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Price cuts ■ Testing times

■ To my knowledge, most head greenkeepers prepare annual budgets for their respective Clubs and, once approved, work within accepted limits. To do this effectively one must have up-to-date prices and I am thus bound to ask 'why is it so difficult to get these from stockists?'

Writing in late April, I have received just one 1992 price list, and this came through the pages of Greenkeeper International. When requesting lists the excuse offered is often that they are still 'at the printers' or 'one will be sent' (still waiting!) and I am prompted to ask: why are they not printed at the same time as brochures, which are always in abundant supply?

Do stockists resist sending them for fear of price comparisons, or are they just saying to themselves 'greenkeepers need the products anyway, so why bother?'

I would like to think this letter will bring me some price lists, and would urge suppliers to send brochures *only* when they can be backed up with prices.

SAM MORRISON Head Greenkeeper,
Royal Aberdeen GC, Scotland

ate strategies are used and problems addressed. Our younger greenkeepers who feel their exam mark is below their ability at practical greenkeeping may well have a specific learning difficulty and should get specialist testing as soon as possible, as help should be available. The test for adults can cost around £25 and there is often a waiting list to endure. However, if a specific learning difficulty is established, help can be obtained in many areas and examining boards can allow extra time and/or make a greater allowance for spelling/grammar errors in such cases.

I think more discussion needs to take place on the subject in order to remove the cloud of academic failure from some of our able workers. How can the Association help? What can a head greenkeeper do if he believes one of his staff has a dyslexia problem?

More information about resources is available from local Dyslexia Institutes - details in local phone books - or contact the Dyslexia Institute, 133 Gresham Road, Staines, Middlesex TW18 2AJ.

RICHARD HEASLIP
Hainault Forest GC, Essex

■ I am writing to you to raise the subject of dyslexia. Over the last couple of years we have been in the process of getting help for our son, aged ten. Well, what has this to do with greenkeeping people you may ask? I shall try to explain.

We came to realise that our son was having learning difficulties, particularly in reading, writing, and also in short term memory, although he had no trouble solving practical problems. We took him to the Dyslexia Institute for assessment. The report confirmed our fears - in spite of an IQ of 120, specific learning difficulties were identified.

It was in conversation with the psychologist that she told us the Institute had been consulted by an agricultural college to advise of ways they might identify and help students who have problems. It had become apparent to the college that agriculture tends to attract a higher than average number of people who have some form of learning problem and greenkeeping must be included in this.

With more and more emphasis placed upon written examinations, this, in some circumstances, could preclude individuals with natural flair and ability from advancing to their full potential unless appropri-

■ I read with interest the articles (May G.I.) about water features on golf courses. Certain points led me to wonder how hazards such as these are now influencing the design of new courses in the British Isles. At Bank House they have 18 holes and a driving range in a limited site of just 120 acres. I presume that most of the 13 lakes must be used as safety zones between fairways, as opposed to being created for irrigation storage purposes or as part of the strategy of the course design.

I cannot admit to having visited the site, but the article gives the impression that the lakes are not in naturally occurring depressions which would normally collect surface water, especially when they are merely two feet deep.

What most interests me is the reason for creating all these lakes. I presume it is the 'Florida influence', as a majority of the resort courses in Florida feature lakes highly, but why? Is it to make the courses more difficult, or to improve the playability of the course, or is the real reason to provide further income for the developer in the resale of 'lake balls'? I think so, especially as they are becoming an increasingly profitable product in most pro's shops

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Letters

■ Golf isn't a water sport ■ Training is The Way Forward ■ A waste

nowadays, often selling at a premium. One resort course I know on the outskirts of Norwich undertakes several dredging operations throughout the year, a highly profitable exercise.

Surely this relates to the type of course being offered to the golfer – the developers of 'Pay-as-you-Play' courses are keen to keep players moving as swiftly as possible. If a golfer hits his ball into a lake, he doesn't have a choice – the ball is irretrievable, he has to forget it and play another. This means that five minutes are not otherwise spent looking for a ball in deep rough or scrub and it keeps the golfers moving. (Unless of course the golfer keeps playing each subsequent shot into the lake!)

This, however, has a detrimental effect on the standard of the golfer. How can a player ever become proficient at shots from different and varying lies if the only hazards on the course are water, closely mown semi-rough or widely spaced staked trees. Where is the rough and deep rough?

I feel that the element of surprise is, effectively, being removed by incorporating an excessive amount of lakes into a golf course design. Maybe this is best explained by the following analogy: two golfers tee off down a par 4 hole, one hits his ball straight, the other slices into the rough and scrub. The latter finds to his surprise and great pleasure that his ball has come to rest in a clearing – allowing him a shot to the green, with a chance of halving or even winning the hole. He has, in effect, been given a reprieve, but he has still got to be able to play a good recovery shot to take advantage of the situation. This makes for exciting golf. A lake allows for one result only – unplayable: reload! As a hazard it is so final, whereas deep rough will always provide for the possibility of another result – that which is based on an element of luck or good fortune.

Thinking back to some of the most exciting Open Championships, this element has always provided spectacle. Take, for instance, the memorable final rounds of Watson and Nicklaus at Turnberry in 1977. The result was uncertain right down to the final putt, and it almost swung in Nicklaus' favour after he made a remarkable recovery shot from a fortunate lie amongst the gorse and then proceeded to hole his putt for a three from the edge of the green. Watson was left with a

two footer to take the Championship by a shot, which he confidently holed.

Had Nicklaus' tee shot drifted into a lake as opposed to the gorse, the Championship would have been over before they had even reached the final green. And what an anticlimax that would have been.

My point in writing is an attempt to explain that there will always be a strong objection against the move towards golf as a water sport. It may well appeal to golfers in the USA but I fail to see it gaining nationwide approval in Britain. Firstly because of increasing problems relating to water shortages and to restrictions set by the NRA, and secondly because of the British golfers' reluctance in having to keep buying new balls.

Do not misunderstand me, though, because invariably, carefully located and well designed water features on a golf course can provide the perfect effect or setting. Depending upon the character of the site, a lake can be considered to be useful for several functions: in providing a positive outlet for drainage purposes; as part of the strategy of the golf course design when a natural depression exists; or for storage purposes for an irrigation system. Ideally, though, the latter will not be visible from the main playing areas.

It is up to the architects of these new courses to convince the developers that there are alternative ways of creating a hazard. In many cases I regard a lake as a 'cop-out' – where the architect lacks the imagination to provide something more stimulating.

I appreciate that the flow of golfers through these new facilities has to be maintained, but surely there has to be some compromise somewhere and by this I mean to provide some thick rough (or heather and gorse) in strategic locations on the course to give the golfer something to really get his teeth into.

JONATHAN GAUNT BA (Hons) Dip LA.
Golf Course Architect, Forest Gate,
London

■ For those sceptics amongst us who sometimes question the standing and direction of our Association, whilst suffering from a seemingly terminal dose of apathy, I would like to report on our (BIGGA Kent Section) strides forward and the recognition we are receiving.

David Wood and myself recently

attended a seminar organised by the Kent Golf Union at Rochester and Cobham GC, aimed at secretaries and captains. David was invited to talk on Greenkeeper Training, something that would have perhaps been unheard of at such an event in the past. Other speakers included Keith Wright, secretary of the EGU, on the role and objectives of the Union, Henry Wylie on the diversity of golfing organisations and Derek Pulford on the role of the County Unions. Much time was devoted to the speakers and delegates were involved in what turned out to be a fairly lively debate, mainly inspired by David's address. It would be fair to say that a minority of the delegates embarked on a spree of 'greenkeeper bashing.'

The usual chestnuts came to the fore: 'why do greenkeepers need training? They then ask for better wages and conditions or are poached by other courses or organisations'. 'One of the newly constructed greens on my course is appalling, it must be the greenkeeper's fault (even though he didn't build it!) and what yard stick can we use to show ineptitude and sack him!' Also 'why do greenkeepers need managerial, accounting and computer skills to cut grass' – this from the odd secretary no doubt fearing for his job. These comments were vigorously countered by Keith Wright, Brian Evans (KGU), David and myself, and it is clear that the Golf Unions and perhaps the majority of delegates actively support our efforts for a strong force of well trained, educated and skilled greenkeepers.

One of the keys to all this will be communication, with this seminar demonstrating how in the past this has been sadly lacking. I read the journals of the EGU and the Secretaries Association and it is clear from reading them that we all suffer the same problems and difficulties in carrying out our duties. These seem to be the haphazard way some Clubs are organised, the lack of funds available and the lack of active management policy in some areas.

As Keith Wright was at pains to point out, the EGU is the most poorly funded Union in Europe, although it caters for more golfers and offers a greater service – and as the gent with the dodgy greens also pointed out, he would like to have an agronomist look at them, but his Club and committee couldn't find one cheap enough!

I am pleased to say some were very keen for BIGGA to provide more information on training – perhaps encouragement for us to move forward and do more. Finally, may I thank Brian Evans and the KGU for a cracking event – I can't wait for the next one, for it is clearly what is needed to enhance co-operation, communication and response to 'The Way Forward'.

PAUL COPSEY Head Greenkeeper,
Barnhurst GC, Bexleyheath, Kent

■ The 'concerned greenkeepers' of West Sussex GC raise an important issue in your May edition. Our company gave consideration to the problem of container wastage at the design stage of our green foliar feed, Agrimaster, and we opted to reduce the number of plastic containers in circulation while offering a high nutrient input at the same time. In the result one 25 litre container of our concentrate proved sufficient for treating 18 golf greens, thus greatly reducing wastage, storage space and handling.

From time to time we have recovered empty containers from some of our larger users but transportation and cleaning costs (including investments in equipment) make this a discouraging proposition. Perhaps the plastics industry should itself take some responsibility for the recycling of packaging materials. However, we acknowledge the legitimate concerns of West Sussex GC and remain willing to discuss the matter with any interested parties.

ROGER WEST

Technical Director, Agriland Ltd.
Bournemouth, Dorset

■ In July of this year my husband, Eric Palmer, will have served 50 years as a greenkeeper – 41 of those as a head greenkeeper.

During his career he has worked on just three courses, Sitwell Park in Rotherham, Abbeydale in Sheffield, and his present Club – Hickleton near Barnsley.

His dedication to his work cannot be surpassed and he is and always has been a credit to his profession. He has seen so many changes over the years and I feel justly proud of him – indeed I have learned quite a lot myself.

Eric has been nominated by his first assistant for the 'Greenkeeper of the Year' award, but notwithstanding this I feel his 50 years of dedication deserve recognition.

MRS MARGARET PALMER

Baby, Doncaster, S Yorkshire