A stress reducing equation

It's a simple law of economics taught to every GCSE student in the country. What's all this about here you ask?

Well over the last few months there have been a few articles written about the poor state of the greenkeeping profession. It seems to me that, apparently, this poor state is due to interfering committees and lack of respect from the golfing public.

All the letters go on about wanting to produce wonderful courses and how committees change too often and don't have the right credentials for the work they do and how an excellent article of various comments of the same nature.

I believe it is the attitude of these greenkeepers that brings problems on themselves and not the fault of the whole industry. As Duncan McGilvray pointed out in his article in the November issue of Greenkeeper international 90% of golf in Britain is played on private members golf courses. The very people that need these changes is a committee structure, and golf clubs have been run like these for over 100 years. Part of being a greenkeeper is working with committees and Chairman of the Courses. The very committees that should realise this is the part of the job just the same as top dressing or applying fertiliser. Once this has been accepted a more harmonious relationship can be formed.

The committee structure is used widely in life, often known by another name, the government is a large structure of committees and sub committees. BIGGA trains us to be more adaptable to our surroundings. We are not all producing top class championship courses for Tiger Woods and Co with long thick rough, narrow fairways and greens so fast the average club golfer would wet themselves! In this day and age where competition is tough for new members at golf clubs it is the role of the greenkeepers to provide what the golfers want and ensure the future success of your employer. Supplying the desired product is where we use all the skills, knowledge and experience that we do. Nobody knows everything and we are all trying to improve and in one way or another so let's share the knowledge with each other in our job experience. I am not knocking the old system, but it is the real hands on knowledge that needs to be handed down along with the technical information from the text books and college.

As the fact that John Ross seemed to have found out about the NVQ system he was doing a job for 1 year. He should have found out these system to maintain the course. There are parts of the NVQ that need hard work and lots of it. What the NVQ system does is give them a chance to go forward, learn more and be recognised qualification on the way.

The other very important factor is that the Head Greenkeeper must put himself on the line and encourage the staff to ask questions. When a staff member goes through the NVQ system it will act as a refresher for all the staff (including the Head Greenkeeper). Questions that are asked in the ten year course can be thrown open to everyone. It is up to the Head Greenkeeper not to be frightened that he may not know the answer. There have been occasions when I have either forgotten the answer or have not known it. Nobody knows everything and we are all trying to improve and we do share our knowledge with each other in our job experience. I am not knocking the old system, but it is the real hands on knowledge that needs to be handed down along with the technical information from the text books and college.

As far as the fact that John Ross seemed to have found the NVQ easy, as I have already stated a person doing the job should be able to do this. Level three is a stepping stone to level four and lack of theory, if job, should be dealt with at the appropriate levels. The governing bodies have put into place many other qualifications and perhaps should have a go at one of them. At least then if any of his stuff need his help he will be able to offer it. Some of the other points under the need for support for the lonely greenkeepers is in my opinion justified. However I believe that too much information is being given back to the club members on how the course is maintained. Greenkeepers all over the UK are measuring rain water and thatch levels etc. writing reports and putting them under serious pressure. It is time to get back to work, if they don't ask, then don't tell them. No where else is more true that a little information in the wrong hands can be most dangerous. A quick example is if you get for an operation the surgeon will tell you in the simplest way what he is going to do, he will not mention how many yards of cotton he will use or how sharp the knife is or because you do not need to want to know.

Use the report writing to time to work on the course or to help your staff and remember stop talking before you run out of breath. Your greenkeepers are the future of your course, do the talking for you. My final message is to those greenkeepers who have no yet received the training to become a work based trainer or even carried out an appraisal on their staff to identify training needs and in turn motivate that member of staff like my 37 year old! Get involved now, if you need help, it is out there for you, just ask.

T.A Smith LCC
North Shore Golf Club, Sleights

Help with lawn sand?

Has anybody experienced problems with turf damage to their greens following an application of lawn sand? We have unfortunately used lawn sand, as usual, only for it to later be found to be contaminated with herbicides and over a period of 1-6 weeks thereafter suffered severe decline and death of significant areas on our greens. We were able to prove that the lawn sand was the cause due to the fact that the one green that was not treated was the only one that remained unaffected. I have left over sealed unused bags which we have had tested at two independent laboratories for herbicide contaminants. If we had not had any left over nor had the one remaining bag been used we would have been able to establish the cause, and certainly been unable to prove it.

Should you have cause to now suspect that a routine application of lawn sand may have led to damage on your greens, contact the magazine with details of your supplier and manufacturer and the batch number printed on the bag. Should it be the same one that is used by ourselves it may be of great help to you.

Please respond through the pages of this magazine.

Enviro thanks

Thank you for the excellent coverage (again) of this year's 2001 environmental competition and again we see the total commitment from numerous courses throughout the UK in promoting and enhancing environmental aspects. I would just like to point out a discrepancy in the article concerning my course, Bradley Park Golf Club. We have 300 members and not 345 and our greenkeepers are not the only ones involved with being municipal. The number of rounds per annum is between 53,000 and 60,000. Thank you again and here's to the future promotion of environmental concern on our courses.

D.W. Brierley, Head Greenkeeper, Bradley Park Golf Club.

In defence of National Vocational Qualifications

I recently read with dismay a letter in the Greenkeeper International from John Ross. His views as to what the NVQ system was failing and yet another qualification should be produced to test our greenkeepers. Having worked my way through the City & Guild to stage four, NVQ level 2 and beyond I believe that there is and always will be room for improvement and this should come in part from the Head Greenkeepers and not just the working bodies.

The GTCPG have established working groups that already review the training. The groups have representatives from colleges, STRI and BIGGA. It is through this partnership that the employers and greenkeepers have developed a range of qualifications to choose from that they feel most appropriate to the trainee and the club.

As stated it, the NVQ system is all about making sure the person being trained can actually do the job on the ground as well as holding their own in a committee room when necessary. I have lived at most of the course where I am that NVQ's do work. I have only been here for 16 months and already have