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Robots

The STC establishes  
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## Utrecht FC follows Liverpool and Real Madrid

Dutch top-flight football club FC Utrecht has taken ownership of two Cub Cadett electrical mowers. The mowers have been fitted with a groomer. Utrecht FC is the first Dutch club in the top league that uses the Cub Cadett, but the machine is used by several clubs in the British and Spanish leagues.

According to sales rep Vinny Tarbox the electrical cylinder mower with groomer is truly unique. 'Apart from the groomer the machine also has a floating head and a modular cassette mower. That makes it possible to remove the cylinder and have it replaced by a scarify unit.' Utrecht FC ordered two of these machines. 'Otherwise cutting the grass will take too long. Cutting the grass on a match-day with only one machine will take approximately five hours. We would have to start really early in order to be ready two hours before kick-off,' groundsman Jan Gijzen explains.

The electrical mower has the advantage that new settings can easily be loaded. 'Aspects like clip rate and mowing speed can be adjusted quickly.'



# Cliftonville artificial grass surface passes FIFA Quality Pro for the 8th time in a row

Cliftonville FC in Belfast, Northern Ireland, has received its 8th FIFA Quality Pro certificate for its Lano MXSi field. The annual certification is compulsory for clubs pursuing FIFA Quality Pro certification.

Most clubs waive the FIFA Quality Pro standard within one or two years after having taken ownership of the field. The rather prefer pursuing the FIFA Quality standard which considers more criteria that are easier to be achieved.

'I remember the days when several teams of our academy would use fields at neighbouring clubs to host their practice sessions', the club's communications director, David Begley, recalls. 'These days the opposite happens. We now have a top-quality artificial grass surface that teams from this area are eager to use too. After having hosted hundreds of domestic and international games, the field is still in optimum condition.'

Cliftonville FC is the oldest club in Northern Ireland, but shouldn't be considered old-fashioned. 'Our players and community deserve the best. When we decided to replace our pitch in 2010, we wanted to be sure that our players could benefit from the new surface 24/7.' The club selected



Lano Spots Profoot MXSi. 'The exceptional resilience and playability in any condition made the difference', David explains.

The club has certainly benefited from its investment. In the past four years Cliftonville FC won several finales at its home turf. The quality of the field also received its own recognition. 'We are

very pleased that our stadium was used to host a Champions League match several weeks ago. We can only hope that there will be sufficient time left for own players to benefit from the surface', he laughs.



## Re-match achieves ETV-certification

The Danish artificial grass recycling company Re-Match has received its Environmental Technology Verification (ETV) certificate. The certificate acknowledges that Re-Match separates waste in clean and separate products.

The certificate confirms what Re-Match has been claiming for many years: separating waste in clean products. The company developed its own artificial grass separation process using air and a sieve. The granulated grass fibres are compressed and supplied to different plastic industries. The infill, consisting of sand and rubber granulates, is used in new artificial grass surfaces for landscaping and sports.

## OUR PORTFOLIO

### TURF



### TREES



### PUBLIC SPACE



### MISCELLANEOUS





### Atlungstad Golf acquires VGR Topchanger 1600

The Norwegian golf club Atlungstad Golffklubb has received its VGR Topchanger. By using the VGR Topchanger the club expects to reduce the time spent on maintaining the 18-hole course.

Stefan Sandegård, the main greenkeeper at Atlungstad Golffklubb, is very pleased with the new machine. 'Thanks to the VGR Topchanger we can now maintain the green in one run. The machine aerates and dresses at the same time. If needs be it can also inject a wetting agent or soil booster at the same time.'

The purchase by Atlungstad Golffklubb comes hot on the heels of a Swedish club taking ownership of another VGR Topchanger.

### Dutch Golf course contractor first to invest in Turflynx robot mower

Turflynx Northern Europe has introduced its Turflynx F315, a specially designed robot mower with GPS. The Turflynx F315 was designed from scratch. 'That is why this robot mower is much smaller and lighter than traditional diesel fairway mowers,' says Turflynx Northern Europe director Tinus Vernooij. He estimates the machine weighs only half of a traditional diesel mower. 'This reduces the impact and prevents the topsoil from compacting.' The batteries allow the machine to cut the grass from approximately six fairways or four football fields before they need to be recharged. The Dutch golf course contractor is the first to invest in this robot.

### BV Projects pitch heating for new Atletico Madrid stadium

Pitch heating of BV Projects will guarantee that Wanda Metropolitano, the new home ground of Atletico Madrid, can be used all year long.

The beautifully designed stadium provides great comfort to spectators, but failed to include the basics for a quality pitch. The roof provides too much shade in certain areas of the field, thereby denying the grass sufficient heat required to grow a perfect pitch.

No less than 33 kilometres tubing was installed in the longitudinal direction of the pitch. The field has been split up in three sections.



### DLF reports that the demand for turf has increased this year.

The improving economic situation has driven demand for turf grasses, the Danish company reports. Even in Southern Europe, where the economy is improving at a slower rate, demand was up for turf grass.

Seed shortages drove up prices for smooth-stalked meadow grass and hard and tall fescue. Seed imports from the USA were low, held back by limited availability and an unfavourable USD exchange rate. And following the disappointing harvests in Denmark, the Netherlands and North America, the balance between supply and demand is tight.



### Marathon TCR Turf Core Renovator





## TC Steinhausen goes for 4 Swiss Court tennis courts

The Swiss tennis club TC Steinhausen recently refurbished 4 tennis courts. The courts have now received a Swiss Court top-layer. Swiss Court is an all-weather surface consisting of an artificial grass field dressed with quartz sand. The surface is hailed for its good properties in terms of maintaining moist and draining excess water.



## Capillary Concrete used for iconic Mickey Mouse bunker

The management of Disney's Magnolia Golf Course have used Capillary Concrete to shape the Mickey Mouse bunker on the par-3, 6th hole on the golf course. The large pores in the base material enable expedited drainage of excess water from the bunker through the concrete into the drains, while preventing sand migration into and through the concrete.

Polymers in the concrete binding agent create microscopic connections to enable moisture to be returned to the sand via capillary action, against gravity, upward through the concrete during dry periods. This keeps the sand conditions ideal for play, while dramatically improving the life span of the bunker as compared to traditional construction methods.

The management of the golf course opted for this solution, as the traditional method of bunker construction can have detrimental effects of

multiple factors including climate and soil conditions, can compromise the longevity of a bunker, requiring periodic rebuilds. These effects can result in the loss of the shape of the bunker and the sinking of the sand due to the erosion of the bottom of the bunker because of rain, despite the use of liners and tile drainage. The greenkeeper of the course could not afford this happening, as that would increase the frequency of required maintenance and the cumulative costs associated with bunker management.

In the case of the Mickey Mouse bunker, the bunker and surrounding turf were removed all the way down to bare ground. The well-known Mickey Mouse shape was freshly and precisely sculpted into the ground and new French drains were dug into the bunker surface. Once the drains were in place, a minimum 2-inch depth layer of Capillary Concrete was poured into the bunker and rolled smooth on to the bunker surface. The concrete was then allowed to cure for at least 6 hours and then inspected for quality assurance. Once the concrete had cured and passed inspection, a fresh layer of new sand was placed in the bunker and new sod was laid down around the bunker edge and perimeter.



## Orange is the new red

The French golf course Le Golf National will rely heavily on Jacobsen to prepare the course for the 2018 Ryder Cup. Jacobsen is already the exclusive supplier of turf care equipment for the golf course near Paris. To prepare the course for the 2018 Ryder Cup, Jacobsen will also support the on-site agro-nomy team.

'The Ryder Cup is one of the sporting world's most revered and highly anticipated events. It will be a privilege to play a role in preparing the course for the match and helping to ensure that the highest standards of course preparation are applied for such a prestigious tournament', explains Alan Prickett, senior director at TSV, owner of the Jacobsen brand.

'We are delighted to announce this partnership with Jacobsen. They already enjoy a first-class relationship with the host venue and our hope and intention is to build on that relationship and deliver a course worthy of staging this great event,' Ryder Cup Europe director Richard Hills adds.

## Brad Kautzer new Company President and CEO at Foley United

Foley United has appointed Brad Kautzer as its new President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Kautzer succeeds Jim Letourneau, who will remain with the company as a senior adviser, board member, and equity partner. Prior to joining Foley United, Kautzer had a long and successful career at Honeywell, including VP/GM of its global Electromechanical Sensing & Control business and VP of Industrial Control Products in the Asia-Pacific



## Italian Serie A clubs switch to LED

SPAL is the second club in the Italian Series A football league to move to LED floodlight illumination for its stadium. Juventus was the first club to make the change when they switched from conventional luminaires to LED technology at the beginning of the 2016/2017 season.

LED technology is best known for its contribution to energy savings and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The technology is, however, also regarded as one that provides superior quality illumination that enables HDTV registration. All games in the highest Italian football league are televised in HD.

Light from LED luminaires resembles day-light quality, thereby enabling players and cameras to identify and register moving objects quicker and better. As a result, players can anticipate and act quicker while spectators both at home and in the stands have a better match experience.

region. He also has a thorough leadership experience in marketing, sales, product development, and operations as well as supporting growth through global dealer/distributor networks. Kautzer has successfully led numerous businesses and channel growth initiatives and is well regarded as an industry expert. 'We are excited to have Brad join the Foley United team,' said Jim Letourneau. 'He has demonstrated throughout his career a deep commitment to excellence in all aspects of business, with a clear passion for new product development, sales, marketing and customer service. I look forward to partnering with Brad to continue Foley United's leadership in our markets.'





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## Duncan Ross reinvigorates Penrith Football Club in six weeks

After having been neglected for nine years, the pitch of Frenchfield Park Stadium has now received a new lease of life. Duncan Ross Ltd. Made sure the field was ready in time for a lucrative pre-season friendly. The surface had been without considered maintenance before and during the current nine-year inhabitancy of Penrith FC. Without a functioning drainage system the top layer of the surface became impenetrable. Duncan Ross were only given a six-week window to complete the operation in time for a lucrative pre-season friendly against League Two outfit Carlisle United. Within the three days of work, the top was completely stripped off using a Koro Fieldtop Maker, sand banding was introduced and the pitch was seeded. Brian 'Billy' Williams has had a 50-year association with the club, first as a player, owner and chairman – the role he currently holds. The importance of the pitch being prepared for the match was massive for the club, and Brian explains the before and after effects the project has had. 'The pitch wasn't draining at all', says Brian 'Billy' Williams, chairman of the club. 'The drains had been dry for the last eight years and Duncan came down and gave us a thesis on what he thought was wrong', Brian explained. 'He presented a solution to what he thought would solve the problems and our local council along with the Football Stadium Improvement Fund got involved and funded the project.'

'We played our first pre-season game against Carlisle United on 12th July, and that really put them to the test, because the decision wasn't made to bring Duncan in until the early part of May, so there was a five to six-week window to actually start doing the work, which was quite considerable.'

'The game against Carlisle meant a lot to us financially for the start of the current season, so it was great that it was ready for the game. Carlisle were absolutely thrilled with the condition of it and we've had nothing but positive feedback.' As Frenchfield is owned by Eden Council and leased by the club, their leisure and community service manager at the council, Doug Huggon, was involved in the process too. 'Duncan Ross can only be commended in their approach to offering a



solution to the drainage issue, successfully bidding for the work, undertaking the work on time and to budget', Doug said.

'Also, for the support and assistance that has been offered to the club since the work was carried out, advising on irrigation, grass cutting and on-going maintenance.'

'Both the council and the club were impressed by Duncan Ross's performance and hope to develop a relationship going forward that will ensure that the day to day maintenance of the pitch, undertaken by volunteers at the club as well as the annual reinstatement of the pitch allows for less matches being postponed and use of the pitch by other teams within the club.'

Their involvement along with the help of the Cumberland Football Association meant half the cost of reconstructing the pitch was paid for. Allowing other teams within the club to use the pitch is a very important point for Brian Williams, who now aims to bond the clubs 300 junior kids and four ladies' teams together by allowing all of them to play on the stadium pitch.

This would not only have a positive effect on the players, but the club's finances at the same time. There is also a probable knock-on effect of being able to use the surface to attract new players to the club.



## Charterhouse to highlight Graden GBS1200 at Saltex

The Graden GBS 1200 is a 1.2 m straight reeled unit ideal for flat areas such as sports pitches, cricket squares and tennis courts. This model can be mounted onto a 20 hp+ tractor and can scarify to various depths of up to 45 mm. The tempered steel blades, in optional widths of 1 mm or 3 mm, feature 8 tungsten tips and are fitted in reverse rotation to slice cleanly through the turf, while the deep scalloped design prevents the blades from becoming clogged.

The Charterhouse stand at Saltex will be Stand K070. Ian Lauder Northern Territory Sales Managers makes his Saltex debut.



# Good enough for French Open is not nearly good enough for Ryder Cup

In the everyday world, we have good, better, best. In the golf world we can replace this by good, better, and the superlative 'Ryder Cup'. Ever since 2012, life has been a dream for 34-year-old greenkeeper and superintendent Alejandro Reyes. In that year he was employed to prepare France's most important course for the 2018 Ryder Cup.

Author: Hein van Iersel



7 min. reading time

## BACKGROUND



In the editorial office of Greenkeeper Magazine, Jos Theunissen (Melspring) is on the telephone: 'We are proud to contribute to the success of the golf course hosting the French Open, with our fertilizers and liquids. The superintendent of this course would be glad to see us and tell us about his preparation of the course for the 2018 Ryder Cup. Do you want to join me?' Of course we want to join

him. Paris is certainly no punishment, and Reyes' story sounds really sensational. A greenkeeper under 30, being awarded this kind of job ... Alejandro Reyes is originally from Spain and studied agronomy on an academic level, both in Spain and in England. After that, he worked in the south of Spain for some years on a number of Jack Nicklaus courses. I started out as a greenkeeper,

but when the crisis struck and a large part of the staff were dismissed, I soon became responsible for several courses as a superintendent and I was leading a team of 25 greenkeepers.'

Reyes continues: 'In 2012, when I was 29, I ran into this vacancy at Le Golf National. The French golf federation was given permission by the organisa-



A perfect course with perfect equipment – there is a special team of three people from Bernhard, manufacturer of sharpening systems, to grind the reels.

tion to organise the 2018 Ryder Cup, provided the course was in perfect shape. That is why the federation was looking for a superintendent with tournament experience and a broad knowledge golf courses construction.. I was invited for an interview. One of the requirements was being able to speak French. I was not, but fortunately I had three months to learn it. And when at the beginning of the second interview they asked me if I wanted to speak French or English, I chose French.' Reyes tells this with a broad smile, but it is clear that he was taking a chance, especially when he was told that he could not switch to English halfway through the interview.

## Whole blocks of flats have been dumped here, it seems, mixed with some black soil

To cut a long story short: Reyes got the job. 'The first day, there was a huge pile of papers on my desk, all about the things I had to realise. Money had been thought of as well. By raising the membership fee of the national golf federation by 2 € and by seeking funding in the region, 7 million euro was collected. This enabled us to carry out the programme that was necessary to prepare the course for the Ryder Cup within five years!' Reyes: 'You mustn't think that Le Golf National was a bad course. Far from it. But the Ryder Cup is just another category, where different standards apply. The greens etc. were fine, but the drainage of the

fairways, for example, was in a mediocre state.' Reyes explains: 'Organising a mega-event is risk management, for the most part. The French Open is usually organised during a period when Le Golf National is very dry; but it could be very different for the RC, the last week of September.. That is why the drainage of the course had to be optimal, so that even after a downpour the fairways would immediately be dry again. After 90 mm of rain, the course should absolutely be playable again within three hours' Reyes: 'When I came here in 2013, this was unthinkable. In winter, for example, it was not allowed to go on the course with trolleys. This has been realised by 'sand-banding': double drainage. On top of the regular drainage, diagonally, there is 140 km of shallow slit drainage: 15 or 20 cm deep slits, filled with coarse sand, help the rainwater to drain quickly, whereupon it is further transported through the main drainage system.'

The irrigation figures are impressive too. Reyes dishes up some figures: 1500 sprinklers, connected by more than 50 km of slits, containing 32-315 mm diameter HDPE pipes, controlled by a Toro Lynx irrigation computer.

### Dressing

Le Golf National tries to make the course waterproof in a number of ways. First of all, intensive drainage work has been carried out during the past few years. Water can now be transported as fast as possible, helped by the intensive topdressing programme. During the season, the greens are sand-dressed a fraction of a millimetre every week. Once a year the course closes for a number of



Entire blocks of flats have disappeared underground.

weeks, when the intensive maintenance is carried out. Well over 1 cm of dress ground is then applied to the greens, tees, fairways and approaches. In all, almost 2 cm of dress ground is applied yearly. And this can be seen and heard. Jokingly, I say to Theunissen that the greens are so hard, they seem like rustic oak furniture. Standing on the greens, you don't need a stimpmeter to know that they are both very fast and hard as a rock. On a random September day, the greens would be stimping at more than 11, the greenkeeper says. And it would be even faster in case of tournament conditions and if the greens are mown and rolled twice. Reyes thinks intensive dressing is good for a number of reasons. There is hardly any organic matter in the top layer (less than 1 percent). Therefore, the grass is actually growing on neutral soil and the growth can be perfectly controlled. For Melspring, there is nothing in it; the liquid fertilizers used for the greens are not in their product range – unlike biostimulants like Megreen. That is why the greens are 100 percent fertilized with water-soluble fertilizers, applied by means of a state of the art Jacobsen field sprayer. This field sprayer is supported by GPS, so basically it knows where to spray and where not. Reyes does not use this option, however; he puts his trust in an old-fashioned foam marker.

The fertilization of the fairways is partly liquid and partly granular with Marathon from Melspring. Whereas the liquid fertilizer is applied on the greens with a Jacobsen field sprayer, on the fairways this is done by means of the irrigation system.



For the greens, however, this is not precise enough. As regards the composition of the grass, the greens consist of a mixture of bluegrass and bent. This mixture may not be completely Green Deal-proof in the Netherlands, but Reyes is pleased with it. And it really helps that the golf course architect adheres to the slogan *trees and golf do not mix*. Trees are non-existent on the course, enabling it to dry quickly in the wind. It also helps that Reyes still has quite a large medicine cabinet with fungicides at his disposal – although in France the pressure to use less pesticides is increasing as well, he says. But it is clear that the wish to abandon all pesticides is less strong in France than elsewhere in the northern parts of Europe.

#### Demolition waste

Reyes takes us to the course, to the place where greenkeepers are preparing a separate driving range for the Ryder Cup. He points at the demoli-



6 min. reading time

## TECHNICS

- **Le Golf National is owned by the French golf federation**
- **The most prominent course is the Albatros, with 25 French Opens, 1 World Amateur Golfers Championship, the 2018 Ryder Cup and the 2024 Olympics**
- **Three courses: Albatros, Aigle and Oiselet, with a total of 45 holes**
- **Surface area: 139 hectares**
- **95.000 m<sup>2</sup> of practice area, 2 driving ranges and 7 putting greens (5.500 m<sup>2</sup>)**
- **Greenkeeping team includes 24 M/F + seasonal Gbps**

tion waste that has been dug up from the ground. Everything you do not want under a golf course, has come up here from the ground. Pieces of rubble of more than 100 kilos, PVC pipes, but also electrical supplies, pieces of wood and iron. It appeared that during the construction of the golf course in the eighties, the builders were searching for free materials to create different levels in a relatively flat environment. Whole blocks of flats were dumped here, it seems, mixed with some black soil.

#### Driving range

Another distinguishable feature of a Ryder Cup course is the driving range. Ryder Cup players can easily launch 300-plus metres drives on a good day. This is not possible on the old driving range. That is why a new one is built, far into the nearby golf course.

#### About Le Golf National

Le Golf National, owned by the French federation, was originally built to host the French Open. The course as a whole consists of three different courses: the championship course Albatros, and two less prestigious courses: Aigle (Eagle) and Oiselet (Birdy). These are also 18 holes courses, but less challenging in design and construction. The course was designed in the early eighties by the French golf course architect Hubert Chesneau. Apart from a good-looking, challenging course, there was a wish for a course that was suitable for major tournaments. Practically every green and every tee is surrounded for the greater part by a slope of several metres high, primarily designed to accommodate as many spectators as possible. Reyes: 'And on top of the slope there is going to be a grandstand.' Theunissen and I are giving each

other a meaningful glance and are saying, almost simultaneously: 'Seeing this course makes you realise why there are no suitable courses in the Netherlands for the Ryder Cup.' Not because they are lacking beauty or because they have a smaller number of greens or fairways, but because their design and infrastructure are not appropriate. Reyes points at the paths on the course, asphalt for the most part, not much to look at. 'Don't forget that during the months before and after the Ryder Cup, every two minutes a heavy lorry weighing more than 20 metric tons comes past. Therefore, all these paths are calculated to carry 40 tons.'

#### Closed for nine months

In order to carry out the major renovations, the course was closed for nine months in all. During that period the drainage and the irrigation were adapted, as were a large number of greens and tees. Lake edges were reconstructed as well, bunkers installed with Capillary Concrete, a full drinking water pipes and fibre optics lines to be able to host 65000 spectators a day and so on.

## On a random September day, the greens would be stimping at more than 11

#### Orange is beautiful

A top quality course goes with top quality equipment. In the case of Le Golf National, this is Jacobsen. The course has been orange for a number of years, and recently the Ryder Cup closed a sponsorship deal with this supplier. We can see it when we enter the halls, a little later: packed with Jacobsen mowers for greens, tees, fairways and roughs. It is clear that the maintenance level of all these machines is high. A team of mechanics are grinding the reels. Reyes explains that two out of these three men have been seconded here by Bernard, manufacturer of sharpening systems.

#### Beautiful or not?

Is Le Golf National a beautiful course? That depends on personal taste and preference, of course. Personally, I prefer courses where nature and experiencing nature are number one, which is not the case on Le Golf National. Here, it's all about golf. And considering the constant stream of Japanese, Chinese and American golf tourists, they seem to have succeeded. The Cup Ryder Cup logo certainly helps to lure those greenfee players.



Jos Theunissen (Melspring) and Alejandro Reyes



# Why we don't need Robots

More than 20 years ago I was rudely woken by the screeching of my alarm clock, telling me in its own obnoxious way that it was 4 am and time for me to get up.

As a 15 year old I could not think of anything worse, but I wiped the drool from my face, stumbled my way to the bathroom, and started to get ready for my brother to pick me up and take me to work on a golf course for the very first day.

Unbeknown to me, that day would be the start of a

lifelong love and passion of greenkeeping. I was put through my paces like any young apprentice of the time and set to task with the most menial of jobs. I endured, I carried on, I worked my way up to more responsibility and soon I was completely head over heels with this profession.

I moved on to my first proper job working for one of the great greenkeepers of our time and prodigy of the late great Jim Arthur, Gordon Irvine. Working here I again was put through the mire in what I

describe as a proper apprenticeship, where I had to earn the right to progress further in the company standings. The lessons I learnt from all of that team at Mill Ride are irreplaceable and I use many techniques I was taught and shown by these fantastic traditionalist greenkeepers today.

All the way through my time in greenkeeping the lasting memories have been with my colleagues, trying to outdo their work in friendly but fierce competition, picking up on the slightest of



4 min. reading time

## BACKGROUND

### Who will pay the fees for our governing bodies like BIGGA if there are only a small fraction of greenkeepers left that haven't been replaced by machines?

that element away from our trade: to automate, to futurize, to bastardize our profession, to turn it into nothing but a production line where you can maintain your course from a press of a button. Why would anyone want this? But sadly there are, and a growing push for robot mowers that may be a small process, but it has the potential to completely ruin greenkeeping as we know it!

It is an all too familiar sight around the world that honest hard working people are losing their jobs because they are being replaced by robots. Surveys have found that within ten years there will be no taxi drivers left. And what will happen to the lorry driver?

Not all of us have brains wired to be computer programmers. I myself find IT the most difficult and tedious process of my work, but I have had to adapt a little to keep my records up to date. But it has been more of a struggle.

An unpublished report in America found that 47% of total employment is endangered with the upcoming wave of technological advances. 47%, that is almost one out of two people will lose their jobs, and who will this be? The ones who are not masterminds with computers.

I have heard that robot mowers are not intended to replace greenkeepers, but believe me, if it becomes more cost effective then it will. I have already heard that one general manager wants to get a robot mower so he doesn't have to replace a member of staff; it is happening already.

It will effect work force numbers and we will lose proper apprenticeships, for there will be no need for a greenhorn. It will be replaced by a computer programmer, you won't be able to go out and hand cut a green and look back to think to yourself

indiscretions like a 1 mm wide Mohican or lines so bendy they look like bananas.

It was the idea of working outside on a golf course that first got me interested in greenkeeping, but it was the job satisfaction, teamwork, working with nature that kept me enthralled with our great profession.

I am lucky enough to now work at the beautiful Yelverton Golf Club, where wild animals roam, and we are blessed with the most amazing sunrises that sparkle when the sun pops its head up above the moor. What lucky people we are to be able to do this job for a living, which is why I find it astonishing that there are some that want to take

'I done that.' That will be done by a robot; no more team spirit and 'we are in this together' attitudes. Now who wants that?

And why? Why would you want to lose all these perks of being a greenkeeper to sit behind a desk? Is it for monitoring? Maybe, but for me our profession is an art, a feeling, an instinctual entity where you become one with your golf course, where you know all the little indiscretions of the course and how to treat it, not something where you just look at numbers and go from there. Is it for precision? I don't believe so. There is not a robot around that could cut a better green than I, and I am not alone. No, it is to save money. They can justify robots as much as they like, but at the end of the day it is because in the long run robots will be cheaper to operate.

**Programming a robot is IT and not greenkeeping, and leave greenkeeping to those who appreciate and respect and cherish this great profession of ours**

I am sure that this may sound enticing to the GM, but not so much for our profession. Who will pay the fees for our governing bodies like BIGGA if there are only a small fraction of greenkeepers left that haven't been replaced by machines?

I may be protective of profession, but that is because that is all I know and I would hate to see others denied the same life changing experiences I have had in my career because they have been replaced by a machine. It is a dangerous road to start treading. If that is the path you want to walk down, then do not have the audacity to call yourself a greenkeeper, because programming a robot is IT and not greenkeeping, and leave greenkeeping to those who appreciate and respect and cherish this great profession of ours.

Kristian Summerfield

**Kristian Summerfield is head Greenkeeper at Yelverton Golf Club and was Dutch Greenkeeper of the Year in 2015**

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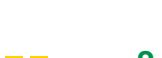
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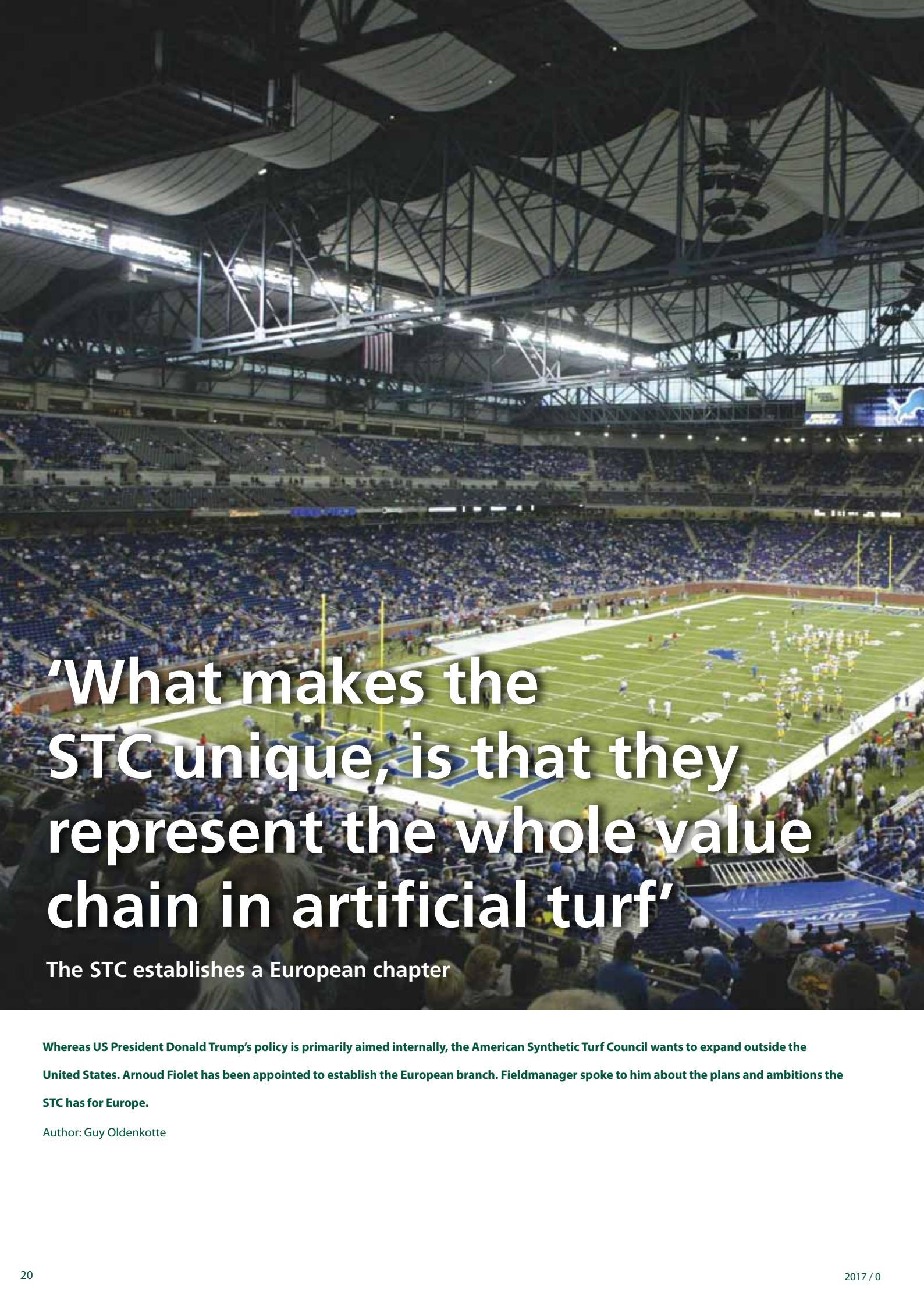
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**'What makes the STC unique, is that they represent the whole value chain in artificial turf'**

The STC establishes a European chapter

Whereas US President Donald Trump's policy is primarily aimed internally, the American Synthetic Turf Council wants to expand outside the United States. Arnoud Fiolet has been appointed to establish the European branch. Fieldmanager spoke to him about the plans and ambitions the STC has for Europe.

Author: Guy Oldenkotte



Since its inception in 2003, the Synthetic Turf Council (STC) has been representing companies in the artificial turf industry on the American continent exclusively. In 2017, the STC represents more than 200 companies. A motion adopted at the 2016 convention will now see this changed. Arnoud Fiolet explains this development: 'The STC has decided it wants to represent the industry globally. This is because it has many members operating all over the world, but also because

the members are dealing with organizations that have a global influence, such as FIFA, FIH, World Rugby and so on. The members see that the STC represents their interests well in the US, and made it clear that they want to benefit from a representation outside the US market that is just as good. This encouraged the STC to roll out plans to establish chapters on each continent. A presence in Europe is the first and most obvious step' At the recent STC congress in Las Vegas, Fiolet scored the jack-

The STC lobbied on behalf of the industry and pointed out to the senators and policy makers **the existence of 90 international studies**

pot when he was elected chairman of the Europe chapter. It didn't make him instantly rich, nor does he expect to become wealthy by it in the long run. 'It is a position that will not be remunerated, but I expect that it will very demanding. I have no doubt, however, that the industry in Europe will benefit from a large, strong and proven organization like the STC. We have formulated four objectives that will form the core of the activities by the European chapter. The first one is that we want to network more often. Secondly, we want to provide more information to the industry. Thirdly, it is our ambition to represent the industry legally, and finally, we intend to promote the artificial turf industry at large! Fiolet believes that the industry will benefit from the informed and thorough approach for which the STC is renowned. He takes the discussion about the safety of SBR granulates, that currently dominates the news in many markets, as an example. 'Last year, attempts were made in seven of the United States to adopt legislation which links SBR granulates to carcinogenicity. These were attempts to prohibit the material. The STC lobbied on behalf of the industry and pointed out to the senators and policy makers the existence of 90 international studies. They also made it clear that all these studies have proven the opposite. The discussion about the safety of SBR granules is a topic in Europe as well, and in the Netherlands in particular. However, the response here is much too fragmented. It could have been dealt with in a better way.'

### Co-existence possible

The remark that the discussion about the safety of SBR granules in the Netherlands and Europe could have been dealt with differently and in a better way, should not be regarded as criticism towards the various associations representing the industry in European countries, Fiolet emphasizes. 'Certainly not. I know for a fact that the Dutch BSNC has worked hard behind the scenes to guide the debate about the safety of SBR granulate in

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## TECHNICS

the Netherlands. They made extensive use of the STC's information. That is what distinguishes the STC: they closely monitor all scientific research that is being done and inform their members through press releases and other publications about the results of these studies. These publications can serve as useful information sources. The sharing of such information is very important to the industry. We want to do the same thing for the European industry.' He also points out that the STC represents the artificial turf industry exclusively. 'Membership of the Dutch BSNC has a much wider scope. They also represent companies engaged in the construction of athletics or sports fields, for example. The STC focuses purely on artificial turf. Nevertheless, I believe the BSNC and the STC can exist alongside each other. It could even lead to an interesting cross-pollination.' The BSNC is an organization especially for the industry in the Netherlands. On a European level, the European Synthetic Turf Organization (ESTO) claims to represent the industry in Europe. The decision to establish its own chapter instead of working together with the STC is remarkable. 'The STC approached the ESTO a long time ago, but their lukewarm response made the STC decide to push ahead with its plan to establish its own chapters all over the world, including Europe.' Fiolet doesn't think this will cause any friction. 'The STC's ambitions have always been an open secret. The ESTO was one of the speakers at the STC conference last year and the STC presented a paper at the ESTO event. I believe this can continue to work in the future. The ESTO and STC memberships differ significantly. The ESTO membership mainly includes artificial turf manufacturers and predominant suppliers to the industry. Suppliers of shock pads are particularly well-represented. What makes the STC membership unique, is that they represent the entire value chain in artificial turf:



Arnoud Fiolet

from yarn manufacturers to installers of artificial grass systems for both the sports and the domestic market. The installers in particular are not properly represented by the ESTO. However, it is precisely this group that can benefit from the information and a legal representation that the STC offers.'

### The STC's ambitions have always been an open secret

#### More innovation

Fiolet expects that better information and the exchange of knowledge will also lead to more innovation within the industry. 'Currently there is very little innovation in the artificial grass industry for sports. We believe innovation will be stimulated by encouraging people to look elsewhere and improving international relationships. Dutch companies can learn a lot from countries such as Italy or Scandinavia, and in turn, companies in these countries can reap what we do here in the Netherlands. Seeing and understanding what is done elsewhere could lead to the development of new concepts. The market should keep an open mind by considering what the end user expects from a synthetic grass field, instead of looking at the preconditions to be met. When this will be the case, I am convinced that the artificial grass systems and the industry at large will benefit.'

Another way for the STC to improve the quality of the products and the industry, is to better distinguish companies dedicated to the industry from those that can be considered fly-by-nights. 'The industry is approximately 40 years old. Since 2010, the number of players aiming for a piece of the pie has grown significantly in many European countries. It has become very difficult for the end-user to determine which companies are dedicated to the industry. Members of the STC endorse the codes of conduct and declare to agree with certain principles. In addition, the STC has its own accreditation system. In other words, companies that are members of the STC offer a better guarantee and stand for quality. That will certainly serve the interest of the market.'

#### Not exclusively Dutch

The first chairman elected by the STC, Ron van Gelderen, had strong ties to the Netherlands. His surname leaves little doubt. The fact that the STC

has now chosen another Dutchman to realize its European ambitions is therefore ironic, but also understandable. Dutch companies involved in the design, construction and maintenance of artificial grass sports fields as well as their colleagues in the natural grass industry are the absolute top in the international industry. Much effort is made, however, to prevent the European chapter of the STC from becoming a Dutch affair. 'The STC has elected eight people to form the European branch. This group must represent the different industries in the market, but also the different markets. Therefore the group consists of people from different countries: myself, Stefan Diderich (Mattrax), Xavier Nicolau (Labosport), Rob Moors (Schmitz foam), Andy Shuttleworth (Permavoid Ltd) and Leon van Zijl (Signgrass). We still have five vacancies for the board, which we intend to fill with representatives from other European countries. An international composition is important.' The United States are big, but they are one nation. That is different in Europe. 'That is why it is important to have representatives from different countries and parts of Europe. This will help to identify problems faster and consider solutions that work elsewhere.' At present, about 25 European companies are already members of the STC. 'The event we organized to announce the European branch of the STC was visited by about 100 guests, representing about 50 companies from the industry. If the STC manages to have 40 to 50 European companies as members by the end of the year, I believe this will definitely give us a critical mass.'

The first opportunity for the industry to engage with the STC will be the FSB Show in Cologne, Germany, in November this year. 'The board of the STC has been there many times as a visitor. This year they will have their own booth for the first time.'

The saying 'sport unites' is commonly used all over the world. While the US President is working hard to isolate the United States, the STC clearly takes this phrase at heart by uniting the artificial turf industry internationally.

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