



RED CLIFFS GOLF CLUB MEMBER'S NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

As a member of the Red Cliffs Golf Club you are able to enjoy one of the best courses in the Sunraysia district but great golf courses don't happen by chance.

The club has one of the best turf managers as its Course Superintendent in Tom Crawford. Supported by two part time employees Neville Birch and James XXXXXX and new Turf Apprentice Gannon Bettess, Tom and the team turn out one of the best prepared golf courses in Sunraysia week after week. Red Cliffs Golf Club relies heavily on its willing band of volunteers, as it has done from its inception in 1925, and none more so than the hard working 'Dad's Army'. This group of willing workers can be found around the club on most Tuesdays carrying out a multitude of general course and clubhouse maintenance tasks. We are always looking to our members to do whatever they can to support the club for without the work of our volunteers it is likely that the club would not have survived for as long as it has.

For a number of years the club has participated in an extensive tree planting program in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Environment & Sustainability. Several large areas have been planted up with a range of native varieties that in time will enhance the look of the course as well as improve the local environment. Many of these areas are now well developed and are beginning to have an impact on the overall appearance of the course. In March 2004 the completely rebuilt 12th green was opened, followed a few months later by the new tee area. The 12th hole at Red Cliffs is now arguably one of the best par 3's in Sunraysia. A number of tees have been renovated or completely rebuilt over recent times in order to improve the overall quality of our course. New tees at the 1st, 6th, 11th, 13th, 17th and 18th holes have made a positive impact with more tee improvement work planned for the future. Tom Crawford has made excellent use of the 'Work For The Dole' program over recent times to make much needed improvements to the course whilst at the same time providing high quality skills training and valuable work experience for the participants.

The next big projects on the drawing board are the redevelopment of the practice fairway and the remodelling of the club's front entrance. The practice fairway will be redeveloped as part of the extension to the club's very successful turf farm initiative which will provide an ideal practice facility for members as well as generate much needed income for the club. The front entrance of the club is well overdue for an upgrade. As our 'front door' and 'window' to the local community it is time it was upgraded to reflect the improved standard of the club as a whole. If you have any ideas about what the new front entrance should look like, Tom Crawford would be pleased to hear from you!

As stated at the beginning a great golf club doesn't happen by chance and we rely on the support of all members to ensure that we continue to improve all our facilities for our members, visitors and the Sunraysia community. What can you do to assist?

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TO THIS NEWSLETTER SEND IT TO THE EDITOR, BOB MUTTON AT ROBNGLN@NCABLE.COM.AU

THE FUTURE OF GOLF IN VICTORIA

In May 2004 the Victorian Golf Association decided to undertake research designed to alert and assist golf clubs with areas of challenge within the current operating environment of golf. The result of that research was released as a major report entitled "Issues and Challenges for Golf Clubs in Victoria" in February 2005. The General Committee of the Red Cliffs Golf Club has used the report to assist it with its long term strategic planning.

One of the most important challenges facing golf clubs is membership numbers. It is ironic that whilst participation in golf is increasing, golf club membership, particularly in regional and rural areas is decreasing. The VGA funded research indicated that between 1998 and 2003 participation in golf increased by 21%, whilst golf club membership decreased by 35% during the same period. The big question is how will golf clubs, including Red Cliffs Golf Club, meet these challenges. It is clear that the biggest obstacle to be overcome is the 'what's in it for me' syndrome, a philosophy which, if it continues, could spell the end of a lot of golf clubs.

Red Cliffs Golf Club is not immune from this trend and has instigated a number of initiatives to attract new members and to retain existing ones. We have recognised that there is a large group of golf players that are not interested in the traditional weekend competition based golf club membership. There are a lot of golfers that are looking for more flexibility and a less regulated environment and for women players, a more female orientated environment. It is essential that all members, regardless of where they fit into the golfing spectrum, appreciate that for our club to survive it is essential that we try and cater for a wide range of golfers, not only the traditional competition playing member. Some of our more 'traditional' members may not like this changing environment but the fact remains that we must address the changing face of golf and ensure that we have strategies in place to ensure our survival into the future.

Some of the major initiatives that have been introduced over recent times including Summer and Social Playing memberships are now starting to have a positive impact. The introduction of motorized golf carts and more attention to green fee players have improved the club's financial position as well as making Red Cliffs Golf Club a more attractive alternative for social golfers.

One thing we can be assured of is that change is inevitable and some might argue that it is necessary. The Red Cliffs Golf Club is trying to position itself to be in front of change as it occurs with strategies in place to ensure our ongoing success. As a member you are our greatest asset and we need your continued support and involvement to ensure that tomorrow's club golf, and that of future generations, is made secure.

GRASS GROWERS OF RED CLIFFS

In 2004 the then General Committee led by President Rod Atkins came to the conclusion that the Red Cliffs Golf Club needed more than membership subscriptions to survive financially. A small sub-committee was formed to investigate income generating activities that had the potential to put the club on a sound financial footing. The eventual establishment of a turf farm was a logical extension of what the club does from day to day, grow grass. As the turf farm nears the end of its first full year in operation it is timely to look back at what has occurred as well as the plans for the future.

In late 2004 an area of 1.3 Ha beside the 18th fairway was prepared and sown with Kikuya and 'Winter Green Couch', both ideal grasses for the Sunraysia area. A hardy band of volunteers walked up and down the patch carrying dip tins full of clumps of grass. As each clump was dropped on the ground it was trod on to set it in place. A large roller was then run over the clumps to further consolidate them and the irrigation was then turned on. We all waited with 'baited breath' to see what would happen and it was obvious that a number of us thought that the grass wouldn't grow. But grow it did, and now after almost completing our first cut it is great to see the new grass growing back in readiness for the next harvest cycle.

These things don't happen by chance and the members that put up the initial funding and voluntary labour to get the project going are to be congratulated for their contribution to the future of the club. The club itself made a significant contribution in terms of the land, machinery, irrigation water and most importantly the time and expertise of Tom Crawford, the Course Superintendent. Tom and his staff nurtured the new grass through the initial months of establishment ensuring that the inevitable weeds were kept under control, the right amount of water and fertilizer were applied and the new grass was mown as required. It must be pleasing for the course staff, including the "Work For The Dole" participants, to see the turf farm producing high quality turf for the local area as well as much needed income for the club.

But we are not going to rest on our laurels! Now that the turf farm has proven that it is a successful venture we are already getting ready to expand production. The practice fairway, which has for a long time been one of the club's least attractive aspects, is set to take on a new role. The irrigation system on the practice fairway has been upgraded and the area levelled in readiness for planting as the next phase of the turf farm's development. With the recent completion of the new practice tee coupled with a manicured turf surface, Red Cliffs Golf Club will have one of the best practice fairways in the district. As we drive into the club past the practice fairway the redeveloped area will reflect the high standards of the remainder of the course. Tom! You won't have to distract visitor's attention, to avoid embarrassment, as you drive them past the practice fairway for much longer. All members can help by participating in working bees and by recommending the "Grass Growers of Red Cliffs" as suppliers of high quality turf to friends, neighbours and work colleagues whenever the opportunity arises.