Great Scott triggers Open countdown

Browsing social media on the Monday after Adam Scott’s magnificent Masters win it was clear that a lot of Greenkeeper International readers had been glued to the TV coverage and were going to be a bit bleary eyed as they prepared their courses that morning.

For as long as I can remember I have considered it compulsory to watch the year’s first major unfold on television and whilst the early hours conclusion does not combine well with greenkeepers hours it is clear I’m not alone in this industry with that view. Once again the Augusta National golf course provided a fantastic examination for the best players on the planet and whilst it was unfortunate that a couple of rules incidents threatened to overshadow the play, the thrilling finish giving Scott his first major was a great advert for the sport.

The immaculate conditioning once again showcased course management to a worldwide audience - whether it creates unrealistic expectations amongst our own golfers or not it is clearly a great shop window for the sport. Augustana weekend marks the traditional start to the golfing season and, with due deference to the world’s greatest golf tournament, I vividly remember the last time that a couple of rules incidents threatened to overshadow the play, the thrilling finish giving Scott his first major was a great advert for the sport. The Augusta National golf course provided a fantastic examination for the best players on the planet and whilst it was unfortunate that a couple of rules incidents threatened to overshadow the play, the thrilling finish giving Scott his first major was a great advert for the sport.

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Augusta weekend marks the traditional start to the golfing season and, with due deference to the world’s greatest golf tournament, I vividly remember the last time that the tournament was held there when strong winds on the Saturday blew some of the world’s finest off course with Tiger Woods registering the worst round of his career. The current champion Ernie Els then came through a four man playoff to claim his first Claret Jug. Els is in the unusual position of being both the defending champion and the last man to win at this year’s venue. In this month’s magazine (page 20) we take a look at the preparation work that the Course Manager Colin Irvine has put in as he builds up to what is in my view the world’s greatest golf tournament.

The BIGGA Open Support Team are also gearing up to the event and I am looking forward to getting to know this year’s successful group as they play their part in ensuring the success of the Championship.

Last month I was privileged to attend the inaugural Future Turf Managers Initiative made possible by Jacobsen. Held at Ransomes Jacobsen’s impressive Ipswich headquarters the Initiative offered an intense management training and mentoring experience for the twenty BIGGA members who had been selected to attend. The event was both inspiring and informative and it was fantastic to see the young, aspirant Future Turf Managers interact with each other and their mentors who had given up their time to participate. In depth sessions on communication skills, budgeting, organisational politics and managing different personalities were all hugely relevant to the skills needed by the modern course manager, or any manager for that matter. I would like to publicly take this opportunity to thank Jacobsen for their superb support of the Initiative and the five mentors for their generous commitment to the event itself and to their role as group mentors.

These pages contain a review of the event and also the first part of an excellent two-part article by Kevin Munro who explores the ‘18 holes to a successful career as a course manager. The front nine commences on page 30 with the homeward stretch to follow in June.
GP400 SIMPLY BRILLIANT

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WELCOME FROM BIGGA

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Chairman’s Word

National Chairman, Tony Smith, gives his thoughts for the month

A glimpse of the future

The only place to start this month’s column is Ipswich – or more precisely the HQ of Ransomes Jacobsen which proved to be a marvellous venue for the first ever Future Turf Managers’ Initiative.

It turned out to be a wonderful couple of days that I can honestly say surpassed all my expectations. I’m 64 now but still came away having learnt all manner of new things. All the presentations were superb, but if I had to pick a highlight it would be Lorna Sheldon’s seminars on interview techniques, writing CVs and effective communication strategies.

I enjoyed Lorna’s seminar at the Turf Managers’ Conference this year and was delighted to see her return and pass on her years of expertise.

You can have all the greenkeeping knowledge in the world, but without a well-written, professional CV you won’t get past first base for the next positions you’re aiming for.

Once you’ve got to interview stage, you really need to stand out and Lorna showed everyone how. In today’s highly competitive job market these are critical skills being passed on.

Well done to all the candidates, who without exception were engaging, enthusiastic and eager, and I’ve a feeling we will be hearing much more about them and their career successes in the future.

Also, my heartfelt thanks to the presenters, and the BIGGA mentors, who gave up their valuable time to assist the next generation.

Finally, congratulations to everyone at Jacobsen who were so helpful and welcoming.

When I started in greenkeeping all those years ago there was little to no formal training available and it was a frustrating time to be an ambitious young (or relatively young) greenkeeper. I kindly remember the first ever supervisory management course organised by BIGGA which took place at Aldwarke Manor in the early nineties.

The seminars, presentations and mentors we had gave up so much to work on and many of us went on to become Course Managers at all manner of courses.

It was also a great chance to meet other greenkeepers from across the country, tap into their knowledge and get to know them personally.

It was a novelty at that time to take part in formal training, now there are so many opportunities for all members and you must take these opportunities.

As I mentioned at the start of this column, it doesn’t matter if you’re a little older and nearing the end of your career, you will definitely learn something.

I don’t want to jinx it, but it seems the weather has turned and spring has finally arrived after one of the longest and coldest spells I can remember.

March was particularly cold which I’m sure may have thrown a spanner in the works for your plans ahead of the start of the season. I enjoyed watching a superb Masters tournament on TV, but as we all know, Augusta is a long way from the day to day reality of life preparing a golf course in the UK.

In fact, I’m sure many of you had a wry smile on your faces as you watched the final holes take place in torrential rain and gloom looking more like a drab day on Tredside – they’ve now had a taste of what we had to put up with for most of last year!

With the Masters out of the way it really feels like summer is approaching, let’s hope it’s a good one. I’ve got a busy few months coming up, as I’m sure you all have, and I hope to visit as many Sections and Regions as possible.

As always I’d be happy to discuss anything with BIGGA members, my contact details are below.

Contact details
Tony Smith / 07988 838956 / tony.smith48@ntlworld.com

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MAY 2013

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Designed and built from the ground up, the TriFlex range provides unsurpassed consistency and quality of cut. Innovative features, such as Toro’s unique Flex Double A-Arm suspension system, Dual Precision Adjustment (DPA) cutting units and redesigned balloon-style tyres, all combine to produce an outstanding greensmower with the lightest of footprints. What’s more, the TriFlex hybrid 3420 model is the first Toro to feature an all-electric cylinder drive system, for an even greener mower.

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The remarkable TriFlex riding greensmower is packed with ground-breaking technology to give your greens a flawless finish.

Contact details
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SHINING BEACON BILL RETIRES

A BIGGA stalwart, and great friend to many in the industry, Bill Paterson has retired after 50 years in greenkeeping. Bill has spent 26 years at Beaconsfield Golf Club in Buckinghamshire. Here, Billy McMillan pays tribute to his friend…

Starting at Old Randfurly golf club in the early sixties as an apprentice Billy was soon hooked on greenkeeping. He was number 27 on the register of young greenkeepers taking up a formal education in Scotland at that time. Once qualified he soon took on the role of Deputy at Old Randfurly then Paisley.

In the early seventies he became Head Greenkeeper at the Randpark Golf Club in South Africa - not only was this a big move for him personally but also a massive learning curve in the management of warm season grasses. Creeping bent grass was on his agenda, and with great initiative he managed to get his hands on some seed, introducing it into his greens during dormant conditions to give his membership quality surfaces year round.

This was not a simple thing to achieve with sanctions going on at that time. He actually managed to have this grass seed smuggled in on the back of his then club captain’s business and therefore golf courses.

Creeping bent grass was his seed of choice during dormant conditions to give his membership quality surfaces year round. Creeping bent grass was on his agenda, and with great initiative he managed to get his hands on some seed, introducing It into his greens during dormant conditions to give his membership quality surfaces year round. 

Bill has been succeeded by Stuart Longhorn who spent eight years as Course Manager at Adwickbury Park Golf Club.

Stuart commented: “I’ve been seeking a new challenge and this is a great opportunity at a stunning golf course – their ambitious match course has spent six weeks working alongside 180. When you join somewhere new you always wonder whether it’s going to be a little awkward working with the person you’re replacing, but it really wasn’t further from the truth. Bill is a top bloke. “His job here has been his life. He’s been much more than a greenkeeper. He’s arranged Christmas parties, he puts the Christmas trees up, he’s done so much work with the Artisan section…you name it, he’s been involved in it.”

I intend to continue the terrific work Bill has done here. I’ll be continuing the woodland management project he started and also the layout of the new paths. Then it’s likely to be working on the greens, bringing up the putting speed, and reviewing and investing in our machinery fleet.”

The recent Chalara Management Plan released by DEFRA lacks any uniform and equitable assistance for landowners and organisations affected by the disease.

Grants will be given for removal, destruction and disposal of recently planted common ash and replanting with alternative tree species, but this only applies to a selective swathe of counties (Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire and up through the Midlands). The aim is to slow down east to west disease spread and help create a ‘Vhalara free’ zone in westernmost Eng-land. The Royal Forestry Society describes the plan as a ‘postcode lottery’ but worse still it excludes the amenity and landscape sector and therefore golf courses.

Simon Ellis, marketing director at Crowders Nurseries in Horncastle Lincolnshire, which currently holds 250,000 healthy ash trees, told Greenkeeper Inter-national: “We are about to destroy the entire stock. They are unsuitable and difficult to manage. Many are up to ten years old which means a decade of investment down the drain with no compensation from government.”

“This plan is selective, divisive, inequitable and unfair. Grant aid will only be available to forestry sector landowners with planted ash sites funded under the Rural Development Programme for England. It excludes the amenity and landscape sectors but it is they who buy our larger trees. I don’t see why grants should only be given to the ‘sanded gentrity’ and withheld from entrepreneurs building and maintaining leisure complexes, golf courses and other sporting facilities.”

Small trees planted by big forestry landowners are typically purchased at around 20 pence ‘a throw’.

Simon and others in the nursery trade met with Defra and put forward specific plans to assist the amenity and landscape sectors, including golf courses, but this has clearly been ignored.

Dr Tony Mabbett

GOVERNMENT ARRANGES ASH GRANTS (BUT NOT FOR GOLF COURSES)

Government announces plans to provide grants to the forestry sector to help assist with the destruction of ash trees, but golf courses are excluded from the scheme.

The latest news from around the globe...
A BIGGA stalwart, and great friend to many in the industry, Bill Peterson has retired after 50 years in greenkeeping. Bill has spent 26 years at Beaconsfield Golf Club in Buckinghamshire. Here Billy McMillan pays tribute to his friend...

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He then spent six weeks working alongside Billy. When you join somewhere new you always wonder whether it’s going to be a little awkward working with the person you’re replacing, but it wasn’t - had he not been from that here. Bill is a top bloke.

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Dr Tony Mulbett
JANE JONES TO DEPART BIGGA

Sadly we are announcing the resignation of Jane Jones from her post as Regional Administrator for the South West/South Wales Region.

Jane has worked dedicatedly for BIGGA for eight and a half years, joining us in November 2004. She has been a hugely valuable employee and we are sad to lose her.

Jane still intends to work within the golf industry on a more local level. Jane’s last day will be 31 May 2013 and we would like to wish her all the best in her new ventures.

BRAVE ASA’S MARATHON MISHAP

Unlucky Asa English endured a torrid time at the recent Brighton Marathon after suffering an injury halfway through – but still managed to finish after limping 12 miles to the finishing line with a torn thigh muscle.

Asa and pal Greg Skinner ran the Brighton Marathon for charity last month, the fourth time Asa – Greenkeeper at Rothley Park Golf Club – has run the 26-mile course. But disaster struck after 14 miles when he suddenly felt a searing pain in his left leg. However, determined not to let his chosen charity down, he insisted on finishing, and managed to drag himself across the finishing line in 3 hours 52 minutes. A scan later revealed a Grade Two muscle tear with doctors amazed he had managed to go through – but still managed to finish after limping 12 miles.

The blog was started in February, mainly because I know how much more support and understanding you get as a greenkeeper when you keep people informed of what you are doing and why you are doing it. It’s a 21st century version of a newsletter and help people informed of what you are doing and why you are doing it.

BRITISH & INTERNATIONAL GOLF GREENKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Greenkeeper International

Mar Hall: Fire at Machrieh Bay

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We're always on the lookout for stories involving BIGGA members. So if you've won a sporting trophy, achieved a qualification or have a humorous story to tell contact Steve Castle at BIGGA HQ on steve.castle@bigga.co.uk or you may be featured in GI!