

Something in the air they breathe

Miracle Professional GREENKEEPER OF THE YEAR

Mike Goodhind clinched the 1995 Miracle Professional Greenkeeper of the Year Award and joins his near neighbour Anthony Davies as a Champion.

“It must be something in the Cheshire air,” said 1995 Miracle Professional Greenkeeper of the Year Mike Goodhind by way of an explanation as to why there are now two Greenkeepers of the Year working within two miles of each other.

Mike, Course Manager at the Tytherington Club in Macclesfield, is in constant touch with Anthony Davies, the inaugural winner of the award who is Course Manager at the neighbouring Prestbury Golf Club.

“We talk on a weekly basis and I think it was Anthony who put my name forward for the award. I was also able to quiz him on the type of questions to expect in the final,” said Mike. Anthony, who won the title in 1990, kept up his tradition of always leaving a message of congratulations and good luck to all the finalists on the BIGGA Headquarters answer machine on the morning of the final.

Mike’s victory came against a high quality, and evenly matched set of finalists and he just edged Chris Brook of Chesfield Downs, Stevenage, into second place and Don Wilson of Dyrham Park, Barnet into third. Joint runners-up



Put it there: Mike Goodhind, left, receives the winning plaque from Miracle Professional’s Roger Mossop

were Ed McCabe of Brockenhurst Manor, Hampshire and James Devlin of Troon Golf Courses, Ayrshire

Mike’s victory in the award is all the more meritorious when it is considered that he triumphed in a year when we have had the worst drought since 1976 with sand greens and no automatic watering system.

“It’s a credit to my staff, particularly my assistant Mike Stewart, who handled the course visit at the regional stage while I was sunning myself in Minorca. They get a cheque for £500 to share from Miracle Professional and they will appreciate it. It was very much a team effort and they are adaptable and always come back if there is work to be done.

“I’m also delighted for my wife, Karen, who had to put up with me working all hours in the summer. For a two month spell I was in at five o’clock most mornings and back in again at nine in the evening to do another stint seven days a week.”

The Tytherington Club is in the new vein of country club courses, 18 holes with all the related leisure facilities. It is also the home of the Women Professional Golfers European Tour and played host to the Ladies’ English Open.

A year ago there was also a change of ownership which brought Mike into contact if John Millen, BIGGA’s 1994 Chairman, who was Director of Greenkeeping for the new owners, Club

Partners International.

“John has gone a long way to influencing my career,” explained Mike, before adding that it was a little difficult for them both when John first arrived.

“I had been there for 12 months when the club was sold and it was a real shock. John was brought in and he was also a Head Greenkeeper and neither of us knew what to expect. It was an awkward situation but in time we have both begun to appreciate the qualities in each other.

“He is now spending more time at the company’s other course in Lambourne but I generally see him one day a week and he’s very good at backing me up and making sure I have the resources to do the job,” said Mike (35).

It is within the last year that Mike has really seen his career take off.

“I’m very thankful to Club Partners for their investment in me over the last 12 months and in that time I’ve really seen the benefits of the way they work. I feel that personally I’ve developed quite considerably over that period and more than anything else it’s because I’ve been pushed.

“We go in for the Investors in People Award at the club and the key to that is the involvement with every employee and the role everyone plays within the organisation and we’ve tried to develop that within the greens staff.”

It is the management skills

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which Mike has developed and the high degree of record keeping which he feels went a long way to getting him the award.

"The management want accountability so they are making me learn new skills on the management side.

The club has a central administration department which comes up with a format for all the record keeping which is used throughout the club.

"We can account for every hour which is spent on the golf course. At first that's a little frightening - a bit like a time and motion study but it's not like that at all. There are a lot of benefits. For example this year I argued to get a new bunker raker but the club wasn't too keen. Through running the budget management we came up with a labour cost of 1114 hours of bunker raking by hand and that it accounted for 20% of our time. Once they heard that they realised the importance of it and we got our new bunker raker.

"Initially I felt that the time filling in forms would be better spent out on the course. I was a hands on person, 'let's get out there' lead by example type but I've come to appreciate the benefits of good management.

"We have a weekly staff meeting which is very open and if it's felt I'm not doing something right they tell me. That goes right through the club, everyone is on first name terms, even the Managing Director, and it's a lovely atmosphere to work in.

"We're all cogs in a wheel and there is no 'them and us' attitude which a lot of greenkeepers at big clubs suffer from."

If Mike's handicap had continued to fall he might have been rivalling Colin Montgomerie for the Golfer of the Year and not the Greenkeeper of the Year title.

"I started off at Macclesfield Golf Club but I was initially more concerned with trying to develop my golf game as it was my ambition to make it as a professional but it was not to be.

"I did get the opportunity to work on the course and I got more into the greenkeeping side and my golf fell away."

From Macclesfield Mike went



At the awards presentation, from left: Pat Murphy, Richard Minton, Chris Brook, Ed McCabe, James Devlin, Don Wilson, Mike Goodhind and Roger Mossop

as a trainee to Prestbury rising to First Assistant and worked under one of the old school of greenkeepers John Leonard. "From a practical side I couldn't have had a better tutor."

"I left there at 21 and went to Heaton Moors in Manchester as Head Greenkeeper. It was an ideal place to go because it was a step up for me and a place where I could learn from my mistakes."

In 1984 Mike went to Cavendish Golf Club in Buxton Derbyshire as Course Manager where he spent nine extremely enjoyable years.

"It was a very high golf course and the first winter I was there I didn't see a blade of grass from the first week in January to the last week in February."

That brought in the course's other use, that of ski centre.

"We had three ski tows on the course and had a run known as the Cresta Run which is world famous in that part of Derbyshire. It ran over three fairways and finished in a stream. I developed my skiing skills while at Cavendish and it was a super club to work for, extremely friendly.

"It was a real wrench to leave and I had to give it a great deal of thought. I'd built new sheds, new workshop and all the lads had uniforms. I'd built it all up and I could take pride in what we'd achieved. Everyone knew what they were doing and it almost took care of itself so really if you feel like that it's time for a new challenge."

The Tytherington Club was back in Macclesfield and Mike could see how the club was developing with the WPGET and professional Tour events.

"A major influence was the fact that it held major events and it was another step up the ladder."

The Ladies' English Open was

held on the course last year and it was another big step for Mike.

"It was a real eye opener with the television cameras there and the overall attention to detail. Fortunately I was given quite a bit of warning about what the Tour wanted and had quite a bit of input myself."

The club has an excellent internal training programme and Mike has already completed his D32 and D33.

"One thing which does appeal to me is the HNC course at Reaseheath College and if the club agrees I'd like to do it because it can be done on a distance learning basis..

"The way the industry is going nobody can lie still. The number of students taking the HND courses mean that all it needs is for them to get a bit of practical experience and I feel in ten year's time, probably less, they will be landing some pretty good jobs. You need the ability to think ahead and keep developing."

It is that sort of attitude which encouraged the judges Pat Murphy and Richard Minton who also visited the finalists courses, Roger Mossop and Neil Thomas to award him the prize.

"It is a prestigious award and I'm very proud for Karen and our four children Leah (7), Holly (6), Grace (3) and Callum (2)," said Mike, whose other claim to sporting fame is that he holds the record for the Cheshire Cricket League with the high score of 177 not out in a limited 40 overs game for Bollington.

"As for the future I've got work to do at Tytherington. It's still got a long way to go to fulfil its great potential and I want to be a part of that."

Roger Mossop, Business Manager for Miracle Professional, praised each of the five finalists and said that they were the closest matched in the history of the

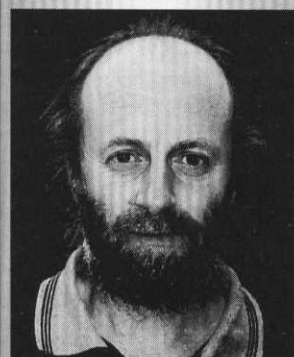
competition.

"Mike's course was excellent and his level of management and record keeping was second to none," said Roger as he made the presentation. "The staff facilities and the presentation of the staff pointed to an excellent team spirit while I was impressed by the fact that Mike seem to be well read on greenkeeping matters."

Roger also highlighted the plus points of each of the other finalists. Chris Brook's course was immaculate and he had the ability to take advice but ultimately make his own decision; Don Wilson's course was in excellent condition and he interviewed very well; Ed McCabe's sheds and record keeping were first class while James Devlin's greens were said to be the best of any seen in the competition, a feat achieved on a restricted budget.

The competition was given a further boost when it was agreed that Miracle Professional is to continue support of the competition in 1996.

MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION IS:



"To satisfy all 600 members of the club for just one day in the year"

- Dave Wood, Littlehampton GC