Richard H. Jacobsen was the son of a highly successful greenkeeper and head groundsman of Latrobe Country Club. He had a keen interest in golf and was exposed to the sport from a young age. This exposure led to his eventual career as a professional landscape architect and designer. His father, Otto, was a well-respected and influential figure in the golf industry, and Richard was able to learn from him and other veterans like Arnold Palmer and Joe Dey. Jacobsen's expertise in turf management and landscape design helped him to establish a successful business that continues to thrive today.
The Alchemist

When it comes to getting better cultivars into your sward, don’t be bamboozled by what’s on offer. David Greenshields, lifts the lid on the art of grass seed breeding and blending

A common question I’m asked by greenkeepers and turf professionals is if and/or when they should change the grass seed mixture.

The advice from leading independent advisors is, quite rightly, to consider changing what you’re using from time to time in order to add to the diversity of your sward to improve overall performance.

And it is also understandable that many turf professionals are bamboozled when told they should change a grass seed mixture that has performed well over the years.

But it’s important to understand that you can still follow this sound advice without necessarily needing to ‘change’ your mixture. So how does this work?

‘Change’ can take place over time in the form of the individual cultivars that make up your preferred grass seed mixture, rather than moving away from the mixture or brand itself. For example, we regularly test new cultivars in mixture synergy trials prior to introducing the re-formulated mixture into the market, thus ensuring users can enjoy improved performance season-on-year by selecting what can be perceived as the ‘same’ mixture.

So, let’s take a closer look at this issue…”

Breeding breakthroughs

Let’s start with the role of the breeder. Grass seed breeders want to improve and update cultivars on an ongoing basis, providing turf professionals with characteristics like disease and drought tolerance, cool-temperature germination and rapid recovery from wear. You name a problem, you can be sure there’s a breeder out there pioneering a new cultivar to solve it!

That’s why it’s vital that these breeding breakthroughs are harnessed into our playing surfaces – they contribute not insignificantly to providing the protection we so need from disease incidence or adverse climatic conditions. Without them, a surface left unseeded for a prolonged period, or reseeded with an unchanged mixture, will become increasingly susceptible to stress.

Once one of our global network of plant breeders has produced a cultivar that, say, provides improved tolerance to Leaf Spot disease, it’s then up to us to make the most of that breakthrough.

How individual cultivars are selected, trialled and harnessed within a mixture aside for a moment, this brings us to the key point of difference between breeding companies and grass seed importers.

Only a breeding company that understands the value of applied research and development – i.e. a company that invests in the collaboration of breeders, research and development – can provide you with the latest confidentially and disease-resistant cultivars.

The improvements in Fineness of Leaf: Barenbrug cultivars in BAR Extreme versus bottom of Table 1 Turfgrass Seed 2011 – can provide you with the latest solutions and all the benefits these bring. We are constantly looking at how we can better our mixtures with the latest Barrenbrook-bred cultivars – to do so takes time and money, hence we are a premium-priced product with added value in terms of performance capability.

Compare this approach with those who buy-in grass seed from various sources either ready-blended or blend it themselves without the benefit of a breeding, and research and development programme – without expertise or passion.

This means products from breeding companies will include the latest cultivars as a matter of course. So, perhaps we’ve been using the same mixture – let’s say our BAR Fescue – for several years. But, as we’ll see, it’s changed and evolved over time. If you’re buying seed from a breeding company, you are replenishing your sward and improving disease tolerance without necessarily knowing it!

Mixture synergy

Let’s say, at the other end of the scale, you do know your cultivars from your mixtures, breeding companies and marketing bumf. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, as they say!

Lots of turf professionals, understandably, look at individual cultivar characteristics – perhaps consulting the British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) Turfgrass Seed guide – to solve problems. It makes sense – you want a bent grass mixture for your greens, so you naturally gravitate towards the top-performing cultivars on that particular table and give the ‘agent’ company a call.

This may sound surprising coming from a company whose cultivars regularly top the tables. But, finding the perfect grass seed blend is a kind of alchemy.

That’s where mixture synergy comes into its own.

By carefully selecting desirable characteristics, and considering how different strengths and traits might complement or compete with each other, we research and develop the mixtures that eventually make it to market. This is a long process – it can take a full 15 years to develop a new cultivar, through breeding, in-house research, field trials with turf professionals and official testing systems; each a vital and valuable part of the process.

Along the way, we might discover a cultivar that scored well in the Turfgrass Seed guide for fineness of leaf improves a mixture dramatically – and gives, let’s say, added cool temperature growth or extra disease resistance to boot. It’s fascinating.

Buy right

We all need to remember that you can’t look at key characteristics of cultivars in isolation to find the optimum solution to a particular problem, be it recurring disease or a salt-avaged links course. Nor can the constant chipping and changing of products, or – more worryingly – brands, magically replenish and revive your playing surface.

So what can you do? Well, you can educate yourself about the differences we’ve discussed here and make informed buying decisions. Ask questions. What new our BAR Fescue does your chosen grass seed mixture contain? When was it last refreshed? How often has it been reformulated in the last five or 10 years? When you take into account the wider relationship building and problem-solving role of grass seed breeding companies, it’s unfortunate to see venues make poor product choices.

Let’s take a look at a couple of examples of mixtures we’ve evolved to show just how much products can change over the space of a few years…

BAR 7 is currently undergoing field trials at a number of top football venues during 2011, BAR 7 RPR has now been launched as an added option to the standard mix.

As the new cool tolerant variety Barlandoo is introduced into our playing surfaces you can be sure there’s a breeder out there pioneering a new cultivar to solve it!

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• BARFescue has changed significantly in the last five years. We’ve most recently seen the introduction of innovative new cultivars like Viktoria (25%), Bar- swing (20%) and Bargon II (15%), together with 25% Bacroon and 15% Barbardie, to create the mixture’s current composition. Compare this to its 2006 formulation of 50% Bargon, 25% Barbans and 25% Barpearl. These latest additions bring improved desirable characteristics – combined disease tolerance and cool soil temperature germination – that are an improvement on the previous incarnation.

• BAR 7 is currently undergoing something of a revolution. Having developed a unique Regenerating Perennial Ryegrass (RPR), we soon saw how its creeping growth habit, with a capability to establish quickly and tolerate wear, could particularly benefit football and rugby applications. After successful trials at a number of top football venues during 2011, BAR 7 RPR has now been launched as an added option to the standard mix. And with production of our new top-rated variety Bardorlando in the pipeline, this popular blend is likely to take another step forward very soon!

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The new, updated, Safety Management System (SMS) sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen has been developed to provide:

- All golf clubs with Golf Industry Standard Risk Assessments.
- All golf clubs with a SMS tailored to their needs.
- Golf Club Managers with practical help to meet their legal obligations.

Why do you need a Safety Management System?
- It is a key obligation of health and safety legislation.
- It is required by HSE guidance.
- It gives protection to employees and senior management.
- The Safety Management System contains help and guidance to enable golf clubs to:
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  - Reduce the costs.

To check how the new hazards are coded, download the Excel document at the end of each hazard page eg 4. Clubhouse – Old to New Hazards.

Both Risk Assessments and Risk Profiles can be updated with the new hazard references as part of your regular review process over the coming months.

HAZARD REFERENCES

To transfer the information to the new SMS you will need to re-code your hazard references on your Risk Assessments and Risk Profiles. To do this:

1. Select the Risk Profile area that you wish to view.
2. When the Risk Profile is visible select the ‘Click here to Download’ option at the top right of the page.
3. The Risk Profile for the selected area will have saved to your selected download area.
4. Repeat steps 7, 8 and 9 for each Risk Profile area.
5. Insert your user name (email address) and password.
6. Select the Risk Profile area that you wish to view.
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9. Repeat steps 7, 8 and 9 for each Risk Profile area.

As you may not remember your username and password, they will be emailed to the address that is registered on the SMS website.

The new SMS does not feature the facility to store the Risk Profile online. All of the documents (Risk Profile and Risk Assessments) are downloadable so that they can be saved to your own computer, a memory stick or printed out and filed away. You do not require a password (other than the login details to enter the Library on the website).

To download the Risk Profiles from the old SMS (as described above 1 - 9).

HAZARDS

As part of the review, Hazards have been re-coded e.g. Hazard ‘A’ across all seven areas (Greenkeeping Activities, Maintenance Facility, Golf Courses, Clubhouse, Kitchen, Pro Shop and Fire Safety) is Hazardous Substances where appropriate.

To store the Risk Profile online. All of the documents (Risk Profile and Risk Assessments) are downloadable so that they can be saved to your own computer, a memory stick or printed out and filed away. You do not require a password (other than the login details to enter the Library on the website).

The new SMS has been available to BIGGA and GCMA members since mid January. The original SMS will no longer be accessible to members from 30 April 2012.

STORED RISK PROFILES

To ensure that you have downloaded your stored Risk Profiles you will have to follow these steps:

1. Login to the Members area of the BIGGA website.
2. Click on Member Resources.
4. Click on the button ‘Click here to visit the old site’.
5. Click on the Login/Register tab at the bottom of the page.
6. Insert your user name (email address) and password.
7. Select the Risk Profile area that you wish to view.
8. When the Risk Profile is visible select the ‘Click here to Download’ option at the top right of the page.
9. The Risk Profile for the selected area will have saved to your selected download area.
10. Repeat steps 7, 8 and 9 for each Risk Profile area.

As a result, BIGGA and GCMA members will have saved to your selected download area:

- All Risk Profiles.
- All Risk Assessments.
- A library of Hazard references (other than the login details to enter the Library on the website).

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- Verify that you have stored Risk Profiles you will have to follow
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Please email your notes to Section scott@bigga.co.uk but be sure to let me know if there has been very little happening with the members there to discuss. With hopefully some new ideas we meet in mid February and Greenwood, our new Scottish Region delegate, will sort you one. Anyway, here are the places and dates for BTME and what a show this year was! BTME, April 12 (TBC); Summer, Stand 47; Autumn, Windermere GC, September 18; Winter, Bert Cross Memorial. See you at Leasowe GC, Spencer Lloyd-Pye (inc AGM)

Not a bad set of golf courses so please try your best to support your Section and hopefully I will see you at one of the above events if not all of them! And if you remember any news of people leaving the area or people joining our area please let me know. See you at Leasowe GC, Spencer Lloyd-Pye (inc AGM)

All the latest news from your Section but be sure to let me know any news regarding this month, this year, or just as a matter of general interest. As you read this month’s notes summer is well and truly just around the corner, although it has rained every day for five weeks in December and January followed by four days of frost, course closures must be high in the North West. It is now mid March and the pressure will be starting to mount from our members to get that quick start to the season we all desire! And a small matter of Augusta is a couple of weeks away. So we dive in early with a first on the greens, tees and aprons and hope for the best weather wise or do we wait and potentially fall behind on all of the tasks and decisions going around your mind?

In feeling is a tremendous time for greenkeepers as those Sid rail Reps start to build up at your door, just remember to give your course and you live and die by your decisions! So as that Rep tries to sell you a new product that will make your course the best in the area, ask him a couple of questions back. Drag him onto your course, show him your concerns, if you have any, and ask him for solutions, just remember a “Special Offer” is only Special if it suits you for your course.

Harrogate was a distant memory, except as I pen this it was only last week and very fresh in my mind. It is great to spend a couple of days catching up with people who you may not see from one year to the next. Apart from my staff, who always arrive on the Wednesday and stay until Thursday, I also try to be there to keep dragging me to Hales Bar for a drink. It was a miss today. The golf course was still frozen, yet 30 or so still went out and played...must be bonkers! I love my golf but there is a limit, so I am sat in my front room watching sky sports news, loaded up with snacks and goodies, kids until tea time...blas.

So, I hope you all enjoyed the show this year, for me it had a freshness to it and a good buzz about it, with so many old mates to chat to but not enough time in the show. I’m afraid not much to tell you this month, the golf days are all booked and confirmed and tee times are available, so send in your entry, so send a couple of days catching up with people who you may not see from one year to the next. Apart from my staff, who always arrive on the Wednesday and stay until Thursday, I also try to be there to keep dragging me to Hales Bar for a drink. It was a miss today. The golf course was still frozen, yet 30 or so still went out and played...must be bonkers! I love my golf but there is a limit, so I am sat in my front room watching sky sports news, loaded up with snacks and goodies, kids until tea time...blas.

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Around The Green

Scottish Region

East

Well just back from Harrogate BTME and what a show it was, 800 up on the Tuesday and more than 1000 up on the Wednesday...good attendances you would have to say. It seemed that every corner there was someone

West

Central

Congratulations to Paul Murphy who has gained the position of Course Golf Manager with the Pige Golf Trust, responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the seven courses previously under the auspices of Pige Trust.

The Section was hoping to put on a practical course on irrigation troubleshooting in March but due to work commitments this has had to be postponed until later in the year. We hope to see a good turnout of members at the evening talk by James Cobbe on native tree selection and planting at the training room at Elmwood GC on Wednesday, May 2, details for the Spring outing at Craighead, on April 17, and the 2012 Pair’s competition will be emailed out to everyone shortly and an entry form will be available on the website www.bigcascentralscotland.co.uk for members to print off. This is the only methods we shall be using to notify members.

Northern

I would like to start this month off with the weather and how frosty it’s been for the last month. So winter has finally arrived but we can’t complain to much as the snow has been to a minimum so far. Then with the movement in the Section, which see Scott Davidson, from Royal Ayrshiret Golf Club as Deputy Head Greenkeeper and we wish him all the best and I am sure he will do a great job.

Scottish Region

Ayrshire

The Ayrshire Section golf outing was held at Turnberry recently. A fantastic venue, but not such fantastic weather. This resulted in a much lower turn out than usual, but we all set out on a very windy but fairly dry afternoon after enjoying a hot bacon roll and coffee in the clubhouse. It was quite pretty though but the Weather Gods decided to play their strongest hand when we were the furthest and highest golf point on the course - even winds accompanied by torrential rain lasting for about twenty minutes. It says a lot about us greenkeepers that not one person gave in, everyone just getting their heads down and plodding on, water running out of everything. It also says a lot for the golf course, as there was not a puddle in sight on any of the greens during this spell.

The storm winds continued for the rest of the round but was at least helping to dry us out a little.

After a very fulfilling high tea and some refreshments in the clubhouse the presentation of prizes was carried out by George and Derek, who conveyed the thanks of all the participants to the catering and bar staff so well, the Turnberry Resort Management for the courtesy of the course, in particular, Edie and the Ayrshire greenkeeping team for providing such good playing conditions, especially at this time of year.

The prize winners were as follows: 1. Champion Trophy for best Spring and Autumn Aggregate: George Morrison (for the second year running). First class handicap: 1. Derek Wilson; 2. David Nelson; 3. George Murray (NP), from Fairhaven GC. Second class handicap: 1. John Wilson; 2. Stewart Clayton; 3. Ewen Grant; 4. Gareth Rogers. I haven’t mentioned the scores because they are just mind blowing, completing the round was challenge enough.

That’s it for this month, by the time you read this the Ayrshire AGM will have passed and my stand in duty with this report over, I will please let me know any news regarding people, places and happenings in the Ayrshire greenkeeping area for inclusion in the next issue, so make sure it is passed on.

All the best,
Duncan Moro

So glad I gave the Saturday Stableford comp at Baidon a miss today. The golf course was still frozen, yet 30 or so still went out and played...must be bonkers! I love my golf but there is a limit, so I am sat in my front room watching sky sports news, loaded up with snacks and goodness kids until tea time...bliss.

So, I hope you all enjoyed the show this year, for me it had a freshness to it and a good buzz about the show, so many old mates to chat to but not enough time in the day.

I’m afraid not much to tell you this month, the golf days are all booked and confirmed and tee times sorted too...Easingwold, April 15, 2010; Scarfroch, June 27, 1:30pm; Yarmouth, Aug 22, 1pm; Oglesby, Sept 26, 10am; Bracken grill, Dec 12, 10am.

So guys the President’s Day, at Scarfroch, and Invitation Day, at Yarmouth, are afternoon starts, we can put in a shift and still make it, hoping for a good turn out.

Andy Slingsby
07590407967 slingsbyfamily@virginmedia.com

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North Wales

Spring is around the corner and with days starting to feel a bit warmer, I’m sure even the grumpiest of us must be finding it easier to get up in the mornings.

North West

Harry gate

Harrogate HTME 2012, what a year this was with record attendance, even up on the last time the big boys were there in 2010.

It's the first time I have ever attended all four days. I can only say all the exhibitors were happy bunnies, not forget the Education seminars were too.

Education - you cannot beat a hands-on approach to attending these events.

I have been HTME for 19 years and I have seen greenkeepers go through several times over the years, it just goes to show that there is life after NVQ level 3 but remember if you are interested then get onto your Head Greenkeeper or Secretary and tell them you want to see what is going on.

The Council and the Section have now received their invites to Scraptoft Golf Club for the East Midlands Spring Competition. If for any reason you fancy accepting then please get in touch with us in our AGM and as predicted we didn’t find a replacement for regular greenkeeper who had to attend to offer to stay in the position till the end of the season. If anyone is interested or would like to recommend anyone then please get in touch with the Secretary or I will be happy to help.

The Committee is busy organizing for 2012 and factures will be delivered soon. We are also working on several ideas/projects to improve our Section and the work that our Section members carry on their roles for the upcoming season.

I have two personal notes to mention firstly, firstly I would like to thank Pete Smith, who stood down as Chairman of The East Midlands Section at the beginning of February, for all the hard work and effort he has put into the Section over the last couple of years. Pete is one of the most enthusiastic and passionate greenkeepers who have ever met and I do hope that he is able to continue supporting the Section with his enthusiasm and experience.

The second note is about a little girl called Megan, who has very recently been diagnosed with a form of Leukaemia. Megan’s parents have set up a fund called Megan’s Wings, with the aim of raising funds to help with the cost of her treatment, and if you would like to donate then please visit the website www.meganforwings.co.uk for more information.

East Midlands

Late February saw our annual, Toro sponsored, Go-Karting event held at Wymes- wold. This was the 2011 Champion and, assuming the trends continue, he should be finishing on the podium by the time the big boys were there in 2010. Well on course, his majority of us has made this winter seem a lot shorter than what we saw on the cold snap at the start of February there has been a steady level of growth enabling some recovery from the winter wear and tear. Fingers crossed we get a good flush of spring growth, something that we were severely lacked in 2011, which would set everyone up nicely for the coming year.

This is our course of greenkeeping utopia, which we have no idea when it will come to pass, but we live in hope.

Happy Greenkeeping!

Greg Skinner

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North Wales

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Springing enough to make MGW go to the GCUSA show in Las Vegas as part of the BIGGA Delegation sponsored by the day before the Golf Show. I found it very educational, and share his experiences with us, perhaps at a Section seminar in November.

The new Section committee held its first meeting in the beginning of February and while I can’t give anything away at the moment, I know there are some very bright ideas being raised around the grooves for educational purposes, along the lines of future educational and training seminars, which this year’s Section events will be looking to develop a better standard of lecture and education. You cannot beat an educational seminar when it’s good and well tackled. It will be finding it easier to get up in the morning for members and to improve the Section educational and will be willing to share his experiences with us, perhaps at a Section seminar in November.

Easter

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South East

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Rory McIlroy’s visit to Textron, in Ipswich.

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It’s been clarified that further big developments will be rolled out.

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Section Notes

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Please email your notes to scotts-higgs.co.uk by the 5th of the month

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Around The Green

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Midland

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As I sit here in February with snowy and freezing conditions all around, I am heartened by the fact that 1st and 2nd March is the mid-term break of the Section’s March notes, and such critical time must only be efficient in 15% of the venues. Fingers crossed! As we are on the subject of spring, our thoughts are now turning to our new-look reinstate of damaged areas with the remaining weeks of the year. In the fullness of time, 2011 has been a success with good dates in 2011, which would have set everyone up nicely for the coming season.

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As I had mentioned in January’s magazine I told you that Tyneside Golf Club had in the company of Headland, Martin Wood, DCI, Frank Pent, to change the bunkers at the 1st and 18th holes. They are both great ideas and have changed the way they play, they have now added a new resource to the course.

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a year ago Facebook and the website: what is happening in the BB&O...