



NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

27-29 March 1992

The Royal Agricultural College
Cirencester

For the fourth consecutive year, BIGGA's National Education Conference next spring will feature a programme of international speakers. The event is to be sponsored, once again, by **Lindum Turf and Associates**. The Conference programme will be available at the BTME from either the BIGGA or Lindum Turf stands.

Some of the speakers and their topics are:

Tom Cook, Associate Professor, Dept of Horticulture, Oregon State University: Maintaining Pure Bentgrass Greens: Is it possible in cool temperate climates?

Neil Baldwin, STRI: Green Pest and Disease Control

Derek Green, Course Manager, Royal Liverpool Golf Club: Dry Patch

Tor Senstadt, Secretary, Norwegian Greenkeepers Association: Greenkeeping in Norway

Patrick O'Brien, South Eastern Director, USGA Green Section: Bentgrass Management in the South Eastern USA

Jon Allbutt: Using Chemicals on the Golf Course and Complying with the Law

William R Roberts, President, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America: The Development of Education Programmes for the Greenkeeping Profession

Carol Borthwick, Senior Lecturer in Greenkeeping, Elmwood College: Where do we go from Here?

Laurence Pithie, Master Greenkeeper, Course Manager, Minchinhampton Golf Club: Golf Course Development – a Greenkeeper's Viewpoint

Barry Cooper: Golf Course Drainage Consultant: Golf Course Drainage – Before and After Construction

Jonathan Gaunt, Golf Course Architect: Project Management – How does it compare to normal Golf Course Construction Contracts?

Jim Arthur, Golf Course Agronomist: Sound Traditional Greenkeeping Practices versus Gimmicks

Gordon Jaaback, Agronomist, Conservation and Land Development Specialist: Limitations in Rootzone Design

Bernard Findlay, Course Manager, Portstewart Golf Club: Can you Build a Seaside Links or is that Nature's Job?

**The programme including application form will be available soon from BIGGA Headquarters
Telephone 03473 581/2 • Fax 03473 8864**

■ Solving the height of confusion

■ I feel I must respond to the Autumn Turf Maintenance programme employed at Ham Manor Golf Club (October), and would make three points:

1) **Height of cut.** Mr George Barr comments that he "raises the height of cut from 1/8" to 3/16" on his greens gradually over a period of three weeks". I presume from this that he regularly cuts at 1/8" during the summer. This would seem to contradict Mr Jim Arthur's article on Page 9, where the regular cutting of greens at 1/8" is thought harmful to turf. It is also contrary to STRI opinion and that of many experienced greenkeepers, who have seen the results of such treatment. Does Mr Barr advocate regular (more than a few days) cutting at 1/8", and if so, does he not agree that there could be serious long-term problems?

2) **Cutting height of adjustment.** Might it not be time to change to the metric scale, specifically millimetres? After all, we deal with hectares, metres, kilos and litres as a matter of course and I believe much confusion could be eliminated by adopting a millimetre scale dealing in whole numbers and not fractions. The metric scale appears to be eminently more practical and understandable and therefore less prone to error.

Also, is it not time for a more accurate method of measuring height of cut, especially below 6mm (1/4")? Even a small error can adversely affect the accuracy on the putting surface, exacerbated by the fact that cylinder mowers (and units) are set up in the sheds, where both front and back rollers and the height of cut setter are all rigid and unyielding, whereas the surface they relate to is anything but!

3) **Hollow tining.** Mr Barr states that he not only hollow tines in eight hours, but clears as well. This claim must be totally unrealistic unless his greens are only 100m² and all close to his sheds. He states that only one Ryan GA30 is used at 50mm (2") centres. My Club owns an Iseki Coremaster which we attach to a John Deere 885 compact tractor, both being less than three years old and in good working order. The speed needed to core at 50mm centres is so slow that our digital speedometer is incapable of consistently giving a read-out. The time taken to core our greens (average 500m²) at 50mm centres is approx. 50/60 minutes or more per green. If one adds non-coring time, such as essential maintenance on corer and tractor, breaks for the operator, travel to and from each green, plus stops for golfing play (to eliminate noise, if nothing else), the job takes two and a half days – this just for coring! Remember also that the job is done in October, when daylight hours are short and subsequently restricting any overtime that could be worked to finish the job. Mr Barr's statement could give the wrong impression to inexperienced greenkeepers, Club members and green committees.

If agreement on basic course maintenance cannot be reached, how can we achieve consistently high standards nationwide?

PAUL BERTINSHAW Head Greenkeeper, Royal Norwich Golf Club, Norfolk

■ After reading the October issue there are several points that require further discussion. Jim Arthur's article, "The Quick and the Dead", was full of useful and sensible ideas concerning the 'headless chicken' quest for speed. Common sense tells us that higher cuts are healthier cuts, whilst shaving to 1/8" leads to a thinning sward and increased weed and poa invasion. This is especially so when accompanied by the increased wear and traffic of 1,000 playing members, as at my Club. Add this to the dry summers and water shortages of recent years and we have a situation where our priorities have to be those of maintaining 100% grass cover. I am forever telling our members that it is better to have grass you can work with than no grass at all.

If one needs to increase putting speeds for that big event, it is surely better to top dress monthly, followed by verti-cutting, grooming and double cutting the day prior to the event. This would be preferable to keeping these speeds for long periods. The average 10-28 handicapper cannot cope with stimpmeter readings of ten feet anyway, never mind the lady members.

Yet further in the magazine we read of George Barr and his successful management techniques, including cutting at 1/8th for the whole season – what is the young greenkeeper to believe? Surely the magazine should be looking for some kind of continuity in its articles.

M JONES Head Greenkeeper, Ely City Golf Course Ltd. Cambridge

We asked George Barr for further comments, which are printed below:

Both Mr Bertinshaw and Mr Jones seek uniformity of advice, or perhaps more accurately, advice with which they can personally agree. At the same time, surely they must concede that the practice of greenkeeping is by no means an exact science. It is the very fact that different management practices are followed – at different locations on different swards and in different circumstances – that makes greenkeeping such a fascinating and infinite subject. In replying to the specific comments, it is my considered opinion that height of cut should be the decision of the head greenkeeper alone – the one who is in control of the course – and not based on rules written in slabs of stone. Granted there are general rules to observe, but there will always be those who break new barriers, repeatedly obtain successful results and feel no pain. Such actions are based on personal experience and are called free choice. The greenkeeper is dealing with a multi-faceted living area and should alone be the arbiter, based on the many factors (soil, grass species, growth patterns, root qualities etc.) he is capable of evaluating. I can state categorically that the management programme outlined works remarkably and consistently well at Ham Manor.

Opinions expressed in these columns are not necessarily shared by the editor or BIGGA and the Association accepts no responsibility for them.

Letters to the editor are welcome on any topic related to the practice or pursuit of greenkeeping.

Write to the editor, Greenkeeper International, 13 Firls Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL. Letters should be signed.

We reserve the right to edit for brevity, clarity and good taste.

Letters

Regarding coring, the greens at Ham Manor are about 500m² and are what would be regarded as average size. The Ryan GA30 we use is a remarkably fast and efficient tool for hollow coring and, when coupled with a Cushman Harvester, we can (and indeed do) core and clear 18 greens in an eight hour day.

GEORGE BARR Course Manager, Ham Manor Golf Club

■ May I convey my sincere thanks to all those at Aldwark Manor who were involved in the recent TORO/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper awards. Our Association representatives and the Toro and PGA personnel all made us feel most welcome. May I wish the winner and runners-up the very best for their future in greenkeeping and express the hope that we shall all meet again at other BIGGA events very soon. I shall remember the weekend for a very long time.

Mark Ellis Woburn Golf and Country Club, Bedfordshire

■ With BIGGA offering an ever increasing variety of official uniform dress, do you think it would be a good idea to provide official BIGGA overalls? A smart range would do much to improve the professional image we try so hard to create.

PETER LACEY Pennard Golf Club, South Wales

Moves are indeed afoot to make BIGGA neckties and blazers obligatory wear at all official or invited functions, such as the Kubota Challenge and the Ransomes International Tournament, and indeed such a 'uniform' greatly improves one's professional image. At work the choice is perhaps one of greater individuality, though there is certainly merit in a smarter, uniform turn-out.

■ Whilst I normally have the greatest respect for Jon Allbutt's opinions, I was disappointed by his negative comments (October issue) on S.P.I.s (spray pattern indicators).

Here was an opportunity for an authority in his field to welcome with enthusiasm a valuable tool which enables greenkeepers to be more aware of their responsibilities and the need for more accurate and controllable spray applications.

The letter asked for more balance, yet balance assumes some form of equality and I see nothing equal about towing a set of chains behind a spray boom or the spitting of foam blobs to mark a spray boom width when compared to the simple task of adding colour to an existing spray solution.

Regarding his questions on the use of S.P.I.s and the Control of Pesticides regulations, these products fall outside the scope of this Act as they exert no effect on the pesticides activity, being purely visual. Pesticide manufacturers are themselves enthusiastic supporters of this concept.

What I cannot understand is Jon Allbutt's refusal to acknowledge the value of S.P.I.s in identifying faults, eg. blocked nozzles on the job, relying instead on The Code Of Practice. Of course greenkeepers should read this excellent manual and follow The Code, but surely Jon must recognise that not everything is predictable and it is usually 'Murphy's Law' – anything that can go wrong will go wrong – that operates in the real world. If a nozzle becomes blocked it is usually impossible to identify without the addition of an S.P.I. and this results in a repeat application.

One positive aspect of his letter was his observation that some spray colourants sold in the UK can have a higher hazard classification than the pesticide with which they are mixed. Industrial acid blue 9 dye formulations adapted from the textile industry are used, whilst Blazon is a non-ionic polymeric colourant and has a non-toxic and non-hazardous classification.

So come on Jon, show an open mind to one of an ever decreasing number of products specially developed for greenkeepers. Remember, the status quo is a very safe state to be in but does nothing to aid progress.

RICHARD FRY Basildon, Essex

Richard Fry, the author of the article to which Jon Allbutt referred, is a Marketing Consultant, perhaps best known to greenkeepers as the head of Rhone Poulenc's (formerly May & Baker Ltd) Environmental Products Division in the early 1980s and the organiser of the National Turf Care Workshop seminars.

■ Back home again after yet another foray to Florida in my quest for the elusive work permit, my first move is to catch up on all that's been happening in the world of greenkeeping. Congratulations! Greenkeeper International continues to grow in stature and quality and is far and away the most eagerly looked for magazine in this household. Though it is hard to single out any particular feature or series for special praise, I always turn first to the brilliant cartoons of "Badleigh Dunne", whose characters from both the clubhouse and work place succeed in capturing the very essence of greenkeeping in such a delightful manner – and so true to life! Long may he continue. Then it's on to 'Flying Divots', the S E Regional news and stories of golfing prowess, made all the more interesting because I've often witnessed these happenings.

This brings me to a point regarding "the ladies". I believe it is very important for more ladies to give support and encouragement wherever possible. This in turn provides a splendid social outlet, one where the whole thing can be great fun through visiting wonderful places and meeting interesting people. I also gain much from technical features, as this gives me a better understanding of the skills required of our menfolk.

LINDA EXLEY
Northwood, Middx.

Linda echoes the opinion of many readers, all of whom say how much they enjoy the Grinkeeper cartoons. "Badleigh Dunne" is, in fact, John Moran, an ex-greenkeeper turned commercial cartoonist, whose work also appears regularly in national magazines and newspapers.

■ It is always worrying when those with little practical or technical expertise get involved in very important matters such as how to comply with the Control of Pesticides Regulations, and in particular the Code of Practice. In order to fully comply with the Regulations, the operator of a pesticide applicator must show that he/she is using a 'safe system' to accurately apply the pesticide to the target, and only the target. Whereas marker dyes will show the operator where he has been, correctly aligned bout markers quite clearly show him where he is going! Thus it can be seen there is a role for both marker dyes and bout markers and sometimes they may well be used in combination to good effect. Ground conditions vary so much that having options is very wise, and all who are involved in this area, be it selling, advising or using, must be responsible and professional in their approach to protecting the environment.

JON ALLBUTT Biggin Hill, Kent

■ I have now read and re-read Mr Jim Arthur's article entitled 'The Quick and The Dead', which appeared in your November issue. On behalf of our Tournament Committee and senior colleagues I write to advise you that the Tour are appalled at his ill-informed references towards our efforts to assist greenkeepers involved with Tour events. Indeed, we believe that elements of Mr Arthur's comments are potentially damaging to the Tour and look to your magazine to reproduce this reply.

I question Mr Arthur's current knowledge of principles or methods that are now employed on the PGA European Tour, as the consultancy relationship the Tour had with him ended several years ago. It should be pointed out that the Tour look to putting greens; 1) as being true as possible, free from bumps and 'snaking'; 2) having a consistent resilience for bounce and grip, ie. a poorly struck shot should not hold the putting green; 3) having as fast a speed of putting surface as possible taking account of slopes and grass species and; 4) having consistency on all 18 greens, practice putting green and chipping greens.

I will, however, reiterate that the sound principle of aeration and sensible levels of water and fertilisation for putting greens preached by Mr Arthur still hold true today. Our approach in recent years has been one of gentle persuasion to build up a good working relationship with host greenkeepers. In the last three years we have organised two one-week seminars to enable all greenkeepers and managers of the Tour venues to meet and exchange ideas.

We feel these exchanges can only be good for the game, believing that no one person can honestly claim to have total knowledge.

In our experience of running professional golf tournaments, which even Mr Arthur might concede is considerable, we have found that the wish of everyone concerned at a Tour venue is to achieve perfection in terms of presentation for their tournament week, and if we are asked to provide practical help, we will continue to do so.

It is quite wrong to suggest that the Tour have advocated prolonged 'shaving' of greens to achieve speed alone. Indeed, all the methods mentioned by Mr Arthur – including rolling – have been used to good effect and certainly in taking the long term health of the Tour golf courses into consideration. Mr Arthur seems to suggest that the Tour have no care or consideration for the venue when the final putt of the tournament is holed. I regard this as so contemptuous that it does not even require further comment!

It seems that the inclusion of Tour representatives on the R&A's Joint Golf Course Committee doesn't meet with Mr Arthur's approval.

Our wish, and we believe it is also that of the R&A, is that with all parties 'pooling' ideas constructive ideas may be forthcoming.

Please suggest to Mr Arthur that many if not all readers of your magazine would dearly love to read constructive ideas from a man who was, for so long, the agronomist. I am sure that he can pass on a great deal of knowledge, rather than embarking on yet another attempt to discredit other organisations or individuals.

J N PARAMOR Director of Tour Operations, PGA European Tour
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