

GRASS CUTTING EQUIPMENT



If the humorous colour illustration of our supplement cover (so cleverly executed by artist, John Moran) suggests a traffic jam of M25 proportion on his fictitious course, there is no error, either on his part or that of your editor. In discussing the general theme with John I was conscious not only of the time being ripe for such frenzied demonstration activities, but that spring is also a time when traffic jams of an entirely different nature descend in earnest upon the course. I refer, as you've probably guessed, to those visiting societies so beloved by club secretaries and treasurers and so utterly hated and despised by just about every club member.

Perhaps you'll question the logic between my comparisons, but it occurs to me that if a Golf Club is to continue to attract those whose cash it feels necessary for survival, it must make a swift about-turn and look at the state of its golf course, as a priority! The operative words, I repeat, are golf course. So often, when the Club finds itself "in funds", questionable decisions are made to purchase, say, new curtains for the dining room; a re-paint for the clubhouse; a bigger car-park; perhaps even replacing something old but steeped in character with a hideous but modern equivalent. Unless pressed, the needs of the golf course will take a minor role and tired machinery will be pressed into service for yet another agonising season.

Whilst it is probably true that most green committee members have scant knowledge or regard for the real needs of the course – indeed many have wildly misplaced priorities – it is also true that many greenkeepers are disadvantaged when it comes to stating the case for new equipment.

Which is more important, the golf course or the fancy dining room? Which is more readily remembered, the shower room or the golf course? In my experience, the society golfer or occasional visitor will remember the golf course long after those peripheral items are forgotten. If the course is in shabby condition, he will think long and hard before parting again with upwards of £75, the daily package price current at some courses in the south.

My accolades go to the greenkeeper who, more often than not, succeeds in maintaining his course in fine condition despite the poor condition of his machinery, the doubtful state of his irrigation or the pittance he is allowed as budget.

If your Club is one that has spent money in a wise

fashion and in the proper place, as some obviously have, give thanks for their wisdom and continue to reward them with a course to remember. If not, your first step may be to learn a little salesmanship. Get the machinery salesman on your side and ask him for help in preparing a watertight case for new equipment. Together you should outline the advantages at the Club in investing in a particular model. When their thoughts are finally turned to spending money, make your approach one of demonstrating how the purchase will save money – either by speeding up a process or by an improvement in turf quality. It is no bad move to get the green chairman on your side and if you play golf be sure to play a round or two with him. During this more relaxed time you could point out ways of making improvements; explain how modern technology has moved ahead. Once convinced he'll find it easier to convince his committee and show greater empathy with your requests.

If you are fairly sure that funds could be made available for capital expenditure, ask for the opportunity to present your case at committee level. Be properly groomed, dress like a businessman, and have your homework ready. Be prepared to answer questions and have knowledge of alternatives, for without such knowledge it is difficult to mount a counter-attack. Above all, ask the company specialist to prepare a list that provides facts, specifications, performance data and, if possible, recommendations from other users in your area. Getting the go-ahead may take a little time and effort, but with a planned, business-like approach you could soon be in charge of new equipment. Why not give it a try?

To buy and what to buy – that's the question

DAVID WHITE considers the priorities involved when compiling an equipment 'shopping list' and suggests ways to get the people that matter on your side...