



# 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 100m<sup>2</sup> 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 500m<sup>2</sup>) 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.