The must-not-miss dates for your diary:
9am–5.30pm Wednesday 21st January
9am–5.30pm Thursday 22nd January
9am–1.30pm Friday 23rd January, 1998
Dr Tom Kavanagh has been a consultant to golf clubs for a quarter of a century. He has a special interest in links. Following early retirement from Kinsealy Research Centre in 1988, where he was Head of the Turfgrass Unit, he now advises courses throughout the Republic of Ireland as an independent consultant.

Golf courses on dune sand are recognised as providing the best challenge for golf as well as the best all year round conditions for play. They have enormous advantages in the quality of the turf, always dry underfoot with contours shaped naturally by the wind and with a beautiful unique flora. Golf started in Scotland on seaside grazing land where sheep did the mowing as well as forming the bunkers. As golf became popular, linksland was sought for golf courses but it was a scarce commodity. So golf migrated on to inland soil where greens were initially mowed out of fields, top-dressed with sandy soil and eventually surrounded with mounds with possibly a bunker or two. All of that happened over a period of a hundred or so years. These kinds of greens could stand the use they got when golf was confined to one or two half days per week and membership was limited to a few professional people. As the game became more popular, and particularly in the last decade, these inland clubs were faced with reconstructing their greens or moving to new sites. Now the clubs and the contractors were faced with the high cost of having to import gravel and rootzone sand for green construction.

The position in links was quite different in that all materials for green construction were on site. The movement of sand on a beach depends on the strength of the wind and the size of the sand particles. Particles which hit a walker in the face have become airborne because they have a particle size below 0.1mm in diameter. Particles which blow in waves close to the ground are in the size range 0.1mm to 0.5mm. Particles above 0.5mm simply roll along the ground. Sand blowing inland from a beach is trapped initially by shrubs and rocks. As more sand accumulates, vegetation, especially marram grass, develops in the sand. This grass which thrives in a moving sand situation traps the sand and thus a dune is formed which grows in height depending on the exposure of the site and the supply of sand available. In the west of Ireland courses such as Ballybunion and Belmullet have very large sand dunes. The majority of sand particles in the dunes will probably be in the 0.1mm to 0.5mm size. Sand covered areas behind the dunes become colonised by red

Introducing the new Greensmaster 3200-D.
fescues chiefly with a wide variety of wild flora which are so attractive in the rough on links golf courses.

In designing a golf course on linksland the architect has the task of producing a challenging course with minimum alteration of the terrain. Where some modification of fairways is necessary, the original turf should be removed together with the attaching black sand which is usually not more than 150mm deep. This black sand is an invaluable and scarce commodity on links invaluable because of its lower pH, its organic content and its microflora. When modifications to shape the fairway have been made, these turves and black sand can be returned and rotovated into the surface in preparation for seeding. If the original turf and black sand are not saved when fairways are modified, alternatives are hydroseeding with a mulch of peat and woodpulp, or slurry or a chemical stabiliser such as poly-

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acrylamide, but saving the turf and black sand is preferable as this method facilitates seedling establishment which can be very difficult on links due to wind blow. Organic sand also provides moisture retention and promotes deeper rooting.

If greens can be mowed out of fairways with minimum modification, all the better - these will have very natural contours. They will have a tough sward mainly of fescue if they have been grazed by sheep. If not grazed, a deep pile of moss, fescue and miscellaneous weeds and sedges will have developed which treatment with ferrous sulphate and traffic will quickly reduce to a mowable condition. Where major modifications are necessary, saving the original turf and underlying black sand is essential. These turfes can be laid back on the modified ground preferably in their original condition with black sand and roots attached extending up to 150mm in depth. Obviously these cannot have been cut with a sod cutter but to have been dug out with spades. When laid back roughly and allowed to begin to grow, a mechanical compactor can be used to produce a reasonably smooth surface which will be further improved by repeated top-dressing. This method of green construction and establishment is very successful.

Links sand is usually limy due to the marine shell it contains. The amount of lime can range from zero to over 5070. Greens on courses with very limy sand usually suffer severely from Take All disease especially in their early years as a result of topdressing with the sand or after hollow coring. Use of black sand for topdressing may reduce this problem because of its lower pH, its organic matter content and the microorganisms which it contains. Wind blown sand coming on to greens from a beach or from bunkers can be another source of Take All.

"In recent years our changing climate has put a severe strain on links which had no irrigation arrangements on tees and fairways"

Nutrition on links differs from that on inland courses in that care must be taken to preserve the links character by not over fertilising. Too high nutrition especially with nitrates and phosphates would favour annual meadowgrass invasion at the expense of fescues. Golfers tend to expect greens, tees and fairways to have a rich green colour such as they see on tournament courses on television. However, aiming to produce such colour would damage links which should have a pale greenish brown overall colour typical of seaside links. Forcing green colour by fertilising will introduce annual meadowgrass.

Leatherjackets are usually abundant in links and can damage fairways, tees and greens if not controlled. Crows and other birds can do severe damage searching for leatherjackets in the turf. An insect which is more difficult to control is the garden chafer. These occur in large numbers in uncompacted areas around greens, tees and bunkers. They damage the turf by eating the roots and birds searching for them do further damage. Chafers seem to have increased since persistent insecticides were withdrawn. Spraying as for leatherjackets does not seem to be effective because they are deep in the sand. When they emerge as beetles in late May or early June, spraying is more effective.

In recent years our changing climate has put a severe strain on links which had no irrigation arrangements on tees and fairways. Now such provision is standard particularly in the drier climate has put a severe strain on links which had no irrigation arrangements on tees and fairways. Now such provision is standard particularly in the drier east-coast of these islands. However, in the interest of preserving the links character, irrigation should be restricted. Another climatic effect on links courses is the increasing occurrence of severe gales and the consequent erosion of the coast. Some clubs spend large sums on counteracting erosion and these will be pleased at the prospect of getting financial assistance through recent EU directives on coastal zone management. The forecasted rise in sea levels due to global warming will be a topic of great interest to links early in the next millennium.

Apart from the quality of links as golfing terrain, its flora is a major attraction. The number of flowering species is extraordinary, ranging from eyebright, lady’s bedstraw, cowslip and birdsfoot trefoil to orchids, burnet rose, dwarf willow and gorse. More than 50 such species have been identified on one course. Needless to say, apart from daisy control on fairways, no broad leaf herbicide is used on areas of rough in these courses, undesirable weeds such as ragwort being controlled by hand rogueing. It is unlikely that further development of linksland for golf will take place because of EU habitat directives and establishment of Special Areas of Conservation. Sand dunes will undoubtedly be ranked as priority habitats. What restrictions will be placed on existing links courses, of which there are only about ISO in existence, remains to be seen. One restriction which will be necessary whether from an EU directive or not is the limitation of traffic on these scarce and sensitive areas.
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**Education Update**

**BY KEN RICHARDSON**

I had hoped to have been able to give full details of the Finalists for this year’s TORO Student of the Year Competition in this article. Unfortunately, this edition of Greenkeeper International went to press before we had chance to complete the judging. However, the judges, Peter Mansfield, from TORO (Lely), Gordon Child, Vice Chairman of BIGGA and myself, thought that it would be useful to describe the process of selecting the National Finalists and to give some idea of what we, the judges look for.

The organisation of each year’s competition begins as soon as the previous year’s National Final has taken place, when representatives from TORO, Lely UK and BIGGA meet to discuss the current year’s competition, to discuss any changes that are needed and fix the dates of Regional and National Finals of the next year’s competition. The next step is to produce the Competition Leaflet, which contains the Competition Rules, a list of prizes, and the dates when entries have to be submitted. The prizes for this year’s competition were slightly different to previous years as the two runners-up now win a trip to the GCSAA show and conference, which will be held in Anaheim, California, in February 1998. The Winner, who becomes the TORO Student of the Year wins the TORO Scholarship, which includes; a six week turf management study course at the University of Massachusetts, visits to the TORO Company Headquarters in Minneapolis, the TORO Europe Division in Riverside California and, if time permits, a visit to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Conference and Show where he/she will join the two runners-up and his/her tutor. There is also the additional benefit of being named the TORO Student of the Year which is a major achievement to put on anyone’s CV. I remember thinking that if Margaret Thatcher were ever to look for another job then all she need write on her CV under achievements was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

TORO Student of the Year is not quite in that league but in the Greenkeeping Industry it would certainly open many doors.

By this time any student reading this article must be asking “How do I enter...”

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**Hard work, but enjoyable**

On July 27 I made my way to Edinburgh by train where I was joined by Peter Mansfield, the ever smiling General Manager of Toro Products, and BIGGA Education Officer Ken Richardson. Our mission was to interview all TORO Student of the Year nominations and pick the regional winners to go forward to the final at Aldwark in October.

We spent all day Monday at the Royal Terrace Hotel meeting the Scottish entrants, leaving late afternoon for the next day’s interviews in Bradford. The journey was to prove a forerunner for the week ahead. Those of you who have been in Ken’s company for long will know that he is an ex RAF man with many stories to tell, and as we sped through the scenic countryside of Scotland and Northern England, there seemed to be a never ending list of old RAF depots or places Ken had visited. Talking about them only served to refuel his tank and with the aid of a Maurice Chevalier lozenge to soothe the working parts, he was able to complete the trip with his voice intact.

Down to the serious job of judging. The standard varied in all four venues but all had their highs. After Bradford, where we met the Northern nominees, we travelled south to Hemel Hempstead for the South East, then on to Cheltenham for a long day with the South West followed by the Midlands.

For the students to win nominations is an achievement in itself, but to reach the final and maybe to go on to win this prestigious award must give their career prospects a big lift. So it was disappointing to see some dressed more appropriate to a day digging ditches than an interview which could play a major part in their chosen career. I may be old fashioned but first impressions and presentation go a long way.

The four days were hard and tiring but very interesting with still one to go in Dublin. I am sure all the winners will make a very good close final at Aldwark. I must on behalf of all students of greenkeeping and BIGGA, thank Toro for their generous support to this competition. The winner will have the wonderful opportunity of receiving the Toro Scholarship to the USA, where he or she will go to Massachusetts University for six weeks and visit the Toro factories and the GCSAA Conference and Show where he/she will join the two runners-up and his/her tutor. For the ones who don’t make it, the whole experience will I am sure enhance their greenkeeping career.

Gordon Child
to be a winner

this Competition”. The answer for 1997 is that you are too late as the Competi-
tion is reaching its final stages. However, the leaflets for the 1998 TORO Student of
the Year Competition will be available on the BIGGA and TORO stands at BTME in
Harrogate, in January, and copies will be sent to colleges. All nomi-
nated students, who should be from N/SVQ Level 2/National Certificate/Diploma
Courses, must complete applica-
tion forms, available from BIGGA.

Greenkeeping tutors must complete nomination forms for each student. Nominated students must be employed or, at a college or be resident in the
United Kingdom or the Republic of Ire-
land. Application forms normally have to
arrive at BIGGA HQ by the end of May,
when the entries are sorted into
Regions ready for the Regional Finals
which take place during late July. The
panel of judges, normally comprising a
representative from TORO, usually Pete
Mansfield, from Lely UK, the Vice Chair-
man of BIGGA and myself, travel to
each BIGGA Region and to the Republic of
Ireland to interview each candidate, and
compare him/her against the others
in that Region. This enables them to
select six National Finalists. They may,
also select up to two other National Finalists from those candidates who
showed exceptional talent but have been
not selected in a particular region. These National Finalist reassemble in
October, usually at BIGGA HQ, although
the 1997 National Final will take place in
Harrogate, where a further set of inter-
views select the TORO Student of the Year.

Many people, including Student of the
Year candidates often ask “What makes
a TORO Student of the Year?” There is
no easy answer. The interviews are sub-
jective, candidates can react well at
Regional Finals and not so well at the
National Final and the overall standard
of candidate varies from year to year.

I suppose an easy answer would be that
the judges select the candidate who they
think will gain most from winning.
The standard of greenkeeping skill and
knowledge is defined by the requirement
for the candidate to have or be working
for the American Study Tour. The BIGGA
Vice Chairman, Gordon Child, in 1997,
may ask questions on the candidate’s
golf course eg the number of holes, the
number of staff, the type of course, the
grasses used on greens, tees and fair-
ways, health and safety, etc. I usually
ask questions on BIGGA, education and
training, future studies etc. We can all
ask questions on general matters such as
shopping, sport, family and other
activities outside work.

Finally, we have to make some diffi-
cult decisions. All students nominated
for the Competition have been selected,
from a large number of college stu-
dents. This not only makes them all
winners, but it also makes the final
selection even more difficult. The final
selection depends on candidates per-
forming well on the day of the Regional
Final and then on the day of the National
Final. Looking back over the years that
this competition has been running, it is
grafting to note that all of the past
winners not only coped well with their
visits to the USA and proved to be good
ambassadors for TORO, BIGGA and the
greenkeeping industry but that they
have also used their status to move up
the greenkeeping career ladder.

If you feel that you could gain from
being a winner, that you could cope
with flying to the USA, finding your own way
to a university, two factories and a major
greenkeeping show, all in different
States and live with the publicity and
status of being the TORO Student of
the Year then watch out for the 1998 leaflet
and make sure that your college enters
you for next year’s Competition.

LETTERS

No point

I welcome the discussion in Greenkeeper
International concerning the CONGU pro-
posal that distance points on tees shall be
not less than four yards in front of the rear
of the tee. It is a subject that requires airing.

The town of Wetherby, is bounded by a
river with a disused railway embankment
running through the centre of the course.
If this proposal is implemented it will create
serious cost problems if we attempt to
conform and if we fail it will lead to a
reduction in the SSS.

Many different clubs without any
desire to produce a “Championship
course” the Committee has already max-
imized the available land to produce a par
71 course of 6,235 yards with a SSS of 70.
It is a good test of golf where position is
more important than length off the tee.
A survey of the tees has revealed that
currently only two will conform to the four
yard ruling, on five holes major tee recon-
struction will be required and on the other

11 it is impossible to obtain the extra
length, because the rear of the tee is either
backing on to the river, a flood bank,
ditches or neighbouring properties. At best
the measured course will be reduced by 44
yards with the result that the standard
scratch has to be revised to 69, despite the
fact that at considerable expense, a further
26 yards is added to the playing length.

We hold just one members’ 36 hole
Championship event a year, of whom per-
haps ten could be said to be in contention.
There may be a professional event as well,
but they play their events against par not
the SSS, so what is the point of adding two
extra yards on 18 tees for the average
course? Although one can appreciate the
logic of CONGU in respect of Champs-
ionship courses who stage county and
national tournaments, this ruling will do
no more than increase handicaps for average
course golfers as well as adding extra costs
too tee construction, sign alterations and
re-printing score cards and yardage charts.
John Lelean, Chairman, Development
Committee, Wetherby GC

Cairndhu Golf Club, set in rolling hills on the coast of
Northern Ireland has had its problems with thatch, pea
and waterlogging. Now though, it’s mainly wear and tear
and the odd disease that head greenkeeper Vincent Magill
has to worry about.

Last year he was among the
first to try Fortiva coated seed,
introduced to the Province by
Elizabeth Wilson of JA
Humphrey Agriculture.

"We hollow-tined, top-
dressed and seeded three
greens with a bent and creeping
red fescue Fortiva mixture," he
says.

"The Fortiva started to strike
a lot quicker than any other
seed I have used - particularly
around the edges of the greens
where wear was worst. After
two weeks you could clearly see
the newly established grasses.

"It also helped obtain a good
take, particularly of the bents,
where Anthracnose had com-
pletely wiped out patches of
meadow-grass."

"I’m now going to start to
use it on our tees as a divot
mix, where I would expect even
better results," he says.

for further information and details
of your nearest distributor, contact

Name and address supplied

For many years now, BIGGA has cam-
paigned relentlessly to increase the profile
and professional standing of Greenkeeping
and its Association.

However, after recently applying for
numerous Heed Greenkeeper vacancies
advertised in Greenkeeper International
and the unprofessional lack of response or
even the common courtesy of acknowl-
edgement, I wonder if the message has
ever gotten through.

Having discussed this issue with my
colleagues, I was amazed to hear of similar
cases and now believe that this is a fre-
quent occurring problem and one which
should be addressed.

I understand that BIGGA cannot be held
responsible for such unprofessional behav-
avour, but believe that BIGGA, when accept-
ing advertisements from golf clubs, should
stress the importance of proper protocol
and the need for basic courtesy.
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American Golf (UK) Ltd has expanded its operations in the UK, adding a further four golf courses to its existing portfolio of five and expanding its territory to cover an area from Portsmouth in the South to Nottingham in the Midlands.

American Golf is the largest golf course operator in the world with the head office in Santa Monica, Los Angeles and employing over 14,000 people worldwide. Geary Leathers is Managing Director of the UK subsidiary supported by Laurence Pitie who, as a Director of Maintenance, is responsible for the development and maintenance of its nine courses.

American Golf has agreed a provisional list of equipment including SV Workhorse Utility Trucks, Top Dressers, Bunker Rakes, HRS 1 11 Rotary Mowers, Greensking V and Tri King Mowers in a £150,000 package. They currently operate a fleet of E-Z-GO golf carts from leading hire specialists WG Search Group.

David Withers, recently appointed National Accounts Manager for Jacobsen, said, “We are obviously delighted to have secured this order from the largest golf course operator in the world. Globally American Golf has 270 courses and our range of equipment plays an inherent part in its maintenance systems. As an expanding organisation we look forward to a long and mutually beneficial association between our two companies.”

Four more courses are acquired by Americans

“Historically American Golf have purchased Jacobsen equipment and we have continued this association because the Jacobsen product range features quality equipment that meet our stringent requirements for course maintenance. This together with their excellent after sales service, and their commitment to product quality ensure that we have the best possible packages to help provide quality playing facilities at all of our courses, said Laurence.

American Golf has 270 courses and our range of equipment plays an inherent part in its maintenance systems. As an expanding organisation we look forward to a long and mutually beneficial association between our two companies.”

Visitors to Huxleys' fifth annual machinery demonstration held at Alresford GC were treated to a display of professional equipment suitable for maintaining a wide variety of grass and turf surfaces.

More than 100 visitors from golf clubs, local authorities, contract organisations, sports clubs, colleges, parks and estates attended the event which featured many established products from the Huxley range as well as a number of machines making their first public working appearance. Accompanied by a commentary, visitors were offered the chance to see Huxleys machines in action.

Geary Leathers is responsible for the maintenance, is responsible for the best possible packages to help provide quality playing facilities at all of our courses, said Laurence.

The tranquil Fota Island Golf Club, situated in Cork Harbour was the scene of activity when Hayter Territory Manager, Barry Halls delivered six Hayter Pedestrian Greensmowers.

Course Manager, Steve Burn, commented that his team had chosen the machines after evaluating them, and, being used to pedestrian machines were satisfied that the Hayter machines would meet the criteria.

Fota Island is a traditional course with many challenging features, and is maintained to the highest standards all year round. Being host to many prestigious championships the need for the right machine is critical and supplying dealers, Pat Geaney/John O'Flynn are confident that the Hayter Greensmowers will provide the desired finish for quality golfing conditions.

Pat Geaney, of Geaney O'Neil, located in Glanmire Cork, will provide service back-up. Being local to the club was obviously an important factor to Fota Island.

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Accompanied by a commentary, machines were paraded in front of visitors before carrying out two or three working passes. At the end there was an opportunity for visiting greenkeepers, to try out the equipment for themselves.

One machine which attracted close attention was the new Huxley Greestar greens mower which was making its public working debut at the event. The Greestar has the distinction of being the only British-built ride-on greens mower on the market, developed with considerable input from working greenkeepers.

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