Heydon Grange Golf and Country Club opened its first 18 holes last May and another nine are due to open this spring. Formerly farmland, the transformation has come about in 15 months on what course manager Anthony Black calls "a distinctively low budget" - a sharp contrast to his previous project, the golf course at Euro-Disney. But no matter what type of course you're on, players want championship-style quick, slick greens. Here, Anthony calls for a lowering of speed limits - and not just on greens...

As winter draws in and growth slows down, so do green speeds.

The need for speed has decimated many a fine sward, and will continue to do so whilst there is a pressure to create and recreate "professional tournament conditions" for amateur club events.

It was with this potential dilemma in mind that I tentatively sought reassurance from my proprietor/chief executive prior to my "professional tournament conditions" for fine sward, and will continue to do so whilst there is a pressure to create and recreate "professional tournament conditions" for amateur club events.

It was with this potential dilemma in mind that I tentatively sought reassurance from my proprietor/chief executive prior to my appointment managing construction completion and grow-in at Heydon Grange in Hertfordshire that I would enjoy complete autonomy regarding agronomy.

So, within the parameters of strict development costs and frugal operating budget, we set about bringing a 'links style' layout to fruition on the borders of Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Essex, our 200 acres bordering all three counties.

We opened our first 18 holes on May 14 1994 following an accelerated grow-in; accelerated by the need to be open for business a.s.a.p. With the last seed hitting the ground in August '93, we faced the challenge of being of essence etc - we set about the 'Poa issue' with much vigour, no little frenzy and several pluggers, daisy grabbers, cutlery forks and sharp knives!

By the time we opened this 'fescue rescue' was deemed 95% successful - we're still working on the other 5% - and our first guests and members were, and have continued to be, extremely happy with our efforts and results.

But, you know, opening with fescue is one thing, keeping it is quite another - especially inland.

Which brings me back to speed. Our opening mowing schedule on greens was 4-5 cuts per week at 7mm with no complaints - players being of a forgiving nature in the immediate post-opening honeymoon period. We came down to 6mm in June, 5-7 cuts per week, with our best stimpmeter reading being 9, achieved on days of double cutting for specific events.

By November we had returned to a more leisurely 7mm cutting regime. Next spring we will follow the same procedure, ultimately reaching an all-time low of 5mm. Sward density, vigour and strong root development will be the key factors in determining when and if we lower the blades.

We aim to maintain this regime for the future by ensuring the practice is written into our operating procedures and course maintenance philosophy.

However, I am not naive enough to believe that we will never be faced with the demand for tournament green speeds. As our popularity and roundage grows, prestige events will undoubtedly be held and we shall be delighted to host them - on our terms and at our pace. But because we know speed kills we are in no rush!

The height of success? About 6mm I reckon.