

Draining 'the swamp'



Stratford Cricket Club's home ground, Victoria Park, suffered from such poor drainage it was dubbed 'the Stratford swamp' by the club's rivals, and last year's first-round matches all had to be played away.

Chairperson Chris Drummond took the club's concerns to the Stratford District Council and they agreed to work together to fix the drainage problems. The council also decided to take the opportunity to move the wicket over five metres so that it would sit squarely between two rugby fields.

Mexteds was contracted to install a 160mm diameter collector drain across the whole length of the field, which soon revealed the full extent of the drainage issue as water poured into the new trench from the saturated subsoils. We then installed six 110mm laterals across the wicket at five metre centres.

With drainage in place, our team of Chris Parkinson, Brent Dornan and Thomas Chalk built a new wicket for the Stratford Cricket Club after removing the old surface. Beginning with a 100mm layer of AP65 basecourse, followed by 20mm of top course, the wicket was built using Patumahoe clay and laser levelled, then seeded and fertilised.

Neil Cooper, Stratford District Council's Parks and Property Asset Manager, says he appreciated Mexteds' high standard of work.

"It's looking really good, and I must say I was very impressed with the professionalism [of Mexteds]. The guys were very tidy from an operational perspective and minimised any damage to the reserve. I couldn't be any happier with the way the whole thing went."

The cricket club will now manage the irrigation and grow-in, and hopes to be playing on the new wicket in January.



New wicket for Wellington College



Mexteds has been rebuilding wicket blocks for several clients recently, including Wellington College Cricket Club.

Wellington College groundsman, Bruce Tie, says the school's cricket club was looking to improve facilities for the students, and funded the new block from club finances.

"It had never been purposely built as a wicket block and had built up over time, so to get another decent quality block at the college it needed to be done properly."

Mexteds dug out the existing material and supplied, spread and levelled the new wicket clay before seeding and fertilising.

We also changed the outfield levels, bringing in 60 cubic metres of soil to lessen the grade leading up to the wicket, feathering it in to the match the surrounding area.

"The cricket bowlers will thank us!" says Cameron Mexted.

New seaside reserve for Plimmerton



With summer in sight, Mexteds has created a brand-new neighbourhood park next to Plimmerton Beach, with views across the water to Whitireia Park and Mana Island.

Two old houses on the site were removed before we levelled and landscaped the area, preserving mature trees to provide shady picnic spots.

Porirua City Council parks manager Olivia Dovey says, "Our aim is to create a neighbourhood park to be enjoyed by local residents and beach goers. Plimmerton Beach is such a popular destination and this work will protect the public's access to the foreshore for the future."

Porirua City Council bought the properties in 2011 with the intention of creating the park, and rented them out while the project went through Council's Long-term Plan process.



Fraser Park Sportsville - Golf fundraiser



L to r Cameron Mexted, Hagen Faith, Lawrence Orr and Shane Maddren

It was a hard day at the office for our contracts manager Shane Maddren and general manager Cameron Mexted as they joined 120 other golfers for the Fraser Park Sportsville golf fundraiser in September.

Teaming up with Hagen Faith of Westpac Stadium and Lawrence Orr of Wellington City Council, our *Irrigation for Show, Drainage for Dough* team enjoyed a day in the sun at the beautiful Boulcott's Farm Heritage Golf Club, which hosted the event.

Mexteds was pleased to sponsor a hole, and event manager Natasha Szalkowski says the day raised over \$12,000, which will go towards capital works at the new Fraser Park multi-purpose facility, a partnership led by Hutt City Council and supported by Sport New Zealand.

Nine Hutt Valley clubs ranging from rugby, softball, cricket, hockey, football and squash are founding members of the Fraser Park Sportsville and each club is tasked with raising \$100,000 to support the capital works.

Mexteds has also signed a six-year sponsorship agreement with the Hutt Valley Community Facilities Trust, which is building the Fraser Park Sports & Community Hub.

The main building is on schedule to open in December and will provide indoor training facilities, squash courts, a café, bar and meeting rooms.

The complex also includes artificial turf areas for hockey, football and softball and there will be a several natural turf playing fields in the 27 hectare reserve.

Ngaio school playing field upgrade

Access was the biggest challenge for Mexteds as we undertook the first stage of a rejuvenation of Ngaio School's playing field in September.

After squeezing our machinery between playground equipment and school buildings, we planed off the top 30mm of turf, which was uneven and compacted, before importing 70 cubic metres of topsoil, levelling, undersowing and fertilising.

The job has been split into two stages to give students an outdoor play area during the works programme.



Supporting the future of sports turf



Mexteds' sports turf operator, Marcus Duell, talks to a job seeker at JobFest 2018

Mexteds joined 35 other local business to take part in JOBfest 2018, Porirua's Youth2Work movement, organised by Partners Porirua in August.

We mustered our own youth representatives, sports turf operators Jules de Vries and Marcus Duell, who manned our stand alongside our contracts manager Shane Maddren and general manager Cameron Mexted.

The 1200 college students and 300 job seekers who came through had the chance to watch a slide show of our work

and ask questions, learning more about career opportunities in the sports turf sector.

A few weeks later a small group of students from Bishop Viard College, accompanied by principal Rose Sawaya, followed up with a site visit to Rugby League Park to see Mexteds' operations team at work as we prepared to begin sand-slitting.

Cameron Mexted says it was a pleasure to show the boys some of our work in what he sees as a 'hidden gem' industry.

Department of Corrections Youth Expo

Mexteds was one of a small number of businesses who attended a Department of Corrections Youth Expo in November, held at Rimutaka Prison.

The expo aimed to help the men transition from prison to the community by building connections with organisations as they strive to make positive changes in their lives.

Employers, training providers, service providers and recruitment companies attended, as well as Ministry of Social Development and NZTA, who provided men with information about connecting with Work and Income New Zealand, and obtaining their drivers licences.

Mexteds was invited to attend after being approached by the Department of Corrections at JOBfest2018.



Crane from Weltec (l) and Cameron Mexted

Hybrid turf - another tool in the box



The high-wear goal mouth areas at Dave Farrington Park in Miramar had an upgrade this winter when Mexteds installed new Mixto hybrid turf.

The sand-based field is Miramar Rangers' home ground, named after David Farrington, a legendary figure in New Zealand football for more than 40 years, who coached Miramar Rangers and the New Zealand women's team.

Mixto is an Italian hybrid grass system that blends natural and artificial grass. Mexteds recommends it as a means of reducing turf damage in high-use areas, such as centre field, goal mouths, around scrum machines and in training areas.

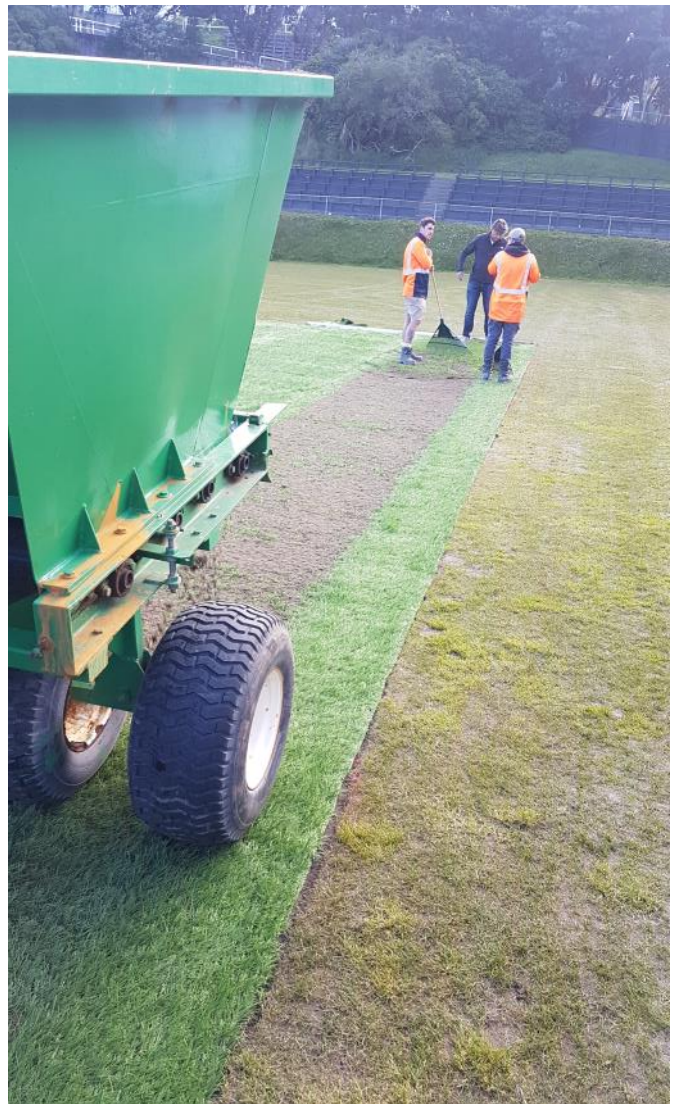
Cameron Mexted says Mixto has many advantages, reducing the natural grass wear and giving faster recovery after a game.

"The maintenance is similar to natural grass turf, and it can either be installed and sown on site, or pre-grown in a nursery and laid from turf rolls."

At Dave Farrington we removed the old turf and installed a new sand bed. The 55mm Mixto product was then rolled out, before progressively top-dressing with sand and sowing with Reliant grass seed and fertilising.

Mixto will allow the grass roots to develop deeply and avoids the problem of grass sods being kicked out during play.

The product is widely used in Europe in training grounds and stadia by top football clubs such as Queens Park Rangers, AC Milan and Real Madrid.



Talking about our evolution



Cameron Mexted was a guest speaker at the Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce *Technology and Innovation* winter series, where he took the guests on a graphic journey charting the growth and development of the Mexted family business from general agricultural contractors to sports turf specialists.

WJ Mexted Ltd, based in Pauatahanui, was begun by Cameron's grandfather, Wilf, a farmer who also undertook agricultural contracting work in the district. But even as far back as 1970 Wilf could see farming was a shrinking business locally, and so he moved into subdivision development in Whitby and also built the fairways at Whitby Golf Course.

Cameron's father, Steve (pictured above), bought the family business in 1992, renaming it Mexted Contractors Limited. It was a time of change for sport in New Zealand, especially in 1995 when the Rugby Union embraced professionalism and the introduction of super rugby, raising pitch performance expectations. After a few years Mexteds decided to move out of general contracting and began specialising in sports turf renovation.

Looking overseas for best practice and technology solutions, Mexteds invested in its first trenching wheel from Italy, and almost immediately modified it to meet New Zealand conditions, a trend that our engineering team continues to this day, ensuring our plant operates at maximum efficiency.

Steve's ability to look at a problem and find an innovative solution has also seen the company design and build the Hurrishifter, a unique rugby goal post lifter operated from a tractor, now regularly used at Westpac Stadium during code changeovers.

Mexteds has continued to keep close tabs on overseas trends and invested in plant such as the Dutch-built Ecodresser, an eco-friendly topdressing system that harvests and re-lays soil, avoiding transporting and bringing in new material.

Steve then set about improving the slow speed of trenching work by designing a dual-wheel sand-slitting machine that halves the time to undertake secondary sand-slit drainage.

Nowadays, digital technology also plays a key part in our work. Mexteds was the first New Zealand turf contractor to use a robotic Total Station for machine-controlled sports field grading. We have recently invested in Topcon Millimeter GPS machine control gear for one of our tractors, giving us automatic grade control with all the advantages of satellite positioning technology. The design surface is programmed directly into the tractor for maximum efficiency and a pegless job site.

In looking at the challenges ahead that will require innovative solutions, Cameron talked about the move away from chemical use and the need to recycle materials, especially given the growing world-wide shortage of sand.

Secondary drainage the icing on the cake

Our workshop was a hive of activity over winter as we took advantage of the quieter months to service all our machinery and upgrade our secondary drainage equipment.

Our mechanical engineer, Paul Dockery, built a new rear axle and fitted tractor turf tyres to our gravel bander machine. The 30 percent increase in tyre size has made a huge difference as it means less ground pressure and less compaction on the field, especially when the hopper is full of backfilling material.

We also fitted two extra conveyors to our unique twin-wheeled sand splitter and a more powerful blower to deliver 50 percent more air to the trench-cleaning system. The modifications have improved the flow of trenching materials, especially in wetter conditions. With Spring renovation work in full swing, both upgrades have been put to the test.

The modified twin-wheeled sand splitter has been used for two major drainage upgrades at Rugby League Park and Porirua Park (Jerry Collins Stadium) in recent weeks.

Cameron Mexted says the trenching machine, designed and built by Mexteds, really proved its worth. "A senior sports field used to take a full week to sandslit using a standard trenching machine, and we completed Rugby League Park in just two-and-a-half days."

Porirua City Council is also delighted with the results



Porirua Park

of sand slitting at Porirua Park, a high-use ground that had more than 60 games played on it during winter, including the Wellington Rugby League finals. With no summer sport planned, Spring was the perfect time to get the drainage upgraded and the grass re-sown.

"It was a really efficient and well-manned job with a lot of guys on the ground which we really appreciate," says Porirua City's turf manager, Glen Smith.

"It's a brilliant surface we have here, with a good reputation, and we're committed to keeping it that way."

Mexteds has also been gravel banding at Otarua Park on the Kapiti Coast, following on from primary drainage we installed earlier this year. The secondary drainage was installed at 5 metre centres in an area covering 14,000 square metres.

KCDC Parks Officer Mark Hammond says, "It's a beautiful park, but it's low lying, right next to the river. However the drainage that Mexteds have put in is pretty incredible. Immediately we have seen the effects of the primary drainage, but we also know we can make it better with the secondary drainage. We're getting very good feedback from users of the park."

The park is used by the Kapiti Coast football community, mainly juniors, as well as some senior games.



Otarua Park

Nga Puna Wai—new home for rugby league

Mexteds' operations team, led by Chris Parkinson, has begun work at Nga Puna Wai sports hub in Christchurch this month building two new sand-carpet rugby-league fields for HEB Construction, head contractors to Christchurch City Council.

Over the next few weeks we are installing irrigation, levelling the subgrade and placing 100mm of topsoil, before installing collector drains and 1,900 metres of primary lateral drains. Once these are in place we'll be installing 18,800 metres of secondary sandslit drains and a 95mm sand carpet layer before grassing and taking care of the 12-week grow in period.

Once complete the rugby league fields will provide covered spectator seating for around 550 people, with a planned opening in April 2019.

Mole ploughing in
irrigation lines at Nga Puna Wai



Introducing ...



Tom Gore joined our operations team earlier this year.

Tom is a Lincoln graduate with a Bachelor of Agriculture, who comes from a Canterbury farming background.

His experience with machinery maintenance and tractor work, alongside his love of rugby and cricket, make him a great addition to the Mexteds' crew.



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