"The truth is now we make it very clear that we are removing the thatch. We never turn off the water - we may use judicious amounts of water but we do not turn it off and we rarely cut below 3.5 millimeters.

John reinforces that view by saying that the Tour is very much of the opinion that they don't want a greenkeeper to kill his course.

"Our main priority is to provide a good green, and one that is not right," said Richard. "That's the best we could get. We will get the maximum speed provided it doesn't affect the smoothness of the putting surface," explained John.

What is achieved is often a revelation to the Course Manager himself.

"I'd say that at 60% of events, at some stage during the week, they come along and say this is fantastic how can we keep it like this," said Richard. "They could, the greens would have to come up a bit but from tee to green it could be. Most people could do what we do if they used the correct technique and managed their man power to the best of their ability."

From his position John is well placed to comment on greenkeeping and greenkeepers.

"I get very frustrated when I see the Chairman of Green at private member clubs, without any formal training in soil, grass or irrigation, trying to tell someone who has spent his life learning the job what to do. Somewhere along the line that is not right," said John. "I like to think that where we go we try to raise the profile of that greenkeeper," he added.

While the quality of greenkeeping has improved over the last few years so has the interest level and knowledge of the players.

"The average member plays something like 25 tournaments on Tour but taking in the other courses he plays and other events in the rest of the world he plays a great many courses.

"He wants to learn why he puts better on certain greens. Is it the speed, the smoothness, the climatic conditions or the grass plant?" said John.

Richard added, "I worked for a year on the Tour and no-one knew who I was. Now the players just love sitting down and talking with me in the evenings. A lot of players are getting involved in the business and I know Rodger Davis, for example, has his own turf nursery."

The downside is that detrimental comments occasionally appear from disgruntled players in the press.

"I do feel that the players are put on pedestals nowadays. Some generally believe that it must be the golf course's fault if they miss a putt and unfortunately they say it to the press and get headlines for it," commented John.

What advice would the Tour give to a BIGGA member who learns that his course is to host a European Tour event next year?

"I'd say to the greenkeeper enjoy it and I know that he will enjoy it. He'll meet a whole lot of new people and everyone is extremely friendly," said Richard, who added that it was normal practice to invite a greenkeeper to another event before his own so he can learn how things operated.

"He'll also come out of the event with an awful lot more than he went in whether that be more machinery or a better watering system. Personally they also benefit. There is a Spanish greenkeeper who has written a book on how to prepare a course for a tournament and now works for the King in his botanical garden as a sideline," revealed Richard.

The Tour also holds a Greenkeeping Conference in Penina, Portugal every other year.

"It is a way of getting all our tournament greenkeepers and some club officials together and getting them to communicate in a social atmosphere."

"There is a universal language of greenkeeping and this is tremendous because as well as the formal lectures much informal comments occasionally appear from disgruntled players in the press."