In all walks of life, we should all try to have a better understanding of other people’s predicaments...

“We specialise in miracles. The impossible takes a little longer”. That has always seemed an appropriate motto for greenkeepers, an impression more than confirmed by the meteorological events of 2012. One of the instinctive skills that cannot be taught is the ability to identify weather patterns, and to adjust to them, but the warmest March, the wettest April, the coldest May and the windiest June have posed unprecedented problems.

Some golfers, who should have known better, took advantage of the situation to be critical of course presentation— one publicly. If only they had thought to stop before these problems, they might have made allowances. Jim Arthur always used to maintain that, in greenkeeping terms, April and May are winter months and that those preparing courses for important events before the arrival of summer are on a fooling-to-nothing. However, such are the standards that greenkeepers have set, and golfers come to expect, that any criticism can be seen as a back-handed compliment.

Courses are rarely prepared to order although deterioration and improvement can be rapid. For last year’s Open championship at Royal St George’s, they were praying for rain (which came in abundance). This year, Lancashire has prayed for it to stop but, in any event, Royal Lytham’s rough, bunkers and the likelihood of wind have invariably proved capable of exacting adequate revenge on those straying from the straight and narrow.

Royal St George’s and Royal Lytham have seen significant layout over the years but British and Irish courses are better able than most to remain playable no matter what the heavens send, or don’t send. This is attributable to several factors not least the fact that traditional designs offers a variety of shot-making that rewards ingenuity and invention. The wedge has long since become a standard, as opposed to a secret weapon, but great courses offer options. When shots are all-carry and the greens are firm, it is no wonder golfers cry foul.

On other types of course, there is less, if any, choice but the price for higher cost courses lies in the need for large numbers of staff and a huge resources budget. When times are hard, thriftiness is a virtue, a policy on which natural greenkeeping is based. A young Head Greenkeeper whom I met recently was a creditable product of the GTC, a good man joining the band with a career in mind as well as the prospect of authority at an early age. Even as a person, staffs generally, are trained to remain the folly of their ways although the volume of irrigation to be applied is governed by local factors.

Irrespective of climate and the different grasses to be found, there are several common denominators. Throughout the world, fighting thriftily by regular aeration to establish vigorous root growth and to assist drainage is key among them. The feed and water brigade also need to be reminded of the folly of their ways although the volume of irrigation to be applied is governed by local factors.

The GTC’s widening involvement is an obvious step as no other body is an obvious step as no other body is an obvious step as no other body is able to maintain the finest grounding employers can provide.

Advice on course presentation is all part of any curriculum but greenkeepers can only maintain what architects design and, while some leading professionals may be able to cope with some modern challenges, the rank and file always need “somewhere to go”. As Bobby Jones said long ago, “from the standpoint of the inexpert player, there is nothing so disheartening as the appearance of a carry that is beyond their best effort and that offers no alternative route”.

Across
1. Conformity to law or principle (10)
2. Title of former hereditary Iranian ruler (4)
3. Bullet compartment (7)
4. 10Seduced craftswoman (7)
5. The last of the James Bond films to feature Pierce Brosnan as 007 (5,7,3)
6. 14Slip of cove of bacon used to add fat (6)
7. 1Plusian bred with olives and herbs (8)
8. Classification of plants or animals (8)
9. Occurred to (as an idea) (6)
10. Judicial process in which a fair trial is impossible (8,5)
11. Extremely pronounced (7)
12. The other four-letter song title from the Spandau Ballet album True (4)
13. The body of soldiers usually abbreviated as OR (5,5)
14. The Spandau Ballet album True (4)
15. A young Head Greenkeeper whom I met recently was a credit to the grounds keeping profession (8,5)
16. The feed and water brigade also need to be reminded of the folly of their ways (5,4)
17. Judicial process in which a fair trial is impossible (8,5)
18. One of the instinctive skills that cannot be taught is the ability to identify weather patterns (10)
19. Advice on course presentation is all part of any curriculum but greenkeepers can only maintain what architects design and, while some leading professionals may be able to cope with some modern challenges, the rank and file always need “somewhere to go” (10)
20. “One of the instinctive skills that cannot be taught is the ability to identify weather patterns” (10)

Down
1. Peanut character noted for pulling a ball away from Charlie Brown as he is about to kick it (4)
2. Annual horse race held in June at Longchamps (5,4)
3. South African landmark originally called Taboa do Cabo (5,8)
4. Harbour area for small boats and pleasure craft (2,4)
5. One who collaborates on a writers work (2,4)
6. Adherent of strict Orthodox Judaism (5)
7. Faintly improper sexual behaviour (5,5)
8. Religious event which forms the basis of the Eucharist (3,4,6)
9. One who collaborates on a writers work (2,4)
10. Musical instrument which accompanies the Spandau Ballet album True (5,5)
11. The appearance of a carry that is beyond their best effort and that offers no alternative route” (10)
12. “One of the instinctive skills that cannot be taught is the ability to identify weather patterns” (10)
13. The Spandau Ballet album True (4)
14. A young Head Greenkeeper whom I met recently was a credit to the grounds keeping profession (8,5)
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