Keith Lloyd, Chief Executive of the GCMA, outlines the ever changing role of the modern Club Manager and the benefits of the three pronged Alliance with BIGGA and the PGA. He talks with Scott MacCallum

Golf is full of clichés and caricatures. There are those around club rules, for starters: “No Ladies or Dogs”; golfers all wear garish, checked trousers; greenkeepers are grass cutters; professionals sell Mars bars, and secretaries are retired military men who enjoy the odd glass of gin.

Now greenkeepers do cut grass, pros do sell confectionary and some secretaries, like everyone else, perhaps do occasionally partake of a tipple at the end of a long day, there is a great deal more which defines their roles within a golf club than those clichés and caricatures would suggest.

Greenkeepers cope with all aspects of course conditioning and preparation, the role of the pro is primarily to teach the game of golf, while the Secretary/Manager is, to all intents and purposes, the Managing Director of the Club.

The roles encompass the three main areas of responsibility within the golf club and a recently introduced Alliance of BIGGA, the PGA and the GCMA is aimed at ensuring the collective skills are brought together for the greater good of the golf club and, indeed, golf itself.

“It is the all round responsibility of the Secretary/Manager, much more than ever before, to look after the members in a job wherever possible,” explained Keith Lloyd, Chief Executive of the Golf Club Managers Association.

“The pressure is on to keep an adequate supply of new members coming into a golf club and then, importantly, keeping them.”

One of the roles of a Club Manager is to ensure that the club’s management structure, which has long been a thorny issue, is nearly always a second, or even third, career, but I do think that it is the case that for many Club Managers the biggest problem is having a different boss, in the shape of the Captain, every year. Indeed clubs are finding it increasingly difficult to get people to take on the role of Club Captain, as there is much demand from Cap- tains nowadays. They are put in the position of being responsible for club liabilities, and it is all much more than they bargained for.

“Captains should be there to kiss babies and present prizes, full stop,” added Keith.

Another problem that can, and does, exist is whether the Course Manager is answerable to the Chairman of Green and not the Club Manager.

“Such a situation can undermine the Club Manager and keep him out of the loop and ultimately prevents him from being able support the Course Manager.”

Keith has a cautiously optimistic view of the future but does think there are some rocky times ahead.

“Golfers will be reluctant to face a £1,000 bill to pay for (what many perceive as) a luxury when they have food to put on the table. However, golf will always survive because those people who do play golf are, by definition, the people who have a genuine affection for the game and, unless there is a dramatic change in their circumstances, will choose to continue their memberships.”

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