

FEATURE



Seve Schmitz tastes the 'Good Life' in Minneapolis

.....Seve Schmitz is Head Greenkeeper at Ellesborough Golf Club near Wendover Berks.



One quarter of the large Bunker at Edinburgh, U.S.A. (Typical of a Trent Jones design)

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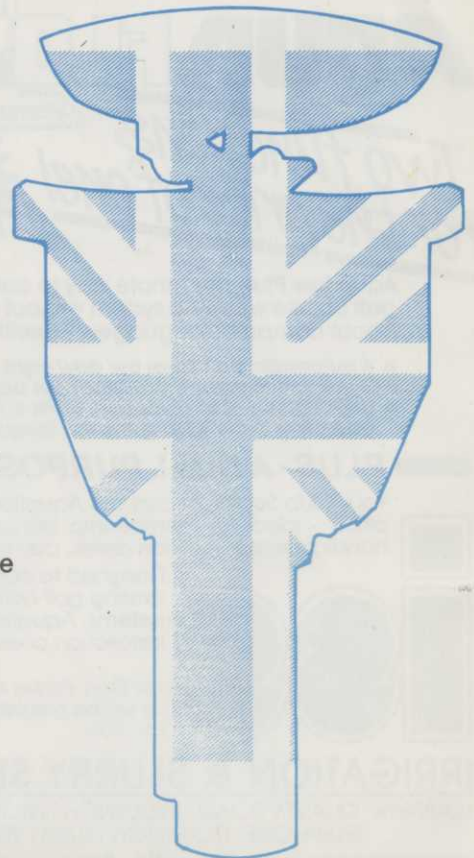
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Recently I was fortunate enough to be asked to attend the Toro Turf Professionals Conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.

Travelling with me were Peter Wisbey from North Foreland Golf Club, Kent, Kevin McNiven from Effingham Golf Club, Surrey and Bob Wiles, R.A.C. Golf Club at Epsom, Surrey. Accompanying us were Graham Dale, Sales Manager Lely Imports UK and Ian Kerry, Ian Kerry Machinery, Guildford, Surrey.

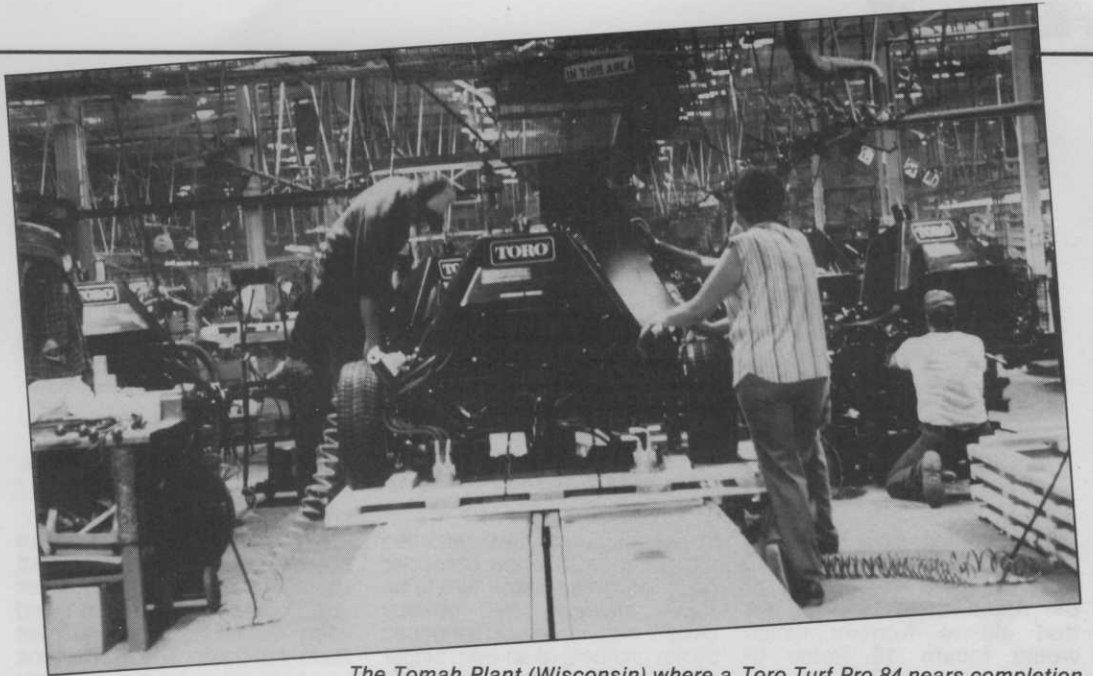
Having only ever flown once before, I found getting in a 747 for an 8 hour flight exciting in itself. We landed in Minneapolis to find beautiful weather. In summer the temperature can go up to 85° but because of a large climatic swing, winters can be very harsh, as low as 30°C with four feet of snow. The Golf season runs from approximately April through to the end of November when most Superintendents spray their greens with Fungicide and cover them throughout the winter.

Our trip was for 9 days, but not all of it was conference and tours, far from it. Our hosts went out of their way to give us a great time. I had oysters and cavier until I could eat no more. Champagne flowed (I developed quite a taste for it) and a Burger Place we were taken to was first class. All the Burgers were made from sirloin steak. My only problem now is shedding some surplus pounds in weight. But enough of our gallivantings, on to the serious side.

We visited Hazeltine National Golf Club where the 1991 American Open is to be held. Chris Hague the Superintendent is already well ahead with his plans out on the course. Last year \$380,000 was spent on refurbishing all 18 greens with Penncross Bent; the turf was specially brought in refrigerated lorries to keep it in tip top condition. The greens are now excellent and the turf looks like it has been there years - a true credit to Chris and his team.

During our visit the fairways were being verti cut with Toro GM3's. All the fairway cutting is also done with the GM3's at 7/16" and all clippings removed. Chris says that the fairways have shown remarkable improvement from this treatment, especially in controlling Poa Annua.

We visited two other golf courses, these being The Golden Valley Country Club and The Edinburgh U.S.A. Golf Course which was a new course due to be open on 1st May 1987. This course is a Robert Trent Jones design. One of the greens which is used as a triple green, measures 44,000 sq. ft., just over 1 acre. It also has a bunker round it to match. That one bunker probably holds more sand than all the bunkers on my course put together.



The Tomah Plant (Wisconsin) where a Toro Turf Pro 84 nears completion

During construction of the course 1 million tons of soil were moved to contour the fairways and greens, also the water table has lowered some 8 or 9 feet. How I would love to come back in 5 years time to play that course, it was one of the most impressive public courses I have ever seen.

So, onto the Conference, there were about 50 participants apart from us few Brits. We were taken to the Toro Shakopee Plant where everything from GM3 cylinders to rotary blades down to small sundries are produced. The tour round this plant was fascinating if a little noisy. Next we were taken to Lyndale Avenue to see the design facilities. Toro are world leaders in this field because computers are used extensively during the design stages. Not being a computer buff I found this all a bit technical but Ian Kerry was in his element.

Next stop were the testing bays where every machine, before going to production, had to go through very extensive testing, for example engines are run for great lengths of time so that carbon build up and internal temperatures can be monitored.

The next morning saw us all on a coach at 6.00 a.m. ready to catch a train to Tomah, Wisconsin where Toro's production plant is situated. The journey was very scenic and meandered beside the Mississippi. We spent most of the day at the plant where the motto of the Company is Pride in Excellence so much so that in certain parts of the factory quality inspectors have been removed and the responsibility is on the assembly team who provide a guarantee from every worker. Each worker can stop the production line at any time if they feel anything is wrong.

The last day of the conference was spent in round the table discussions, which surprisingly I found very interesting and rewarding. Toro also gained information in these talks from us.

I think other manufacturers could learn a lot by holding such a conference and then listening to those people who use their machinery day in, day out.

Finally there was a true American Razzamataz style Farewell Banquet. It was extremely well organised. We were shown a slide show that evening from pictures that a photographer had been taking of us during the entire conference, we were also all

presented with a group photo.

To summarise my trip I feel the Toro Company are fully committed to trying to understand our problems.

I think American Superintendents are extremely professional and are in total command of their courses although I should like to have their yearly budget to use on my course.

FEATURE 1

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