



Fertile FRANCE

France is possibly the fastest growing golf market in Europe. Japanese, American, Middle Eastern and European money is being channeled into new golf course constructions, with greenkeepers being recruited from Great Britain and North America; as well as being trained in France itself. The training of greenkeepers has become a very important subject and one in which all sides of the

The Barbaroux Golf Course is described as 'the ultimate in European golfing'. It comprises 87 hectares for a course length of 6963 yards in wooded landscape interspersed with six extensive lakes

French golf industry have had an influence. Unlike the UK, there is no 'tradition' of golf greenkeeping, so they are immediately addressing the problems posed by modern construction methods and the intensity of play that the rapid growth in golf interest has generated.

With limited practical experience they are tending to follow the scientific path, but this is well tempered by user experience drawn from industry sources, as well as 'imported' greenkeepers. The changes in grasses as well as construction materials has tended to make 'traditional' greenkeeping methods of limited value and this has brought new opportunities in creating new methods to produce what all greenkeepers and golfers are looking for – first class playing surfaces.

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A brand new modern construction in France will never be another St. Andrews, but that is the joy of visiting and playing other courses – the challenge of new surroundings. As a test of the golfer's skill French courses are equal to their counterparts in the UK and maintained to an equally high standard, but with a character of their very own, they are different. You will all have seen the postcard of the two young children entitled: "vive le difference"!

At the recent first International Salon of Golf Course Maintenance and Repair (SIERG) organised by the Association of French Greenkeepers (AGRF), this new thinking in respect of golf green fertilisation was introduced to a new product from BASF. The close affiliation between manufacturer and greenkeeper had identified a need and responded to it in an effort to make the 'manipulation of nature' called greenkeeping a little more effective.

Because most constructions in France are new they do not have the reserves of nutrients so often found in older UK greens. They have also been built with irrigation and drainage incorporated from the outset, rather than the 'add-on' situation here. This means a very free draining structure often covered with one of the new creeping bents which have a high nutrient demand, so applying nutrients in the correct balance and in the right quantities and form, enabling the plant to optimise their use, was essential.

The Company drew on all these requirements and their own experience as major fertiliser producers to create for BASF France a special fertiliser – Floranid Master – to assist in maintaining the quality of French golf greens.

The formula is 16:5:10:+5Mgo and Trace elements. It was first researched in response to the demands of the new turf grasses, (stoloniferous agrostis spp in particular), which demand a balance of nutrients at least of 3:1:2., this being determined by the losses incurred in clippings removal. Add to this the fast infiltration rates of USGA specification and pure sand constructions and you will appreciate that ingredients had to be carefully selected.

Nitrogen: with very little nitric nitrogen (2.5%) to reduce leaching and subsequent pollution by nitrates, but with a lot of slow-action nitrogen (two thirds in IBDU form) for reliable, gentle feeding without sudden flushes. Phosphate was added 5% p2o5 in the correct

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An open approach to greenkeeping

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 proportion to maintain plant functions without creating an over-supply.

Potassium: this element is particularly important on free draining constructions, as these do not hold Potassium very well and it is essential in helping disease resistance. It is supplied in sulphate form to reduce the risk of polluting the subsoil with Chlorine, found in other sources of Potash, and the sulphate form reduces the risk



of scorch, (Sulphate has a salinity index of 46, as opposed to Chloride, which has 114). Furthermore, the use of Sulphate avoids the phenomena of phytotoxicity, which the chloride ion can induce, and encourages the formation of dry matter, reducing bruising and wear sensitivity.

Magnesium: this is at a high level to keep the ration with Potassium and to encourage the production of chlorophyll, for plant photosynthesis.

Trace Elements: Iron (0.5%) copper (0.01%) and zinc (0.01%) are the three most important metallic trace elements for turf, as they promote the formation of growth substances and help in chlorophyll synthesis.

The creation of this new product did not stop at the analysis, for the size and distribution of sizes of granules were specially researched for precise and regular spreading over small working areas. Even the colour was not left to chance and after several tests with different colours, carried out by the greenkeepers themselves, a brown colour was chosen. This allows easy checking of the spread pattern but quickly disappears into the sward.

Like the French golf courses it is used upon, Floranid Master is new, but it clearly shows the more open approach to greenkeeping that the lack of traditional conservatism is creating. We all hear a lot about the opportunities within Europe after 1992, but let's remember that on the continent they are all looking toward the UK and saying 'the same thing! Will the next greenkeeper at your course be French or German?

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