Ken and Sami would like to wish all of our readers a very happy new year. We hope to see you during the Continue to Learn week at Harrogate. Please remember, that there will be a BIGGA Education and Training Stand in Hall M, this year, at BTME.

OnCourse

Golf Course Management Software has, in the past, been seen by many greenkeepers as being too complicated for their course - that is until BIGGA introduced OnCourse, in 2000. Developed by greenkeepers, for greenkeepers, OnCourse is now being widely adopted by BIGGA members across Britain and Europe, from large, multi course facilities to the smaller private members clubs.

With the same underlying principles applying equally to both small course and large resort course greenkeeping facilities, the software is scalable to suit all situations. Andy Campbell, MG CGCS, the Estates and Golf Courses Manager at De Vere Carden Park has recently installed the system: "I have tried other programmes but OnCourse suits our needs best, it is the ideal package for our multi course operation".

OnCourse has the potential to save a huge amount of time and paperwork for the Course Manager, allowing him to spend more time out on the golf course, managing his staff. Vast amounts of course management data (traditionally kept in dust-covered files) can be stored within the system, resulting in a more organised greenkeeping department, which requires significantly less administration: "It not only allows the Head Greenkeeper more managerial control but also allows all staff to see what is happening day to day, thus improving efficiency and control," added Andy.

OnCourse provides total budget transparency for the Course Manager. The reports produced by the system allow the Club Manager to see exactly where resources are being utilised on the golf course and how budgets are put together. Most importantly, they can provide the head greenkeeper with the justification he requires for budget increases and requests for large capital investment items.

Producing detailed reports from OnCourse couldn't be simpler. For the 'Green Committee', showing how much time was spent on certain activities is practically impossible with a paper based system. OnCourse, however, provides this powerful information in many different formats: by hole, piece of machinery, time frame or member of staff, as well as retaining all historical information for comparing course activity and tasks with previous years.

By using OnCourse the Course Manager can provide a Club Manager with peace of mind that the most expensive assets on the course are being utilised to the full whilst being maintained to the highest possible degree. OnCourse allows you to protect these investments and manage their rotation, replacement and depreciation.

"With every tightening employee and Health and Safety legislation, OnCourse enables me to keep all staff records in one system, be they related to training, discipline or accidents in the workplace," commented Steve Holmes, the Course Manager at Hindhead Golf Club in Surrey. It only takes a minute per day for members of Steve's team to complete their daily timesheet. This involves nothing more than a few clicks with the mouse to record where they were working, for how long, and on what task or piece of machinery. By doing this, the data flows to all parts of the system, building up a comprehensive picture of greenkeeping activity and machinery use, all of which can be easily reported on. Using a cheap and simple cable to link his office computer to an old PC in the greenkeeper's canteen, Steve has maximised his system, by making it easy for his staff to access OnCourse at all times of the day. Each greenkeeper has his own logon password, which ensures that he only has access to areas of the system that Steve sees necessary.

"The system is easy to learn your way around - even for a self-taught computer user like me," added Steve. "I do a monthly backup of all my data to disk, and keep a copy of it in the Clubhouse safe as well as a copy at home. The more you use it, the better the system is."

The question that every head greenkeeper and course manager should be asking themselves this winter is: "With hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of assets under my control, can I afford not to manage my department without a computerised system that costs only £800?"

The winter months are the ideal time to install OnCourse, enabling you fully to reap the rewards come next spring. For further information, contact me at BIGGA House or visit the BIGGA Education Stands in Hall M or Hall D, at the BTME and Clubhouse Exhibitions, where you can also see demonstrations of OnCourse.
Regional Courses

We have had some very successful one and two-day courses this autumn and there are a few places left on the spring courses which start in February. These superb courses are excellent value for money, especially if you can acquire Golden Key Company. Recent feedback from delegates include:

Great venue, excellent courses. “Brilliant! Solely the best reason for joining BIGGA. Enjoyed the two days fully. Look forward to the next course.

Unfortunately, due to an administrative error all the dates for the March 2003 courses were listed as March 4 & 5 in the December edition of this magazine. Apologies for any confusion. The dates of the March Courses are:

- Further Computer Skills
- Project Management
- Coaching Skills
- Management Skills for Head Greenkeepers
- Basic Computer Skills
- Presenting a Professional Image
- Budgets and Finance

You have a few more days to book your place on Continue to Learn, which runs from 20 to 23 January 2003. Places at the National Education Conference and on Workshops must be pre-booked. However, you can book places on Seminars ‘on the day’, by calling at the BIGGA Education and Training Stand in Hall M. Remember, the National Education Conference and Workshop Programme is supported by the John Deere International Challenge.

Careers Fair

Remember to visit the BIGGA Careers Fair, in Hall Q at the Harrogate International Centre on 21, 22 and 23 January 2003. Supported by the TORO Company, the Fair includes information on careers in Greenkeeping and Golf Course Management, Golf Club Management, Agronomy, Machinery Sales and support, the Chemical and Fertiliser Industry, the Land Based Industries and Playing Golf.

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