



Floral centre pieces for the Ryder Cup

Nearly 30,000 blooms are being prepared for planting at The Belfry to make a colourful display

Former regular Army Physical training instructor Derek Ganning, course manager at The Belfry, is a man with flowers on his mind. Not simply birthday or anniversary bouquets, or even those which his wife Anne tastefully arranges to win prizes at exhibitions in the Midlands.

The blooms he has on his mind at the moment number nearly 30,000 and at this stage they are being nurtured in greenhouses over a hundred miles from his base.

But when they are moved from Warrington in Cheshire to The Belfry

in Sutton Coldfield early next September, they will be admired by thousands of people. They will become centerpieces on the Brabazon course, scene of the Johnnie Walker Ryder Cup, the blue riband of golf, in which the European side aim for a record third successive and historic win over the American giants of professional world golf.

The begonias, marigolds and lobelias have been carefully chosen. They will provide a splash of red, white and blue in rockeries and flower beds all over the golf course and will be seen not only by the 27,000 golf fans who will

visit the Ryder Cup each day - attendances are being restricted and it has become an all-ticket event - but also by millions of television viewers throughout the world and particularly in Europe and America where the event will be screened live.

"We spent a lot of time planning the types of flowers we would use and exactly where we want to display them. At the moment they are being grown in Warrington before being transported here", he said. The Belfry, one of Europe's top golf and leisure complexes, is owned by Greenall Whitley, the Warrington based brewers, and

LOOKING AHEAD



the flowers are being tended by their gardeners at their North-west base. Ganning, course manager since 1981 at the Belfry with its two golf courses, hotel and leisure complex, has already experienced the fruits of a Ryder Cup victory. He was responsible for the course preparation for Europe's historic first win in twenty-eight years back in 1985, and he has also been involved in course preparation for several major international golfing spectacles over the years.

"But the Ryder Cup is different. It generates tremendous excitement and enthusiasm and it is a matter of pride for myself and the eleven staff who work full time on the golf courses to ensure that everything is perfect. It may sound strange but we all feel that it is the one time in our lives when we are actually representing our country", he said.

The flowers, of course, are just one tiny segment of a huge jigsaw which makes up the total of the Ryder Cup itself. Apart from the preparation of the tees, greens and fairways, and other on course work, Ganning and his team will, additionally, have to cope with the demands of the biggest tented village ever seen at any golf tournament anywhere in the world where upwards of 7,000 VIP guests will be entertained each day in hospitality areas which will match any others at major sporting events throughout the world.

"Fortunately we now have many of the facilities they require already installed and they are permanent. In future years whenever we have a big tournament we can tap into the facilities but for myself and my staff and for Peter Watkins who is in charge of the maintenance at the hotel in the weeks

before the Ryder Cup itself, we will be on call twenty-four hours a day", he said.

"In 1985 there had been some criticism of the course. There were people who had said it would not be up to championship standard in a hundred years. We were happy to prove them wrong. In September we have to ensure that the course is superb and prove again what a magnificent test of golf it is even to many of the best players in the world", he added.

In September even more attention will be paid to the requirements of the spectators. Stands will be erected at the back of each of the eighteen greens and several more spectator stands are to be built alongside fairways on the finishing holes. And a huge new spectator mound between the eighth and fourteenth fairway now offers a marvellous vantage point for hundreds of spectators.

But the famous Brabazon course, which annually sees around 90,000 rounds of golf played on it, will not be closed in the weeks prior to the Ryder Cup. "Play will be restricted because of the need to ensure that it is in pristine condition and also to allow the greens staff to work without too much interruption but the public will be able to play on it right up to the week of the event", he said.

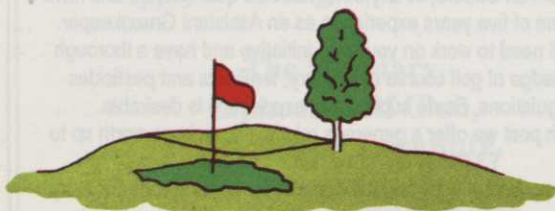
Not that Ganning, a sixteen handicap golfer at the nearby Handsworth Wood club will get much time himself. "The clubs will be put away. A major tournament demands every moment of your time to ensure that everything is taken care of. Nothing can be left to chance particularly in something as important as the Ryder Cup", he added.

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