

## Organisational smash and grab

Visitors to the East of England Showground for the IOG Sports and Leisure Exhibition in early September, especially those presented with complimentary passes, must have been dumbfounded – as I was – to discover that such ‘believed to be free’ entries were valid only as a means of partially reducing the cost of the IOG’s ‘admit by catalogue only’ remit. Those unfortunates unable to prove their favourite dealer actually loved them were being charged a hefty three quid to enter, with a high majority steaming with indignation at such piracy. It was, as one impecunious greenkeeper pointedly remarked, ‘a bit like being charged to enter Marks & Spencers in order to see if you might like to buy new underwear’.

If your own experience at Peterborough leaves you with less than sweet thoughts about this organisational smash and grab, consider the plight of yours truly. My saga began in early July, when both written and telephoned requests for forward information and press facilities were brushed aside with a brusque ‘please contact later’. Despite repeated telephone pleas over several weeks running up to the show, the first day found me outside the gate sans entry pass, sans press pass, sans information. I actually dared – thoroughly wicked soul that I am – to drive to the gate and was told to turn around and get out. I drove the full ten yards forward necessary to execute a 90 degree turn and promptly had my car searched: this in full view of the security guard making such demands! I was still outside the ground and only the intervention of Techturf’s Gordon Rolfe, who lent me an exhibitors pass, prevented yet another calamitous goof: I was finally in at last!

Hightailing it to the press centre I was informed there were no press identification badges and no catalogues. Not one single writer had received a press badge and there were some pretty ugly rumblings taking place. How are we journalists to find our way around the maze, was the oft repeated question, don’t know and don’t much care seemingly the answer. I was shunted from office to office and stonewalled at every turn, a dog-eared, coffee-stained cata-

logue eventually being grudgingly produced together with a plea not to tell other journalists, otherwise ‘they’ll all want one’!

The point we were all trying to make was a simple one: a press badge is not likened to some star of kudos, rather it instantly identifies the wearer and prevents time-wasting at stands when seeking information. You’d be amazed at how quickly a sales manager will respond to such beacons and produce vital up to the minute data. With so much to see in a short time, the luxury of browsing is certainly not for the working scribe.

Perhaps the final unforgivable straw came following the presentation of the National Turfgrass Award to a deserving Peter Dury, longtime Sport and Landscape Development Officer with Notts County Council. A hundred or so people attended the ceremony, which took place near to closing time and took over an hour to complete. Imagine our surprise upon discovering we were locked in! I didn’t stop to see every last soul attempt to leave the site but the vision of men dressed in their Sunday best clambering onto upturned dustbins in order to shin over the lethal wire fencing was a sight to behold and I wish I’d had my camera, – though it was far from being funny at the time.

The 1991 IOG Show was an undoubted success and no doubt about it. But it was a success this year in spite of the IOG’s organisation, not because of it. What credit is due

must be meted out to the dedicated exhibitors who somehow manage to rise above adversity, with such resolution deserving an extra vote of praise in my books, rather than a metaphorical kick in the teeth.

We all know the IOG can do better, having seen their skills of organisation demonstrated to grand effect in the past. Together with my fellow journalists I’d like to know why it seemed to crumble apart this year, was it something we said? Perhaps the time is ripe for the IOG to look again at appointing professionals to do a professional job: the previous masterminding of such tasks by Dianne Mowat being seen as a touch of pure magic.

DAVID WHITE

*‘a bit like being charged to enter Marks & Spencers in order to see if you might like to buy new underwear’*

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