This month, Greenkeeper International’s bi-monthly series featuring Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers from every Region profiles Competition Preparation

Competition Preparation
Compiled by Malcolm Huntington MBE

1. What is the biggest event you have to prepare for each year – or have prepared for?

Name: David Gower
Course: The Oxfordshire
Region: Midland
Course Type: Parkland
Number of Holes: 18
Staff: 12 summer, eight winter

The Benson and Hedges International Open each May. We also hosted a regional round of the Anderson Consulting World event for two years and we have also had the English Open Ladies’ Championship.

Name: Ivor Scoones
Course: Long Ashton GC
Region: South West and South Wales
Course Type: Heathland and parkland
Number of Holes: 18
Staff: Course Manager plus five

We had the Northern Open last year and we also had our club bi-centenary (the club opened in 1780) in addition to our spring and autumn club medal events which are important on our calendar.

Name: Robert Patterson
Course: Royal Aberdeen
Region: Scottish
Course Type: Links
Number of Holes: 36
Staff: Nine

The Howley Hall Scratch 36-hole tournament, one of the North Region Order of Merit events. When I was at Fixby we had the Laurence Batley Seniors.

Name: Simon Heppenstall
Course: Howley Hall
Region: Northern
Course Type: Parkland and moorland
Number of Holes: 18
Staff: Five plus seasonal in summer

We had the London Masters Senior event two years ago won by John Bland, but now it is mainly club competitions.

Name: Steve Jones
Course: The London Golf Club
Region: South East
Course Type: 18 holes inland links, 18 holes US style parkland
Number of Holes: 36 (four loops of nine)
Staff: 30 in winter and up to 38 in summer.
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<td>2. How far in advance you start thinking about it and how much preparation goes into the event?</td>
<td>Twelve months before, although nowadays you try to get the course to its highest possible standard every day of the year. Obviously we break it with top dressing, striping etc for a big one.</td>
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<td>3. Are there any special requests made by the organisers?</td>
<td>The Martini wanted five yards of semi-rough and then jungle and this left quite a few problems in getting back to normal again. Ladies are very particular about measurements and length of course. All want fast greens.</td>
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<td>4. Do you think more carefully about pin positions and sometimes give them a few tricky ones?</td>
<td>Yes, I operate on the usual 6-6-6 principle but would give them an odd crazy one if you like, particularly on the last day. Our course is 105 years old and partly built on rock so even for a major event it wouldn't be possible to pins anywhere as there are places on some greens where you can't put them.</td>
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<td>5. Do you enjoy the excitement of preparing for large events? Would you like to hold an Open/Team event or prefer to work on producing excellent conditions all the year round rather than peaking?</td>
<td>Yes. I do like to put our work on show as it were and to have the course tested by top players. But to be frank I like top quality on a regular basis because the most important people, as far as I'm concerned, are our members.</td>
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As this is a members club I try to get good conditions all the year round, but two weeks before our scratch event we top dress, double cut the greens and get the fairways nicely striped or diamond cut and bring it to a peak.

We have received many special requests in the past, most of them too late to act on. I recall being asked two days before an event for a stimpmeter reading of nine feet when we had them at 10 feet. All greenkeepers would like a lot of notice of special requests because it gives you time to work on them.

The PGA decided for the Northern Open and I had no control of where the pins went. But they took note of advice on different positions and places to avoid if there was heavy rainfall. Generally it's 6-6-6 so there is something for everyone.

Yes, it's nice to see the course laid out in the best conditions as it is being played by very good players and you hope for positive feedback but I prefer working on producing excellent conditions for our club members, rather than for a Tour event.