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GREENKEEPER'S CROSSWORD

Compiled by Mark G Smith, first assistant at Frilford Heath GC

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Important function of a caddie (4,9)
- 8 A small piece of live wood on a dying fire (5)
- 9 Assign too many workers to a task, the boss perhaps! (7)
- 10 Body responsible for administering men's amateur golf north of the border (1,1,1)
- 11 A type of lifting device (5)
- 12 The quince: (L Oblonga) (7)
- 14 A basic bunker maintenance task (6)
- 16 Withered or drooped (6)
- 20 Cuts out, like tree surgeons perhaps (7)
- 23 Aquatic rodent and pest of South American origin particularly prevalent in East Anglia (5)
- 24 People who know, buy from their (3)
- 25 A compound of alcohol with nitrous acid (7)
- 26 To wet a pump to make it start work (5)
- 27 What generous members may do for their guests (6,3,4)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Hole at Old Prestwick known as

- 2 "Sea Headrig" (3,10)
- 2 Old golf club with large round head, equivalent to the modern 8 or 9 iron (7)
- 3 Holing out before one's opponent! (5,2)
- 4 All that is required when putting on fast greens (1,5)
- 5 Surname of golfer known as the Slammer (5)
- 6 John, USPGA tour professional and winner of the 1993 Buick Southern Open (5)
- 7 Royal couple's courses at Gleneagles (4,3,6)
- 13 Essential ingredient of 2 stroke fuel (3)
- 15 UK manufacturer of Verdone Herbicide and Daconil Fungicide (1,1,1)
- 17 No spice is mixed where trees are found (anagram) (2,5)
- 18 Region of Scotland where Carnoustie championship links can be found (3-4)
- 19 Man management is just one of the head greenkeeper's job (6)
- 21 Fade the ball to the flag or commence play at the tenth hole perhaps (3,2)
- 22 Ken, US Ryder Cup player in 1969 (5)

★ Solve the crossword puzzle and you could win either a BIGGA blazer (worth £87.95) or £50 in cash! Send completed entries to: Crossword Competition, BIGGA, Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Alne, York YO6 2NF.

Closing date January 28, 1994. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win the prize. Photocopy your entry if you don't want to cut up your magazine. Apologies to last month's entrants for the missing clue to 11 across...!

Name:

Address:

.....

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If I'm the winner, please send me £50 cash or BIGGA blazer, size



Phil Helmn: "This club and course are not just for golfers. I'd like people to enjoy the course for other things - essentially it remains a beautiful parkland."

ONLY

Aspiring to excellence is one of the secrets of Overstone Park's success. It's a philosophy shared by course manager Phil Helmn

Despite the spectre of recession, which has seen off many golf course developments, there is at least one oasis of optimism for new courses in this country.

Overstone Park Golf Club in Northamptonshire opened for play last July, at a time when green shoots of recovery were only thinking of making an appearance. This ambitious project encompasses an 18 hole parkland course, a development of 122 second homes for the golf-obsessed, a health and leisure club and even a 27 acre trout lake, complete with resident "fishing professional."

Donald Steel designed the par 72, 6602 yard course, which is set in 800 acres of picturesque Victorian walled parkland on the eastern outskirts of Northampton. It's a site of notable beauty and Donald took a pragmatic approach to the course design: "My philosophy is to work with the land's resources rather than against them," he said. "The land has many mature trees and an existing lake and it was our aim to make use of these natural features.

"We have tried to produce 18 very individual holes with a lot of variety between them."

Responsibility for the course lies with Phillip Helmn, a course manager with big ambitions. Phil, aged 28, worked at a club in Vero Beach, Florida after leaving Myerscough College, where he was a student for three years. Apart from his diploma with honours, Phil also picked up the Top Turf Student trophy and Top Research Studies trophy along the way.

His route to his present post came via Camberley Heath Golf Club in Surrey, where he was deputy head greenkeeper, and Collingtree Park in Northampton where he was head greenkeeper under course manager Peter Jones.

Phil joined Overstone Park when it was under construction and worked closely with Donald Steel and Brian D Pierson's construction company to grow the golf course in and open it for limited play within six months. It was a hectic half year, which also comprised appointing a full maintenance crew of eight and selecting and buying a stable of the best machinery.

"Some 90 per cent of my major grass cutting machinery is Toro, simply because of its quite

THE BEST WILL DO



Top picture: at work on the course at Overstone Park
Above: maintenance staff with some of their machinery

Phil Helmn, seated, with Andrew Humble of Erringtons of Evington, Leicester, who supplied Overstone Park with their Toro kit. "They give me unrivalled quality of service and therefore peace of mind," said Phil.

justifiable reputation for quality and reliability. I think my main reason for choosing Toro, however, was my experience in the past of their efficient back-up service."

Firmly in Phil's sights is a strong desire to achieve high standards of excellence on the greens. He also wants to nurture a course that will be appreciated by more than just the golfing fraternity.

"I identified the turf we wanted from fields in Norfolk and Yorkshire," he said. "Then, to enhance the Victorian setting, we planted trees, shrubs and an abundance of wildflower mixes, containing specimens such as corn poppy, foxglove and red campions.

"This club and course are not just for golfers. I'd like people to enjoy the course for other things – essentially it remains a beautiful parkland."

Testimony to the early successes of Overstone Park, which is the centrepiece of the Watermark Club leisure resort, is the fact that 50 timber finish homes were sold within three months of opening, at a value of £4.5m. Starting at £79,000, the properties have a prime location near to the first and tenth tees and all owners receive two free lifetime memberships to the club, worth nearly £10,000.

Overstone Park staff

Phillip Helmn – course manager
Craig Williams – deputy head greenkeeper
Andrew Parsons – assistant greenkeeper
Paul Knowles – trainee greenkeeper
Christopher Stanley – trainee greenkeeper
Simon Atkinson – head landscaper
Martin Green – golf course mechanic

Major machinery in the Overstone Park stable

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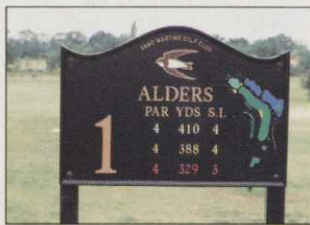
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BEATING THE FREEZE

Early morning blues as Walter Woods surveys the sprinklers at the second green as an attempt is made to clear the last of the rime before play begins

Hosting a big event is never easy and the problems multiply as the weather gets colder. Head greenkeepers

Gordon Moir and Eddie Adams report from St Andrews



Gordon Moir



Eddie Adams

panies sponsoring national, Scottish and regional events, the presentation and condition has always to be first class. In preparation for the Dunhill, very little extra is carried out other than extra cutting on the days immediately preceding and during the tournament, with the greens being topdressed with a sand/sterilised mixture at the end of September to help smooth and speed up the surface.

One week prior to the event, torrential rain fell from the Wednesday until the Saturday with 35mm on the Thursday alone (October's total average

rainfall!) which severely hampered the preparation work. After two days of dry weather, however, the staff were able to get back to normal.

The first serious headache took place on the Monday morning preceding the event when the greenstaff went out to prepare the course for the first day's practice and discovered that one of The Old Course's three large bunkers, Shell Bunker, had partly collapsed. "The wet weather had undermined the foundation of the revetted face," explained Eddie Adams, head greenkeeper of the Old, "Resulting in the top sinking

three to four feet in the very centre [the face of Shell Bunker measured 15 feet high by 90 feet long]. At such short notice, and with all the other work to attend to, all we could do was bank up the base at the affected area with sand to prevent any further collapse.

"Fortunately, although Shell is a huge bunker guarding both the 7th and 11th greens it doesn't really come into play for the professionals, but it was disappointing from the presentation point of view.

"Ironically we were due to start rebuilding Shell at the beginning of November in preparation for the 1995 Open."

With frosts forecast for every morning of the tournament, Walter Woods, Links Supervisor and Eddie Adams decided to cut all the greens, tees and aprons after play as well as in the mornings just in case the morning frosts prevented any cutting at that time of day.

Wednesday arrived, the day of

An annual event on the PGA European Tour circuit is the Alfred Dunhill Cup at St Andrews which has been held at the 'Home of Golf' since its inception in 1985.

Staging such a prestigious event in Scotland in October is never easy. Normally most greenkeepers are busy making preparations to begin their winter programmes following a season's play with numerous competitions. On the Old Course, after tens of thousands of local and visiting golfers, everything is beginning to look a little tired so when you have professional golfers and a televised tournament, the problems of maintenance and presentation become even harder.

For this particular event, the vagaries of the Scottish weather plagued the greenstaff more than ever before.

Preparation of The Old Course is an ongoing job, and with golfers travelling from all over the world to play the famous links, local club competitions and com-

'The weather caused such disruption that after a day's work the staff were back in the afternoons until after 6pm'



The collapsed face of Shell Bunker

the Pro-Am, and the greenstaff were in before first light to enable them to make final checks on their mowers and to be on site ready to start as soon as they could see, as time was all important.

First tee-off was at 8am and even with 10 staff cutting it takes a considerable time to get the large double greens – averaging 5000 square yards – cut in front of the golf. True to form, however, a light ground frost prevented any cutting taking place. The fact they were not cut did not particularly affect the pace of the greens for the Pro-Am. "They had been double cut on Tuesday morning and cut again on Tuesday afternoon and growth at this time of year has almost stopped," said Eddie.

The greens were cut following play late on Wednesday afternoon with Paladins set at 3/16" and a similar situation developed on Thursday morning, the first day of actual competition.

The golf on the Thursday was not due to start until 9.30am, however by 8.30 there was still a considerable rime on the greens. At around 8.45 it was decided to switch the sprinkler system on for a couple of minutes on the first four greens to try to clear the rime and let the staff get started.

By doubling up the cutters and with help from additional staff from the other courses at St Andrews to switch the greens,

staff were able to keep just in front of the first match. Unlike most courses, it is not just a case of cutting 1, 2, 3, 4 etcetera because of the double greens – when the 2nd is cut, the 16th also has to be cut, the 3rd and 15th and so on. On average it takes two men between 25–40 minutes to cut a double green.

"The weather caused such disruption that after a day's work the staff were back in the afternoons until after 6pm," said Eddie. "They excelled in their duties – having to cut the greens in near pitch dark on some occasions."

Friday told a similar story, though not quite so bad, when cutting was able to begin at around 8.15am, but Saturday morning brought a fairly severe frost with the ground remaining hard until well into mid-morning. The start of the golf was delayed from 9 until 12 noon with play

starting from both the 1st and 10th tees. This once again made cutting impossible – in fact it was a struggle to get the holes changed!

The policy of cutting greens in the afternoon was once again to prove beneficial as far as Sunday was concerned – the day dawned with a hard frost. With both the semi-finals and final to be played, golf began at 10am and the Americans clinched the trophy at around 6pm in the gathering darkness.

Despite all the hassles, what did the players make of The Old Course in October? Well such notables as Mark McNulty, Jose-Maria Olazabal, Nick Price and Nick Faldo all thought the greens putted extremely well.

"During the week the greens were cut 12 times at 3/16" with green speeds at the beginning at 8ft and ending at 9ft," said Eddie.

"Although slow compared to what they are used to, both the European Tour and the professionals themselves knew it would be suicide for us to lower the height of cut to increase the speed due to the cold weather.

"It was suggested on the Wednesday that we put on the groomers but I refused to put the greens at risk for a week's golf and an extra foot on the stimpmeter explaining that the speed would increase as the week wore on and that the greens would remain consistent and true.

"Following the event the height is raised to 1/4" but it takes at least 3-4 weeks for the greens to recover and they are only cut once or twice per week. The other main jobs to be tackled are clearing up after the contractors – although through experience this is getting easier every year – and repairing the crowd damage around the perimeter of the course. All traffic routes receive intensive aeration with any areas very badly affected roped off and overseeded in the spring.

"Although it is all a great deal of hard work and hassle the satisfaction of successfully staging such an event and being part of a team including Walter Woods, the staff of the European Tour and the greenstaff at St Andrews all pulling together, makes it all worthwhile."

Left: 9am on Thursday and cutting finally begins.



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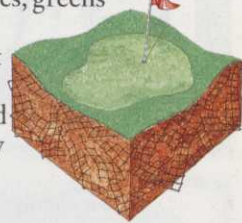
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