

Meet the President Jeff Gambin



AGCSA president Jeff Gambin has spent the past five years as an AGCSA Board member



AGCSA president Jeff Gambin (centre) with (from left) AGCSA chief executive Steven Potts and Board members Jon Penberthy, Martyn Black and Martin Greenwood

In the last edition of ATM, newly appointed AGCSA president Jeff Gambin outlined his trip to the United States earlier this year. In this edition, ATM fires some questions at the Gold Coast Burleigh Golf Club superintendent to find out what makes him tick and how he plans to lead the AGCSA during his two year term.

Jeff, you are the current superintendent at Gold Coast Burleigh Golf Club. How long have you been there and where have you come from in regards to your career in the turf industry?

I have just finished my 10th year at Gold Coast Burleigh Golf Club. I am hoping that we will have our new master plan approved at this year's AGM which will give me and the staff some exciting projects to do over the next 10 years.

I have had some great times, but of course due to changes in the board, I have had some very low times. I hope those times have made me stronger and haven't turned me into a bitter and twisted man. (My son thinks it has changed me, unfortunately for him!)

Before Burleigh, I was at Royal Pines Resort. The title they gave me was department head of golf and landscape maintenance. Sounds impressive! I only lasted three years due to

being overworked and underpaid. It was the only time my wife told me to find another job or another family. That same weekend I got a call about the Burleigh job. Talk about fate!

Prior to the Pines I had 10 great years at Coolangatta and Tweed Heads. Basically I did all my growing up at Tweed. Doug Robinson employed me as one of two qualified greenkeepers after Tweed decided to extend to 36 holes.

I was very fortunate to become Doug's assistant for five years and during that period I learned so much. I then took over when Doug went to build Sanctuary Cove. What a learning experience that was with 36 holes of bentgrass greens; summer was tough but I had a very supportive committee, manager and staff.

I did my training at Grovely TAFE in Sydney while employed at Manly Golf Club. The superintendent had been there before World War II. What a great guy Bobby Smith was.

You have some 20 years involvement at state and national association level, the last five years as an AGCSA Board member. How has this time prepared you for the role of AGCSA president and what do you hope to bring to the role?

My involvement with superintendents' association started with admiring Doug Robinson and Loch Ledford who were both superintendents at Manly during my five years there and who were both heavily involved in association matters.

When I took over at Tweed and started attending field days in Queensland, Doug was elected as Queensland president. They needed a couple of committee guys to help out so I put my hand up. I remember being responsible for organising field days and then introducing a newsletter. I was Doug's vice-president for a couple of years before taking over as president when he left to become AGCSA president.

There is no doubt in my mind that for me this was a great learning curve and the experience I gained proved valuable for when I became an AGCSA Board member. The five years I spent on the Board before taking over as president in June also steered me for the rigours of being president.

I would have been quite happy to continue to help the association as a Board member, but I felt the time was right so I will give it my best shot. I feel very fortunate to have the experience of the other Board members and more importantly the expertise of the individual staff members. I don't think our members realise how fortunate our association is to have such a dedicated group.

What makes a good association president?

I believe that a good president is one that can communicate with all members. We have such a huge diversity of members that range from your Royal clubs to your local nine-holers. We need to try and increase our membership numbers so we need to get all clubs across the country to join as members.

Over the last 20 years I have been fortunate to attend all conferences around the country and feel I have made many friends that I could call if I needed any help for the association.

What changes would you like to see/make during your term as president?

Unfortunately too many colleagues and friends have lost their positions at what they thought was a secure job. I know that this is one area that I hope I can get the AGCSA to help out with.

AGCSA chief executive Steven Potts has already made some progress with this, particularly in Victoria. I just want to make sure that we can give some support and pass on some helpful hints when our members are going through a tough time.

I am confident that with the support we are getting with the newly created education and



Gold Coast Burleigh Heads Golf Club, home for the past 10 years of new AGCSA president Jeff Gambin.

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The 170m par 3 17th at Gold Coast Burleigh Golf Club

environmental committees that we will truly have a united turf body in my time as president.

Individuals from the different turf associations are all supportive of working together for the

betterment of Australian turfgrass management. There are no ego heads among them which is great for all concerned.

The Australian Turfgrass Conference continues to grow from strength to strength and this year's Melbourne conference was a huge success. Why the decision then to host the 2005 conference in Moama/Echuca?

The last conference in Melbourne was a huge success, thanks to the support of the different associations, the trade, the members and, of course, our staff. It is going to be exciting to see what sort of support we can generate for Moama/Echuca. Knowing how competitive the NSW boys are I am sure they will be trying to outnumber the Victorian contingent.

The trade has been asking for a regional conference for several years now so I hope they support it. I really think our biggest problem is going to be deciding on the different venues that we have to choose from.

Attendances at the AGCSA's roving workshops have been poor in recent times. How can the association combat this worrying trend?

I really don't know what the answer is with the problems of getting numbers to our workshops. We always have the input from our state presidents, but apart from NSW we always struggle for numbers.



The 2005 Australian Turfgrass Conference and tradeshow will be held in Moama in an attempt to make the event more accessible to regional members

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Maybe we are trying to fit too much into our calendar with all the state field days along with individual companies inviting members to educational days.

If there was one thing about the industry you could change, what would it be and why?

I am hoping that we can continue to change the image of golf course superintendents to the point where, like it is in the US, the superintendent is on the same level as the club professional and manager. You pick up a scorecard at a golf club in the US and it has the superintendent's name on it.

Those little touches are where we should be at. For example at my club you pick up the annual report and everyone gets their name and title on the inside cover except for the superintendent.

What has been your proudest moment as a superintendent?

My proudest moment as a superintendent was definitely winning the Fellowship Award (now known as the Excellence in Golf Course Management Award) in 1995, and getting through the presentation of that trip in front of a full conference breakfast. Having hosted six televised tournaments is also pretty fulfilling.

What has been the best piece of advice you have received about the job?

The best piece of advice was definitely to make sure you put your family first when making any decisions, because they are going to be the ones that will always be there for you, not any employer! 🙏



Australian Golf Course Superintendents Association

RAPID FIRE...

Family:

Beautiful wife Karen, who has put up with me for 26 years.
Daughter Jasmine (21), a hairdresser; son Ryan (19), competitive swimmer/pool attendant.

Nickname:

'Gambo' has been around for a while.

Favourite food:

Pasta. I guess it must be the European family background.

Favourite sporting team:

No question – Rabbitohs! Aside from that, any Australian team.

Golf handicap:

My swing – 27.

Pick for 2004 Centenary Australian Open at The Australian:

Robert Allenby will carve up Rob Ashes' course.

Greatest rugby league player:

I grew up admiring Ron Coote, but it is hard to go past 'Joey' Johns.

Favourite pastime:

Keeping fit and out of trouble (with the wife and kids). The dogs think I'm okay.

Driving or flying:

I just drove to Perth, so what do you think!