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in terms of rapid drainage rates.

Furthermore, it is frequently the condition of the surrounding land, ie. fairways and especially green approaches, which dictate the feasibility of winter play through periods of heavy rainfall and consequently, the availability of ultra free-draining greens becomes irrelevant. That is not to say that the provision of a free draining putting surface is of low priority, indeed quite the opposite is true. A compromise is the obvious solution and we prefer to use a growing medium which contains at least 70-80% of uniformly graded lime free sand of medium particle size, blended with a small amount of light soil and organic material. Given the provision of good quality materials which conform to a very tight specification, this growing medium will provide free drainage and promote healthy growth of the desirable turf grasses. Indeed, this type of sand/soil mixture is more in line with our original links green constructions, when compared to pure sand.

In conclusion, the combination of research work and site experience leads us to believe that generally there is no place or need for pure sand greens in this country. The only mitigating circumstances which could contradict this conclusion may arise due to a complete lack of suitable local materials and a tight construction budget.

As is so often the case with experimental work, more questions become apparent and in responding to the need for further investigation into the whole subject of green construction, the Institute is carrying out extensive comparative research into pure sand greens, the USGA Green Section specification and local topsoil constructions. This five year experiment, again sponsored by the R&A, will also encompass investigations into irrigation rates and links with fertiliser application.

■ May I use the pages of Greenkeeper International to thank everyone in the North Scotland Section for the presentation of a print of The Old Course at St. Andrews, made to me at our section AGM.

It came as a great surprise and although being secretary of the section was hectic at times, the post gave me a great opportunity to make a great many friends in greenkeeping, not only in the north of Scotland but also throughout Britain, Europe and beyond.

I would also like to thank once again all those who helped and supported me in my capacity as secretary, including my wife, Pauline, and my past employers, Fraserburgh Golf Club. It is a job I would recommend every member might care to try for and I am sure that my successor as section secretary, Iain McLeod, will be an excellent ambassador for BIGGA, North Scotland.

GORDON MOIR St Andrews, Fife, Scotland

■ As a member of BIGGA I want to congratulate you on your fine magazine Greenkeeper International. I enjoy reading it and look forward to it every month.

I was particularly interested in the recent article: "Lessons To Be Learned" (September '91). I too was one of the millions of viewers who watched The Open at Royal Birkdale on my TV set and although as a fellow greenkeeper I was curious about the appearance of the greens, what really disappointed me was the speculation and misinformation that the so-called professional announcers – both British and American – were feeding to the viewing public. Whilst this misinformation has been a problem in America for some time, I was distressed to see that it had now reached global proportions.

It has always seemed curious to me that the mere presence of a microphone and a camera can instantaneously transform an observer of the game into an agronomist. The situation is even more alarming because to the viewing public these men are uttering the final word and their rambling theories are taken verbatim as THE TRUTH! This is particularly troublesome for the greenkeeper in question and for the industry as a whole. One of the few positive signs that this situation might improve, at least here in America, is that the announcers are more frequently commending our golf course superintendents by name during their telecasts. Positive it is, for it wasn't too long ago that the local golf professional was given credit for the spectacular condition of the course, which as you might imagine was a real thorn in the sides of all golf course superintendents.

Suffice it to say we still have a long way to go before we can be satisfied that we have turned the corner on this particular problem. Certainly it would be nice if these announcers were to seek out the person in charge of the maintenance and improvement of the golf course to get the real facts, but until they do it is important to use a forum such as your magazine to help them recognise their deficiencies.

ROBERT J MAIBUSCH CGCS, Hinsdale GC, Illinois, USA

■ As we come to the close of another year I am in the habit of reflecting on the various milestones which have occurred during the previous twelve months. One such major milestone has been the upgrading of BIGGA's magazine, Greenkeeper International, which in my view has successfully combined news from within the golf industry with helpful and instructive articles.

In particular, I have found Jim Arthur's articles to be ideal. They seem so often to epitomise the realities which many people tend to skirt around and incorporate helpful, positive suggestions and direction. I trust this beneficial and vital format will continue in the years to come.

To everybody who works on Greenkeeper International I send my best wishes for a prosperous New Year.

DAVID JENKINS

Managing Director, Charterhouse Turf Machinery Limited

Letters

■ I suffer from apathy! My chosen sport is cycle racing and I cover around 200 miles a week during the summer. I also enjoy watching golf on TV as well as most other sports.

All very well, you may say, but because I don't play golf (though I do belong to BIGGA) I suffer from apathy. This complaint about non-golfers is one levelled at non-playing Kent section members, which is why I'm writing.

I'll admit I did play golf in the past, but found it slow and boring. Now I find myself asking how many other greenkeepers – like me – work very hard on golf courses and yet enjoy another sport and are therefore branded as apathetic? Do the rules of BIGGA state that members must play golf?

GARY MILLS Chestfield Golf Club, Kent

Whilst talking with other members of the team here at Walton Heath, I offered an opinion that greenkeepers who play golf make better, or more complete, greenkeepers than those who do not play; by virtue of seeing and understanding the golf course from both sides. The room went very quiet for a while and I think my comments upset a few. Am I right, what do you think? I don't know if I am qualified to offer such an opinion, but I've been an artisan golfer for 25 years, a mechanic/greenkeeper for 8 years, and I keep my eyes open and use my common sense too.

TED JAMES BOND Walton Heath Golf Club, Surrey

– Two divided opinions, poles apart, and separated by nothing more than a delightful game and its vociferous devotees. Perhaps it is because the greenkeeping profession so often attracts entry from those who play golf that such opposing views are often aired. Readers comments are invited.

■ Whilst playing at Eltham Warren I hit a shot to the elevated first green, to my own satisfaction and retorts of 'good shot' from my partners. Upon reaching the green the ball was noticeable by its absence. A relentless search ensued – even looking in the hole – without success.

The following group were pressing and with mumbled remarks such as 'come on Biscoe, we'll never get round', with shaking heads we abandoned the Slazenger and moved on.

The matter was forgotten in the heat of battle until the eighth was reached, the green being adjacent to the first. My third shot hit the green, stopping 12 feet from the pin and ending in birdie territory in more ways than one, for as I walked forward my partner exclaimed 'did you see that, a crow has taken your ball and flown off with it?'. I couldn't believe it, but sure enough, one of the balls – mine – was missing. I looked and spotted the villain of the piece, 50 yards away with ball in mouth, taking a breather.

Suddenly my mind snapped, perhaps it was part of my RAF Regiment training, for I found myself charging at it, brandishing my putter. The fact that I'm an RSPB member didn't enter into the situation, for my ball was in danger and I was out of control. The bird, realising his little game might end in mortality, dropped the ball as my putter soared through the air, and took to the sky.

The putter never reached the target, clunking innocently through intervening tree branches to the ground. I proudly retrieved both ball and putter, replaced the ball and missed the birdie for a second time, settling for a par.

Well, I've heard of the thieving magpie but stone the crows – this takes the cake!

PETER BISCOE Keston Wood, Kent