A champion autumn

Congratulations to Oly Browning of Stocks Golf Club in Hertfordshire on becoming the BIGGA National Champion at Irvine Golf Club recently. Derek Wilson and his team presented the golf course beautifully for the Championship and we are very grateful to Kubota and Charterhouse for their generous sponsorship of the event.

I really enjoy attending the National Championship and having the chance to spend time with so many members who are passionate about playing the game. Frilford Heath Golf Club in Oxfordshire has kindly agreed to host the event in 2013 and I very much look forward to seeing who will take Oly’s crown.

Congratulations also to Curtis Tyrrell MG and his team for preparing the Medinah No. 3 course for what turned out to be one of the most exciting and memorable Ryder Cup Matches ever.

Having coped with fifty straight days of temperatures in the 90s during the Chicago summer, Curtis put in to action a plan to bring the course in to the immaculate condition the players found when they arrived and was maintained throughout the week. Within these pages is a review of the event from the course maintenance standpoint.

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November traditionally marks the start of the education season for BIGGA with many of our Sections holding a variety of excellent seminars and conferences over the coming months and of course the Continue to Learn programme at BTME in January is the centrepiece of our Learning and Development schedule.

Bookings have been good for Harrogate so don’t delay in reserving your place at the Turf Managers Conference or the wide ranging array of workshops and seminars.

Four of our Regions are holding their annual Conferences during November, by the time you read this the Midlands and Northern Region events will have taken place and there are details of the South East and South West & South Wales Regional events elsewhere in this magazine.

These Conferences are a great opportunity not just to learn more about the technologies of golf course management but also to network with your peers and interact with the many supporters from the trade who support the events. I hope you take the time to attend your Region’s event. Enjoy the read.

Jim Croxton
Chief Executive
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The various social media forums are already alive with members bemoaning the fall of leaves and of course this comes at a time when many are flat out with important maintenance tasks. This month we feature a range of labour saving devices to make the leaf problem a little easier to deal with.

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NOVEMBER 2012
The dust is starting to settle around Medinah. Not only have the massive crowds, contractors and structures started to disappear, it finally rained a bit to clear all the dust!

I found it funny talking with Jim McKenzie as his Ryder Cup was beyond wet, and ours was a dust bowl! Anyway, everything is different now. For five years I looked at the turf with September 2012 in mind. Now it’s different. Now we’re looking back on what was truly the best of week of my career. I would say it was the best week of my life, but my honeymoon and kids will always take that prize. I had many thoughts, ideas, and expectations for the Ryder Cup. They all came true in their own unique way, and all things leading up to, during, and after, exceeded my expectations. I have no regrets.

I wouldn’t change a thing. It was simply unbelievable and I still have adrenaline flowing through me as a result.

There were many highlights. Meeting the many volunteers that proceeded to work their butts off all week for us was certainly a part of it all that I will never forget. I mean guys just simply dropped it all, and gave 100% running flymos, raking bunkers, hand watering, and mowing! I wasn’t sure how this volunteer program was going to work. But to see what happened was humbling and inspiring. We will always be grateful to each of them, and hope we get to repay the favour in the future!

My team blew me away that week. We have been striving for that one moment for so long, and their execution, management, and professionalism stood apart. I couldn’t be more proud of them and what they accomplished. Managing the turf through the week was so much fun. The weather was finally in our favour and we basically did whatever was necessary to provide what was asked of us.

There were no worries - and best of all, the turf is better today than it was that week. Trying to hide from the European contingent of our team (including Steve Chappell and Lee Strutt) when we were stimping greens was a lot of fun - just kidding of course! Green speeds and the general ball roll was something I was really proud of that week. I thought we delivered what Davis Love III asked, and then some. Too bad our guys got skiddish on the greens when your guys were rolling!

Now that it’s over I really only have one thing to say...Let’s do it again! C’mon we’re ready! Rematch! On a serious note, I would do it again, 100 times over. It was beyond the definition of fun. I wish it were starting again tomorrow.

Leading figures from across the golf industry paid tribute to the course, which had been expertly prepared by Master Greenkeeper Curtis and his team.

Martin Kaymer, whose winning putt has already passed into sporting legend, said: “It was set up perfect for match play and the greens were really fantastic.”

Kerry Haigh, the PGA of America’s Managing Director of Championships and Business Development, said: “Curtis Tyrrell and his staff did an outstanding job at Medinah prior to and during the 39th Ryder Cup.

“They had to deal with an extremely hot summer with record temperatures that had its effect on the conditioning of the fairways and greens.

“However, Curtis put together a plan to bring the course back into Championship condition once the weather broke, in late August.

“With this plan he was able to bring the course back to what you could see in person and on television to showcase not only the outstanding talents of the best players in the world of golf but also to show what a truly great golf course Medinah really is.

“The tees, fairways, roughs, greens and bunkers were all beautifully prepared and allowed the course and the players to showcase their skills.

“Curtis was a delight to work with, he was very professional in every way and his talented crew met and exceeded the needs and expectations that are made for the challenges of Ryder Cup preparation.”
The 2012 Ryder Cup at the Medinah Country Club will go down as one of the most dramatic in history.

In a GI exclusive, Curtis Tyrrell – Director of Golf Course Operations at the venue – gives us the inside story on an incredible week around Medinah. Not only have the massive crowds, contractors and structures started to disappear, it finally rained a bit to clear all the dust!

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So, on Saturday 22 September we left Glenelges at 4am for Chicago and got to our hotel at around midnight UK time.

Even though we were tired, the lure of Chicago’s lights couldn’t stop us enjoying a beer or two at the local Irish bars which are at the heart of the city’s rich history.

Sunday afternoon we headed to Medinah Country Club for the first time. It was amazing to see the scale of the event in person.

Curtis took time out to give us a guided tour, explaining how he had dealt with some of the issues they’d had this extremely hot summer.

On Monday we viewed the last minute preparations and received our uniforms and schedule for the week.

There were approximately 90 full time staff as well as 109 volunteers during the week – meaning a lot of organising and scheduling.

We then had an opportunity to get to know the 104 superintendents and assistants from all over the US.

There were just four of us from Europe and one expat – so we knew if Europe won we might be a lot outnumbered on the cheering front!

From Tuesday onwards we carried out many different preparation duties including bunker maintenance, hand watering, raking, green stimping, hand blowing... and polishing sprinkler heads!

During Thursday onwards, once morning setup had taken place, we were unable to get back to the maintenance facility due to the large crowds of spectators. So we were held back for a while until the surrounding highway was shut so that we could drive in convoy back along the main highway to the maintenance facility.

It was some spectacle - a convoy of 30 to 40 golf vehicles towing blowers, rakers and crew with spectators waving as we went past.

Friday morning, the pressure started to mount, there was less banter and more focus as this was the first day of the actual event. The first day’s play ended with the US 5-3 up.

It was great that things had got off to an exciting start and the course was performing just how Curtis had planned it.

One of the most amazing things was being so close to so many people cheering the matches, it is one hell of a thing to hear 65,000 people cheering all at once!

Saturday’s preparation followed a similar plan to Friday’s, and the US ended the day 10-6 up.

Sunday saw the start of one of the most amazing days in Ryder Cup history, where the European underdogs came back as a team to regain their title!

It was amazing to have been a part of the preparations and maintenance of the course and to be standing there witnessing the greatest game clinic the Ryder Cup.

It was an amazing gesture by Curtis to ensure that we could celebrate our win for as long as we wanted that evening and he joined us in the celebrations.

That will be one lasting memory of the event, a very hard working man, his team and his family had spent the last five years living the dream and preparing his golf course for the third biggest sporting event in the world.

The Europeans had won, but he stood to the end with us to celebrate the best team in the world.

A remarkable man, a true professional, and now a friend.

To those that look at these events and wish to take part, I can only encourage you to take every opportunity to get involved, even though I spent a fair bit of cash!

I can certainly say that I hope we won’t be my last Ryder Cup.

Lee Strutt, Course Manager at G West and a member of the support team for the tournament, gives us a greenkeeper’s eye view of his week in Chicago.
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GI leads the way reporting Chalara dieback

Major national newspapers and TV news reported the story about chalara dieback in October – a full month after it appeared to Greenkeeper International.

‘The Daily Mail, The Telegraph and The Guardian all reported on the threat from the fungus to the nation’s ash tree population.

It also appeared on ITV news and became one of the most popular stories on the BBC website – but only after we had been alarmed of the game after Dr Terry Mabbett’s article in our September edition. The warning entitled ‘Native Ash: Ash Tree Race for Surprise Disease Threat’, broke the news about the potentially devastating alien plant pathogens which had arrived in the UK. It also featured practical tips on dealing with its ‘unprecedented threat’.

Keep an eye on Greenkeeper International for the exclusives!

Opportunities Abroad for Young Greenkeepers – Part 2

IEPUK Ltd is a not-for-profit educational organisation which co-ordinates international exchange programmes in over 35 countries. This Autumn IEPUK has been asked by WISE (Worldwide International Student Exchange) to find 300 young people in the UK to fill internships starting next spring on PGA level golf courses from Florida to New York.

Vanessa Peach, director of IEPUK, spoke about the benefits of doing an internship overseas as an unbeatable life experience and a potential job clincher.

‘Overseas internships are not for everyone but if a young person wants to boost their career prospects gaining a potential job clincher. They will also have made new friends and valuable business contacts.’

The important thing is for them to live the dream and come back with the trophy and there were club praters for the second third and fourth places together with individual team praters and nearest the pin and longest drive praters.

The final pin prize was won by Tony Thomas from Morton GC and the Longest Drive prize was won by Steve Rawlings from Mendip Gold Club.

GI leads the way reporting Chalara dieback

The final of the BIGGA Golf Management Competition took place on 15 October at Frilford Heath GC in Oxfordshire.

For the second year TACT sponsored the whole competition and BIGGA would like to thank them for their support of the Association and its members in sponsoring this competition.

Section qualifying events took place during the summer and eight teams won through to the final.

TACT had chosen Frilford Heath Golf Club for the final and it proved a superb venue with the course in excellent condition.

The teams of four players which were made up of members of the club management together with their Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager played an 18 hole stabelford competition on the Red Course after which players sat down to a three course dinner.

The winning team won a set of 20 hole cups and 20 flag pins for their course together with the trophy and there were club praters for the second third and fourth places together with individual team praters and nearest the pin and longest drive praters.

The nearest the pin prize was won by Tony Thomas from Morton GC and the Longest Drive prize was won by Steve Rawlings from Mendip Gold Club.

Arnold Shprio-Jones
REMUNERATION 2013
The Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) has recommended a 1.5% increase in the level of recommended Salary Scale for Greenkeepers. This increase is less than the 2.5%-HPT rate normally adopted as the Committee accepts that the current year has been a very difficult one for Golf Clubs and the continued strain on their finances. The CGCS recommended rates of pay package are guidelines only and the Committee is aware that they are for negotiation only and that, as in many industries, some staff will earn substantially more, while others will earn less, depending on the standing of the golf club. The CGCS wants to emphasise that these scales are for ‘packages’ and should be treated as such, whilst taking into account individual and team performance and any increase in responsibility and/or qualification. The CGCS, once again, wishes to draw the attention of golf clubs to impending changes in pension legislation. Regional variations will be published and downloadable in PDF format from the BIGGA and GCMA websites from December onwards.

SUCCESS FOR SUSSEX
Keith Welles and his team produced a superbly presented golf course with some lovely paced greens after heavy overnight rain for the annual triangular match between the Essex, Surrey and Sussex Sections of BIGGA at Lingfield Park Golf Club.
This year after a closely contested match the ten men of Sussex broke the stronghold held by Surrey over recent years of the event by a winning margin of just three points with Essex finishing a close third. Nearset the jib winners on the day were Sam Cooke and George Barr, with Antony Kienzle taking the largest drive. Lingfield Park, like BIGGA, are celebrating 25 years since the formation of their Club. We are grateful to Ernest Doe for their continued support of this popular event.

Support ‘Movember’ and win a trip to New York
Greenkeepers are being urged to support the annual ‘Movember’ charity drive – and put themselves in with the chance of winning a fabulous trip to New York.
British Seed Houses (BSH) has joined forces with movember.com to support men’s health charities such as Prostate Cancer UK and the Institute of Cancer Research.
All you have to do is email a clean shaven picture of yourself taken on 1 November to seeds@bshlincoln.co.uk or tweet them to @bshamenity together with a seeds@bshlincoln.co.uk or tweet them to @ picture of yourself taken on 1 November to enjoy hosting the European Golf Greenkeepers Associations (FREGGA) at BIGGA House.
We have many members who work in different countries across Europe and there are many areas that affect greenkeeping that are governed by the European Union.
It is therefore important to BIGGA that FREGGA has our strong support and as the largest association within Europe we do all we can to ensure our members are well represented. As part of our meeting we welcomed the FREGGA board for a joint session which was positive and constructive on both sides.
As the level of economic hardship increases, so will the golf clubs’ finances.
Difficult one for Golf Clubs and the Committee accepts that they are for negotiation only and the Committee is aware of pay package are guidelines only and the Committee is aware.