Forward attitude

I have been in the greenkeeping game for approximately 14 years, starting at ground level under the superb guidance of Duncan McGilvray, followed by more of the same with the Welsh 'wizard' himself, Henry Stead, both at the Great Yarmouth and Caister Club. I learned a lot under these two guys, for which I am eternally grateful, and now I lead my own team at Caldbeck Golf and Leisure Club.

This club has a very forward attitude when it comes to greenkeeper/management/member relationships. For instance, my team and I are encouraged to enter all club competitions and use the club facilities - including bars and restaurants - and we are grateful, and now I lead my own guys, for which I am eternally grateful.

Steven Davidson, Head Greenkeeper, Caldbeck Golf & Leisure Club, Great Yarmouth.

Synthetic surfaces

Occasionally interest is shown in the use of synthetic surfaces on golf courses. In favour is: 1) Their ability to withstand use during adverse weather conditions. 2) The reduced level of maintenance that is required in comparison to traditionally constructed greens. 3) The fact that they are environmentally friendly.

However, these apparent advantages are to some extent questionable. It is all very well to claim they are able to withstand use during adverse weather conditions, I do not argue with this statement, but surely the demand for course usage will be reduced during, say, heavy snow, as a result, the difficulty in getting to the site in question. Also, if only artificial tees and greens are being used on a course, what effect does play in these adverse weather conditions have on the approaches and surrounds to a green?

It is true that a much reduced level of maintenance is required in comparison to traditionally constructed greens. However, this should be qualified with the proviso that in the case of a synthetic green it has a limited life expectancy and will need replacing eventually at considerable cost. A traditional green constructed to high standards, using the correct materials and following a strict specification, theoretically has an indefinite life period.

The final point that they are environmentally friendly is true again, but it only tells part of the story. During the manufacture of glass fibre yarns a number of by-products are produced which are not perhaps so environmentally friendly. Also, moss, algae and weeds tend to thrive on areas of synthetic surfaces and a resultant accumulation of litter occurs which effects the trueness. 5) They have a very high replacement cost. 6) Home advantage occurs.

Having read this you will be under the impression that I am totally against the use of synthetic golf courses. On the contrary. There is a place for them, with areas of urbanisation being a prime example. However, their place must be at present generally regarded as being rather limited to, for example, teeing areas during the winter months.

J.H.E. Spencer, Advisory Agronomist, STRI, Bingley, West Yorkshire.

The Last Word

Send your letters to The Editor, Greenkeeper International, 13 Firle Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL.

EVENTS DIARY

September 7-9: IOG Show, Peterborough, Northants
September 14-15: The Hayter Challenge Tournament Final, Sand Moor Golf Club, Leeds
September 24-26: Ryder Cup, The Belfry, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire
December 6-7: ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Award, Aldwark Manor.

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The reduced level of maintenance that is required in comparison to traditionally constructed greens.

Surely there are more points against the use of these surfaces than points for: 1) They possess an unnatural colour which generally detracts from the aesthetic appearance of the course and can also cause glare. 2) They are prone to invasion by mossey and algae due to their inherent dampness and low fertility, thus requiring regular remedial measures. 3) They give poor playing characteristics. 4) The system as a whole is more costly. 5) It is more difficult to spray artificials with pesticides due to seeds rooting in this layer.

P Nederstigt states that due to the presence of a sand layer in some synthetic surfaces and a resultant accumulation of litter occurs which effects the trueness. 5) They have a very high replacement cost. 6) Home advantage occurs.

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