

The run-up to Christmas

This is the first of three months when we work a shorter 35 hour week, which compensates for the 45 hour weeks of April, May and June. This shorter week, and the Christmas break, means we are busy right up to Christmas week, trying to complete the majority of course improvements.

Over the Christmas period, through to the New Year, a working rota will be in operation, with all staff working some mornings and getting a well earned rest on the other days. All the basic preparation work of cutting or switching greens, changing holes, raking bunkers, moving tee blocks, divoting tees, emptying bins and re-routing traffic is planned on the rota, but if it's like last Christmas, with heavy frosts, less work will be possible.

Greens Maintenance

On the sand based greens, bi-weekly surface aeration is carried out with a sorrel rolet, and weekly cutting at 6m with a hand mower helps keep smooth sur-



A GREENKEEPER'S DIARY

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faces. With the greens not having been fed since August, the Winter feed on sand greens is the most important of the year and will see the greens through until Spring with good dense sward. This is applied at the start of December in the form of a slow release fertiliser 15-0-30 at 25gms/m². A contact fungicide will be applied mid month to protect against disease over the Christmas period.

Planning of Feeding Programme

Core samples were taken from the greens in November, when nutrient levels were low and were sent for testing from the results, a feeding programme will be planned for 1997.

Obtaining a balanced feeding programme on these hungry sand based greens is the key to suc-

cess. The feeding programme is based around slow release fertiliser which will not affect the pH too much. During 1997, feeding was carried out on a little and often basis with application rates as low as 12.3g/m² which is possible with quality mini granule fertilisers. This gave us a good even growth pattern, without any flushes, which also helped produce, a good consistent greens speed. This will be the policy for the next year, which will again see some liquid feeding during dry periods, and the use of liquid irons and some seaweed between feeds.

Routine Maintenance

Tees and approaches are slit tined and solid tined, also hand cut during good periods of weather. Weekly divoting of tees and divot buckets filled with rootzone material. Fairways and walkways are slit tined, again in suitable weather. Weekly divoting of fairways especially on the four water holes, as golfers are reluctant to retrieve their divots from the water (they use any excuse). Occasional mowing of fairways at 15m, mainly for presentation leading into the Christmas period.

Bunkers are kept clear of leaves and regularly raked with a final edging for the year in early December. Drop Zones and Gurs are kept clearly marked and water hazard posts checked once a week. As the Oak Trees finally drop their leaves, a final leaf collecting is carried out.

Staffing

My feelings on staff, echo Kerran Daly's views from last month's Greenkeeper's Diary, that staff are my biggest asset. They are well clothed for the Winter weather, and are treated, along with the rest of the company's staff, to a Christmas party. The annual staff appraisals are held the week before the Christmas break and the following years training needs discussed.

Machinery Planning

My mechanic and I plan the reno-



DECEMBER

BY JOHN WELLS,
COURSE MANAGER,
BROCKET HALL

vation and repair of machinery and order certain spare parts ready for January and February. All machinery passes through the workshop, where the well qualified mechanic, Philip Spencer inspects the machines, and with assistance of other staff members carries out the necessary work. This helps to teach staff more about the equipment and the care required in setting up and maintaining them.

Looking Forward to Harrogate

After receiving the Master Greenkeeper Certificate last year, Harrogate was a special week and I anticipate it will be similar this year, therefore my Deputy, John Moorehouse and I will be off to Harrogate at the National Conference/BTME show to learn more about the art of Greenkeeping, look at new products and look closely at the machinery on display.

Talking to other greenkeepers throughout the day and evening also helps in the learning experience, and meeting old friends is not to be missed. There may even be the chance of a snowball fight – weather permitting that is!

Finally, to all BIGGA members and staff, I wish a very Merry Christmas and an enjoyable year of work in 1997.

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