

# MDP – “We are changing the perception of club management in Europe”

As CMAE celebrates its 50th Management Development Programme (MDP) in Edinburgh, *Clubhouse Europe* catches up with the volunteer credited as the architect of formal club manager education in Europe.

Introducing Kevin Fish CCM.

Newcomers to the industry may think that formal training has always been available for club managers, but Kevin Fish CCM knows otherwise. “As recently as 2011 this was not the case, and it took the CMAE and its partners to give education its correct place on the agenda of clubs, professional bodies and even club managers themselves,” he says.

Kevin, who was within the first group of European Managers to attain CCM designation in 2008, chaired the CMAE Education Policy Board (EPB) for six crucial years and has the distinction of being the first European invited on to the Professional Development Committee for the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA).

Ask him how the CMAE MDP programme came about and Kevin is disarmingly modest.

“I was just sitting on this egg when it hatched, it really is that simple,” he says. “CMAE had been gradually building up a head of steam for a decade or more when I was approached to Chair the Education Policy Board (EPB). It became very clear that in order to maintain our momentum and our status within the international community of club managers we would need to mirror the standards of education being offered to club managers not only in America, but throughout the world. Someone needed to stand up and say they would try and make it happen, so I took a deep breath and said that if the EPB was with me, we would do it. And we did.”

That meant studying the programme owned by CMAA – called BMI – and replicating this in a format that would appeal to CMAE’s managers across Europe, explains Kevin: “Back then clubs were far less used to committing to their managers’ professional development needs.”

Five years on the MDP Pathway is now firmly established and the numbers speak for themselves.



Nine hundred representatives from 29 nationalities have been represented to date in seven host venues.

“As we saw early demand for the course rise, and numerous countries show serious interest, we could sense the excitement and momentum build and the enthusiasm from everyone just carried us over the line,” says Kevin. “Jason Koenigsfeld was our biggest supporter. He mentored me through the whole thing, even becoming a fixture around the dinner table in my house for a while as he audited our programmes on behalf of CMAA, who understandingly needed to know that their programme was in safe hands.”

As the programme got underway the impact it was having on club managers – who as Kevin points out are often under-valued by their clubs and committees – was soon evident. “It became clear that through the

introduction of training and qualifications we were doing far more than just helping club managers with their jobs, together we were actually changing the perception of club management,” he says. “Few clubs would employ a new course manager or head professional without the appropriate training and qualifications, and now, finally, we are giving clubs the chance to view their club manager in the same light. Wouldn’t it be great if within a generation we change the landscape so that every club recognises that their manager has received the formal training required to do this job, and fully respects them for that.”

So with over 900 places taken at 50 MDPs, what’s so special about the programme? Kevin crystallises it down to three key factors: “It’s industry-led, it generates tribal behaviours, and it forces managers to think deeply about their clubs, and often themselves.” Let me elaborate.

## Industry-led

The programme is based on a global curriculum which has been fine tuned over 30 years by an international audience of thousands of club managers. “This let us hit the ground running back in 2011, with proven best practice which give managers guaranteed deliverables when they return to their desks,” says Kevin. “Club managers in 29 countries and 15 different sports have attended the courses so far which proves that the principles of club management are global, even though the practices are understandably very local.”

## Tribal behaviours


“The residential nature of the courses generate a togetherness that other forms of learning simply don’t foster,” says Kevin. “Managers now have access to many other forms of education, or they can simply google information on clubs if all they are seeking is a

“When things are going well, take every opportunity to look out of the window, not in to the mirror.”



Kevin in action with MDP delegates.

transfer of knowledge. MDP is different, it provides the benefits of studying in a group, using the social interaction of managers sharing experiences to truly explore a subject and generate meaningful solutions based on real life, not just theory. This tribal behaviour extends well beyond the course, with managers continuing to interact to solve day to day problems. Presenters now also send a post-course email nudge to delegates to see if they can help them once back at their desks. Our Managers cant quite believe the tribe



**MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

www.cmaeurope.org  
#jointhetribe

**Industry experts**


The curriculum is delivered by **external specialists** with a history of working in the club industry and experienced **qualified Club Managers**. Our committed team of educators will provide on going support after the programmes to delegates who approach them.

**Certification**

We offer two levels of certification for those who are on our education pathway.


The **Club Management Diploma (CMdip)** which is available to those who complete MDP's 1 & 2 and the globally recognised **Certified Club Manager (CCM)**.

Both awards are recognised by the leading club industry recruitment firms.



**Networking**


30% of learning is done outside of the classroom, which is why our MDP courses are residential giving delegates the chance to network and build relationships.



**Bringing it back to your club**

One third of all delegates have made a financial improvement at their club within 30 days.

The average improvement was

**£3,310!** 

**50**  
MDP Courses

**7**  
Countries


**901**  
Delegates

**147**  
CMdips


**36**  
CCMs

The delegate satisfaction rate for our MDPs in the 2015/16 term was **90.34%**


The delegate satisfaction rate of our facilitators for the 2015/16 term was **95%**



**Clubs all over Europe have benefitted**



- Scotland
- England
- France
- Spain
- Italy
- Ireland
- UAE





Kevin meets a hero, Alastair Campbell (right) and Bill McFarlane (left) at London's action-packed 2016 BMI International.

that they have joined, and often say they wonder how they ever did their jobs without it.”

**Going deep early**

“We encourage people to go deep early,” says Kevin. “It’s a catch phrase that has stuck with me



CMAE Vice President David Roy (standing) introduces Kevin Fish at the AGM where CMAE Presidents Arnaldo Cocuzza and Marc Newey awarded Kevin with honorary CMAE membership and a gavel ‘with which to chair his meetings with ruthless efficiency!’

now, but I truly believe that those who get most from the courses are the managers who come willing to explore their weaknesses, share their concerns or angst, and are willing to help others do the same.” Managers often rediscover their love of the job during a week with their peers, and re-affirm why they were attracted to a club career.

“This has been helped enormously by the recent introduction of the two Lumina profiling tools,” says Kevin. “These two modules, and the follow up support we can offer have taken self awareness to a new level, and are helping managers to improve communication and reduce conflict. It’s all about self management, which starts with self awareness.”

While Kevin is widely credited as the architect of

## INSIDER'S INSIGHTS

### On working with the CMAA

I know that CMAA is delighted that Europe has successfully delivered the global curriculum using local presenters and I was honoured to be approached by them to join the CMAA Professional Development Committee who oversee that global curriculum.

### On governance

I was alerted to the importance of governance by Dick Kopplin whose message instantly resonated with me as a serving club manager. The governance session at MDP always scores well, but I am quick to point out that it is the content that is so compelling – although it might help that this presenter has much personal experience of governance done badly, that it makes it easy to articulate what 'good' and 'bad' look like.

### On presenting eight times at World Conference

I was first asked to co-present at the World Conference in Hawaii by Niall Flanagan. I had just secured my R&A Rules of Golf Refereeing certificate. I learned that if you have some knowledge that you think would be interesting for the audience to hear, and you have a passion for channelling that subject to the audience, then presenting is fun. It's finding the subjects you have passion for that counts, and I am pleased to say that I have several of those passions on which I now speak.

### Most rewarding MDP session to deliver?

I loved the MDP 2 at Warwick last November because the Lumina Spark session was so well received. Delegates immediately decided to 'go deep early', allowing us to enlarge several issues that weren't necessarily on that days agenda, but were critical to the managers fulfilment in the role.

### Most challenging MDP?

MDP 2 is the most exhausting for delegates, mainly due to the amount of time they are determined to put in to the case study preparation. No amount of mentoring them can hold them back from banking hours in the evening, when they may be better served by balancing their case study with kicking back and learning from each other again.

### Biggest challenges in setting up the programme?

In 2011 the education landscape was filled with deeply buried landmines, and a number of professional bodies were – understandably – sceptical of supporting a programme which had not piloted in this country. That was a big challenge. However, BIGGA, the PGA and GCMA all got behind the programme and CMAE continue to aspire to having the same commitment to the education of Club Managers that Course Managers and Professional Golfers have benefited from for years.

### Name three club related wishes you'd love to be granted by Theresa May?

1. All of the public to be offered a financial incentive to take up a membership of a sporting club. This might help the health challenges we have, and give a much needed injection of cash in to clubs.
2. With an eye on training, introduce a new minimum educational requirement for managers of sports clubs, to focus the spotlight on this important area.
3. Introduce a new code of conduct, similar to Company Directors, which all volunteer club Committee members are obliged to follow.

### Who would you could award an OCE (Order of the Club Empire) to and why?

Dead easy – Gregg Patterson OCE. These guys come along once in a generation, and if you are lucky enough to have one in your industry then cherish them.



Gregg Patterson OCE



Top: Greg Patterson welcomes Kevin to the CCM fold. Above: CMAE VP David Roy CCM and Kevin winning the MDP Golf ladder – a trophy which the duo had donated (and not on the understanding that they should win it!).

the programme in Europe, he pays tribute to those unsung heroes who helped lay the foundations.

"Establishing MDP in Europe has been my biggest achievement as a volunteer, but I have seen the blood, sweat and tears of dozens of people who have made it possible," he says. "I have already mentioned the many CMAE Board members who helped CMAE to gain a foothold in Europe, the EPB members who just decided one day to make it happen and Jason Koenigsfeld of CMAE without whose professionalism we would not have earned the reputation we have gained."

Support from the broader industry is also praised. "Long before the success of MDP our long term partners at Toro, Circle, Jonas and EZGO backed us to climb this staircase, even when the first step wasn't always clear," says Kevin. "My own employers at Scottish Golf immediately saw the benefits of the programme to their affiliated clubs and backed the early programmes with infectious enthusiasm."

Each of the seven MDP-hosting countries have needed what Kevin describes as 'a pied piper on the ground'. "In Daniel Asis, Marc Bousige, Ascanio Pacelli, Nigel Cartwright, Dave Balden, Stuart Ferrier and James Burns we have been fortunate to have such great ambassadors," he says. "Our presenters have delivered brilliantly, or we wouldn't be sitting with a



Celebrating in style at the CMdip presentations at Stirling, 2016.



The first ever MDP course, "The Scottish Trailblazers", held at Stirling in October 2011, under the shadow of the Wallace Monument.

90% delegate evaluation score. The experience of Ronnie Malcolm and Bill Sanderson in particular was much needed in setting up such high impact courses. And finally to Gregg and Elaine Patterson tireless support and unwavering belief kept me going; thank you."

Asked what really stands out from the MDP journey and Kevin is clear that it's the satisfaction of seeing education high on the agenda of clubs and of managers.

"I get to see people who have not been in a classroom for 30 years battle their way through an exam and pick up a qualification that re-energises their careers. I see more and more vacancies being filled by managers with a CMAE Qualification," he says. "I occasionally have someone tell me that MDP has changed their life. What better reward can there be?"

Kevin has now handed the EPB Chairmanship to James Burns CCM, so what's next?

"I have enjoyed taking a back seat for a while, knowing that the programme is getting stronger under James and with Mike Braidwood in post. I am now turning my volunteer time to creating an annu-

al gathering of this growing tribe of qualified managers. Its a form of alumni I suppose, where we can gather together at a supportive European venue for a mixture of education, golf, socialising and maybe some charitable work thrown in there too."

On the work front he intends to carry on mentoring the many managers who contact him after an MDP presentation on governance, business planning, committee relations or Lumina self development, concludes Kevin. "I have learned a huge amount from teaching the competencies of club management, and I am regularly asked to coach those managers to put that knowledge to good use at their clubs. I aim to extend that one to one support beyond Scotlands borders in 2017, and would of course welcome a call from a member of our tribe if they would like me to guide them and their clubs."

### Contact details

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# UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

## Where did you go to school/college?

I was born and raised in Newcastle and have lived in Scotland most of my life.

## First job?

Selling the first home computers. Ironic really as I'm now one of the least IT-reliant people you'll meet.

## Most exciting role to date?

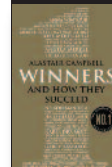
I loved managing a club, which I did for nine years. My greatest pleasure though is helping mentor or simply un-stick other club managers.

## Anything you'd do differently?

My advice to my younger self is the same advice I pass onto those managers at MDP under pressure. Take 10 years to complete the five year plan, and take everyone with you in the process. The journey will be far more enjoyable and far less hazardous.

## Who has been your biggest influence in your working life?

Gregg Patterson, the recently retired Manager of the Beach Club in Santa Monica.



## What book are you reading?

Alastair Campbell's book on strategy, *Winners*.

## First record ever bought?

Ouch; it's the Bay City Rollers

I'm afraid.

## Current music hero?

Modern day crooner Richard Hawley.



## What is your favourite tippie for relaxing after a hard day?

I should probably reflect deeply on this fact, but most of this readership already know the answer to this. Drambuie.

## How do you unwind/relax?

Either, in the hot tub with the family, a beer and some Richard Hawley on the CD, or around my beloved Huffin Puffins football team, cycling, footballing, watching bands or just having meaningful conversations. Both work well for me.