



RED CLIFFS GOLF CLUB Inc.

PO Box 449 Red Cliffs Vic. 3496

Tel: (03) 50241531; Fax: (03) 50241449

THE RED CLIFFS 'WHACKER'

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Tribute to Ray "Patto" Patterson

Everyone at Red Cliffs Golf Club was saddened to hear of the recent death of Ray Patterson. Ray has been a member of the since 1995 and was committed to ensuring that the club was successful. He loved his golf and he enjoyed the company of those he played and socialised with and he will be sadly missed at Red Cliffs Golf Club. We pass on our condolences to his wife, Cheryl and his children Blair and Julia. He will be sadly missed.

The President's Message

As we begin a new year in golf, I would like to thank past President Rod and past captain Neville for their fantastic contributions over the last couple of years. In addition thanks must also go to retiring committee members Julie Warne, Peter Hickey and Col Richardson for their outstanding efforts. The previous committee worked very hard to establish a secure base, upon which, a more secure and stable Club can be developed, a fact I'm sure is not lost on the new committee.

New faces on the committee include Leigh Bowring, Graham Tiller, Ron Baird and Graham Bamford, all of whom bring a new level of expertise and experience to compliment what I believe to be is a very strong committee.

We were all very saddened to learn of the untimely passing of club stalwart and former vice president, Ray Patterson. In his time at RCGC Ray made many friends and contributed significantly to the development of the club. He will be sadly missed. Thank you to all members and staff who, in the true traditions of Red Cliffs Golf Club, worked so hard to assist with Ray's memorial service. Those who were in attendance last Wednesday would agree that he received a fantastic send off.

Tom and Neville have done a fantastic job in maintaining our course so well even though we are in the grip of such a severe drought. With the dry conditions the availability of water is once again becoming an issue for us. Consequently, we would love to hear from any members who might be prepared to donate excess water to the club. Any assistance in this regard would be greatly appreciated.

Captain Justin and his deputy Ron have settled into their new roles very well indeed with preparation of the new syllabus well underway. I know they are still looking for trophy donors, so if you are able to assist or have any ideas in this regard, please let them know.

There certainly seems to be an air of enthusiasm about Red Cliffs Golf Club at the moment which I hope augurs well for a successful year ahead. Andrew Wood, President.

News from the General Committee

The first General Committee meeting under new President Andrew Wood was held on Monday 17th January. One of the key points that was stressed at the meeting was how important it was for all members to appreciate that the General Committee is the controlling body of Red Cliffs Golf Club. The committee is elected by the members and charged with the responsibility of managing the club. The club is not the property of individuals it is 'owned' by the membership as a whole and the committee's role is to ensure that the decisions are in the best interests of the club as a whole. Some of the important outcomes of the first meeting were:

- The Treasurer highlighted the major financial goals for the year. More detail on this later in the newsletter
- The new 12th green will be officially opened on the 5th March season opener.
- The Greens committee will start the process of developing a long-term plan to upgrade the watering system on the course.
- The sub-committee structure was decided. See details later in the newsletter.
- An Operating Plan will be developed and a first draft will be ready for the next General Committee meeting.
- A roster will be developed in an attempt to have the clubhouse open for longer periods of time.
- A decision was taken to do away with draught beer over the bar, as it was uneconomical to continue.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of a junior coach and a junior golf program in the club. The matter is being investigated by a couple of members of the Committee.
- Irrigation water shortages may be a problem and members will be approached to loan water to the club.
- The committee agreed to participate in the Sunraysia Golf Factory's "Sunraysia Golf Club" initiative and will offer discounted green fees to their players.
- \$325.00 raised for the Tsunami Appeal.

The Course Superintendent

There has been some recent damage to the course caused by motorbikes, which Tom is attempting to deal with. It is likely that we will need the help of members who are prepared to loan irrigation water to get us through the summer period. See Tom if you can assist. The watering system is beginning to break down and a plan needs to be developed to finance its replacement. More on-course volunteer workers are urgently needed, see Tom if you can help out. Given the dry times, the course is in good order.

The Social Side of Life

The first social event for the year will be the 'Concert on the Course' to be held this year on **Friday 18th March**. This event proved to be a great fundraiser for the club last year and we are looking to repeat the performance. Entry fee will be \$20.00 per person, or \$50.00 per family. So get out there and encourage your friends, neighbours and work colleagues to come along for a great night's entertainment.

The General Committee decided that it would not appoint a Social sub-committee this year. Instead individual members of the Committee have taken responsibilities for a specific event. So when you are approached to help out, please be ready to assist. We need these social / fundraising events to get us through the year.

Whilst on social issues, we are desperately in need of more volunteers to help out in the clubhouse. If you can assist please see Mick Hogan or Lois Briggs. **We need your help!**

The 2005 Operating Plan

President Andrew came across an Operating Plan developed by a Victorian Country Football Club. It was obvious from a closer examination of the plan that most of what it contained was relevant to the Red Cliffs Golf Club. The plan sets out the aims of the club and the strategies to be put in place to achieve the aims. It details the club structure and how each component of the structure interacts with others. The most important part of the plan however is the key task list that details what must be done, by when and who is responsible to see that it is done.

Leigh Bowring and President Andrew have taken on the task of developing a draft 'Operating Plan' for the Red Cliffs Golf Club. When the final draft is developed it will be put out for membership comment prior to its introduction.

The Captain's Comment

Let me begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year. After one month into 2005 I can honestly say I am enjoying my role as new Captain and am relishing this opportunity to give something back to the club. My first thanks must go to Neville Birch who held the captaincy for the past two years and who was well assisted by John Gray. I think you will all agree, they did an incredible job and I already can acknowledge how much they did for the club in these positions. I also must thank my Vice Captain Ron Baird who already has sourced new sponsorship for this season. The Australia Day Ambrose is fast approaching and if you do not have your name on the timesheet, you had better hurry as spots are filling up quickly! The sponsor for the day is the always generous Neil Wilkie, who has arranged wonderful prizes that will certainly please any who turn out to play.

Finally I would like to say I am proud of the people who gathered on the 19th of January to pay respect to the late Ray Patterson who was a valued member at our club. His passing is certainly a great loss to the club and to all who knew him. My condolences are with his wife Cheryl, his children and many of his good friends who are members here.

Special Feature

"Issues & Challenges for Golf Clubs in Victoria"

The Victorian Golf Association, with the support of the Victorian Government commissioned Ernst & Young to produce a report designed to help clubs come to terms with the changing face of golf and golf club membership. A summary of the report appeared in the last issue of 'Golf Victoria' for 2004 and for those interested in the future of golf and golf clubs it is well worth a read. The general Committee will be getting hold of a copy of the report when it is released and will be going through it carefully so that strategies can be developed to ensure that the Red Cliffs Golf Club can survive into the future.

It is somewhat ironic to think that in an earlier issue of the 'Whacker' I wrote an article on this very topic just before the General Committee took a number of steps to change the face of Red Cliffs Golf Club. I distinctly remember at the time that some members didn't agree with the steps taken by the club, but it is likely that more changes will have to occur if we are to survive as a club. It is interesting to note that the Sunraysia Golf Factory has reintroduced the concept of what might be referred to as the "non-aligned golfer" with the establishment of the "Sunraysia Golf Club". This 'club' will provide an opportunity for people interested in playing golf, but not interested in joining an established club, the chance to do so. Sure! They need a course to play on but they don't need to belong to a club. This is a trend that we ignore at our peril. The general Committee at its meeting on the 17th January agreed to support the concept in the hope that by supporting a system that introduces a whole new range of people to golf and allowing them to play on our course, we may well get a membership benefit.

Let's look a bit more closely at the article by Brian Meldrum that appeared in the Volume 45 #6, 2004 issue of 'Golf Victoria'. The next four paragraphs in this article are Brian Meldrum's words, not mine:

"What has changed and changed quite dramatically is the sociology of golf. New lifestyles, different work habits, things such as these have altered the way in which people choose to play golf, and in this context the traditional golf club is being challenged to stay relevant."

"The report identifies the specific challenges faced by golf clubs as being membership, land rent, environmental, cost structure, management and corporate governance."

"It is ironic, perhaps, that many golf clubs are struggling to attract new members and, in some cases, retain current members, at a time when golf participation numbers are on the increase."

"The Ernst & Young research indicates in the period 1998/1999 40% of the people playing golf in Victoria were members of a golf club. Four years later, despite an increase in the total number of participants, some 21% [30,000] the percentage of them as golf club members dropped to 35%."

There is a lot more to be said and done about this issue and it is important that all members don't 'bury their heads in the sand' and appreciate that to survive we have to change. If we don't the Red Cliffs Golf Club will cease to exist!