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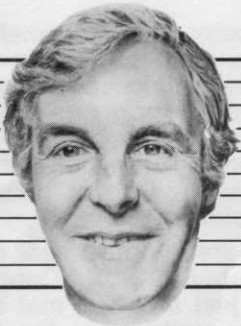
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Greenside Comment...



John Lelean

Bouquets and Brickbats

European golf received a massive injection of adrenalin as a result of the retention of the Ryder Cup at Muirfield Village in Columbus, Ohio. Greenkeepers on this side of the Atlantic should raise their glasses in a toast to Tony Jacklin and his team who by their tenacity and determination have created such an interest in the game, there must be an ultimate spin-off for those long neglected individuals, the stage setters, the men who prepare and maintain our golf courses.

Sports journalists, commentators and the specialist golf writers, are now beginning to appreciate the skills of the greenkeeping staff, as well as those of the participants. At last their contribution is receiving recognition, so long overdue.

At Muirfield, forty seven greenkeepers and additional ground staff worked throughout the night to have the course in pristine condition for the final day's play, a far cry from the staffing levels of four or five whose job it is to keep our members clubs playable, throughout the year in Britain.

Let us hope the significance of these figures will be recognised by the average weekend golfer when he is tempted to complain of petty imperfections in the presentation of his club course after losing the Saturday morning four ball.

For those avid viewers of television golf who often take the BBC presentation for granted, the coverage by American cameras could be best described as pathetic. At least they now appreciate their failings in the higher echelons, as those who heard the comments of the distinguished commentator, Jack Whittaker.

On the final day he bemoaned the fact, the finest golf he had ever seen was denied to the sports fans in the United States while addicts in Europe, Australia, Japan and most other countries were treated to the most exciting sporting contest ever witnessed. It seems hard to believe, but the transmissions of the Ryder Cup were only seen by local viewers around Columbus.

While handing out bouquets there is just time as this issue goes to press to present the best that Interflora can provide to Kevin Munt and his staff at Wentworth. To have made the course playable at all after the disasters of that horrendous Thursday night is a near miracle, but to have it playable the next day defies comprehension.

Kevin moved from Royal Dornoch earlier this year to what he probably thought was the tranquility of the Surrey stock-

broker belt. The Suntory World Match Play, was his first major championship and we know he looked upon this event as the opportunity to present his course to the world's viewing public through the medium of television. It is tragic, the elements decided otherwise, but as we, who know the dedication of the greenkeeping staff would expect, they rose to the occasion magnificently and the show went on.

We would also like to pay tribute to Jerry Coley, Course Manager at Wentworth until his retirement in February this year. Jerry died from a heart attack at the end of July, just at the time when he was beginning to pick up the threads of a new challenge as a golf course consultant.

There were few people who had such a depth of greenkeeping knowledge acquired through practical experience and an unquenchable thirst to seek out information on any subject relating to his passion for perfection.

It is sad, so many people will not now be able to benefit from the advice he was so competent to give. The world of golf and greenkeeping need people like Jerry Coley and there are all too few about.

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Fred Hawtree looks at the trends from the new 'breed of 'architects' - the tournament professionals and he does not approve of the results.

