For the fourth consecutive year, BIGGA's National Education Conference next spring will feature a programme of international speakers. The event is to be sponsored, once again, by Lindum Turf and Associates. The Conference programme will be available at the BTME from either the BIGGA Lindum Turf stands.

Some of the speakers and their topics are:

Tom Cook, Associate Professor, Dept of Horticulture, Oregon State University: Maintaining Pure Bentgrass Greens: Is it possible in cool temperate climates?

Neil Baldwin, STRI: Green Pest and Disease Control

Derek Green, Course Manager, Royal Liverpool Golf Club: Dry Patch

Tor Senstad, Secretary, Norwegian Greenkeepers Association: Greenkeeping In Norway

Patrick O'Brien, South Eastern Director, USGSA Green Section: Bentgrass Management In the South Eastern USA

Jon Allbutt: Using Chemicals on the Golf Course and Complying with the Law

William R Roberts, President, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America: The Development of Education Programmes for the Greenkeeping Profession

Carol Borthwick, Senior Lecturer in Greenkeeping, Elmwood College: Where do we go from Here?

Laurence Pithie, Master Greenkeeper, Course Manager, Minchinhampton Golf Club: Golf Course Development – a Greenkeeper's Viewpoint

Barry Cooper: Golf Course Drainage Consultant: Golf Course Drainage – Before and After Construction

Jonathan Gaunt, Golf Course Architect: Project Management – How does it compare to normal Golf Course Construction Contracts?

Jim Arthur, Golf Course Agronomist: Sound Traditional Greenkeeping Practices versus Gimmicks

Gordon Jaaback, Agronomist, Conservation and Land Development Specialist: Limitations In Rootzone Design

Bernard Findlay, Course Manager, Portstewart Golf Club: Can you Build a Seaside Links or is that Nature's Job?

The programme including application form will be available soon from BIGGA Headquarters

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Solving the height of confusion

I feel I must respond to the Autumn Turf Maintenance programme employed at Ham Manor Golf Club (October), and would make three points:

1) Height of cut. Mr George Barr comments that he "raises the height of cut from 1/8" to 3/16" on his greens gradually over a period of three weeks". I presume from this that he regularly cuts at 1/8" during the summer. This would seem to contradict Mr Jim Arthur's article on Page 9, where the regular cutting of greens at 1/8" is thought harmful to turf. It is also contrary to STRI opinion and that of many experienced greenkeepers, who have seen the results of such treatment. Does Mr Barr advocate regular (more than a few days) cutting at 1/8", and if so, does he not agree that there could be serious long-term problems?

2) Cutting height of adjustment. Might it not be time to change to the metric scale, specifically millimetres? After all, we deal with hectares, metres, kilos and litres as a matter of course and I believe much confusion could be eliminated by adopting a millimetre scale dealing in whole numbers and not fractions. The metric scale appears to be eminently more practical and understandable and therefore less prone to error.

Also, is it not time for a more accurate method of measuring height of cut, especially below 6mm (1/4")? Even a small error can adversely affect the accuracy on the putting surface, exacerbated by the fact that cylinder mowers (and units) are set up in the sheds, where both front and back rollers and the height of cut setter are all rigid and unyielding, whereas the surface they relate to is anything but!

3) Hollow tining. Mr Barr states that he not only hollow tines in eight hours, but claims as well, this claim must be totally unrealistic unless his greens are only 100m2 and all close to his sheds. He states that only one Byran GA30 is used at 50mm (2") centres. My Club owns an Iseki Coremaster which we attach to a John Deere 885 compact tractor, both being less than three years old and in good working order. The speed needed to core at 50mm centres is so slow that our digital speedometer is incapable of consistently giving a read-out. The time taken to 50 cores our greens (average 500m2) is approx. 50/60 minutes or more per green. If one adds non-coring time, such as essential maintenance on corer and tractor, breaks for the operator, travel and from each green, plus stops for golfing play (to eliminate noise, if nothing else), the job takes two and a half days – this just for coring! Remember also that the job is done in October, when daylight hours are short and subsequently restricting any overtime that could be worked to finish the job. Mr Barr's statement could give the wrong impression to inexperienced greenkeepers, Club members and green committees.

If agreement on basic course maintenance cannot be reached, how can we achieve consistently high standards nationwide?

We asked George Barr for further comments, which are printed below:

Both Mr Bertinshaw and Mr Jones seek uniformity of advice, or perhaps more accurately, advice with which they can personally agree. At the same time, surely they must concede that the practice of greenkeeping is by no means an exact science. It is the very fact that different management practices are followed – at different locations on different swells and in different circumstances – that makes greenkeeping such a fascinating and infinite subject. In replying to the specific comments, it is my considered opinion that height of cut should be the decision of the head greenkeeper alone – the one who is in control of the course – and not written rules and regulations. Granted there are general rules to observe, but there will always be those who break new barriers, repeatedly obtain successful results and feel no pain. Such actions are based on personal experience and are called free choice. The greenkeeper is dealing with a multi-faceted living area and should alone be the arbiter, based on the many factors (soil, grass species, growth patterns, root qualities etc.) he is capable of evaluating. I can state categorically that the management programme outlined works remarkably and consistently well at Ham Manor.