

# LETTERS

Dear Sir,

**I see in the greenkeeping press that the R & A has pledged £250,000 support to the STRI at Bingley to investigate the fertilizer and irrigation needs of British golf greens.**

**Does this mean that the R & A have decided that this is the problem? Does this mean that the advice to date from the STRI on these matters has been wrong or/and unfounded, or not even researched? Who advises the R & A on these matters?**

**Will this news make golf clubs paying for this advice, in good faith and coin, reconsider their position? How many greenkeepers have lost their jobs, and in some cases their health, on the 'say so' of these so called advisers?**

**Who is going to take the final responsibility for the condition of the British golf green?**

**S L Farrington,  
Course Manager,  
Frilford Heath G.C.**

\* Reply from Peter Hayes  
Director of the STRI

"Mr Sam Farrington raises a number of points in his recent letter to *the Golf Course* concerning the R & A's research grant of £250,000, over five years, to the STRI at Bingley.

"The two projects financed by the R & A will consist of a major project looking at the effects of irrigation, construction and fertilizer nutrition of golf green turf and a second looking at the nutrient requirements of fine-leaved fescues and bentgrass for golf greens. This research programme should be of great benefit to all European golf courses and will, hopefully, result in a return to faster, firmer and truer putting surfaces.

"The R & A have decided that these are the major problems worthy of a research contract at the present time. However if head greenkeeper wish to submit research proposals to the Institute, we will consider them for a future research programme. That the Institute is carrying out research into these matters does not necessarily mean that the advice given now is wrong, but every industry has to look forward and no industry can survive without a research base. For example, the advice given to people 10-20 years ago concerning the treatment of cancer or heart conditions is completely different today due to research which has been carried out over the years, but that does not mean previous medical advice was wrong. For the future demands on golf courses we need to know more about the growth of grasses and how they can stand up to excessive wear under

different fertilizer and irrigation regimes.

"To answer Mr Farrington's other points, I do not know the number (if any) of greenkeepers who have lost their jobs on the 'say so' of advisers, and the answer to this question is not easy as many other factors would be considered.

"The final responsibility for the condition of British golf greens rests jointly between golf clubs in providing enough finance to undertake the necessary maintenance and greenkeepers with their skill to carry out such maintenance, in conjunction with the advice from agronomists from the Sports Turf Research Institute, backed by a sound research programme."

Dear Sir,

In England & Wales the average rainfall in the course of a year is between 22.5 inches and 68 inches depending on where you live. If you take the bottom figure and multiply this for the average area of a golf course (say 150 acres) you can see that in the year 76,308,750 gallons of water will have to be dealt with by surface run-off, drainage systems and general porosity of the soil. This figure also increases if we have a year like the last. Also bearing in mind that two thirds of the rain falls between September and May, the winter months in golf can be very hazardous. Controlling the greenkeeping aspects of a particularly wet course in the winter, where the greens have a high sod content, the problem of closing the course is dependent on the condition of the fairways, and not the fact that the greens are well under water.

Whilst all clubs around are closed (and we should be really) it really amazes me at the amount of golfers who turn up to play golf. After a week's deluge, they come into the clubhouse or ring up and say, "has it been raining there then" as if we were an island that the rain had missed. Most golfers will tend to stay away if it is wet, but some I am positive will play even, as I have seen, wearing their black or green wellingtons. What possible pleasure can they get from paddling around a wet, waterlogged golf course?

As it is usually only a few people who play when the conditions are atrocious, the actual damage caused by walking through sodden areas is minimal, the only problem that arises is where, wear or mud occurs on well used areas. These areas make the whole of the golf course look untidy for quite a few weeks.

So if we have the wettest winter on record, first look forward to the spring, when all your water problems are over... or just beginning!

R. R. Kates

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