What’s your number?

Van is the man, as this month What’s your number goes Dutch

Name: Peter van Mispelaar

Company: Vanmac/Trilo.

Position: Owner/director of Vanmac (50% shares).

How long have you been in the industry? 23 years.

How did you get into it? After practicing from school.

What other jobs have you done? I worked with dairy, I was born on a dairy farm and I still like this industry.

What do you like about your current job? Selling the equipment and managing people, so things go as they’re supposed to go.

What changes have you seen during your time in the industry? The market forces us to build cheaper machines because the budget is smaller. Also we don’t see new machines, but existing machines that are fine-tuned and made in a wider range.

What do you like to do in your spare time? I like to mountain bike in the forest.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time? I see myself as director of the company still, but at a different scale.

Who do you consider to be your best friends in the industry? My best friend in the industry is Leo van Loen, my partner in the business.

Who do you consider to be your lucky number? I don’t really have a lucky number but, 44 is a nice number.

Keeping the greens in play

A drainage and sand banding combination keeps the greens in play at Robin Hood Golf course.

Three years after joining Robin Hood GC, Course Manager Andy Wood is delighted with significant improvements that have been made in that time.

When he first joined the team, he was concerned with the poor drainage on the course that kept it out of play.

With development funds at his disposal, Andy was able to make several improvements.

Previously, the greens staff had employed various aeration techniques to improve the flow of moisture through the root zone, but none have been as effective as using the AFT 45 at installing drainage lines at 1.5 metre centres, followed by diagonal adjoining lines with the sandbunker, to provide even greater opportunity for the water to flow into the main drainage system.

“The AFT 45 is an excellent, easy to operate trencher. Coupled with the sandbunker, it is a perfect combination of equipment to keep our course in play all year round,” said Andy.

MAY 2012

Versatility and Multi-Tasking for Open Space Jobs

The Grass Group’s MD, Tim Merrell, extended an invitation to the press to visit Tyto’s manufacturing facility during their ‘Dealer Week’. The first of the more competitively-priced products is the B7 blower.

The Leaf Blower range begins with the pedestrian Speedcut and continues with this month’s lucky number...
Win the ultimate golfing experience at Slaley Hall

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Slaley Hall Golf Club will, for the fourth year running, host the De Vere Club PGA Seniors Championship this summer.

Steve Cram, Course Manager at Slaley Hall, spoke about the preparation involved for this Senior Tour event and improvements made since Andrew Oldcorn secured his Maiden Senior victory last year.

He said: "Last year we got really good feedback from all the players, who said the greens were running well and the tournament officials were pretty happy with it.

“We did a lot of drainage work on fairways with our Sandmaster and saw improved surfaces all around the course.

“Our 9th fairway was a big problem so we used the Sandmaster on that and put about 80 tonnes down into the landing area. Four years ago you couldn’t walk on it, it was all so wet you could nearly roll the turf up and now we’ve sorted all that,” he added.

Slaley Hall sits 1000 feet above sea level, in Northumberland, and the conditions are often cold and wet. The weather has been dreadful this year with almost continuous rain except for two weeks in March and even snow in the middle of April.

Since the previous tournament last summer, the team at the club have been putting a lot of effort into improving drainage especially around the greens.

Steve said: “We had some greens areas that weren’t draining very well so we got a drill and fill machine and we’ve done some major work on them, so they will drain pretty well now if we have any downpours.

“When we were hollow coring some of the problem areas, we brushed in crumbs from shredded rubber tyres to keep them moving and we’ve had great results with that as well. I’m willing to try anything to keep them draining,” he continued.

Of the two championship-standard courses at Slaley Hall, it is the Dave Thomas designed Hunting course which will see the action in June this year.

The course is challenging and long, measuring over 7,000 yards from the back tees and is considered one of the toughest tests on the European Senior Tour.

Steve went on to explain some of the changes made in preparation for the tournament. He said: “The bands around the green, the surrounds, are cut at 7mm and then were up to 25mm on the areas out from that. The PGA wanted that lowering a little so it was a bit easier for the guys to chip onto the greens. So we’ve lowered that.

“We’ve also widened a few of our approaches because some of them were previously quite narrow going into the green. We widened the 4th and the 18th so the players have

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A cohesively managed turf pesticide market started to evolve somewhat later than in agriculture where agrochemicals, albeit few in number, were already in full flourish as foliar sprays and seed treatments by the 1930’s. The turf chemical pesticide market has always been dynamic growing in product range and tonnage but more recently consolidating as increasingly tight environmental and safety legislation takes its toll across the board on fungicides, insecticides and herbicides.

Many ‘household names’ in turf’s pesticide portfolio have already gone and the days of many more look numbered, but greenkeepers and groundsmen can relax for the moment at least. Evidence suggests pesticide manufacturers are designing and developing new actives specifically for the turf market and much better targeted to provide superior control in smaller amounts.

The revolving door opening and closing on contemporary turf pesticides is not altogether logical. It certainly isn’t always the case of oldest pesticides in being the first ones out because hormonal herbicides like 2,4-D and MCPA, with pesticide pedigrees now approaching 75 years, are still widely used. The products may have changed with 2,4-D and MCPA now commonly used in two-way and three-way pre-formulated mixtures with other actives. However, at the end of the day these two ‘household’ herbicides have achieved their three score years and ten by continuing to provide good selective control of broad leaved weeds in turf, the job they were designed and developed to do in the 1940’s.

There are many more products with a considerably shorter pedigree and commercial life span but already consigned to the history books. How many people remember the fungicide thiophanate methyl (a precursor of carbendazim) with systemic activity and heralded as a new beginning for disease control when it came onto the market in the 1970’s. Thiophanate methyl was also a highly effective wormicide and gave short shrift to surface casting earthworms. However, all that was inconsequential when medical researchers found thiophanate methyl wanting on human toxicological grounds causing its withdrawal from the marketplace more than five years ago after only 25 years use on turf.

Different factors at work

The credentials of contemporary pesticides including those used on managed turf are under fire from four EU directives coming at the market from different directions and using different criteria. They are:

• Revision 91/414 Directive
• Water Framework Directive
• Sustainable Use Directive
• Machinery Directive

Revision 91/414 requires re-registration on a 10 yearly basis and forces manufacturers to face up to contemporary conditions and concerns around pesticide usage ten years on. And a lot can happen in one decade in today’s fast moving arena of scientific research and public concern around the use of chemical pesticides. Toxicological research may have uncovered indications of endocrine disruption or carcinogenesis while environmental investigations may have unearthed possible effects on useful soil organisms such as decomposers and natural enemies.

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or perhaps pollinating insects. Chemical pesticides up for re-registration are invariably faced with more and higher hurdles to negotiate. Some are unable to meet requirements. Others can but the manufacturer faced with mounting costs of carrying out new trials and providing more data to the registration authorities may look at the cost benefit ratio and decide to let an active go. And turf being a relatively small niche market doesn’t help, especially if there is no wider application in the much larger agricultural market. Perfectly good pesticides with many more years of safe and effective use in managed turf have already been lost in this way.

The Water Framework Directive is the watery grave for pesticides caught ‘red-handed’ at an excessively high concentration in ground water. High water solubility and soil leaching is clearly a disadvantage although other factors including widespread intensive use and run-off from hard surfaces are clearly critical. Use on managed turf is a ‘red’ one so the big use in broad-acre arable crops and weed control on hard surfaces are the two key factors that tend to trap pesticides in this watery grave. Water flows where it wants to. Streams meandering across golf courses may have already passed through miles of arable farmland where cereals and oilseed rape are intensively sprayed with selective herbicide and then afterwards hit industrial sites where total herbicide is sprayed on hard surfaces. When water is tested all that matters is the concentration in ppm (parts per million) of a particular herbicide (or insecticide/fungicide), with little consideration to exactly how it got there. This is clearly of no consequence to managed turf when a pesticide is purely agricultural in use such as the herbicide IPN which ‘ill foul’ of this directive, but a different matter if there is paunil use on managed turf.

As far as ‘Sustainable Use’ is concerned greenkeepers and groundsmen could reasonably be forgiven for believing this directive is custom-designed and targeted to specifically cobble the sports turf and amenity sectors. The Sustainable Use Directive targets pesticide use in public places (and those places used by the public) which is essentially what sports, amenity and leisure turf is all about.

The Machinery Directive immediately brings to mind the old adage ‘there are more ways of killing a chicken than choking it’. This directive deals specifically with the machinery and equipment used to apply pesticides and now requires every new turf and amenity sprayer to achieve certification to a required level of environmental protection before being released onto the market. Clearly there is no attempt to directly target pesticides but at end result is the same. Without an approved application method there is no way of delivering a pesticide product.

Turf and amenity sprayers can vary in design from simple pre-formulated mixtures for the home gardener to custom-designed mini-sprayers including hydraulic sprayers being used to apply exact amounts of a particular herbicide and then afterwards hit off, and shielded or shrouded to further reduce drift and high volumes of spray mixture leading to excessive run-off. Or manufacture and maintenance faults leading to leakage and nozzle drips.

Inherent design problems in hydraulic sprayers are being overcome by the design and development of a new breed of sprayers based on controlled droplet application from rotary atomisation nozzles applying ultra-low volumes of spray mixture to eliminate run-off, and shielded or shrouded to completely eliminate the inherently minimal amount of droplet drift. Pesticide manufacturers are playing an important part too through on-going design and refinement of their own ‘low drift’ hydraulic nozzles.

**Forward and lateral thinking**

Some of the first turf pesticides to disappear many years ago did so for good reasons. A succession of insecticides applied to turf to control chafer grubs including organo-chlorine insecticides like chlordane and gamma HCH (lindane) and carbaryl (a carbamate insecticide) were unmitigated environmental disasters. To be fair they were doing a good job on chafer grubs which became immediately apparent when the last of these was withdrawn but before imidacloprid (Merit Turf) was released onto the market.

For some years there was a gaping hole in the market and even bigger holes in turf up and down the country as chafer grubs severed grass roots. Rooks, crows, badgers and foxes finished the job, even bigger holes in turf up and down the country as chafer grubs severed grass roots. Rooks, crows, badgers and foxes finished the job, even bigger holes in turf up and down the country as chafer grubs severed grass roots. Rooks, crows, badgers and foxes finished the job.

The pendulum has swung the other way and pesticides that no-one thought in a million years would disappear or suffer from restricted use have fallen foul of EU legislation or suffered collateral damage from high costs associated with re-registration.

Multi-national pesticide manufacturers are thinking ahead and laterally. Classic case is Syngenta which saw chlorothalonil, universally used over a long period of time as a contact fungicide, coming under scrutiny. By dispensing with chlorothalonil as a single-active product (Daconil) on managed turf, in favour of registration in a three-way product with fludioxonil and propiconazole (Intrace), Syngenta is helping to keep this valuable ‘workhorse’ fungicide alive for turf use, as well as in agriculture and horticulture. Any anticipated downsides for turf disease control was more than compensated for by Syngenta’s introduction of fludioxonil, as a brand new single active contact fungicide (Medallion TL) with a much superior overall profile.

Chlorothalonil is not the only pesticide to have lost some aspects of its traditional application and use and remained alive to fight another day. Carbendazim the last remaining wormicide approved for control of surface casting earthworms, and the mess they create on professional sports turf including golf greens, was originally released as a turf fungicide for the control Fusarium patch and other turf diseases and a highly effective one at that.

Essential difference is there being nothing to replace carbendazim as a wormicide should it eventually fall by the wayside. It is inconceivable to imagine the registration of any other chemical to kill surface casting earthworms will ever be considered in future, either by legislators or commercial companies, irrespective of what will always be a clear need on professional turf. Earthworms are key soil fauna included in the increasingly broader and higher environmental hurdles erected for all types of turf pesticide.

**New environmental mind-set and language**

The example set by fludioxonil shows quite clearly the new era of thinking and language when it comes to chemical pesticides in the twenty-first century. Dosage was the traditional language used to describe the label recommended amount of pesticide required to control the pathogen, pest or weed, including golf greens, was originally released as a turf fungicide for the control Fusarium patch and other turf diseases and a highly effective one at that.

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Water flows where it wants to. Streams meandering across golf courses may have already passed through miles arable farmland where cereals and oilseed rape are intensively sprayed with selective herbicide and then afterwards by industrial sites where total herbicide is sprayed on hard surfaces. Where water is tested all that matters is the concentration in ppm (parts per million) of a particular herbicide (or insecticide/fungicide), with little consideration to exactly how it got there. This is clearly due to the concentration in ground water and soil leaching is clearly a disadvantage although other factors including widespread intensive use and runoff from hard surfaces are clearly critical.

Use on managed turf is a ‘red radial’ because big use in broad- acre arable crops and weed control on hard surfaces are the two key factors that tend to trap pesticides in this watery grave.

Some of the first turf pesticides to disappear many years ago did so for good reasons. A succession of insecticides applied to turf to control chafers grubs including organo-chlorine insecticides like chlordane and gamma HCH (lindane) and carbaryl (a carbamate insecticide) were unmitigated environmental disasters. To be fair they were doing a good job on chafers grubs which became immediately apparent when the last of these was withdrawn but before imidacloprid (Merit Turf) was released onto the market.

For some years there was a gapping hole in the market and even bigger holes in turf up and down the country as chaffer grubs spread to grass roots. Rooks, crows, badgers and foxes finished the job by ripping up already loosened turf as down the country as chaffer grubs spread to grass roots. Rooks, crows, badgers and foxes finished the job by ripping up already loosened turf.

The Machinery Directive immediately brings to mind the old adage there are more ways of killing a chicken than choking it’. This directive deals specifically with the machinery and equipment used to apply pesticides and now requires every new turf and amenity sprayer to achieve certification to a required level of environmental protection before being released onto the market. Clearly there is no attempt to directly target pesticides but end result is the same. Without an approved application method there is no way of delivering a pesticide product.

Turf and amenity sprayers can be found wanting due to intrinsic design factors such as inappropriate droplet size and droplet size distribution causing spray droplet drift and high volumes of spray mixture leading to excessive run off. Or manufacture and maintenance faults leading to leakage and nozzle drip.

Inherent design problems in hydraulic sprayers are being overcome by the design and development of a new breed of sprayers based on controlled droplet application from rotary atomisation nozzles applying ultra-low volumes of spray mixture to eliminate run off, and shielded or shrouded to completely eliminate the inherently minimal amount of droplet drift. Pesticide manufacturers are playing an important part too through on-going design and refinement of their own ‘low drift’ hydraulic nozzles.

**Forward and lateral thinking**

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with these targets clearly at the forefront of thinking. Not so now with contemporary terminology changed to ‘loading’ and the environment now uppermost in mind and consideration.

Big plus point claimed for fludioxonil is an efficacy as good if not better than chlorothalonil but with a loading which is ten times less. On a weight for weight basis fludioxonil weighs in with loading of just 375g a.i. (active ingredient)/hectare (has) compared with around 5000g a.i./ha for long established contact fungicides like chlorothalonil and iprodione with their 30-40 year pedigrees on turf.

The manufacturer as much anyone else now regards chemical pesticides as intervention agents rather than foundation products for turf pest, disease and weed control. The latter is increasingly seen as the function and responsibility of the myriad of living organisms and their biological systems in the root zone and thatch.

Around this new thinking is growing a whole new field and industry encompassing biological control and natural soil systems designed to set the nutrition and health agenda on and under turf. Integrated pest and disease management is the name of the game but the essential meaning of integrated, which was coined and used in agriculture and horticulture long before it became established in turf, is inclined to get lost.

In this context ‘integrated’ means using everything at your disposal including where necessary chemical pesticides but only in highly interventionist and targeted ways for minimal impact on natural biological systems in the root zone and thatch. Be that as it may, there is increasing pressure within the industry to dispense with the use of all chemical pesticides.

Proponents of pesticide free turf was lyrical about what is happening on and under the turf as though they are actually there observing these complex and often microscopic systems at work. Danger for greenkeepers, who clearly want to do right by the environment, is to ‘sign the pledge’ on pesticides and embark on a course of chemical pesticide-free golf course management. And then find it is practically impossible to achieve depending on the situation – e.g. location, local topography, level of wear and tear on turf and the expectations of club management and members.

Being wedded to organic (no chemical pesticide or synthetic fertilizer) turf management is not much fun and consolation when birds and badgers are tearing up your turf because there is an infestation of chafer grubs underneath the grass that requires prompt intervention by chemical control. A biological control product based on entomopathogenic nematodes may suffer if both time and temperature are on your side otherwise chemical control is the only option.

Even a tiny patch of Fusarium or a wobbly grass tilter with its roots cut by chafer grubs is enough to throw that vital putt off line. Some greenkeepers have already paid the ultimate price for doing the ‘right green thing’ on their golf course but not according to their management and members.

An entire golf course covers a huge area in relation to the 18 greens where the ‘make or break’ of the game of golf tends to occur. Surely there is a sufficient area out there for the biodiversity-driven pesticide-free course management we all want to see, while allowing the greenkeeper a large measure of leeway on his greens.

To criticise greenkeepers as environmentally unfriendly for spraying greens with fungicide to fend-off Fusarium, spreading insecticide granules to kill chafer grubs and applying wormicide to prevent the worm casts is highly hypocritical given the amount of synthetic turf elsewhere in the sports sector.

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Only £10 to BIGGA members per Skills Collection (+VAT)

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Thanks to the support of the Gold and Silver Key contributors to the Learning and Development Fund (shown below), each of the Skills Collections is available to BIGGA Members for £10 + VAT. For further information, contact the Learning and Development Department on 01347 833800.

Option 3.

The Water Framework Directive is already becoming a worrying threat to grassland ecosystems.
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Keeping heather on course

For West Hill Course Manager, Ben Edwards, heather regeneration is a passion and golf greenkeeping a way of life, as MIKE BEARDALL reports.

BEN EDWARDS is one of those individuals you immediately empathise with as a sportsturf professional.

As Course Manager at West Hill Golf Club, a Surrey heathland course near Woking, he has very rigid criteria for maintaining the course “to the very highest standards possible.”

At the age of only 31 he has certainly fast-tracked in greenkeeping, becoming a course manager when he was only 23 at Sand Martins Golf Club in Berkshire.

West Hill, an 18-hole course founded in 1909, is kept looking incredibly smart. “It has to be at its best, as a good advertisement for the club and for the greenkeeping staff,” says Ben, who has been at the club for a year and a half.

His current demanding job is a far cry from his original plan as a teenager to join his father in his printing company in London.

“After three hours of driving every day I just decided there had to be more to life,” says Ben, who now lives only 20 minutes away from work at Biddenfield in Berkshire.

“I went off to America at 18 to work with a friend running a pool-cleaning business and started playing golf most days. That’s when I developed a deep affection for the world of golf.”

“When I came back to Britain I saw a job advertised for a trainee greenkeeper at Sand Martins Golf Club and applied for it. I have never looked back.”

“After 18 months I was made deputy course manager and at 23 became course manager. I know I was young but I took it very seriously and went on training courses at Merriot Wood College in Surrey and joined BIGGA. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity at such a young age and I owe a great deal to Andrew Hall, the owner of Sand Martins Golf Club. “I think I have only missed one Harrogate show in all that time and I have been to the US shows for the last six.”

West Hill Golf Club is a typical Surrey heathland course with the lucky advantage, in times of drought, of having two boreholes from which the club is allowed to extract water for irrigation. “The Environment Agency simply asked us to cut down a little during the drought period,” says Ben, who says the club is planning to build a reservoir to further help with irrigation and sensible water use.

A sprinkler system is controlled from a central computer which Ben can operate from his mobile phone, using data supplied from the on-course weather station.

The course is on typical clay-sand for the area and, ironically, suffers from wet greens which Ben is tackling through a programme of severe scarification and double core ailing. This is to make the greens playable the whole year round.

“We used a Koro on the greens and were quite amazed at the amount of thatch we lifted,” he says. “The greens are of original construction, but we are gradually going to introduce more sand to change the profile.”

With 82 bunkers on the course, most remodelled about 12 years ago, Ben is keen that they retain the look and shape suitable for a heathland course.

But his major work is on heather regeneration, which has been paying dividends. Vast swathes of vanishing heather have been revived through a process of rotavating, scarifying and turf cutting to bring heather seeds to the surface.

“West Hill is keen to encourage wildlife on the course and in the woodland there are owl boxes, with some tawny owls currently nesting. Hawks and deer are regular visitors and the diverse habitats encourage butterflies and smaller birds.”

The 450 members of West Hill are anxious to keep the heather regenerating. “It is the one thing that crops up in most conversations, because some of the members have been here for many years and have seen the heather go through various stages,” says Ben. “When it is all in flower it is a beautiful purple that looks spectacular against the mown grass areas.”

Ben has eight staff, including a mechanic, and his deputy, Matt Foster, was also previously at Sand Martins. “He is also my best friend, which helps when you are in the same profession,” he says.

“We have a very young staff here, all members of BIGGA, some of whom have very good single figure handicap and our latest recruit, Ros, is only 20. Play off three.”

“I don’t play as much as I should but my handicap is about 16 – 1 play football three times a week, but when my legs tell me to stop I will certainly play more golf. I really believe you have to play golf to appreciate what a golf course is all about.

“I know there are many greenkeepers who don’t play golf, and that’s understandable – but golfers who are greenkeepers look at the course from a different perspective.”

Ben believes that golf is all about people. “This is one of the nicest sports to work in and I have a very good relationship with the members and the staff,” says Ben.

Chairman of the greens is David Haugroves, who has been a member of West Hill for about 30 years. “We have a major meeting about twice a year to make a plan of action,” says Ben. “But David and the club secretary, Gina Rivett, rely on my experience to keep the course running smoothly.”

“This is an incredibly busy club...”