ON A ROLL IN SWITZERLAND

By using the technique of Koring, Course Manager Ritchie McGlynn of Blumisberg Golf Can Country Club, Fribourg, Switzerland, has kept the course fully open during extensive changes. "This member Ritchie joined the club in 2011. He found that the fairways in particular had severe problems relating to compaction, excessive thatch and a dominant poa sward, resulting in issues such as dry patch, dieback and chafe grub infestation. So he began the first stage of an ambitious ten-year project to renovate all the fairways without closing any holes. Various renovation practices were considered to achieve this, culminating in the decision to strip the existing turf off the worst areas, decompact the ground and reseed with new grass mixtures. Ritchie looked to other sports for inspiration. Knowing how professional groundsmen in other sports achieved rapid recovery, he wanted to know if the same method could be applied to golf fairways. The Koro Field TopMaker is a heavy-duty flail mower and is a primary tool in the pitch renovation process. It removes unwanted surface matter such as poa-annua, thatch, weeds or the entire surface to a depth of 50mm. After this, he had it open again, first teeing up their shots, and a few weeks later they were able to play normally." There was some initial opposition from members, but the difference between the unrenovated fairways and the newly renovated areas soon became very apparent during July and August. Ritchie added: "The difference was so striking, that when we came to work on the other side of the fairway, there was far more support this time. In fact two members actually took the trouble to go to the office and remark at the huge difference it had made. So thankfully we seem to be winning the support of the players – which is half the battle!"

The effectiveness of Koring and the fast recovery period is the secret of Ritchie’s approach. "Over time he will completely renovate the whole course with minimum disruption and maximum improvement for the future quality of golf played at Blumisberg."

HEALTH AND SAFETY FOSTER

A reminder to BIGGA members that the Health and Safety poster became illegal on 1 April and has been replaced by a new, legal version. For more details visit www.hse.gov.uk

David Blackmur

We are saddened to hear that Professor David Blackmur has died after a short illness. David Golding, Education Director at the GTC, has paid this tribute. "David’s passion for golf greenkeeping was second to none and many of today’s Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers owe so much to him, as he was not only a great turf scientist, but one of life’s true gentlemen."

"He was synonymous with Plumpton College for nearly 40 years and instrumental in producing students and finalists for the Toro Student of the Year Award."

"I have a contact in BIGGA who has a lasting memory of David dressed immaculately as he walking down the Las Vegas Strip with his sunglasses on a rod, and with his hand raised to his head, presumably golf courses and P. lateralis as a highly infective pathogen. This is another example of UK plant health authorities not understanding the needs of the arb and amenity sectors even if they are concerned, which many the industry simply do not believe."

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Phytophthora lateralis first appeared in 2010 on Lawson’s cypress which is the most widely traded and planted conifer in the UK landscape. It was initially treated with great concern by UK plant health authorities but arrival of Chalara Fraxinea put paid to that. P. lateralis disappeared from the radar in 2012 when UK government threw a line in the sand following the unprecedented public outcry over chalara ash dieback. P. lateralis now goes unreported outside of the commodity growers and in private gardens. We have been further away from his question and the golfers could play towards the left of the hole. "We then made three drilling zones for those that were just that bit too far left. Within five weeks we had it open again, first teeing up their shots, and a few weeks later they were able to play normally." There was some initial opposition from members, but the difference between the unrenovated fairways and the newly renovated areas soon became very apparent during July and August. Ritchie added: “The difference was so striking, that when we came to work on the other side of the fairway, there was far more support this time. In fact two members actually took the trouble to go to the office and remark at the huge difference it had made. So thankfully we seem to be winning the support of the players – which is half the battle!”

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"GTC’s thoughts are with his family and colleagues at Plumpton College. We have lost a true turf legend.”

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