

# Turf Clippings

SPRING/SUMMER 2016

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## WELCOME TO THE SPRING/SUMMER EDITION

Welcome to the spring/summer edition of Turf Clippings for 2016. With the milder than average winter we have experienced this year, no doubt you are all as busy as we are as we move into the warmer period of the year. Over the next three months we are seeing predictions of warmer than average temperatures over the majority of the South Island and also the eastern and upper regions of the North Island. With average rainfall expected across the country this spring it still pays to be vigilant when it comes to water management and being proactive in turf management with an increase in insect and damaging disease spore activity this time of year.

Once again we have been working frantically in the off season attending our industry conferences. PGG Wrightson Turf are fully committed to the continuation of the support we provide our industry by sponsoring our industry conferences, sponsoring an industry relevant award that recognises proactive and sustainable environment management practices, investing in necessary regional real world trials, investing in the development of our staff and also investing into research and development to help further develop and drive innovation in the products and service we offer to the markets we cater for. The involvement, investment and support we give back to the industry is second to none and something that sets us apart. Our expertise in our industry has enabled us to develop and nurture lasting mutually beneficial relationships which is something we are very proud of. Many of you were lucky enough to be at the recent New Zealand Turf Conference and Trade Show and helped us celebrate the 25th birthday of our Duraturf seed brand. From its inception through to today, Duraturf continues

to set the bar in quality and performance within our own unique environment in golf courses, major stadiums in Australasia, sports fields, racecourses and landscaping situations.

In this issue we've got some great reading. We cover this years Turf Conference, a huge 50 year milestone for Mike Leitch, some innovative work that has been carried out at Remuera Golf Course and take a look around the stunning Tara Iti Golf Course. We also have our first caption competition so make sure you get your entries in for that!

All the best for the warmer months ahead.

**Jason Weller**  
Sales and Marketing Manager



## 2016 CONFERENCE WRAP UP



Winner of our Queenstown golf retreat, Mike Seaward from St Andrew's College with MC Frankie Stevens and PGG Wrightson Turf Business Manager Mark Shaw.



PGG Wrightson Turf Territory Manager Karen Crake and Turf Business Manager Mark Shaw cut the Duraturf birthday cake



PGG Wrightson Turf Agronomist Bill Walmsley during question time.



The PGG Wrightson Turf team were on hand to talk turf!



Duraturf Sports Oval

PGG Wrightson Turf has always endeavoured to support industry conferences, and 2016 was no exception. This year we were proud to support the New Zealand Racetrack Managers Conference held in Wellington, the International Erosion Control Conference recently held in Auckland, the South Island Bowls Conference held in Christchurch, and the New Zealand Turf Conference held in Auckland. Every one of these conferences gives us the chance to get

alongside our clients from all sectors of the industry and support the ongoing learning and advances in the industry.

At this year's New Zealand Turf Conference we celebrated 25 years of our Duraturf seed blend brand by unveiling its new look, and giving you the presents! Our 'trip to Queenstown' competition was won by Mike Seaward from St Andrew's College in Christchurch; thank you to

all who entered and took the time to visit us on the stand. As with past New Zealand Turf Conferences there was huge opportunity to listen to a variety of speakers, from both New Zealand and overseas. We even had our own PGG Wrightson Turf Agronomist Dr Phil Ford and Territory Manager Bevan Houghton speaking on the Princess-77 seeded couch trial in Auckland and Melbourne (read more about these trial results on page 8 and 9).

## 50 YEAR MILESTONE – MIKE LEITCH

This year Mike Leitch celebrates 50 years at the Mungakiekie golf course. PGG Wrightson Turf Territory Manager Bevan Houghton had the opportunity to sit down with Mike and reflect on the past 50 years.

### **What has been the best thing about the turf industry/highlight of your 50 years?**

The guys you meet and the friends you make in the industry. There really are some fantastic people in our industry and I have had the pleasure to know many of them.

Also the self-satisfaction you get from a hard weeks work, knowing when you leave on Friday that the course looks good and that you and the team have worked hard to prepare it for the golfers to enjoy. I am lucky to have worked with a few really good people over the years and having a small staff enables you to learn a lot about each of them, I get a lot out of that.

### **50 years in the green keeping trade at just Mungakiekie Golf Club, what have you seen change in that time?**

The work has changed a fair bit and there is more to do now than when I started that's for sure, TV has had a huge impact on that over the past 20 years. Golfers these days want what they see on TV, they forget that these courses have been closed for weeks and in some cases months before these events. We on the other hand may have had 1000 rounds the week before our big events and they still want everything perfect.

When I started at Mungakiekie Golf Club back in September of 1966 we didn't have ride on mowers, we had these things called an Overgreen, and you don't know how lucky you are these days. The whole course was cut at one height by trail gang mowers except for the greens that were cut much lower. We had a



tractor called a Farmall A and our irrigation system consisted of 4 x free standing sprinklers that were plugged into quick couplers which we had to move by hand. We were lucky to have 50 golfers during the week play, now we can have over 1000 depending on what's on.

We only had three staff when I started, we now have five but during the glory years we were up to six in the team, this was when we were doing construction.

When I started I can remember renovating greens at night by hand with a handcorer which you used with your foot. We used the street light to see. This process took four guys about two weeks to do and we back filled with pumice.

### **What have been the challenges over the last 50 years?**

Change! There were a few new courses being built like Gulf Harbour, Formosa and Kauri Cliffs in the late 90's and our board thought that if we didn't do anything we would get left behind, so we embarked on developing eight holes. It was a challenging time for the club but one we learnt a lot from.

Auckland's clay is a huge challenge, when it's wet it's wet and when it's dry it's really dry. Managing grass on our soil is a challenge but we are lucky we have a fair bit of browntop around the place which is great. Our greens are a browntop/*Poa annua* mix which have their challenges, but all in all they provide a quality playing surface.

### **How do you explain your success in the turf industry?**

I would say I am a laid back sort of guy that gets on with almost everyone, I have seen a few different people go through the club as managers, committee members and more recently board members come and go. Having worked here for 50 years I know most of my members, so have some sort of relationship with them and I just make it work.

I keep things simple. Warren and I (Warren is Mike's 2IC) work well together and coming from a course with a small budget we have to think outside the square. We are resourceful with what we have to work with and we love our job.

### **You mention Warren, he is your brother, how long have you worked with him and how have you made it work so well?**

Warren has worked with me at the club for 42 years, we have had a run in or two but nothing a beer and a laugh couldn't fix. We don't talk about work outside of work and we don't live in each other's pockets. We do work well together though.

### **If you were giving advice to someone young who was looking at getting into the turf industry, what would you tell them?**

You get out of this industry what you are willing to put in. If you're willing to work hard and not just sit on a mower you will go a long way and get involved in construction, not only maintenance. You need to know everything these days, so take all the opportunities that you can.

### **PGG Wrightson Turf would like to thank Mike for his contribution to the turf industry over the past 50 years and wish him many more.**

## CAPTION COMPETITION

*In this issue of Turf Clippings we would love to see your captions for this photo featuring MC Frankie Stevens and our very own Mark Shaw (left), Jason Weller and Karen Crake.*

*Our favourite caption will win a \$150 PGG Wrightson Rural Supplies voucher.*

*Email your caption to [info@pggwrightsonturf.co.nz](mailto:info@pggwrightsonturf.co.nz)*

*Entries close 5pm, 30th of November 2016.*

*Please visit [www.pggwrightsonturf.co.nz](http://www.pggwrightsonturf.co.nz) for full terms and conditions.*



# HINDS RUGBY GROUND



*Duraturf® Sports Oval seven weeks after sowing*

PGG Wrightson Turf Territory Manager Joe Johnson spoke to Brent Schmack from Southern Rugby Club at Hinds about their recent field upgrade.

### ***What have the challenges been in this project?***

For the first field we did two years ago we used agricultural fertilisers and we over did early nitrogen use, which meant a lot of early mowing and then we mowed the field too low and too late into the autumn so it did chop up a bit during heavy use in a wet winter. We later oversowed this field which has now given us a good turf.

For the second field we did the following season we used slow release fertilisers as recommended and left higher grass covers at the start of the

rugby season which helped get a better thatch established.

### ***What has been the best thing about this project?***

Being a farming community we did all the cultivation and sowing work ourselves so that kept the overall cost very low and we had good community involvement and sponsorship to get the work done.

### ***What is the process you used to get to this point?***

We made the decision to do the first field and got put on to PGG Wrightson Turf Territory Manager Joe Johnson by our local PGG Wrightson arable representatives. From there we did the work ourselves, taking advice from Joe on seed and fertiliser and he has kept any eye on the fields making recommendations along the way.

### ***How is this going to improve your grounds?***

Given that the whole Hinds Domain, where our grounds are situated, has had a substantial upgrade with new changing sheds, toilets, playground and now our main rugby fields re-grassed, it is now a high quality community asset, and we want our grounds to be recognised as being some of the best in Mid Canterbury to play on.

### ***What next?***

With the successful upgrade of the first two fields the committee are now looking to re-grass a third field after the current rugby season finishes.



*Duraturf® Sports Oval three weeks after sowing*

*Duraturf® Sports Oval five weeks after sowing*

## NEW STAFF MEMBERS

We would like to give a warm welcome to the newest members of the PGG Wrightson Turf team. Craig Kerr joins us as a Trainee Turf technician at our research centre, Kimihia and Penisimani Taufa is our new Dispatch Coordinator in Auckland.

### CRAIG KERR, TRAINEE TURF TECHNICIAN PGG WRIGHTSON TURF



- **Describe yourself in three words.** Honest, loyal, enthusiastic.
- **Hobbies.** Radio and sport.
- **What is your favourite food?** Thai.
- **What do you like to do on the weekends?** Relax with family and friends.
- **How long have you been in the turf industry and where have you worked prior to PGG Wrightson Turf?** Dabbled in Turf for years, came to PGG Wrightson Turf from New Zealand Cricket.
- **What do you enjoy about working for PGG Wrightson Turf?** The people.
- **What PGG Wrightson turf product appeals to you the most and why?** Everything the turf team promotes and sells.
- **If you were stuck in traffic and your CD player was stuck on repeat what CD would you choose to be playing?** Best of Fleetwood Mac.
- **What is your favourite NZ sports venue?** Pukekura Park.
- **What sports have you played?** Rugby, Rugby League, Cricket and Golf.
- **What's your favourite sports team that you follow?** Melbourne Storm.

### PENISIMANI (PENI) TAUFA, PGG WRIGHTSON TURF DISPATCH COORDINATOR



- **Describe yourself in three words.** Easy going, Gentle, Reliable.
- **Hobbies.** Reading, Playing touch rugby, and watching my footy.
- **What is your favourite food?** I think I need a whole page to answer this. But lu sipi (taro leaves, coconut milk and lamb) and lamb curry might be standing out for me.
- **What do you like to do on the weekends?** Playing footy, hanging out with my wife and our two kids and visiting relatives.
- **How long have you been in the turf industry and where have you worked prior to PGG Wrightson Turf?** First time working in the Turf Industry. I watched my grandfather use fertiliser and chemicals when growing up for his little vege farm but never knew how big the industry is. Previously I was a Warehouse Manager at Kempys Mitsubishi and Toyotaz Galore.
- **Career highlight so far?** When first promoted to a manager role back at 2013, and being a member of PGG Wrightson Turf.
- **What do you enjoy about working for PGG Wrightson Turf?** The support from the team as well as dealing with different products and clients.
- **What PGG Wrightson turf product appeals to you the most and why?** Almost all of the products, from the seeds, fertiliser and the chemicals.
- **What is your most memorable moment with the turf team so far?** The learning process, the amazement of how the products are quite similar but for different purposes.
- **If you were stuck in traffic and your CD player was stuck on repeat what CD would you choose to be playing?** Any country music
- **What is your favourite NZ sports venue?** Eden Park, but Forsyth Barr stands out to me for it's a one of a kind.
- **What sports have you played?** Rugby union, rugby league, soccer, volleyball, touch rugby, tennis and table tennis.
- **What's your favourite sports team that you follow?** All Blacks, Highlanders and Melbourne Storm.
- **Last words?** Love the team, the atmosphere and also the positive environment I am surrounded with at PGG Wrightson Turf, and looking forward for the challenges.

## COURSE PROFILE – TARA ITI GOLF COURSE, TE ARAI POINT



*Tara Iti Golf Course*

Nestled on the East Coast of the North Island, 150km north of Auckland is a very special place called Te Arai Point, home to the Tara Iti Golf Course. Tara Iti is named after the New Zealand Fairy Tern, Te Arai Point being one of the few breeding sites for this small endangered bird. Opened in October 2015, the Tom Doak designed course was just over three years in the making. The coastal location of Tara Iti, originally planted in pine forest, lends itself to the minimalist design which Doak is well known for. A recent course walk with Course Superintendent CJ Kreuscher was a chance to experience this unique golf location.

PGG Wrightson Turf Territory Manager Brian Griffiths has worked with CJ since the inception

of the project and has enjoyed watching the course come to life during this time. The maintenance team works hard maintaining and perfecting a playing surface which provides an entertaining experience for those who play at Tara Iti. The wall to wall fine fescue course is sympathetic to its natural environment amongst the Te Arai Point sand dunes.

Brian's involvement with the project started in June 2011. The process of construction commenced in November 2011 with a team of shapers who work their magic to shape, mould and contour the land so it works in with the stunning backdrop of the area. A Bowie 1100 arrived on site in November to start the hydroseeding of the course. A woodfibre mulch

was used along with a tackifier to help stabilise the ever shifting sands. The construction was a complex operation with application of a specific pre-plant fertiliser and a fine fescue seed blend that would be able to perform and tolerate the harsh coastal conditions of Te Arai Point. Construction was completed after 18 months and the course was ready for play after 2 years.

The overall goal of Tara Iti was to produce a stunning golf course with little or no impact on the environment and since its inception the number of endangered Fairy Tern have increased which is a wonderful reflection on the project and the work that the team at Tara Iti has achieved.



*Before. This photo shows the dense pine forest before construction commenced. Local contractors were engaged to start the mammoth task of the removal of this pest infested forest. The removal of this forest went a long way to reducing the numbers of possums, rats and other pests that were impacting the local wildlife, in particular the Fairy Tern and the Dotterel.*



*During. This photo shows the skilled hydroseeding applications which were done straight after the shaping team had been through.*



*After. This photo shows the 3rd green cut into the sand dunes blending into the natural landscape.*



Looking back up the fairway of the 18th green at Remuera Golf Course

Bevan Houghton sat down with Spencer Cooper the Superintendent at Remuera Golf Club to discuss their recent GEO certification.

### **What does GEO certification mean?**

It means 'Golf Environment Organisation'.

Their catch phrase is "Driving the Green", this statement declares their commitment to understand and continually improve within the six areas of sustainable golf.

The commitments and actions you undertake focus on the sustainable operations of your golf facility. This on-going focus is intended to improve your business and gain credible recognition for your positive contribution to people and the planet.

### **There are six key criteria that you are judged by, what are they and is it a long process?**

The process has taken since 2014, some of the data we have used has been historic and regularly collected like soil and water testing, we have also used general record keeping such as pesticide and tracked chemical use, all the way down to electricity and gas usage in the clubhouse, fuel and oil usage. The key thing to understand is that this accreditation is not only for out on the golf course it also incorporates the front office, clubhouse and proshop, basically all and everything within the property. We have just

become GEO Certified in September 2016. The six key criteria are:

#### **NATURE**

- Understanding the wildlife and landscape qualities of the golf course.
- Undertaking ecological and landscape surveys and monitoring.
- Protecting and enhancing landscape and biodiversity.
- Managing appropriately the vegetation and habitats on the course.

#### **WATER**

- Reducing water-use, and avoiding all waste.
- Monitoring water-use across the club, identifying opportunities for efficiencies or repair, and eliminating excess use.
- Diversifying water sources, increasing the proportion of reused and recycled water.
- Exploring opportunities to store and use rainwater and wastewater.

#### **ENERGY**

- Reducing energy and fuel consumption, and avoiding all waste.
- Monitoring consumption across the club, identifying opportunities for energy efficiency and reducing waste.

- Diversifying energy sources, increasing the proportion of clean and renewable energy.
- Exploring opportunities to introduce new renewable energy supplies.

#### **SUPPLY CHAIN**

- Purchasing responsibly and reducing unnecessary consumption to reduce transport costs, emissions, and waste.
- Adopting an ethical and environmental purchasing policy, trading with sustainability led companies, locally when possible.
- Decreasing overall amount of waste and aiming for zero waste to landfill.
- Modifying waste streams across all parts of the club, to 'reduce, reuse, recycle'.

#### **POLLUTION CONTROL**

- Legal compliance with all relevant local, national and international regulations.
- Monitoring water quality; treating wastewater discharges; handling, storing and disposing hazardous materials/equipment and carefully.
- Reduce as much as possible the use of fertilisers, pesticides and turf products to essential playing surfaces.
- Monitoring and recording use, with emphasis on non-chemical techniques to maintain turf grass health.





*Spencer Cooper and the team at Remuera Golf Course in Auckland*

## COMMUNITY

- Promoting the sustainability aims, actions and achievements of the club.
- Communicating across members, visitors and wider community; and providing staff training.
- Protecting and enhancing features of cultural and historical significance.
- Conserving and promoting landmarks on the course and local traditions.

### ***What were some of the key things that you identified and changed over the past two years?***

We had a report done in 2011 from Lite Club which identifies areas of your business that can start to save energy by providing an Efficiency Action Plan. They came back in January this year and we have ticked off 95% of their recommendations. Some of the things that were recommended were changing to LED light bulbs as well as replacing shower heads to ones that utilise less water pressure and therefore save on water usage.

Some of things that we have implemented on the course are naturalising areas around the course, no mow areas, increasing buffer zones between our neighbours so that we can cut down or spraying and fuel usage. We are about to take ownership of two fully electric greens mowers and greens rollers, we currently already own and run two fully electric utility vehicles.

### ***How did you become so interested in the environment?***

My father was a game ranger, farmer and a keen golfer back in Africa and he was very aware of the environment and I first noticed it when playing golf with him. Then I had the opportunity at The Links at Fancourt in South Africa to initiate an environmental plan and were able to become Audubon Certified there in 2010. From there it has become a passion of mine to help leave each property I manage in a more environmentally sustainable place than when I found it.

### ***What are some things that you have initiated or are going to from this process?***

It was easy to get the clubs management behind this as it was brought up when the club hired me. The staff and membership have taken more convincing.

We relied heavily on the clubs suppliers to gather information around what products and quantities we had purchased over the past two years and then sat down and evaluated these. We measured things like how far away each supplier is from the club and then set about seeing if we could reduce our footprint on the environment by utilising local suppliers and contractors.

The use of organic fertilisers and microbial solutions have been a key initiative to help

overall soil and plant health to help reduce nutrient leaching, thatch and disease.

With the help of NZ Waterways we are about to introduce fresh water mussels to help purify our irrigation water before it heads out to the Waiatarua Reserve. We are also about to introduce sterilised carp to our irrigation and storm water ponds and this will help with the removal of any aquatic weeds so we do not need to use chemicals.

### ***Finally, what have you enjoyed most about this process and what advice would you give to other clubs thinking of doing something similar?***

We have had some tough conversations with members and their guests, the surrounding community and neighbours but becoming GEO certified is well worth it to Remuera Golf Club, the staff and myself personally. It's hard in the beginning but it is a lot of fun. Putting fish into ponds, having mussels in ponds, planting trees, this is all fun stuff and something that any course can be a part of, if they want to help the environment and become a more sustainable business.

I hope this inspires some other like-minded Superintendents to look at it and try to improve their facilities and encourage clubs to leave their property's in a more environmentally friendly and sustainable space.



*This shows the field at the end of the 12 week grow-in, complete coverage has been achieved over the 1.2 ha*

Over the past three years PGG Wrightson Turf has had a large focus in the upper North Island to develop techniques and ideas for the warm season market for golf and sports field industries. This has included field trials at PGG Wrightson Turf's research plots at the Kimihia research Centre in Christchurch and at our research farm in Ballarat Australia.

PGG Wrightson Turf have found new techniques to help achieve great results through chemistry that has already been in New Zealand. Both Dr. Phil Ford and Bill Walmsley have played a huge part in the discovery of these techniques.

This has enabled PGG Wrightson Turf to run workshops for Auckland Council staff and the four main sports field contractors in Auckland.

From these workshops Bevan Houghton was approached by Darren Kalka and Andrew Moore from Auckland Council and asked to consider a joint research trial of Princess-77 on a soil sports field in South Auckland, in particular:

- Length of establishment times from our seeded variety to the current industry standard options.
- Whether Princess-77 would be suited to soil fields in the southern sector.

- How Princess-77 would perform overall and how it would handle the first full seasons play.

After choosing Seaside Park in Otahuhu they needed to establish the requirements for the trial and consider the following:

- The unevenness of the field. Being an old land fill it had over 15cm of subsidence across the pitch. Darren mentioned that this was one of the reasons that it was chosen, so that Council may invest a little into it and get the field level again.
- It's Auckland's first ever sand carpet which was built over 20 years ago.
- It has an average irrigation system.
- Grow-in time was a consideration for the trial so Dr. Phil Ford, Darren and Bevan spoke about what they thought was a realistic time frame. It was decided that 12 weeks was an acceptable time period to get the trial established.
- The next was how it would work on a soil field in the southern sector. With this now being on a sand field they had a small issue, however it was decided that they would

establish a further 1000m<sup>2</sup> at either end of the field outside of the sand carpet on the existing soil and evaluate these areas separately.

- And lastly how it comes out of the first winter (which is still being evaluated).

At this stage they worked with Aaron Hutton from Turf Tech to come up with a re-construction schedule and bringing the field up to a level surface, this included:

- Digging up all irrigation heads
- Removing the existing 25mm of sod
- Re-levelling the base of the field
- Bringing in 150m<sup>3</sup> of new sand and spreading with a drop sander and levelling
- Re-installing new irrigation heads

2000kg/ha of Bioboost® was applied with a Vicon and allowed to sit on the surface. Before any seeding the field was kept wet as to not lose any sand through wind blow, as well as keeping the profile firm for hydroseeding.

Once the contractors started to apply the mulch the process was broken down into quadrants of 200m<sup>2</sup> as this was all that their machines could



*This photo shows that the leaf blade curls at the ends and looks drooped which is normal with Princess-77*



*Goal mouths showing little to no wear after the winters play*

do at any one time. They parked their machinery to the side of the field so as to not disrupt the surface by driving on the field.

The application rate of mulch was 2000kg per ha or 80 bales of Conwed Fibers® Hydromulch® 2000, it provides a layer to help with germination and protects the seed as well as helping with erosion, which could have come from wind blow as Seaside Park is a very windy site.

At this point the grow-in started and there were a few problems throughout the 12 weeks:

- Early washouts - these occurred around a handfull of sprinkler heads due to them sticking in position which also created over watering. This coupled with poor uniformity due to wind and the configuration of the irrigation heads was something that was not anticipated.

It was a hard site to manage the irrigation and Turf Tech did a great job of this, particularly with the sprinklers on the eastern boundary, which needed to be adjusted on a daily basis due to the soil surrounds. These sprinklers weren't able to be in a specific zone by themselves which added to the challenge.

Germination took place 12 days after seeding. The photo above shows that the leaf blade curls at the ends and looks drooped which is normal with Princess-77. Another key features is when the seed germinates, its leaf is purple which is very different and when you are not used to this it can feel like you have weed infestation, which can last for 1-2 weeks.

100% coverage was achieved at both ends of the pitch after five weeks. As mentioned, the ends were sown into soil which was one of the main establishment evaluation points for council.

The first cut was done at 10 weeks and it showed some weak areas where the seed establishment took time due to the watering issues. However by the 12 week mark the field was fantastic and coped with a full mowing programme.

The establishment was a success and the following goals that we set were achieved:

- Achieving full coverage of a seeded couch grass variety within 12 weeks
- Whether it would be suited to soil fields in the southern sector (positive outcome)

The field was oversown with perennial ryegrass

in late spring following the 10 point oversowing guide that Dr. Phil Ford researched and developed for PGG Wrightson Turf. The field has handled the first seasons play exceptionally well with no turf blowouts or new turfing needing to be laid in the high trafficked areas.

The process this past winter has been to fertilise with monthly applications of a balanced NPK product at 200kg/ha for the ryegrass, then in October transition the field back to clean couch using a tried and true method of herbicides.

With the upcoming summer the field needs to be monitored to evaluate how Princess-77 handles the wear it will receive.

Off the back of this trial there has been great interest from a number of sporting codes and there are two rugby fields being re-developed into Princess-77 this coming summer.

We will keep you posted on the full outcome of the Seaside Park trial in the next issue of Turf Clippings.

# ALL BLACK TEST MATCH PREPARATION



Getting the job done



Territory Manager Julian Holden and the H3 team

As with any international rugby fixture, there was much excitement in the Waikato region ahead of the All Blacks vs. Pumas test match in September. Territory Manager Julian Holden tells us about his day before the test match spent with the H3 team at FMG Stadium Waikato preparing the ground.

I was lucky enough to spend the day with the great bunch of guys at H3 and get an insight to what goes on for an International Game. It was an intense schedule of Mitre 10 Cup home games leading up to the test match, and a lot of time was spent on planning and preparation months before the All Blacks game.

Around a month out the field is in the midst of ramping up with the team managing the fertility and disease management amongst all the other day to day activities. There are still normal games in action and the toughest part is to remove the painted logos. These have to be removed for each game and reapplied for the next game. For

the All Blacks they have to be fully removed without any shadowing, no easy feat. Two weeks out the field is given a slow release granular fertiliser and this NPK ratio will depend on the decision of the turf manager as to how the field is performing at the time and what is needed to be achieved on game day. The field is still taking a hammering so it is regularly combed for divots and seeded and sanded. The field is still being mowed every day in a certain pattern to maintain quality.

## WEEK OF THE GAME

The game day pattern for mowing is started one week out from the game. A True Foliar nutritional blend is applied three days before game day, this is to enhance the natural colour of the genetic species of turf in the stadium. The H3 team aim to present the field in its dark natural state and this enhances this. The field is still being mown every day with all clippings collected. The entire field is line marked three times during the week. An anti-dew product is applied on the Friday.

Come Friday things really heat up. The field is line marked again, all the corner flags have to be put out. These have to be straight and the seams facing away from the cameras. Goal post pads get put out. The outline of the numbers are painted, this is a highly skilled job and I managed to bluff my way into doing a couple of them! The logos are applied to the field in readiness for the game. There are two Captains runs on the Friday and after each run the field has to be walked with all divots picked up and a seed and sand mix put into the divots for repair. The field is mown and marked for the last time on game day to give it the real sparkle. The team is also managing the training venues and doing huge amount of venue prep with Sky TV and all the other commercial entities involved. All of this hard work doesn't go unnoticed, two rugby sport commentators were quoted saying "FMG Stadium Waikato has to be one of the best outdoor stadiums in New Zealand", this is an understatement when you see the passion and skill the team put into these events.

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