The 2012 Ryder Cup at the Medinah Country Club will go down as one of the most dramatic in history.

In a GI exclusive, Curtis Tyrrell – Director of Golf Course Operations at the venue – gives us the inside story on an incredible week.

The dust is starting to settle around Medinah. Not only have the massive crowds, contractors and structures started to disappear, it finally rained a bit to clear all the dust!

I found it funny talking with Jim McKenzie as his Ryder Cup was beyond wet, and ours was a dust bowl! Anyway, everything is different now. For five years I looked at the turf with September 2012 in mind. Now it's different.

Now we're looking back on what was truly the best of my career. I would say it was the best week of my life, but my honeymoon and kids will always take that prize.

I had many thoughts, ideas, and expectations for the Ryder Cup. They all came true in their own unique way, and after, exceeded my expectations.

I have no regrets.

I wouldn't change a thing. It was simply unbelievable and I still have adrenaline flowing through me as a result.

There were many highlights.

Meeting the many volunteers that proceeded to work their butts off all week for us was certainly a part of it all that I will never forget.

I mean guys just simply dropped it all, and gave 100% running flymos, raking bunkers, hand watering, and mowing! I wasn’t sure how this volunteer program was going to go. But to see what happened was humbling and inspiring. We will always be grateful to each of them, and hope we get to repay the favour in the future!

My team blew me away that week. We have been striving for that one moment for so long, and their execution, management, and professionalism stood apart.

I couldn't be more proud of them and what they accomplished.

Managing the turf through the week was so much fun. The weather was finally in our favour and we basically did whatever was necessary to provide what was asked of us.

There were no worries - and best of all, the turf is better today than it was that week. Trying to hide from the European contingent of our team (including Steve Chappell and Lee Strutt) when we were stimping greens was a lot of fun - just kidding of course! Green speeds and the general ball roll was something I was really proud of that week. I thought we delivered what Davis Love III asked, and then some. Too bad our guys got skiddish on the greens when your guys were rolling!

Now that it's over I really only have one thing to say...Let's do it again! C'mon we're ready!

“With this plan he was able to bring the course back to what you could see in person and on television to showcase not only the outstanding talents of the best players in the world of golf but also to show what a truly great golf course Medinah really is.

“The trees, fairways, roughs, greens and bunkers were all beautifully prepared and allowed the course and the players to showcase their skills.

“Curtis was a delight to work with, he was very professional in every way and his talented crew met and exceeded the needs and expectations that are made for the challenges of Ryder Cup preparation.”
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Now that it's over I really only have one thing to say...Let's do it again! C'mon we're ready! Rematch! On a serious note, I would do it again, 100 times over. It was beyond the definition of fun. I wish it were starting again tomorrow.

Leading figures from across the golf industry paid tribute to the course, which had been expertly prepared by Master Greenkeeper Curtis and his team. Martin Kaymer, whose winning putt has already passed into sporting legend, said: "It was set up perfect for match play and the greens were really fantastic."

Kerry Haigh, the PGA of America’s Managing Director of Championships and Business Development, said: "Curtis Tyrrell and his staff did an outstanding job at Medinah prior to and during the 39th Ryder Cup. They had to deal with an extremely hot summer with record temperatures that had its effect on the conditioning of the fairways and greens.

"However, Curtis put together a plan to bring the course back into Championship condition once the weather broke, in late August. With this plan he was able to bring the course back to what you could see in person and on television to showcase not only the outstanding talents of the best players in the world of golf but also to show what a truly great golf course Medinah really is. The trees, fairways, roughs, greens and bunkers were all beautifully prepared and allowed the course and the players to showcase their skills.

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Lee Strutt, Course Manager at G West and a member of the support team for the tournament, gives us a greenkeeper’s eye view of his week in Chicago

My Ryder Cup adventure started in 2011 when I got to know Curtis Tyrrell and I applied to join the support team.

During a visit to the GIS show at Las Vegas in February this year, he confirmed I was on the list of support crew along with Steve Chappell from Glenelg’s home of the 2014 Ryder Cup.

So, on Saturday 22 September we left Glenelg at 4am for Chicago and got to our hotel at around midnight UK time.

Even though we were tired, the lure of Chicago’s lights couldn’t stop us enjoying a beer or two at the local Irish bars which are at the heart of the city’s rich history.

Sunday afternoon we headed to Medinah Country Club for the first time. It was amazing to see the scale of the event in person.

Curtis took time out to give us a guided tour, explaining how he had dealt with some of the issues they’d had this extremely hot summer.

On Monday we viewed the last minute preparations and received our uniforms and schedule for the week.

There were approximately 90 full time staff as well as 109 volunteers during the week – meaning a lot of organising and scheduling.

We then had an opportunity to get to know the 104 superintendents and assistants from all over the US.

There were just four of us from the UK and one each - so we knew if Europe won we might be outnumbered on the cheering front!

From Tuesday onwards we carried out many different preparation duties including bunker maintenance, hand watering, raking, green mowing and general maintenance work.

During Thursday onwards, once morning setup had taken place, we were unable to get back to the maintenance facility due to the large crowds of spectators.

So we were held back for a while until the surrounding highway was shut so that we could drive in convoy back along the main highway to the main maintenance facility.

It was some spectacle - a convoy of 30 to 40 golf vehicles towing blowers, rollers and crew with spectators waving as we went past.

Friday morning, the pressure started to mount, there was less banter and more focus as this was the first day of the actual event.

The first day’s play ended with the US 5-3 up.

It was great that things had got off to an exciting start and the course was performing just how Curtis had planned it.

One of the most amazing things was being amongst so many people cheering the matches, it was one hell of a thing to hear 65,000 people cheering all at once!

Saturday’s preparation followed a similar plan to Friday’s, and the US ended the day 10-6 up.

Sunday saw the start of one of the most amazing days in Ryder Cup history, where the European underdogs came back as a team to regain their trophy.

It was amazing to have been a part of the preparations and maintenance of the course and to be standing there witnessing the potentially game clinching Ryder Cup.

It was an amazing gesture by Curtis to ensure that we could celebrate our win for as long as we wanted that evening and he joined us in the celebrations.

That will be one lasting memory of the event, a very hard working man, his team and his family had spent the last five years living the dream and preparing his golf course for the third biggest sporting event in the world.

The Europeans had won, but he stood to the end with us to celebrate the best team in the world.

It was some spectacle - a convoy of 30 to 40 golf vehicles towing blowers, rollers and people cheering all at once!

It was just how Curtis had planned it.

Keep an eye on Greenkeeper International for the exclusives.

Buck to Basics Clinches Title

The final of the BIGGA Management Competition took place on 15 October at Frilford Heath GC in Oxfordshire.

For the second year TACIT sponsored the whole competition and BIGGA would like to thank them for their support of the Association and its members in sponsoring this competition.

Section qualifying events took place during the summer and eight teams won through to the final.

TACIT had chosen Frilford Heath Golf Club for the final and it proved a superb venue with the course in excellent condition.

The teams of four players which were made up of members of the club management together with their Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager played an 18 hole stableford competition on the Red Course after which players sat down to a three course dinner.

The winning team won a set of 20 hole cups and 20 flag pins for their course together with the trophy and there were club pairs for the second and third and fourth places together with individual team pairs and nearest the pin and longest drive pairs.

Pictured here is the winning team from Buckingham GC who won the competition with 82 points, in second place was Mendip GC on 80 points, third Brockenhurst GC with 79 points and fourth Newport GC 72 points.

The nearest the pin prize was won by Tony Thomas from Moreton GC and the Longest Drive prize was won by Steve Rawlings from Mendip Gold Club.

Arnold Phipps-Jones

Opportunities Abroad for Young Greenkeepers – Part 2

IEPUK Ltd is a not-for-profit educational organisation which co-ordinates international exchange programmes in over 35 countries.

This Autumn IEPUK has been asked by WISE (Worldwide International Student Exchange) to find 300 young people in the UK to fill placements starting next spring on PGA level golf courses from Florida to New York.

Varanessa Peach, director of IEPUK, spoke about the benefits of doing an internship overseas as an unbeatable life experience and a potential job clincher.

“Overseas internships are not for everyone but if a young person wants to boost their career prospects gaining international experience will certainly help them to stand out from the crowd.

"Most importantly, every intern is investing in their future, not only through the work skills they will gain but the skills too.

"An internship will suit a young, outgoing and motivated individual, who likes a challenge and works hard but has fun too.

"The important thing is for them to live the dream and come back with enthusiasm, having achieved their goal and done something that many of their peers will not have done – plus they’ll have been paid! They will also have made new friends and valuable business contacts.”

Accommodation is included plus a monthly stipend of $1,100 that will more than cover programme, visa and flight expenses as well as pay for a holiday at the end of the placement before returning home.

The internships will last up to ten months starting in February and March 2013.

The same programmes will run in 2014 and so if anyone is interested in 2013 or 2014 contact mail@iepuk.com
Lee Strutt, Course Manager at G West and a member of the support team for the tournament, gives us a greenkeeper’s eye view of his week in Chicago.

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On Monday we viewed the last minute preparations and received our uniforms and schedule for the week.

There were approximately 90 full time staff as well as 109 volunteers during the week - meaning a lot of organising and scheduling.

We then had an opportunity to get to know the 104 superintendents and assistants from all over the US.

There were just four of us from Europe and one expat - so we knew if Europe won we might be a bit outnumbered on the cheering front!

From Tuesday onwards we headed to Medinah Country Club for the third biggest sporting event in the world.

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During Thursday onwards, the match was a bit back and forth and the home fans were always there - the pressure started to mount, and so we knew if Europe won we could celebrate our win for as long as we wanted that evening and he joined us in the celebrations.

That will be one lasting memory of the event, a very hard working man, his team and his family had spent the last five years living the dream and preparing his golf course for the third biggest sporting event in the world.

The Europeans had won, but he stood to the end with us to celebrate the best team winning.

A remarkable man, a true professional, and now a friend.

To those that look at these events and wish to take part I can only encourage you to try and prepare your golf course for the third biggest sporting event in the world.

Vanessa Peach, director of TACIT, spoke about the benefits of doing an internship overseas as an unrepeatable life experience and a potential job clincher.

“Opportunities are not for everyone but if a young person wants to boost their career prospects gaining international experience will certainly help them to stand out from the crowd.”

“The important thing is for them to live the dream and come back with enthusiasm, having achieved their goal and done something that many of their peers will not have done - plus they’ll have been paid! They will also have made new friends and valuable business contacts.”

Opportunities Abroad for Young Greenkeepers – Part 2
Success for Sussex

Keith Weller and his team produced a superbly presented golf course with some lovely paced greens after heavy overnight rain for the annual triangular match between the Essex, Surrey and Sussex Sections of BIGGA at Lingfield Park Golf Club.

This year after a closely contested match the ten men of Sussex broke the 120 foot by 40 foot, a larger-than-life version of the logo used by BIGGA House.

The giant M symbolising the tree imposed on the long-term tree management programme.

The Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) has recommended a 1.5% increase in the Club Salaries (CGCS) have recommended rates. The CGCS, once again, wishes to draw the attention of golf course management to the formation of their Club.

We are grateful to Ernest Doe and the entire Irvine Golf Club for their continued support of this popular event.

RENUMERATION 2013

The Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) has recommended a 1.5% increase in the Club Salaries Scale for Greenkeepers.

The increase is less than the 2.5%-RPI rate normally adopted as the Committee accepts that the current year has been a very difficult one for Golf Clubs and the continued strain on their finances.

The CGCS recommended rates of pay package are guidelines only and the Committee is aware that they are for negotiation only and that, as in many industries, some staff will earn substantially more, while others will earn less, depending on the standing of the golf club. The CGCS wants to emphasise that these scales are for ‘packages’ and should be treated as such, whilst taking into account individual and team performance and any increase in responsibility and/or qualification.

The CGCS, once again, wishes to draw the attention of golf clubs to impending changes in pension legislation. Regional variations will be published and downloadable in PDF format from the BIGGA and GCMA websites from December onwards.

Many areas that affect greenkeeping are governed by the European Union

Firstly, I’d like to say that the board and I recently enjoyed hosting the Board of the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Associations (FEGGA) at BIGGA House.

We have many members who work in different countries across Europe and there are many areas that affect greenkeeping that are governed by the European Union.

It is therefore important to BIGGA that FEGGA has our strong support and as the largest association within Europe we do all we can to ensure our members are well represented. As part of our meeting we welcomed the FEGGA board for a joint session which was positive and constructive on both sides.

As the longévités end in PDF is a sure sign that BTME is getting closer, and I’m urging everyone to get in gear for BIGGA’s showpiece event.

After such a successful event last year, we need everyone to be supporting and promoting the trade show, the seminars, the workshops and everything associated with BTME. If you’re coming – and if not, why not – you need to be sorting out your travel plans and booking accommodation, it will come round before you know it.

We want you not only to attend, but to encourage as many other people to attend as possible and bring them along. Everything you could possibly need is on our dedicated website at btme.org.uk.

I know everyone thoroughly enjoyed the 2012 BIGGA National Championship. It was an exceptional event on a traditional golf course, immaculately prepared by Derek Wilson and his team. I’d like to thank the captain David Moore and the entire Irvine Golf Club for their hospitality, and also the sponsors Charterhouse and Kubota who once again offered excellent support for the event.

Summer turned up at last, although I seemed to spend most of the tournament in a bunker on the 18th. I thought I was going to bury myself in the first one, then managed to escape but landed right in another. My misfortune apart, it was a wonderful couple of days.

During the presentation dinner I took the opportunity to mention one subject that I want to be a recurring theme of my time as Chairman and beyond – communication. We all know that course management can be a lonely business at times and when the weather is inclement as it has been this year it can also be quite a thankless task.

At times like these it is vital that we stick together and also make sure we talk regularly with our peers and friends. It’s a cliché to say that a problem shared is a problem halved but there is no doubt that words of support and advice are always welcome.

So I urge all of you to make sure you pick up the phone and give each other a call or a text and share your problems and successes.

On my own course, it’s been very hard work this summer as I know it has been for everyone. We’re working on improving the drainage as the wet weather has highlighted problems in certain areas of the course. We’re also continuing work on the long-term tree management programme.

I was very fortunate to attend the Ryder Cup on behalf of BIGGA – what a fantastic experience. It was a privilege to meet Medinah’s Director of Golf Course Management Curtis Tyrrell and see the knowledge Steve Chappell and Lee Strutt were gaining ahead of the next tournament at Gleneagles. BTME offers a unique opportunity to hear their reflections on a stunning event and share their knowledge – don’t miss out.

As always, I’ll be delighted to hear from BIGGA members. I’m available on 07988 838956 or at tony.smith/bigga@btworld.com.

Contact Details

Tony Smith
Chairman
Email: tony.smith@bigga@btworld.com

European support

SUPPORT ‘MOVEMBER’ AND WIN A TRIP TO NEW YORK

BSH have shown their grassroots support by growing a giant moustache in support of the men’s health charity.

The giant M, 120 foot by 40 foot, is a larger-than-life version of the logo used by the charity on its movember.com website.

BSH has also pledged £1,000 towards the cause. The giant moustache was grown by Andrew Cook, the South Wales and South of England Area Sales Manager for the agricultural side of the business, who has a farm in Somerset.

Andrew said: “I began with a scale drawing and then made the moustache with flowering staked in a field where we were growing grass for silage.

“I then mowed it into shape using an agricultural mower and did the final trimming with a trimmer. I was pleasantly surprised at how well it worked out.”

BSH have also been supported by 'packages' and should be treated as such, whilst taking into account individual and team performance and any increase in responsibility and/or qualification.