

Slow down to move ahead

In all these years of maintaining golf greens the green speed has changed. The greens have become faster, but where is the end and how far can we go?

In my opinion, we cannot go any further, but we have to go backwards. First of all, green speed depends upon grass species and professional maintenance. However, we are cutting lower and lower to create fast greens for big tournaments or to have the fastest greens in the area. Being cut below 5 mm, however, fescues, brown top bent and creeping bent will not survive. What we are doing is encouraging annual meadow grass, and this is the opposite of what we want. After all, we would like to play golf in autumn and winter too. The worst thing, that happened was introducing the stimp-meter, and setting standards for faster greens.

In Harrogate, I was talking to a Course Manager and he said his greens were 13 feet on the stimp-meter and members were still complaining about slow greens. These ridiculous comments should be stopped. Also talking to Dr Joe Vargas, Plant Pathologist at Michigan State University, I said, that by raising up the cutting height of greens we would solve various problems like diseases, heat-stress wear and tear etc. He said: "Don't tell me. I know you're right. Tell your committee and members."

We are cutting too close to what grass species on greens can withstand. But what is the problem? If everybody start to make these changes at his golf course, committees will see the improvements in turf quality. Of course a Course Manager will say that by doing so he will lose his job. If that is the case he should wonder whether he is employed by the right club.

Because of the above argument, I would like to ask, and I seriously hope that are willing to, organisations which have influence on this matter, to help Course Managers in this never ending story of fast, faster, fastest greens. I am hereby thinking of organisations like the Royal and Ancient, the PGA., the STRI, BIGGA, USGA, Golf Monthly and people like agronomists, architects, and the top media commentators. I would like them to stand up and tell the world that the direction we are going in is the wrong one. We should give grass species a chance to survive, and with the parties mentioned above standing behind this matter, life for the Course Managers would be made a little bit easier.

As long as we have greens of smooth trueness and green speed adapted to the characteristics of the

available grass species of the green, it is all right. And a good professional golfer can adapt his game to the quality of the available green.

In my opinion raising up the cutting height enough to keep the required grass species alive is the way forward and not what we have been doing all these years.

**Arne van Amerongen
Lauterbach
Germany**

Caution over cures

Through your magazine I am interested to find out how many Golf Course/Turf Managers, Green Chairman and Secretaries consider, like myself, that information about a large number of products leads us into tunnel thinking, especially when it comes to the understanding of grass and soil growing mediums, its requirements, tolerances, maintenance regimes etc.

More and more we see wonderful cures in bottles and bags which the turf manager is expected to buy as the latest developments. These cures quite often lead to another purchase to counteract the reaction of the first and so on.

Are we moving away from good cultural turf management? Do we as an industry agree what good cultural turf management is? Are sports clubs, golf clubs, realistic and consistent in their expectations of the turf they play on? Are these expectations leading the turf manager to look for the quick cure in the bottle?

These are a few of the questions that I feel need answering to enable those of us involved in turf care to produce the results that satisfy both the sportsman's need and the turf manager's needs.

This is too deep a subject to discuss in one letter so perhaps anybody with views on the subject would contact me to ascertain whether an open discussion would be justified at a venue.

**Steven Pell
Course Manager
Lansdown GC**

First class event

I would like to thank BIGGA for the wonderful job of putting a first class class conference together. As it was my first time there, and I hope it won't be my last, and I had such a great time, I will certainly recommend it to other greenkeepers in the North Section.

I have been in greenkeeping now for 31 years and I can honestly say it was

the best conference I have ever been to and the most friendly people I have ever met.

**Hugh McLatchie
Head Greenkeeper
Peterhead GC**

Excellent value

Through the pages of *Greenkeeper International* may we thank the BIGGA delegation who attended the GCSAA Conference and Show in Orlando for their company and friendship throughout our visit.

We felt the organisation, hotels and plane seats from Gatwick to Orlando were excellent value.

Hope it is not too long 'till we all meet again.

**Craig and Mhairi Stewart
Wittelsbacher GC
Rohrehfeld-Neuburg
Germany**

A great week

I write to you to convey my thanks through your magazine to the North Section (Scottish Region) on my receiving the Patron's Award for the Section.

This enabled me to attend BTME '96 which I thoroughly enjoyed, also giving me the chance to meet many more friends from the greenkeeping profession.

I must also give a vote of thanks to Elliott Small for arranging another great but strip for everybody from Scotland.

I am surer I can say on behalf of everybody it was a great week.

Thank you once again.

**Gordon McKie
Deputy Head Greenkeeper
Eden Course
St Andrews**

Fair deals ignored

I am writing in frustration at the disregard that golf club committee's seem to show towards the BIGGA wage scale. In the four and a half years that I have been in greenkeeping, it has been laughed at, screwed up and usually totally ignored.

Isn't it about time that somebody stood up for the greenkeeper and made the wage scale a compulsory minimum, as it is in agriculture, on which the BIGGA rate is based? I really think that the BIGGA Board of Management should start to think about the ordinary greenkeeper, instead of concentrating on the top few greenkeepers who may be earning a decent wage. I also think that a craftsman's wage sys-

tem should be introduced to reward greenkeepers who take the time to learn new skills and who gain recognised qualifications, but until the golf clubs are told that they must pay for the time and skill put into the preparation of their golf courses, I'm sure they will just carry on paying derisory wages and in some cases letting people work in dangerous conditions under the health and safety laws. Maybe it's about time for less bowing and scraping to the golf clubs and a bit more effort being put into the welfare and earnings of the membership of their Association. After all it is the humble greenkeeper who makes up the majority of the membership.

Name and Address Supplied

Appreciated

I have been requested by my fellow students who attended the Massey Ferguson Tractor Appreciation Course at Oaklands College to convey our heartfelt thanks to all those concerned with the organisation of this course.

We all feel that the instruction given to us by Guy Stewart of Massey Ferguson was of the highest quality in explaining the nuts and bolts approach to tractors and other grass machinery.

We would also like to thank the Principle and Chris Bishop of Oaklands College for the hospitality shown to us during our stay.

We all hope that this type of course will be available again to greenkeepers who, like us, would find it a very rewarding experience.

**Mark Anderson
Head Greenkeeper
Newbury Racecourse Golf Club**

Generous gift

May I thank the Northern Section of BIGGA for its generous gift of £84 donated to Kasisi orphanage. The orphanage that my wife Marie and I help to support is situated in Zambia, approximately 30 kilometres east of Lusaka and at present there are 140 children there with ages ranging from one day old to teenagers.

Part of the orphanage houses 40 babies suffering either from the HIV virus or AIDS. These children do not live very long, but with the help of donations received from caring people and the love given to them by the Sisters running the orphanage it does allow them to die with dignity.

Once again many thanks to you all for your generosity.

**Bert and Marie Cross
Liverpool**