

Chris calls for support

The following appeared in the **Surrey Herald** and also the **PGA European Tour weekly mailout which goes to all media and golf associations around the world.**

Wentworth Course Superintendent Chris Kennedy has issued a heartfelt plea for Europe's beleaguered greenkeepers to be allowed "more tolerance and understanding".

Kennedy, one of the most respected figures in golf, was

speaking as his hard working team, led by Graham Matheson, made their final preparations on the eve of the Toyota World Match Play Championship.

Wentworth is the only club in Britain who stage two major international events in the same year, and Kennedy knows all too well the fierce media spotlight focused on the famous West Course.

"For us, a major tournament is like facing a very public examination paper and we have to sit it

twice a year," he explained. "I can understand that these days the players are competing for a vast amount of money and prestige and they want everything to be right for them to play. By the same token, however, they must realise that there is no one more upset than the greenkeeper if the course is not in perfect order.

"No-one needs to tell us if our greens aren't right - we live with it 24 hours a day and we eat drink and sleep the job."

Kennedy was reacting to criticisms of European courses that came to a head in the row over conditions for the Volvo German Open at Stuttgart and the One 2 One British Masters at Collingtree Park, in August

"My heart bled for the lads at Collingtree and it was certainly a case of 'there but for the grace of God go we'," he declared.

"Alistair Connall, my opposite number there, had to make a professional decision, and he was just unlucky that all the elements conspired against him. They had staged a successful Seniors event just three weeks before and they wanted to cut the greens down to get the right speed for a European Tour event.

"The minute you cut down to an eighth of an inch or less you are putting the grass plant under great stress, especially when the greens are pure sand based. They were then hit by extreme temperatures in the high 80s and low 90s and the grass just could not recover quickly enough. No one

wants these things to happen, but people have to understand that in this country especially we are at the mercy of the weather.

"Some of the players cite America as having much better and more standardised playing conditions. But they forget how big America is and how they can arrange their calendar to always play where the best conditions are. Even then, with all their sophisticated preparation, things can go wrong as we saw when last year's Ryder Cup was almost wrecked by rain at Rochester.

"The weather in Britain has been much more extreme in recent years. We hardly seem to have a gradual spring or autumn any more. This year we went straight out of a very tough cold winter into almost drought conditions and we had to use three times the normal amount of top dressing to make sure the putting surfaces were right for the Volvo PGA Championship at the end of May.

"At Loch Lomond a few weeks ago one player shot a 66 in the morning but then a fierce wind blew up the loch and the players who went out in the afternoon faced a terrible task. It was no one's fault. It just proved how much nature can affect our sport. In an ideal world we would always like to prepare our courses at the right time of the year and always in benign conditions, but we know real life is not like that."

● Re-printed with kind permission from John Whitbread of the Surrey Herald.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The winner of the recent **Jacobsen Flash Attach Challenge** is **Rob Weaver** who is pictured receiving his prizes from **Peter Bell**, General Manager, Jacobsen E-Z-GO UK.

The Flash Attach Challenge was held to highlight the new quick release, no tools system fitted to the GreensKing V, which allows a cutting unit to be changed in seconds. Rob Weaver who works for Brophy, one of the largest grounds maintenance contractors in the UK, managed a startling time of 15 seconds. He was rewarded with vouchers, a Jacobsen jacket and a commemorative 75 year anniversary baseball cap.



Peter Bell commented "I was very pleased to present Rob Weaver with his prizes and feel that this record breaking time highlights the ease of maintenance on the GreensKing V."

Ronan Rafferty has teamed up with Martin Gillett, an Associate of the British Institute of Golf Course Architects to form Rafferty Gillett a practice which will offer golf course design and architecture, project management and consultancy services as previously provided by Martin Gillett but with the opportunity to commission Ronan Rafferty as a design consultant.

Andy Toomey and John Cook, of Crondon Park, experienced Ryder Cup style pressure when they represented their club in the final stages of the *Mail on Sunday* Golf Club Classic in France.

The two had played excellent golf to help Crondon into the final four at the final played at Champ de Bataille in Normandy and although they lost in the semi final to Hill Valley they were part of the team which clinched third place against Llantrisant & Ponyclun.

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Unemployed	£20.00	N/A

It has been agreed that the Association will form a working party to review the subscription rates for 1998.

(mis)adventures of Gordon the Greenkeeper

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