

“greenkeeping”

A perfect career choice for young golfers...

Richard Saunders is an apprentice Greenkeeper at the Murawai Golf Club who loves golf and generally can't get enough of it. Not surprisingly he has managed to find the perfect career option that allows him to play as much golf as possible. Talk about a 'win/win' situation – he's able to improve his handicap and become a qualified Sports Turf Manager at the same time!

Richard started playing golf when he was 12 years old in Tauranga. He made the Bay of Plenty development squad when he was fifteen with a handicap of 4. He now lives in Auckland and at the tender



age of twenty is about to graduate from a three year apprenticeship in Sports Turf Management, while working at Helensville and Murawai Golf Clubs. The world is certainly his oyster as he embarks on a Greenkeeping career which could span the globe and open up some amazing golfing opportunities.

Richard couldn't be more enthusiastic about his career choice. "The summer hours of work are between 6.30am and 3.00 pm. This allows time for 18 holes of golf in the afternoon", which he manages 3-4 times a week in summer helping towards his goal of getting down to a zero handicap. He also plays on a regular basis with a group of other Sports Turf trainees and their Superintendents, alternating around their courses.

All Auckland Greenkeeping apprentices are automatically members of the Auckland Golf Course Superintendents Association (AGCSA), which provides them with the opportunity to play golf for free around Auckland subject to course availability – this is usually not a problem in the early afternoon when everyone else is still at work!

The flexibility that Greenkeeping provides has enabled Richard to work around golf tournaments as participating in the game has an important impact on the quality of his work. "Ideally the skills of a golf course Superintendant are made up of 70% Golf, 15% science and 15% communication skills", believes Tony Jonas, Course Manager at Golf Harbour Country Club. A statement Richard agrees with, "Greenkeeping gives you an appreciation of course standards, as it allows you to understand the significance of ball roll in different conditions and grasses". These observations can be critical to how he will manage the turf at his own course.

"As a career you can take it to any level you want", says Richard. Careers in sports turf are available with golf courses, in sports field and cricket pitch management, with councils, turf management contractors, bowling clubs, schools, race courses and commercial organisations serving the sports turf industry. You could be the Turf Manager in one of New Zealand's premier turf facilities!

Turf management is more than looking after grass! Opportunities range from hands on turf care, through to management of staff and resources required to maintain a world class sporting facility. You can even branch out into research and consultancy. For more information on how to enter the world of Sports Turf Management, contact the Sports Turf Industry Training Organisation on (06) 355 7025, or have a look at the website... www.getonthegrass.co.nz ■

