

HOT TIP



Duncan McGilvray, course manager at Letchworth Golf Club:

The following points, which I have wanted to discuss with colleagues for some time, are, I believe, essential so that the perception of us and the work we do improves, as it certainly needs to.

POINT 1: If we manage a golf course we should be titled golf course managers. No employer will argue that point unless you do NOT manage a golf course.

POINT 2: We, as golf course managers, must hold seminars in the clubhouse so that all facets of our work can be presented and our golfing membership can question our actions and decisions. All golf course managers who do this (and there are a growing number) know that our work is made easier if we make the effort to communicate (a point expanded on elsewhere in this issue).

POINT 3: We present (as well as conduct) ourselves in a professional manner. This, in part, can be achieved by supplying our greenstaff with a uniform (not overalls) so that an image of professionalism can be projected.

HOT TIPS

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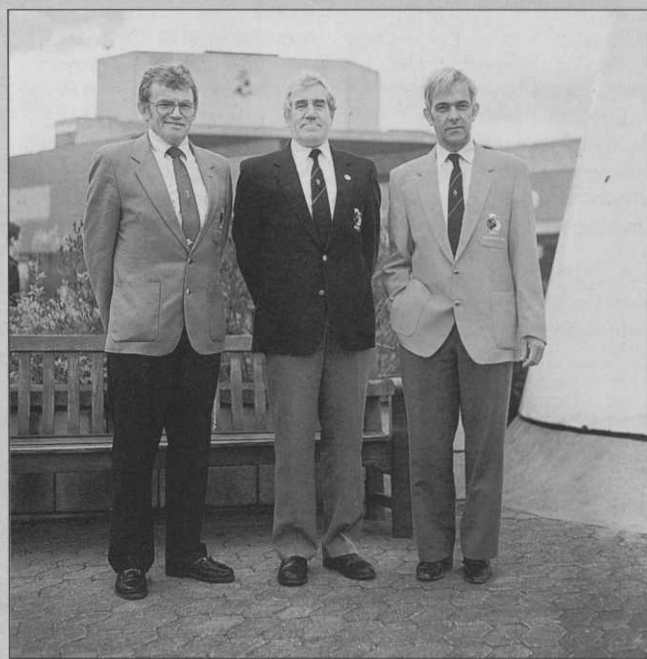


Joseph Baidy, president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

While many of us have a self-image as a nature lover and a steward of the land, our public image doesn't quite measure up. A 1990 National Golf Foundation survey in the US found that golfers were evenly split on whether they thought that the fertilisers and chemicals used on golf courses pollute surface waters. But statistics from a National Golf Foundation survey one year later showed that golfers are almost twice as likely as non-golfers to describe the overall effect of golf on their community as "very positive" or "positive" – 67 per cent of golfers chose a positive description, compared to 35 per cent of non-golfers.

It's not that non-golfers feel that the game is a threat to the community – only 3 per cent said golf has a "negative" or "very negative" effect. Most non-golfers surveyed said that golf has no effect on their community (that's 32 per cent) or that they didn't know (that's 30 per cent). Altogether, that is 62 per cent of the non-golfing public that we might be able to reach with good news about golf and the environment.

As greenkeepers, we need to make sure, first and foremost, that we do a good job environmentally; and secondly, that we let everyone know about it. We must make sure we tell our good news, for there will always be someone else to share whatever bad news there may be. We must continue to sharpen our public relations and media relations skills.



BIGGA luminaries such as past chairman John Crawford, vice chairman Barry Heaney and new chairman John Millen (pictured) heard a rich variety of greenkeeping facts at the National Education Conference, at Warwick University. Greenkeeper International was there too and presents seven hot tips from the industry's hottest speakers.

HOT TIP

David Oatis, director, green section Northeastern Region, USA

The grass growing environment that a particular green or tee is located in has a big impact on water management and this is sometimes overlooked. Pocketed, shaded greens produce weaker, less stress-tolerant turf that is more prone to disease problems. This type of turf requires less water due to its reduced

vigour and because the lack of sunlight and air circulation reduce the amount of water lost through evaporation. The end result is that thinning and loss are common problems for turf located in a poor grass-growing environment.

We regularly recommend trying to improve poor grass-growing environments through tree removal and even through the installation of electric fans. This may sound like a peculiar suggestion, but properly used fans can improve the turf's

ability to cool itself. They can also help reduce disease pressure by reducing the level of free moisture. Obviously, they are not appropriate in every situation and removing trees and underbrush often improve a bad grass-growing environment to a sufficient degree. However, electric fans offer an effective alternative for especially difficult locations.

QUOTE OF THE CONFERENCE

'When everyone else was into the Sex Pistols and punk rock, I was into Jim Arthur' – Kevin Munt, course manager at The Buckinghamshire Golf Club.



HOT TIP ✓

Barrie Gregson, course supervisor at Mottram Hall Hotel

I have sand greens at Mottram Hall. God, have I had problems. Some of these problems are from a form of compaction and compaction is not something I would normally worry about on sand greens.

My greens are sat on a very correct stone carpet which, in turn, is blinded by a geotextile separation membrane. On top of this is a sand which, although it conforms to a recognised specification, everything is at its maximum regarding particle sizes.

Add to this the fact that the depth varies somewhere between 12 and 18 inches and you may start to recognise signs of problems.

Firstly, with natural rainfall and irrigation, plus normal maintenance, the 2 per cent clay and the 2 per cent silt and the 2 per cent fines have all started migrating downwards leaving all the larger stuff at the top. When the fines reached the geotextile membrane, they blocked it up. This caused three distinct problems:

1. Water cannot pass through at the rate it was intended;
2. Now the build-up of fines in the lower reaches act as a compacted layer and a filter for any nutrients that are trying to pass by.
3. Water and nutrients race through the top 4 or 5 inches where my grassroots need them to be. Because of this filtering effect I have got what can only be described as a hot layer, and when roots reach it, they burn off causing the death of the plant.

Our solution was to cut through the membrane. But without a separation layer, the sand would eventually pass through into the drainage stone below and block that up too. So we hired in a verti-drain, a big verti-drain, the one with the 18-inch tines on and passed

over each and every green.

We followed up the verti-drain by filling in the holes with Lyt-ag, the idea being that it would act as a blinding layer, therefore stopping the migration of sand but allowing the reasonably normal amounts of water and nutrients to pass through. Incidentally, we filled in the holes by hand using scoops and funnels. You should have seen my lads' faces! In general, it worked. It solved three of my problems, but not the other 17. When I've solved those, you'll read about it here first.

HOT TIP ✓

Happy is the greenkeeper who knows what his members want. But, remember, lady members are the most important because most of them sleep with male members – I mean, they are usually married to male members. It is very important for the greenkeeper to understand this fact, especially when constructing a new ladies' tee or just working on the course on certain days. Treat them right or forever rue the day. Awesome pressure comes from this direction.

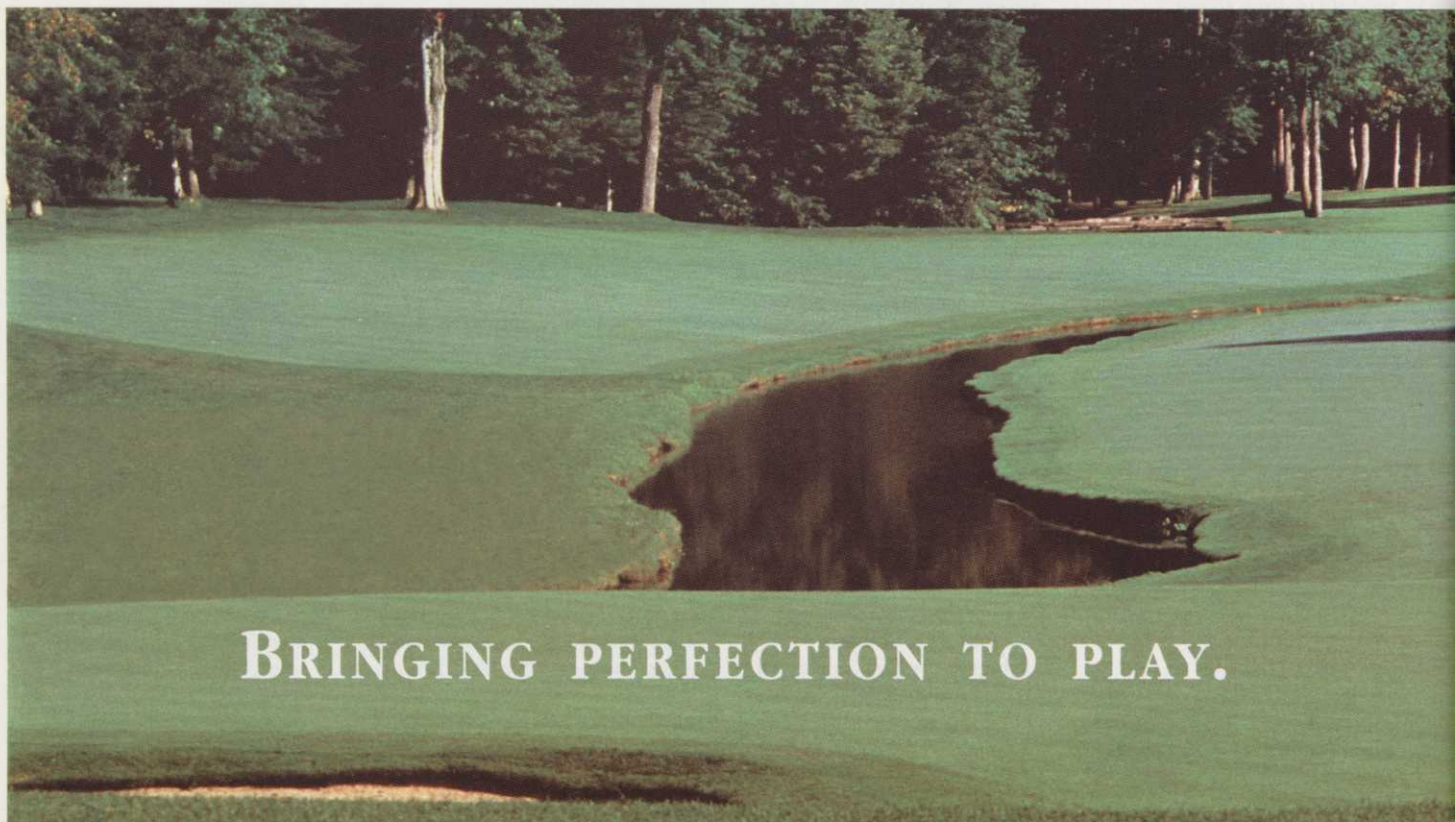


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Alan Mitchell, course manager at The Hampshire Golf Club

A golf course can be built and open for play in less than a year. Work on The Hampshire Golf Club, a pay-and-play course with membership aimed between a municipal course and a members' club, began early last year and by September it was open for limited play. Built on downland near Andover, the site boasts an 18-hole course, a nine-hole par 3 course and a driving range.

Dry weather during February and March helped the project and the greens were prepared and sown by April. An 80/20 rootzone of Kingsley sand and fen soil was chosen. All fairways and tees were sown by the end of May. The installation of the irrigation system was not completed until September and erratic irrigation resulted in some



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patchy germination on greens.

Although inevitably very young, the course opened for limited play at the end of September and was played throughout the winter, only closing on one day when covered with snow. The greens came through remarkably well and are now improving quickly with the spring growth.

Because of the need for cover, the greens were fed with high nitrogen fertiliser until the end of October and we were on guard for disease problems. In the event, we had little disease although it was often a damp winter.

In November, we constructed the nine-hole par 3 and had the greens ready for sowing at the beginning of December. Wanting to speed the growing in of the greens, I decided to sow at once with pre-germinated seed and cover the greens with gro-cover. We sowed the second week in December but were only able to get the covers on two greens because of heavy rain. The seed germinated anyway due to the mild wet weather and by the middle of January we had a light cover. At the end of February we commenced feeding and in March we were able to start weekly mowing. This has gained us several months on the greens.

If we can continually work on just these three points, I am certain we will be held in much higher regard by our employer and even the general public – that way the greenkeeper, who in my experience always puts pride in his work before all else, will be rewarded with higher esteem and a better salary. He will then give a far superior service and therefore better product, ie golf course.

CONTROVERSY OF THE CONFERENCE

You would imagine that one of the 17 talks would have provided the most controversy. But, no, it was the sixth to last question at the quiz night. The question was: How many broken clubs can a golfer replace during each round? Most contestants said none, but the answer Trivial Pursuits gives is one. We checked with the R&A who said: "As many as you like provided they were broken DURING THE COURSE OF NATURAL PLAY." Thus, if the player swings at a ball and wraps his club round a tree in the follow-through, he can replace it. But, if he swings and misses and wraps his club round the tree in temper, he can't. If a golf cart runs over his bag and breaks all his clubs, he can get a new set. If he chucks the bag in a lake, he can't.



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David Oatis, director, green section Northeastern Region, USA

What can be done to avert a disaster, such as massive loss of turf? The first step is to take an offensive approach rather than a defensive one. Act, don't react. Call in appropriate consultants and begin a fact-finding mission. Analyse the course's strong points as well as its weak ones. Look for potential problems in the water management systems, including irrigation and drainage, since failure here guarantees turf loss. Examine the growing environment around greens and tees. What is the air circulation situation like? Are trees becoming a problem? Is the majority of the turf the best-suited species or variety? Does your turf have a reasonable

chance for survival if the weather becomes unfavourable? All of these questions need to be answered before a plan of attack can be devised.

The golfers must be kept well informed. New programmes are more readily accepted by those who understand why failures occurred and what is being done to prevent them from recurring. They should be made to feel part of the decision-making process. Do not be surprised if the problems are complex and cannot be solved by a single solution. Usually, a variety of factors are involved. Don't fall into the trap of looking for a painless solution to your course's problems. It is very rare for a single piece of equipment, soil additive, growth enhancer, pesticide etc to turn a programme around. Severe problems rarely develop overnight and solutions require time, funding and patience to work effectively. In short, do not wait for disaster to strike, anticipate it. If disaster has already struck, use it to help sell the necessary corrective programmes. Don't be afraid to look at a bad year in a good light and use it to the golf course's advantage.



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