

■ In reply to David White's by-line (page 22, August) on the origins of golf, I have to say that if golf is a Dutch game then I am a Dutchman, and the first *Homo erectus* that ever scampered across the savannah in a loin-cloth was the inventor of the Olympic Games.

The truth, however, is that the game of golf as we know it developed in Scotland and no Dutch historian can deny that. I would also suggest that it is quite fruitless to employ words such as 'early Dutch golf' – the Dutch game in the period referred to was called *Kolven* and while it undoubtedly contributed to the development of golf, it was not golf. In fact its closest modern relative in my opinion is croquet, and one doesn't hear too many Dutchmen singing the praises of that game.

It always amuses me that those who would belittle the Scottish contribution to golf simply let their minds sail across the water and take root in Dutch soil. Why on earth do they stop there? Were the Dutch the only people ever to put a stick to a ball in bygone days? Chimpanzees have been known to wallop a stone with a stick – are they golfers? Maybe that's why golf makes monkeys of us all. I rest my case.

**MAURICE GRAY**  
Aberdeen


*It was bound to happen, the sore nerve having been touched... but I am unrepentant and still claim – with proven historic records on the side of reason and truth and dispelling folklore – that the game of golf (irrespective of its foreign title of Colf – the long game – and Kolf – the short game (still played in Holland) – or even 'Goff', the original Scottish derivative taken and developed from its Dutch ancestry) originated in the Low Countries. I would never, as Mr Gray implies, belittle the Scottish contribution to the game's development but would recommend the reading of EARLY GOLF, the historic work by Steven van Hengel, a member of the R&A and a true golfing Sherlock*

*Holmes who made research his life's work. After having read his book, Mr Gray and other doubters will find it difficult to believe that golf – yes, golf – originated in Scotland. Incidentally, the game referred to by Mr Gray, correctly *Het kolven*, never existed in the 'imagined' form in which it was first described in Victorian fantasy. Summarising, golf was originally a Dutch game imported to Scotland. No longer exclusively Dutch or Scottish, it is now truly Universal. – Editor.*

■ Following the publication of your article (July pages 22-26) on the workings of the PGA European Tour, I write to further clarify some of the points made therein.

There are many courses on the European Tour that have *Poa annua* greens and even though these are less than perfect in the winter months, the Tour professionals find that well prepared *Poa annua* greens often give a very respectable putting surface during the summer. The article seemed to imply that the Tour regularly recommends the killing of *Poa annua* greens by Methyl Bromide gassing. I must stress that this is not the case. May I also stress that this method of cleansing greens by gassing can be very dangerous and should only be carried out by experts.

Finally I would like to clarify and expand upon the role of Richard Stillwell, who manages to successfully run his own independent International Turf Consultancy business whilst



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# Letters

being retained by the Tour to advise on course preparation and final presentation. Together with Roger, his eldest son, Richard has provided practical help at many Tour venues, with improvement to these courses having at times been so dramatic that this has resulted in the Tour providing long-term agronomy advice.

**BRUCE JAMIESON**

Director of Agronomy, PGA European Tour

*Quite unconsciously, Bruce confirms what many have been saying for years: that Tour players (and indeed the majority of uninformed amateur players too, who demand 'lush green grass' and are totally unable to evaluate good playing conditions when they are presented to them) are quite happy with Poa annua for summer tournaments, whilst admitting they are not very good in winter – and winter is a period which is often seven months long in Britain. – Editor.*

■ Whilst most greenkeepers are eager to make use of new techniques to produce better playing surfaces, I feel we are being discouraged by what I view as misinformation. The comments in the September issue were typical of innumerable fallacies printed on the subject of Penncross. May I take this opportunity to counter those views of Mr Arthur by reminding him that:

- Penncross has been grown successfully throughout Northern Europe for several years. I don't doubt Mr Arthur will have seen many poor results using Penncross, but I can assure him from personal experience that many greenkeepers are producing excellent results on heavily used facilities open 365 days a year.

- Although the maintenance of Penncross requires a different approach, this does not necessarily lead to a high increase in costs. Its tendency to thatch up easily can be counteracted by frequent grooming and top dressing, carried out quickly and efficiently with modern machinery.

- In my experience a healthy Penncross sward is no more susceptible to pests and diseases than a traditional mix and mercurial fungicides are neither necessary nor desirable for disease control. Does Mr Arthur really believe that greenkeepers have an inexhaustible supply of illegal chemicals at their disposal, as his comment implies?

- Although Penncross is unavailable in the UK at the moment, there are several varieties of creeping bent available that will produce the same results both quickly and cost effectively. These should be considered as a viable alternative by any new development wishing to produce greens of the highest standard, particularly in the warmer regions of Britain.

**DAVID WHITAKER**

Course Manager, The Wisley Golf Club, Surrey

■ I am sure the manufacturers of Blazon are pleased with the article 'A Better Way to Spray' (August), showing their product in such a favourable light. However, it was disappointing, unbalanced and missed an opportunity to deal with the whole question of spray marking in more detail.

The whole subject of mixing anything into a pesticide solution in the spray tank is subject to the Control of Pesticides Regulations. The article failed to establish if mixing marker dyes with pesticide solutions *without written guidance* from the manufacturer is possible.

The foam mixture in bout markers can be adjusted to

**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 Firle Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL. Letters should be signed.**

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

● **Apologies to Terry Adamson, winner of the special prize at the BIGGA National Tournament, who we mistakenly referred to in last month's magazine as 'Terry Anderson.'**

break down at different speeds, there being no need to have 'blobs' on the course long after spraying is finished.

It is bad advice to suggest that the operator can rely on marker dye to show how poor his nozzle spray pattern is, or if a nozzle is blocked! The Code of Practice sets out in detail the procedures to ensure that the spraying job will be accurate and the calibration procedures also require careful inspection of nozzles.

Some marker dyes can have a higher hazard classification than the pesticide and from a COSHH point of view it is important to include these materials in the Risk Assessment now required before the spraying can commence.

Marker dyes are an important aid to accurate spraying, but they are *not* the only way. More balance please.

**JON ALLBUTT**

Biggin Hill, Kent

*Jon Allbutt is a technical consultant to the leisure and amenity industry. He is perhaps best known to greenkeepers as a technical trainer of those who apply pesticides, and in assisting with COSHH assessments.*

■ I do not agree with the content of my good friend Mr Jim Arthur's article: 'The Analysis Fallacy' (September 1991).

There is a need for chemical analyses of soils taken from golf courses, particularly golf greens. Nowadays, with large quantities of sand being incorporated with soils and organic matter in green constructions, it is vitally important that pH, phosphate and potash levels be monitored regularly in these very sandy rootzone mixes.

It is true that most of our old golf greens have very high levels of phosphate and potash present and in these cases there is no need whatsoever to apply phosphatic or potassic fertilisers.

There are a small number of cases each year where phosphate levels in greens are very low (less than 10 ppm) and here our agronomist would recommend the application of phosphatic fertilisers, however I would wish to emphasise that these are rare occasions.

On golf greens there is a continual removal of phosphate within clippings and if not replaced phosphate deficiencies can occur and a lack of vigour in grass growth can result.

I fully agree with Mr Arthur's comments concerning trace elements. A deficiency of any trace elements is extremely rare on British golf courses.

**DR PETER HAYES**

Director, Sports Turf Research Institute

*I now admit to being confused, my understanding being that application of phosphates positively encourage Poa annua in every case (see Goss et al, Washington University Trials 1975). If a green appears healthy and the grass type is ideal, even if soil analyses show levels of 10 ppm or below, does this automatically call for phosphate application? Further, if the turf is not good on a modern sand/soil green at what levels should corrective treatment be applied? I am drawn by an article by an STRI Agronomist which appeared no later than August; which states: 'it should be borne in mind that there are no exact limits for deficiencies in individual elements, whilst excesses in some, particularly available phosphate, are known to cause severe problems in the useability of turf long-term'. – Editor.*