, making fences for golfers to get through to different areas, whacking down mulch paths for golfers' access."

Last summer was a particularly trying period for players, who not only had to cope with an ever-changing layout but also 18,500 loads of fill being trucked across the fairways.

In the middle of Melbourne's worst drought in memory, the giant carriers created a haze that hung over the course each day unless it rained. When it did the fairways became a bog.

Mud is something Patterson River members have endured for as long as they can remember – the legacy of 30cm of peat covering the whole site. It only took a few millimetres of rain to turn the place into a quagmire. But that is no longer the case with a new fairway sand profile providing greatly improved draining.

2003 saw the turn for home – 4, 8, 9 and now 13. Upon completion, all fairways and tees will be Santa Ana, all greens have been seeded with Pennlinks while the rough is a rye/fescue

mix. Riordan has also instituted a tree management and replacement program which has seen the removal of up to 400 pine trees and the introduction of many native species which have been propagated in the on-course nursery.

Apart from the Patterson River snaking along the club's southern boundary, virtually no water came into play on the old course. But on the new 6200 metre, par 72 layout, nine lakes hold 15 hectares of the stuff.

Two par 3s – the 2nd and 12th – feature water carries, the latter tee shot being completely across water. Another channel-like water feature cuts across the par 4 5th linking lakes either side.

The lakes were the result of providing the landfill for Australand and according to club manager Brett Kerr the new course would not have been possible without the deal with the developer.

"Indeed, the Australand link has given the club financial security. It's no secret that we were struggling and facing some serious decisions," says Kerr.

"Clearly, if all had been well we wouldn't have sold our old practice fairway for housing, but by doing so we will shortly have a new course for under \$6 million."

For Riordan, the completion of the course will be immensely satisfying in what without a doubt has been the biggest undertaking of his extensive career.

"Having the interaction of the golfers was an added nightmare, but I think a lot of other clubs can certainly achieve the same by just having an understanding membership," says Riordan who has also been able to triple the number of staff and purchase new machinery during the project.

"It also helps if you can have a couple of holes done early to be the showpiece so the members can see the end product. A lot of members became involved in the project and they have been happy to see the club take such progressive steps.

"The people who are going to benefit most are not only the members but those that come later on because we have done everything properly. We've set the club up for the next 50 years.

"The club has always been very supportive and they gave me whatever I wanted, within reason. And they're happy. The respect is certainly there from the club towards me and my staff."

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Shifting Sands -

A Spotlight on Victorian and Tasmanian Golf Course Projects

BARNBOUGLE DUNES

Project: Construction of an 18-hole links course

Superintendent: Nathan McDonald

Location: Bridport, Tasmania

Time Period: August 2003 - ongoing



Barnbougles Dunes with Bass Strait in the background

Comments:

Just as Peter Thomson gushed over his Moonah Links creation, so have those involved with this unique venture just outside of Bridport on the north coast of Tasmania.

Links Golf Tasmania has teamed with Michael Clayton Golf Design and respected US golf course architect Tom Doak to produce a links course they are hoping will rate among the top 100 in the world.

On the drawing board for the past two years, course construction began in earnest in 2003. A soft opening of the back nine holes is planned for April with the full 18 expected to be open in early spring.

The course has been designed over 113 hectares of coastal dunes which form part of a

massive 5265 hectare property owned by prominent Tasmanian tourism industry identity and potato farmer Richard Sattler. The design features 14 holes which stretch along 3km of Bass Strait coastline

Due to the undulating nature of the greens and exposed location, the greens will be a 70 per cent fescue/30 per cent bentgrass mix. It was felt that a wholly bentgrass green would become unplayable. All fairways are a fescue/bentgrass mix as well.

Construction has progressed steadily, although much effort has gone into the removal of marram grass, while a rampant population of tiger snakes proved a tricky hurdle. ♣



Three fairways have been stolonised at Flinders this summer

FLINDERS GOLF CLUB

Work In Progress: Sprigging, bunker reshaping, tee extensions

Superintendent: Colin Morrison

Location: Flinders, Mornington Peninsula

Time Period: December 2003 - ongoing

Comments:

Flinders Golf Club celebrates its centenary in 2004 and superintendent Colin Morrison has kicked off the festivities by stolonising three fairways, these being (1,2 and 18) with Wintergreen couch.

The works are just part of many Morrison has on the go at the club, including extensive bunker reshaping and tee extension.

"Being 100 years old, a lot of the bunkers on the course are in the wrong place," says

Morrison. "So we are looking at that and the design of the holes given today's changing playing conditions.

"It will be an ongoing project which we will just chip away at in the coming years."

Morrison blanket sprayed the three fairways with Round-up to kill off an ugly mix of rye, bentgrass, *Poa* and couchgrass and replanted 10 days later. Thanks to some warm December and January weather, the couch has flourished.

Water restrictions meant that only three fairways could be converted this season, but once they have been established and evaluated, Morrison says more holes will follow later in the year. ♣

Shifting Sands – A Spotlight on Victorian and Tasmanian Golf Course Projects



Construction of the new 1st at Freeway

FREEWAY GOLF CLUB

Project: *Layout change to first three holes.*

New maintenance facility.

Superintendent: *Glen Davie*

Location: *Bulleen, Melbourne*

Time Period: *October 2003 – June 2004*

Comments:

Commencing in November, this \$350,000 project involves altering the existing layout of the first three holes to address safety issues.

As the name suggests, the course lies alongside the Eastern Freeway in Melbourne and errant golf balls hit around 16 cars each year. The main issue surrounded the second shot into the long par 4 3rd, with a number of balls leaving the course onto the Bulleen Rd off-ramp.

The old 1st and 2nd holes will be combined into a par 5 with the old 2nd green now the 1st. The 2nd will become a short

uphill par 3 complete with a new green which is being constructed halfway down the old 3rd fairway.

The troublesome 3rd will remain a par 4 although reduced in length. A new green (Penn G2) is being constructed which will change the angle of shot.

Superintendent Glen Davie says the project had been in the pipeline since 2000, however, was stalled while the club waited for council funding. Davie is hopeful the works will be completed and ready for opening in June.

The layout changes come on top of a new maintenance facility which was completed in October 2003. The new \$540,000 48x15m shed replaces the existing 13x13m facility which was riddled with OH&S issues. ♣

GREEN ACRES GOLF CLUB

Work In Progress: *Greens construction and fairway sprigging*

Superintendent: *Tim Pierce*

Location: *Kew, Melbourne*

Approximate Cost: *\$200,000*

Comments:

Work is currently underway on the 8th, the final hole in what has been an ongoing greens reconstruction project which has taken place over the past 10 years. The green is Penn G2, while new surrounds and approach have been

constructed. Superintendent Tim Pierce has also recently finished sprigging the 13th and 16th fairways. ♣



Construction of the new 1st at Freeway

GROWLING FROG GOLF CLUB

Project: *Construction of an 18-hole golf course*

Construction Superintendent:

Spiros Skaftouros

Location: *Whittlesea, Melbourne*

Time Period: *October 2002 - ongoing*

Approximate Cost: *\$12 million*

Comments:

The final grassing of four greens and two fairways is underway at this new 18-hole course situated 5km outside the township of Whittlesea on the northern metropolitan fringe of Melbourne.

Construction superintendent Spiros Skaftouros, joint winner of the AGCSA's Claude Crockford Environmental Award in 2003, is hopeful the course will be open by April.

The course is situated on a former trotting training complex which was bought by the City of Whittlesea in late 2001. The site was typical of the remnant grassy redgum woodland ecosystem and was dotted with ancient redgums, many of them more than 200 years old.

The 6200m Graham Marsh-designed championship course covers less than 50 hectares and is situated on a parcel of land that is over 121 hectares. It boasts 57 bunkers while half the course is links style and the other half tree-lined.

The Santa ana couch fairways were line-planted by a NSW contractor and as of early January were 50 per cent covered. All greens are Penn A1 bentgrass.

The course will be irrigated using recycled water after the council entered into an agreement with the local sewerage authority to provide half a megalitre a day of Class B treated effluent. ♣

HENLEY PARK GOLF CLUB

Project: *Construction of an 18-hole championship golf course*

Location: *Chirnside Park, Melbourne*

Approximate Cost: *At the outset, it was predicted the project would cost in excess of \$11 million. This may have increased in light of extensive assessments to ensure compliance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999.*

Comments:

Located on the banks of the Yarra River in the northern outskirts of Melbourne, this Tony Cashmore-designed course will serve as the second championship 18 for the Heritage Golf and Country Club.

The birth of this project has been rather troublesome with environmental lobby groups kicking up a fuss over the course impacting on the habitat of nationally threatened fish species, namely the Macquarie Perch, Australian Greyling and Murray Cod.

The matter went all the way to Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, who gave the final go-ahead in September 2003, subject to conditions.

The 210-hectare development, proposed by Yarra Valley Golf Pty Ltd, required assessment and approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 due to the potential impacts on fish species. ♣

Shifting Sands – A Spotlight on Victorian and Tasmanian Golf Course Projects

HUME COUNTRY CLUB

Project: Construction of a new 18-hole course

Superintendent: Tim Hicks

Location: Albury-Wodonga

Time Period: Depends on land sales. First stage expected for completion mid-2004

Comments:

After suffering severe financial difficulties during the 1980s and 1990s, the 27-hole Albury-based Hume Country Club was brought out in the mid 1990s by two private buyers.

Now, after a drawn out planning process, construction is finally underway on the first three holes of the new 18-hole Neil Crafter-designed course. Coinciding with this, construction of the first 80 properties in a 360-resident development has started.

As this magazine was going to print, shaping of the 1st and 9th fairways had been completed with sprigging expected in January. Work is also underway on the par 3 8th.

The course will boast Santa ana tees, Plateau couch fairways, Penn G2 bentgrass

greens, while the rough will be a mix of native grasses, fescue and rye.

The course will be irrigated using Class A reclaimed water from the nearby Waterview Wastewater Reclamation Facility. The water will be gravity fed along a 5km pipeline from the treatment plant where it will be housed in storage tanks. Property owners will also have the option of using treated effluent to irrigate their gardens.

Stage two will see the construction of a further six holes. ♣

KEYSBOROUGH GOLF CLUB

Work In Progress: Bunker reconstruction and couch program

Superintendent: Brett Chivers

Location: Keysborough, Melbourne

Time Period: Bunker (August 2002, ongoing); Couch (December 2002, ongoing)

Comments:

Keysborough superintendent Brett Chivers has two major projects on the go as he tries to return the course to the condition it was before the club endured financial hardship in the 1990s.

All bunkers are being reconstructed back to the original sandface style, while all fairways are being converted to Santa ana couch.

The front nine's 30 bunkers were reshaped during 2003 (at the time of writing, the final three were being completed) with work starting on the back nine 32 immediately after. Most of the work involves basic reshaping with no major drainage work.

As far as the fairway conversion project is concerned, in September 2002 Chivers put kerbing out on all fairways and evaluated

them. That resulted in the row planting of seven fairways with Santa ana couch in September 2003. The sprigs came from nearby Southern Golf Club which has helped to dramatically reduce costs.

Fairways that were sprigged in September have close to 100 per cent coverage, although a couple of areas where the native couch was at its worse are still growing in. ♣

Shifting Sands – A Spotlight on Victorian and Tasmanian Golf Course Projects



The 5th at Kingston Heath

KINGSTON HEATH GOLF CLUB

Work In Progress: Full greens conversion

Superintendent: Martin Greenwood

Location: Heatherton, Melbourne

Comments:

Due for completion in 2005, Kingston Heath is midway through a full greens conversion project which has seen superintendent Martin Greenwood switch to Penn A1.

The project has seen all greens reconstructed to USGA rootzone specifications

and seeded with Penn A1 bentgrass in replacement of the existing Egmont variety, which Greenwood regarded as being too slow and too hard to get speed out of.

Prior to Christmas greens 4, 5 and 18 were completed and following the British Open Qualifier in late January, work will start on greens 6, 9 and 10. The project has also seen the construction of a new 19th hole and one putter. 🏌️

RIVERSDALE GOLF CLUB

Project: Construction of two storage lakes; greens construction

Superintendent: Michael Picken

Location: Mt Waverley, Melbourne

Time Period: April 2002-November 2003

Approximate Cost: \$1.2 million



The new 13.5 megalitre storage dam and 10th green at Riversdale

Comments:

With water restrictions now an annual event around Australia, Riversdale Golf Club has ensured its future water supply through the construction of two major storage dams which, combined, have a capacity of 22 megalitres.

Starting in April 2002, stage one of the project consisted of constructing the first storage lake fed by Dampier Creek, which runs through the northern section of the course.

Boasting an 8.5 megalitre capacity, the lake enabled 10 metres to be added to the par 5 13th, and has added water hazards to the 13th and 15th holes.

For its efforts, construction company Streamtech Pty Ltd received environmental accolades, winning the Case Earth Award Category 1 prize for construction work of up to \$2 million.

Stage two of the project saw a second lake gouged out behind the 10th and to the left of the par 3 17th. As part of the works, a new 10th green was constructed which juts out into the lake, adding a further 25m to what was an extremely short par 4 hole. Again, the lake has added a water hazard to the 10th, while the tee shot on 18 requires a carry over water.

Riversdale superintendent and VGCSA president Michael Picken says there has been a noticeable increase in bird life as a result of the two dams, while 200 native Silver Perch were added to each lake.

Each stage cost around \$600,000 with Melbourne Water contributing an undisclosed sum. The project means the club is no longer dependent on potable water and water levels can be completely controlled. 🏌️

THE SANDS, TORQUAY

Project: Construction of an 18-hole golf course

Superintendent: Brad Marsden

Location: Torquay

Comments:

After a tumultuous 2003, The Sands, Torquay superintendent Brad Marsden is hoping for a more settled 2004.

"After a lot of uncertainty last year we are starting to kick some good goals out there at the moment," says Marsden, who moved down from Sydney for the project.

Midway through the construction phase, original tender Traditional Links was replaced by Turnpoint Constructions after many elements of the original construction were found to be severely lacking.

Coming on board in late August 2003, Turnpoint was charged with completing the grow-in phase as well as the mammoth job of rebuilding all 135 bunkers which were found to be poorly constructed.

"We had to strip them all out and start from scratch, redo the drainage," says Marsden. "And there's only one pot bunker on the course! It has been a massive job but we had to do it."

One of the huge bunkers on the 3rd, the largest on course and one that Marsden nicknames the 'snakepit', took an incredible 660 tonnes of sand to fill. Marsden is expecting 90 per cent of the bunkers to be completed by the end of February.

Other shortcomings needed to be rectified also, including the 14th green which was rebuilt due to structural problems with the base.

Apart from Traditional Links departing, Marsden says the other biggest hurdle was persevering with the extreme weather.

"September and October were disgusting," recalls Marsden. "We had horizontal rain, cyclonic winds which carved out the bunkers, and great weather for weeds."

Despite being close to the coast, the course is wholly clay based. All greens and tees have been built to USGA perched water table specs with many kilometres of underground drainage pipes that link to a series of ephemeral wetlands.

With the Stuart Appleby course (his first design project) expected to open in time for Easter, Marsden has welcomed the hot summer which has seen the Santa ana

fairways, tees and approaches take off. The Penn G2 greens have also benefited.

While the course is on target, Marsden is awaiting approval from Barwon Water to use Class B treated effluent water for irrigation. He was hopeful of a resolution in late January. 🏌️



The massive bunker on the 3rd at The Sands, Torquay which required 660 tonnes of sand to fill.

Shifting Sands – A Spotlight on Victorian and Tasmanian Golf Course Projects

THIRTEENTH BEACH GOLF CLUB

Project: Creek Course construction

Superintendent: Steven Hewitt

Location: Thirteenth Beach, Surf Coast

Time Period: July 2002-February 2004

Comments:

February 2004 will see the opening of the second 18-hole Creek course at Thirteenth Beach, a collaboration between three-time British Open champion Nick Faldo (his first

design project in Australia) and Melbourne-based architect Tony Cashmore.

The new course opened on 2 January for restricted play by members on Fridays and Sundays. The official opening will be on 9 February but superintendent Steven Hewitt envisages restrictions to remain during the initial weeks.

Hewitt reports the greens and tees are in fine condition, with some fairways a bit thin

in patches. Staff are in tidy-up mode at present while one of the par 3s needs planting. An extensive tree planting program will begin in autumn.

The par 72 Creek course is in contrast to the existing Beach course which opened in December 2001. The new course boasts Penn G2 greens, common couch fairways which will be overseeded with fine fescue in the autumn, and Wintergreen tee tops. 🌱

WATERFORD VALLEY

Project: Construction of an 18-hole golf course

Construction Superintendent: Peter Glidden

Location: Rowville, Melbourne

Time Period: Completion due April 2004

Comments:

Dogged by delays, recently appointed construction superintendent Peter Glidden is hopeful the course will open in April.

"I will be glad when I see some golfers out there," says Glidden, who has been with the

project from the early stages and replaced Greg Rooke who left for Southern Golf Club in August, 2003.

Part of a massive retirement village development by PrimeLife, the 18-hole international resort style course is a par 72, 6339m layout and is the first course in Melbourne to boast a full concrete golf cart path which stretches for 9.5km.

With last year's cool summer, fairways 4, 6, 8 and 10 (Santa ana) were badly affected but with this season's warm summer they are

now on target. The rye/fescue rough is still to be grown in on 6, 7 and 8 while general tidying up of bunkers and garden areas is ongoing.

Over the past couple of months Glidden has been able to increase his staffing levels and has appointed Chris Allen as assistant. Glidden also received an early Christmas present in the form of machinery – a new fairway mower, greens and tees mower, two gators, and a sod cutter. 🌱

WAVERLEY GOLF CLUB

Project: Relocation of existing club and construction of a 27-hole course

Superintendent: Mark Schroder

Location: Rowville, Melbourne

Time Period: Construction commencement Spring 2004

Comments:

In the pipeline since 2001, Pacific Coast Design director Phil Ryan envisages six to seven more months of planning before construction on the new Lysterfield course can begin.

While approval has been granted for the new 27-hole Lysterfield course, planning

approval for the existing Waverley course has still ongoing. The old course is earmarked for a housing development which retains nine holes.

In 2001 Waverley Golf Club made the decision to move the site of the course due to a number of difficulties including safety and steepness of slopes. 🌱

The next edition of Australian Turfgrass Management magazine will highlight projects in Western Australia.