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Learning from the past and looking to the future

'It is evident that to meet modern requirements, golf greenkeeping has to be made a profession in itself—that a man has to study to fit himself for it, has to possess some elementary knowledge of chemistry in order to understand the constituents of the food of grasses and some knowledge of botany respecting the different kinds of these grasses and the conditions for their growth.

'It is also essential that he shall be a man of observation and that he shall not be so fastbound in his acquired rules as to be unable to make for himself the deductions needed as he watches the different growth of grasses on different greens and different parts of the same green.

'In fact, if a man is to be a greenkeeper in the best modern sense, it is wise for him that he should apply himself to learning the job, as he would in any other profession, under a skilled teacher—if he be fortunate enough to find one—and, if not, to do the best he can for himself with book learning and attentive study of greens.'

That piece of good common sense was written almost 80 years ago by Horace Hutchinson in *Golf Greens And Greenkeeping*. The lack of training for greenkeepers has been apparent for a long time! Hutchinson's book comprised a series of essays by prominent golf-course architects, such as Colt and Fowler, Beale (then manager of Carters Ltd), who constructed many well-known courses, as well as greenkeepers like Hugh Hamilton, then of St Andrews. Frequently, the information seems



By Eddie Park

contradictory, but I was impressed by the high standards evident in the appreciation of applied botany and geology and soil studies.

Of course, in some ways things were easier then. Play was usually much lighter, although *Nisbet's Golf Year Book Of 1910* (Edited by John L. Low) shows many clubs with well over 400 members. A few had tried fertiliser and water but, in general, golfers still appreciated the merits of the traditional British game and there was little pressure for the target golf of today.

Fowler wrote of Westward Ho: 'The putting greens are now splendid and are the finest examples of the old seaside putting greens unspoilt by overfeeding.'

Indeed, courses tended to be ranked according to whether they demanded a complete armoury of

shots. Low himself said: 'As far as my experience goes, Hoylake is the best test of golf in England. The course seems to me to afford and to demand continual variety of strokes. The running shot, which is called for at the first hole when the wind favours, is at once complemented by the pitch demanded by the second.'

No playing everything with a wedge in those days! You sense, too, that the skill of the old-time greenkeepers was better appreciated. Sound practices and the many good sites with indigenous fine turf combined to give a respected and peaceful, but badly paid, group of men.

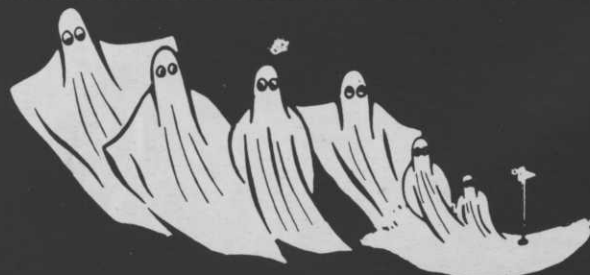
Today, all is sadly different. Much of that turf has been destroyed by faulty use of fertilisers, overwatering and lack of aeration. Golfers now believe they have the choice of a range of options and that they can order up whatever conditions they want, regardless of weather or season. Worst of all, they believe that the production of a golf course is easy and certainly not worth the expense of fully-trained staff.

Greenkeepers are, not surprisingly, frustrated and vaguely demand a higher status. This seems to comprise a mixture of financial and social betterment, together with a belief that their position should entitle their expertise to be recognised and accepted. They are divided with different factions demanding different remedies.

Some younger men want the immediate creation of a profession with colleges providing a complete education. A little research would



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show them that most of the established professions only emerged over long periods and the early pioneers saw little of the benefits. But at least it is a progressive view with a worthwhile long-term aim.

The same cannot be said of those who seem to want to retire into their fortress and pull up the drawbridge. There are some who want, in effect, an association composed solely of established head greenkeepers, which will preserve the status quo forever. This is a recipe for censorship of greenkeeping journals, the imposition on employers of a salary scale they have not negotiated, a firm policy of no consultant agronomists, head greenkeepers dictating policy to the clubs, which, in turn, will have to put up with whatever conditions they choose to give. I believe the majority of greenkeepers have more sense and are more realistic.

I have put down a few ideas, having tried to face the problems head on. So, don't switch off or turn the page because you don't like them all—try to thrash out something better with your colleagues!

Of course, the first task is to educate golfers about golf courses and I think that has begun. If it means saying what they have now is poor, do not flinch from it, but point out that it is almost always the result of unwise pressure on staff.

Let us first deal with the vexed question of who sets policy. I believe that this is not the job of either greenkeeper or green committee—rather, that both should make big contributions towards gathering the facts required before making these decisions. Policies will only stick if all members have at least a say in making them. Anything decided by a committee or individual can be overturned by successors within months.

By all means let everyone make their points, perhaps engage an

agronomist to prepare a report or address the members. But then put them in a general meeting to decide a policy and stick to it for a long period. They will have to decide which type of golf—target or traditional and the costs and consequences of each.

Architecture must go hand-in-hand with this, so changes in bunkering, etc, all come into the reckoning. If all this can be done properly, resulting in a policy document, the greenkeeper should then be protected from much of the pressure from which he suffers at present. What a relief!

The reality is that only the owner, be it club or company, can decide policy. They can, and should, take advice, both from their greenkeeper and their consultant, but they cannot be allowed to duck the responsibility of actually doing the deciding.

Denigrate

I do not denigrate either greenkeeper or green committee by saying they should not take on this role themselves.

Having got rid of that bogey, let us proceed to consider a structure to cover the whole field of golf greenkeeping.

If we are to claim this is a skilled business, it follows that there is no place for unskilled operatives, which is only another name for cheap labour. The set-up of a highly paid head greenkeeper with a bunch of unskilled and untrained young men should become a thing of the past. Most clubs had a full, fairly skilled workforce up until the last 25 years. The need to attract head greenkeepers with a reasonable salary led to clubs recruiting young men from the bottom of the labour market and then keeping them, without training, on very low wages.

Trainees should be of high quality, carefully selected and then trained fully. The City and Guilds course was not too bad for this purpose when

properly taught by the colleges. It perhaps did not give sufficient emphasis on fundamental science subjects, tended to be repetitious, not always relevant and too spread out.

Within a year, at most, the trainee should be moving into the craftsman grade followed by further grades of skilled craftsman. Remuneration could be geared to these grades.

My impression is that there is not too much need for additional training in practical greenkeeping. Learning the job from senior colleagues is still a very good method. The trade will find it in their own interests to provide some lectures and especially training in machinery workshops.

The main difficulty now at craftsmen level is that, at different clubs, working practices have evolved in different ways and at different standards. We need some standardisation and upgrading to fit in with modern policies.

Now, all the time we have to be thinking (as do other crafts and professions) along two parallel lines. We may be able to make suggestions for future college-based training for craftsmen, but it would be grossly unfair to present staff to fail to produce a scheme that will help them. At craftsman level, my own experience of this standardisation and upgrading is that it is not really so difficult to do.

I believe the greenkeepers' associations could form a board, perhaps with some outside help, to agree working practices and appoint some regional advisors.

Big Brother? Not really. In my profession, I know that any piece of work I carry out can be inspected at random. The fact that greenkeepers themselves would be seeking to enforce high standards and, therefore, protect their clients is a concept common to most professions.

Now we come to the real crunch. It

Continued on page 34...

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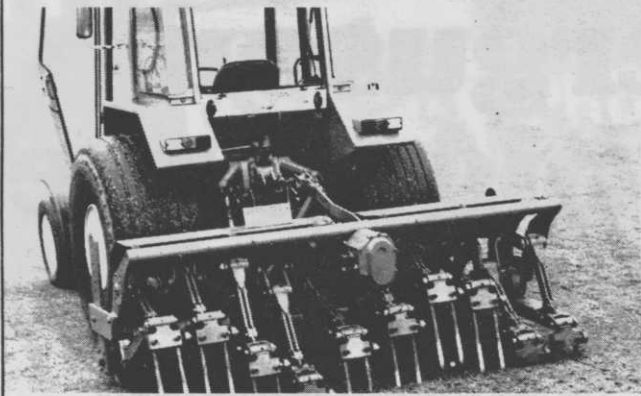
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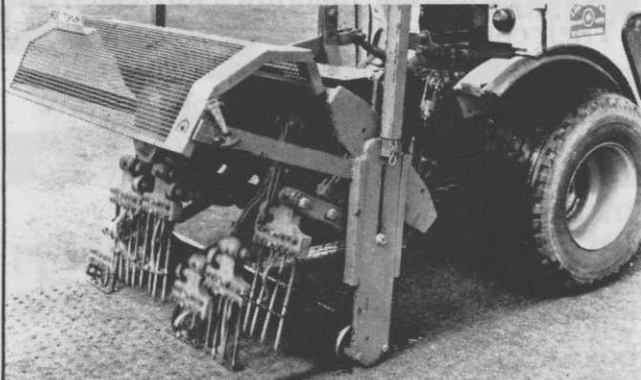
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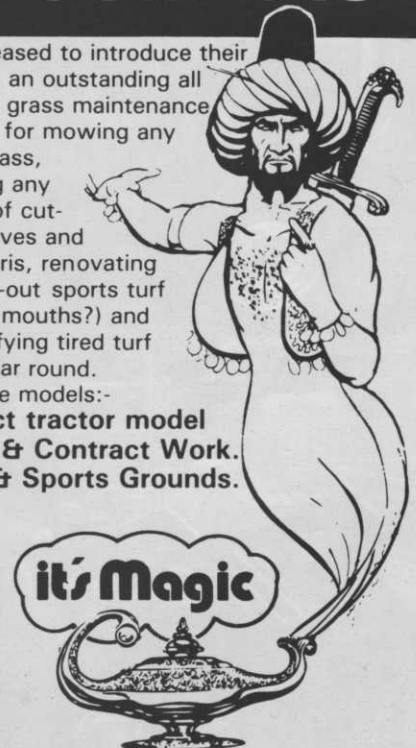
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The new Greensmaster 3 is designed with its cutting heads isolated from both the traction unit and the grass baskets, which allows it to cut more evenly - from 3/32in to 11/16in.

It uses a carrier frame that pulls rather than pushes the cutting unit, therefore resulting in balanced, fully floating cutting heads that allow the reels to float freely as they cut, unaffected by dips or bumps encountered by other parts of the machine or by the weight of the clippings in the baskets.

The Greensmaster has a three-wheel design that allows turning within its own length. This tight-turning design, coupled with two independent, hydraulically driven front traction wheels, allows this rear-steering triplex to cut up to and around the edges of greens, collars and traps.

A single forward reverse pedal gives the operator even more control in tight turns and, together with the variable speed kit, provides infinitely variable speed control up to 3.5mph.

The Greensmaster is designed with hydraulically-driven traction wheels, reels and reel lifts. These enclosed, self-lubricating power systems give longer service and require less maintenance because there are no gears to



Toro's Greensmaster 3.

change, belts to adjust or clutches to repair.

The operator station features centralised controls within easy reach, plus a steering arm that can be adjusted in height to allow for more leg room, as well as an adjustable, cushioned high back seat. Maintaining a quality cut in low ranges demands frequent and precise adjustment. TORO's quick-disconnect cutting units give fast, easy removal of the reels for servicing.

The balanced eight-blade cutting units are interchangeable, as are all baskets and reel motors. And these cutting units allow fast, easy conversion to thatching or spiking reels.

Numerous other new models will be on display, including the GM44, GM62 Diesel, 6M Triplex, 21in Heavy Duty Hand Propelled and Heavy Duty Self Propelled, together with a vast range of current equipment allied to both domestic and commercial use.

TURFLAND PROFESSIONAL EQUIPMENT

On display will be the new production models of the Brouwer Super 3 gang mowers, following last year's showing at Windsor of the prototypes, which attracted a great deal of interest.

This year also sees the launch of the new Fairway Mower, specially designed to follow low ground contours with its unique floating heads. In minutes, it can be converted back to a rigid mower for

use in the rough, eliminating the need for maintaining two mowers.

Also on show will be the Brouwer Mark 11 Mini Turf Cutter, which can now be adapted to take attachments for de-thatching, edging, etc. The new models complement the already well-established range of Brouwer three, five and seven gang mowers and turf harvesters widely used throughout the UK.

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BOWLS GREEN '84

SISIS Equipment (Macclesfield), in association with May & Baker and its distributors, is staging demonstrations of turf management techniques and machinery for bowling greens, each followed by a lecture with slides covering disease recognition and chemical applications.

Dates and venues are Norfolk Bowling Club, Unthank Road, Norwich (in association with Collier Turfcare Distributors), Tuesday October 2; Marlborough Bowling Club, Lansdowne Road, Ipswich (with R.E. Rushbrook & Son), October 3; Quendon Bowling Club, Quendon, near Saffron Walden, Essex (with John K. King & Son), October 4.

For further details, phone SISIS on 0625 26363 or write to SISIS Equipment (Macclesfield), Shoresclough Works, Hulley Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 2LZ.



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Safety first!

Peter Wisbey is the chairman of EIGGA and course manager at North Foreland GC, Kent. This article is based on the Health And Safety At Work Act, 1974 and formed the basis of a highly acclaimed paper delivered by Peter at Golf Course '84.

The Act, in its present form, seems to overlook the golf club, or so many clubs seem to think. But does it? How does it affect golf clubs and greenstaff?

Under section 2 (3) of the Health And Safety At Work Act, 1974 it is the duty of any employer with five or more staff, whether full-time or not, to prepare and display a policy statement setting out in detail safety standards applicable to their business. This figure of five includes clubhouse staff, cleaners and caddies, as well as the greenstaff. Failure to meet this requirement is subject to a maximum fine of £1,000.

Who is responsible for the health and safety of the greenstaff? In a private club with directors, it is the chairman of the board. If, however, it is a members' club, then the responsibility falls on the captain to ensure that conditions and work practices conform with the 1974 act. It then falls to the delegated head of department, in this case the head greenkeeper/course manager, to prepare and implement a policy statement.

The first and most important thing to ensure is that a policy statement is available to all staff. A copy should be displayed in a prominent position in, say, the mess room or workshop. This statement (required by law) can be on guidelines laid down by the Health And Safety Executive (Agriculture).

It should consist of a general statement laying out:

- 1) Employer's responsibilities.
- 2) Employees' responsibilities.

It would then detail the arrangements and procedures for such things as: a) servicing machines and reporting faults, etc; b) safety training; c) protective clothing; d) special care (under this heading, the club must detail any specific hazards—i.e. steep slopes, overhead or buried pipes, cables, etc, use of dangerous substances or machinery),

e) fire hazards, naming the areas where smoking is forbidden.

The final part of the statement should give procedures in case of emergency, giving locations of first-aid equipment and also reminding staff to report *all* accidents and to enter them in an accident book (required by law).

Under a paragraph headed Task Restrictions, a statement should make it clear that no employee will be asked or expected to undertake work for which he/she is not experienced or trained. This statement must be signed by the employer—i.e. captain and/or the delegated head of department.

In agriculture, the law regarding the fitting of such things as pto covers and tractor safety frames is clear. They must be fitted.

On the golf course, however, tractors, etc, need not comply with these regulations and the Health and Safety Executive can only suggest they be fitted.

The same applies to safety clothing, such as spray suits, gloves, masks, goggles, ear protection and non-slip safety (steel-toed) boots. Often greenkeepers have told me that these things are not provided because golf clubs are exempt from the act. They are not! In the Policy Statement, two paragraphs read:

Employer's responsibilities a) to provide and maintain equipment, machinery and systems of work, which are safe and without risk to health, e) to provide a working environment without risk to health and safety and adequate facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work.

Therefore, in the event of mishap or accident an inquiry or inquest would require the club to provide good reasons why good safety arrangements were not made. Expense is not a good reason. The Act does require that adequate mess

facilities be maintained—i.e., heat, toilet and washing facilities with soap and towel.

I would also expect clubs in this day and age to provide a small cooking area, shower cubicle and drying room. These things can only improve staff morale, which will undoubtedly reflect on the condition of the course.

Many courses like mine are split by public highways. As part of the daily routine, machines, such as tractors, Cushman and triplex mowers, cross and recross such roads. Clubs are allowed up to six miles per week without an excise licence (for each machine), but the Vehicle Licensing Department at Swansea must have details of each machine (serial number, make, etc (and an exemption disc applied for and displayed).

Storage of chemicals, sprays and the like should always be in a secure place, designed to contain them in the event of spillage, leakage or fire. The store should be situated away from drains and open watercourses. It is a good idea to notify the local fire authorities of the nature of chemicals and pesticides in use.

The store should be built of non-combustible materials, with a light roof to act as a vent in the case of fire. Good ventilation is essential. It is a good idea to have a raised, slatted floor to provide a sump and the raised threshold facilitates the unloading of drums, etc.

Fungicides should be kept on shelves, while 25 litre drums should be carefully stacked on the floor.

If at all possible, do not interstack different products. Keep a bag of sawdust handy to soak up spillage. The door must be lockable and kept locked when not in use.

When a new product is brought into use, the head greenkeeper will obtain copies of data sheets for members of staff, give proper training in its use

Continued overleaf...

Safety first—Continued...

and make sure protective clothing and equipment is supplied and used.

The storage and handling of petrol affects all golf clubs. Few clubs seem to follow the letter of the law as far as the purchase and storage of this highly dangerous liquid goes. A few more enlightened clubs have installed underground bulk tanks with electric pumps, which gives them a safe, convenient supply bought in at bulk prices. Most, however, rely on odd cans dotted around and in some cases filled daily (in summer) at a nearby garage.

How does the law stand with regard to petrol? If a bulk tank is not installed then the maximum amount you can store without a licence and for *immediate* use is 60 gallons in an approved store (such as described for chemicals) and in two gallon cans only. Drums or jerry cans *will not* do. Also, you must notify your local Petroleum Officer of your intention to store petrol on your premises. Warning signs should be displayed on the store and fire extinguishers provided.

Another common occurrence at golf clubs is that a member of the greenstaff, usually the head greenkeeper, fetches the petrol in his car or, in some cases, the club's vehicle. Again, the law here is very clear—no more than ten gallons in not more than two gallon cans. The vehicle must display the inflammable diamond and carry a fire extinguisher.

Insurance

Most important of all, though, make sure your car insurance covers you, especially if you are using a private car. Insurance is the key to all these regulations, for if an accident does occur and you have not notified the authorities that petrol is being stored, and it is not stored in a safe and proper manner, the club may well find its insurance cover void.

A bulk tank of 1,000 gallons capacity with garage-type pump will cost around £4,000 to install, with a licence fee of £25 per annum.

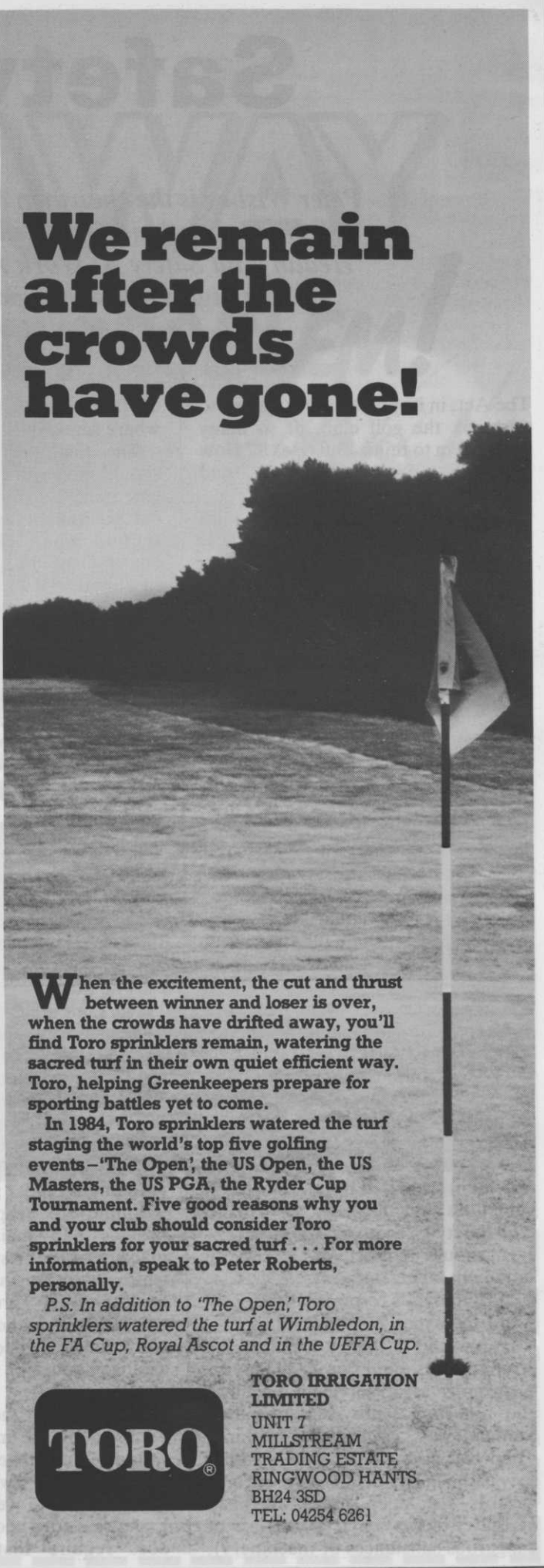
To conclude, it is in the interests of the golf club committees and staff to have a good look at work procedures. At most clubs, a few hundred pounds spent on improving safety standards could save a lot more in the long run. Head greenkeepers and course managers should be aware that, in certain cases, *they* can be prosecuted if the Health And Safety Act is not adhered to. I know of at least one case where this happened. The greenkeeper was found guilty of negligence and had to pay costs. So, be warned.

The Policy Statement must be drawn to the attention of *all* staff, whether trainees, part-time or casual. It is a good idea to get them to sign the statement, stating they have read and understood it.

I have found both the Health and Safety Executive and the Petroleum Officer extremely helpful and informative. In both cases, they have said that it is the policy to prosecute only as a last resort and are willing to carry out advisory visits and make recommendations. These visits cost nothing and could save a lot of money or, more importantly, lives. Put safety *first*.

**Greenkeeper
has a new phone number
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We remain after the crowds have gone!



When the excitement, the cut and thrust between winner and loser is over, when the crowds have drifted away, you'll find Toro sprinklers remain, watering the sacred turf in their own quiet efficient way. Toro, helping Greenkeepers prepare for sporting battles yet to come.

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P.S. In addition to 'The Open', Toro sprinklers watered the turf at Wimbledon, in the FA Cup, Royal Ascot and in the UEFA Cup.



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