GTC Chairman Donald Steel examines two ways of doing the same thing. Could greenkeeping throw up anything more contrastingly?

One part of a job description for a Head Greenkeeper should surely be “you do what you have to do it”.

It might even carry the rider, “if you can do it. Constant adjustment, on account of the weather, makes me wonder how often, in fact, programmes can be implemented in any year without a hitch. Either that, or important exercises don’t get carried out at all. Which is worse?

It is odd that, in the most predictable climate of Augusta, preparations for the Masters progresseed unimpeded with every conceivable technical aid at their disposal. On the other hand, the biggest question is whether the maintenance and presentation of the course is the right way of doing things.

Although the Masters is watched on television from Kuwait to Kathmandu via Karachi, and hailed on television from Kuwait to Kathmandu via Karachi, and hailed in any year without a hitch.

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Scott-Corriag pulled no punches in his article in last month’s edition. I must be careful not to tread on his territory except to say “hookey for his thoughts”. What was equally fascinating in the same edition was Laurene Pithie’s interview with Chris Mitchell at Royal Ashdown Forest and the comparison it threw up between Ashdown and Augusta and the different methods of maintaining the two courses. Apart from playing the same trade, the outlook for Chris and Brad Owen, the Augusta National Superintendent, has little common. It made me wonder, in fact, how an exchange would work, Chris with a bottomless purse and Brad Owen, the Augusta Superintendent, restricted by austerity.

The first peculiarity is that, while Ashdown is launching a new playing season, Augusta is shutting its doors. In the heat of summer, the Augusta greenkeeping crew have a handle on the course for which they are responsible.

They may be cursed that they can re-lay a green in May and have it back in full play by the fall. As we heard and saw on television, the 14th green was the latest to be laid although it is still a minefield of crafty slopes.

Another revelation in the Links Golf Magazine was that Augusta has started using sensing camera technology on the 13th and 17th greens. The “hawkswings” system provides infrared temperature readings every ten minutes to detect areas of stress caused not only by temperature, but by insects, fungi, disease, and other environmental stressors. That is in addition to four iPads controlled sensors on every green to monitor soil moisture, temperature, and salinity.

As far I am aware, such extremes of scientific assistance haven’t yet infiltrated Forest Row where Royal Ashdown Forest is celebrating its 125th anniversary and, without bunkers, has claims to being the most natural of golf’s settings. However, one joint aim shared by Mitchell and Owen is a preference for a fast running course to highlight strategic subtleties.

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Recruitment

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p.copsey@crown-golf.co.uk
Tel: 01347 833 812

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Puzzlepage answers

1) Gylfi Sigurdsson
2) York City
3) Nepali
4) Lee Westwood
5) Samir Nasri & Sergio Aguero
6) Lucy Mecklenburgh
7) Sir Chris Hoy
8) Wim Van DEN Broeke
9) Stirling Moss

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Quick ‘Nine Hole’ Quiz Answers:

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