Stand by for a challenging tournament

BIGGA's 1994 National Golf Tournament, again sponsored by ICI Professional Products, moves to Dartmouth on August 1–3. Chris Boiling met up with head greenkeeper Terry Farkins to discover what's in store.
Bring plenty of balls with you if you're coming to Dartmouth Golf and Country Club for this year's ICI-sponsored National Tournament. And a scuba diving outfit might not go amiss as this picturesque course boasts seven water hazards, including an irrigation lake that holds 1.5 million gallons.

The tip from head greenkeeper Terry Farkins is: "Don't take your driver out until the 6th." After that the 6663-yard (off the white tees) par 72 course becomes more open. "Once you've played it a few times you know where to stick your driver in your bag and you know where to get your iron out," says 12-handicapper Terry, who joined the course two and a half years ago halfway through its construction.

When I went down to Devon to see him and view the course, the main thing on his mind was when were his six men going to be paid? Receivers were called in on March 28 and are running the club for the banks which financed this £6m project. Although there is much uncertainty about the future of the club, Terry has assured BIGGA and ICI that it is "business as usual" and they are looking forward "to welcoming all BIGGA members and feel confident you will all enjoy our superb golf course and leisure facilities."

These facilities include a £4million, 40,000sq ft clubhouse on an elevated position overlooking the 18th green and surrounding South Hams countryside. On the ground floor of the clubhouse is a leisure club with swimming pool, sauna, steam room, jacuzzi, solarium and gymnasium. On the top floor is a conference/function suite that can seat 300 delegates or guests.

Terry Farkins. 29, is a former Carrington College student and was the '91 regional winner in the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year awards. Terry spent eight years at Torquay, where he was born and still lives before hearing about the Dartmouth job. He joined after 12 holes had been constructed. The developer, Ralph Hitchens, said to him: "There it is, show me what you can do. He let me run my own show." Terry had the back nine ready to play from seed in six months. "We were talking about closing it for the winter but because it had established itself so well, and they needed the money, we stayed open."
THE GREENS

The greens at Dartmouth Golf and Country Club use a USGA method of construction. There is a herring-bone drainage system set into the subsoil, followed by a 100mm-deep layer of 6mm gravel. The rootzone was laid on top, no blinding layer was needed. The 250mm-deep rootzone mix is 90-10 sand and fen soil. The sand came from a local quarry (Watts Blake and Bearne) and is described as irregular to sub rounded with particle sizes of 93 per cent between 0.25 and 2mm. PH is around 6 to 6.5. "We have had no problems with the sand, it is of excellent requirement as it does not compact."

The seed mixture after construction was as follows, but they have now introduced creeping bent (Cobra) to the sward and this has dominated the surface:

- **Chewings fescue (Festuca rubra commutator)** – Frida – 60 per cent
- **Slender creeping red fescue (Festuca rubra liatellus)** – Ruffia – 20 per cent
- **Oregon bent (Agrostis Castellana)** – Highland – 10 per cent
- **Browntop bent (Agrostis tenius)** – Bardot – 10 per cent

Tees are subsoil graded with falls from front to back and are finished off with a 4in layer of site soil and sand, mixed 50/50. The seed used was the same as the greens but with smooth stalked meadow (Julia) and creeping bent (Cobra). The fairway is similar, except the Cobra has been replaced by perennial rye (Hermes), a dwarfed variety. All seeds were supplied by British Seed Houses.

Top soil shortages

The first season Terry was here he concentrated on getting the greens right, then the tees, and now he is looking to improve the fairways by weed spraying, verti-cutting and scarifying.

One thing he has noticed with the recent wet winter is that the fairways drain well. This is partly because of the shortage of top soil following the construction of the mounds. There is supposed to be two inches of top soil all over, but it's a bit sparse in places. However, the grass seems to be growing well: "We've used a lot of nutrients (high nitrogen and agricultural fertiliser) to get it established, but the result now is that you only get bogy areas in the few spots where there is too much top soil," explains Terry.

They have been verti-drained twice since opening.

When I visited the course in early April, Terry and his team were looking to topdress with fine sand "but because of the bad weather we weren't able. We're two weeks away from a county match, so we're limited as to what we can do. So maybe next week I'll verti-cut them, and give them just a light dressing if I can get away with it, and give them another feed and get them going again. As soon as the match is finished, we'll be in hollow-coring, overseeding with creeping bent and top-dressing."

Being a modern club, there is no greens committee and Terry has good communication with the pro (director of golf) and the members and is able to oversee etc at the best times for germination.

Terry, who originally wanted to be a cricket groundsman, tries to play once a week himself and he tries to play as many other courses as possible "because you always think you've got the biggest problems, but you go somewhere else and you see they've got bigger problems than you."

One of the key people in his seven-man team is Steve Hunt, who worked the land when it was a farm. He knows the land inside out and, according to Terry, is an excellent weather forecaster.

He says it will great in August, so the only other thing to worry about is the pin positionning: "I'm always fair," says Terry, "at least they're on the greens." But sometimes only just.

MAIN MACHINERY

The £139,000 worth of equipment in use at the club includes:

1. **1 Toro 3000D green mower**
2. **1 40hp tractor with front loader**
3. **1 Browers 5 unit rough cut mower**
4. **1 Buckler power unit and rotary deck**
5. **2 Toro Reelmaster triples (216 D)**
6. **2 Lloyds Palldins pedestrian mowers**
7. **1 Outfield Spiker**
8. **1 Flymo**
9. **2 Pro 24 strippers**
10. **1 Toro fairway mower (223 D)**
11. **1 Toro Sand Pro bunker rake**
12. **1 Cushman power unit**
13. **1 Top Dresser**
14. **1 Vari Tyne Aerator**
15. **1 66-gallon sprayer**
16. **1 8ft brush**
17. **1 Multi-depth aerator**
18. **1 Allen Reciprocator**
19. **1 Cyclone fertiliser distributor**
20. **1 Small trailer**
21. **1 Vert drainage**
22. **2 Knapsack sprayers**
23. **1 21in rotary**
24. **1 Cylinder grinding machine**

Machinery borrowed from Hitchens Quality Homes includes:

1. **1 Trailer (3 tonnes)**
2. **1 Quad ATV**
3. **1 21in Toro rotary**
4. **1 15hp tractor**
5. **1 Mini digger**