

patchy germination on greens.

Although inevitably very young, the course opened for limited play at the end of September and was played throughout the winter, only closing on one day when covered with snow. The greens came through remarkably well and are now improving quickly with the spring growth.

Because of the need for cover, the greens were fed with high nitrogen fertiliser until the end of October and we were on guard for disease problems. In the event, we had little disease although it was often a damp winter.

In November, we constructed the nine-hole par 3 and had the greens ready for sowing at the beginning of December. Wanting to speed the growing in of the greens, I decided to sow at once with pre-germinated seed and cover the greens with gro-cover. We sowed the second week in December but were only able to get the covers on two greens because of heavy rain. The seed germinated anyway due to the mild wet weather and by the middle of January we had a light cover. At the end of February we commenced feeding and in March we were able to start weekly mowing. This has gained us several months on the greens.

If we can continually work on just these three points, I am certain we will be held in much higher regard by our employer and even the general public – that way the greenkeeper, who in my experience always puts pride in his work before all else, will be rewarded with higher esteem and a better salary. He will then give a far superior service and therefore better product, ie golf course.

CONTROVERSY OF THE CONFERENCE

You would imagine that one of the 17 talks would have provided the most controversy. But, no, it was the sixth to last question at the quiz night. The question was: How many broken clubs can a golfer replace during each round? Most contestants said none, but the answer Trivial Pursuits gives is one. We checked with the R&A who said: "As many as you like provided they were broken DURING THE COURSE OF NATURAL PLAY." Thus, if the player swings at a ball and wraps his club round a tree in the follow-through, he can replace it. But, if he swings and misses and wraps his club round the tree in temper, he can't. If a golf cart runs over his bag and breaks all his clubs, he can get a new set. If he chucks the bag in a lake, he can't.



HOT TIP

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What can be done to avert a disaster, such as massive loss of turf? The first step is to take an offensive approach rather than a defensive one. Act, don't react. Call in appropriate consultants and begin a fact-finding mission. Analyse the course's strong points as well as its weak ones. Look for potential problems in the water management systems, including irrigation and drainage, since failure here guarantees turf loss. Examine the growing environment around greens and tees. What is the air circulation situation like? Are trees becoming a problem? Is the majority of the turf the best-suited species or variety? Does your turf have a reasonable

chance for survival if the weather becomes unfavourable? All of these questions need to be answered before a plan of attack can be devised.

The golfers must be kept well informed. New programmes are more readily accepted by those who understand why failures occurred and what is being done to prevent them from recurring. They should be made to feel part of the decision-making process. Do not be surprised if the problems are complex and cannot be solved by a single solution. Usually, a variety of factors are involved. Don't fall into the trap of looking for a painless solution to your course's problems. It is very rare for a single piece of equipment, soil additive, growth enhancer, pesticide etc to turn a programme around. Severe problems rarely develop overnight and solutions require time, funding and patience to work effectively. In short, do not wait for disaster to strike, anticipate it. If disaster has already struck, use it to help sell the necessary corrective programmes. Don't be afraid to look at a bad year in a good light and use it to the golf course's advantage.



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