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Golf's modern dilemma

ON a recent visit to Scotland, I had what I suspect must be the classic illustration of 'black and white' golf clubs. On consecutive days in August, a doctor friend and I, both adequate golfers and he a respectable past captain, decided to play Gleneagles and Blairgowrie - the King's and Rosemount courses.

Gleneagles was exceptionally well-presented for the visiting golfer, from locker-room to putting green. The course itself was a joy and, to my delight, the greens were sufficiently fast to induce my opponent to four-putt the first! All the staff we encountered, from starter to steward, greenstaff to waitress, were helpful and polite, non more so than the ranger who appeared astride a Honda three-wheeler on the sixth fairway to encourage a husband and wife from Tokyo to step aside in the cause of speeding up play. It was money well spent.

Rosemount, by contrast, was a great disappointment. I had last played there some 25 years ago and remembered it as 'The Sunningdale of Scotland,' which it isn't now. The course, changed by the addition of a couple of the dullest holes built anywhere, had greens that were slow and bright green. They were so spongy, even in August, that any shot left a pitch mark, a great number of which remained unrepaired. The greens were not good in August, so you wonder what they are like in a wet February.

Our enjoyment was further spoilt by a member in charge of a fourball who, despite two *requests* from the doctor, steadfastly refused to let our twoball through from the fourteenth green to the home hole. Whatever it costs, Blairgowrie overcharges.

I believe that these two incidents are really what golf is all about today and by 'golf' I mean course maintenance and presentation - if it's no fun to play, it's no fun to pay. Those who can pay, will buy the best and those who can't, will be left with the soggy bogs.

Scotland is also in the news on another more important front. SIGGA is the first of the three greenkeeping associations to commit itself to the proposed British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association (see page 13). Well done, gentlemen! EIGGA is in the process of a postal ballot, the result of which will be announced at a series of branch EGMs on October 1. The BCGA is rumoured to have said yes but, apparently, the association is waiting till after the declaration of the EIGGA result to announce its position.

A previous headline in *Greenkeeper* may have been misleading or misunderstood. 'BIGGA may not necessarily be better' (page 3, July issue) was a statement made to encourage rank and file members of all the associations to ask those charged with the responsibility of discussion and negotiation searching questions regarding BIGGA in order that as many of the wrinkles be ironed out at the start so members cannot say afterwards "I didn't know."

A united greenkeeping fraternity must make sense and, no doubt, BIGGA will be the start, with no loss of the ideals and progress that have characterised SIGGA and EIGGA since their respective splits from the BCGA.

MICHAEL COFFEY