

# Letters

## Greenkeeper's despair at lack of sympathy by his golf club

I am writing to you in desperation as my career as a Head Greenkeeper and my whole life seems to have collapsed and my only crime is that I worked too hard.

I am a 34-year-old family man and started my career in greenkeeping on a course near home in April 1985. I really enjoyed my time there and progressed through the ranks to become Deputy Head Greenkeeper and also obtained college qualifications.

In April '94 I moved to a nine hole course in a neighbouring town as Head Greenkeeper but unfortunately this position turned out to be a lot less desirable prospect than it seemed at my initial interview and appointment. The whole club was a political battleground and I suffered three years of intense pressure on my career and had to work in a very manual fashion.

After a while I started having problems with my back which became more serious and crippling as time went on until, in January this year, after having MRT scans etc I was diagnosed as having degenerative Spondyloisthesis, a condition where the disc in the spine has worn away.

I informed the committee of my condition and that I now had to wear a lumber support while I waited for a spinal fusion operation. To my dismay they worked me even harder giving me more manual construction work etc until in April of this year I could not carry on any longer as it was literally crippling me. I am now off sick, awaiting my operation in agony.

Due to the nature of my contract my employers would only pay me four weeks' wages. I've therefore gone from a Head Greenkeeper salary to statutory sick pay of £64 per week which has devastated me and my family. It seems that I am being punished

for doing no wrong.

I have made various claims such as personal accident insurance etc., but have been rejected as they all say that I suffered progressive damage and can't pin down a specific incident. The worst may be to come as I am not 100% sure that after my operation in September I will be able to return to the manual type of work involved in greenkeeping.

I would be most grateful if anyone reading this letter could offer me advice on my current situation, or perhaps be able to redirect my greenkeeping knowledge into another career linked with the sports turf industry such as a technical sales representative, for example, as I am sure there must be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow in such a large industry.

**Name and address withheld.**  
■ Please direct any correspondence through BIGGA Headquarters.

## Tee markers: Rules don't make sense

I read with interest Mr Gordon Moir's letter in the June issue of *Greenkeeper International* on the recent amendment by CONGU to the positioning of permanent tee markers.

Before commenting specifically on this issue, I would make a general observation and that is that the reasons for the changes to the Standard Scratch Score and Handicapping Scheme 1983 have in my opinion been poorly communicated to clubs. Also there appears to have been very little if any consultation with interested bodies such as BIGGA and AGCS. As a result some of the changes have not been well received particularly the proposed change to tee areas.

However, the proposed amendment to the positioning of permanent tee markers from a minimum distance of two yards

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## AUGUST QUESTIONS

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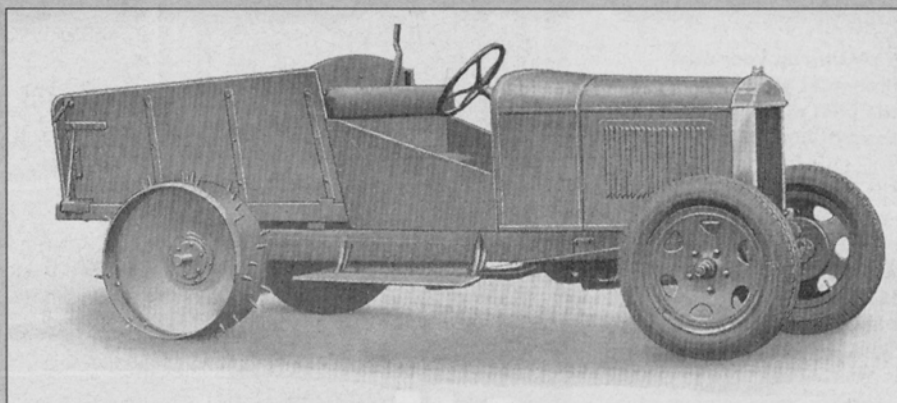
## For old times' sake

I wonder if any readers can help me?

For 40 years I was in turn draughtsman, designer, works manager, managing director, chairman and owner of H Pattisson & Co. Ltd, before we sold the family firm four years ago.

In the '30s, '40s and '50s we made hundreds of the Pattisson Golf Course Tractors at Stanmore Hill Works – big machines with wide steel spiked rear wheels (or trak grip pneumatic tyres) for pulling the gang mowers of the time for fairway cutting, carting and other jobs on the course and sports grounds, powered by Ford 24 HP engines.

Does anyone know the whereabouts of one that I could buy for old times sake as a memento of my past? I am sure that there is a Club somewhere with one at the back of



the shed kept in reserve or even working still.

The enclosed photo will be recognised by any of the old school of greenkeepers although sadly most of them will have retired by now, like me!

I would like to give it pride of place on my small estate here working or not.

**Ken Hemingway**  
**Coles**  
**Higher Hulham Rd**  
**Exmouth, Devon EX8 5DZ**

“in front of the rear of the tee” to four yards, is a logical one. Paragraph 11, on page 56 of the Scheme booklet explains the reason for the change and is in order that “a player may tee his ball and play his stroke from within the area permitted by the Rules of Golf...”

In Section II Definitions of the Rules of Golf the teeing ground is defined as a rectangular area two club-lengths in depth. Since the average driver is some 45” long and making a similar allowance for a golfer's swing, a four yard teeing area is just about adequate.

Clearly if the current requirement for a two yard teeing area is left unamended, a number of clubs, including my own, could never strictly set up their course to play to its full length and conform to the Rules of Golf definition of teeing ground.

As far as the ramifications of the proposed change are concerned, individual courses are going to have their own particular problems as Gordon Moir has highlighted and not least the potential cost of building new tees and extending existing ones, new tee markers, reprinted scorecards, etc.

This, of course, raises another issue.

It would appear that CONGU has assumed that clubs would automatically foot the bill which for most means the individual member of those clubs. Perhaps the proposed change would have

been more acceptable had CONGU, through the individual National Golf Unions, arranged to put in place a fund to at least defray part of that cost to individual clubs.

However, cost apart, it does seem to me somewhat nonsensical to allow a situation to persist where the Rules of Golf are at odds with those on course measurement.

**Richard H Danzey**  
**Secretary Manager,**  
**Chigwell Golf Club**

## Opposition is mounting

I would like to add my name to the hopefully growing list of opposition to the proposal found on page 56, Appendix K, decision 11, regarding teeing areas. Found in the amended edition (1997) of the Standard Scratch Score and Handicapping booklet, specifically to position the distance points four yards in front of the rear of the tee instead of the tee instead of the current two.

In making us aware of the practical implications of such a proposal in the June issue Gordon Moir, Head Greenkeeper of the Eden Course, St Andrews, may have saved many greenkeepers an awful lot of unnecessary work and golf clubs' money.

**Bernard Findlay**  
**Course Manager**  
**Portstewart GC**  
**Co Londonderry**

## NVQs have to be made to work

I feel compelled to write in response to the article printed in the April issue of *Greenkeeper International* on the London Golf Club and, in particular, the comments made by Steve Jones regarding NVQs and their delivery at Colleges such as Plumpton.

NVQs do not have a grading system for passing and I, like Steve, feel that this is a major flaw in the process. How does a potential employer differentiate between applicants for a job vacancy at the outset if all applicants have “passed” their NVQ? Only an in-depth job interview and college reference will help with the selection process.

While some might hanker for the old times, NVQs are here to stay and they have to be improved over time and made to work. Standards are not low everywhere and here I take exception to Steve's comments. There are problems with standardising standards, but this is down to individual college assessors in the workplace and, in particular, the internal and external verifiers.

No standards are provided with NVQ literature or, at present, with the GTC Training Manual, so it is up to individuals to interpret the performance criteria that they are assessing.

If standards of maintenance vary from golf course to golf

course then it is not surprising that standards of student NVQ attainment vary from course to course and college to college – enter the verifier! The more assessors there are the more difficult it is for the verifier to monitor the standards that have not been specified anywhere! This surely should have been the starting place for all practical assessments. Standards must be task specific and every student must reach the standard. We have them stated at Plumpton and those working the system are happy to work with them. I would anticipate that this is the case in most other colleges and indeed with assessors in the workplace – or might it be that they are testing purely subjectively on what they know is a professional job? Unfortunately professionalism alone is not an acceptable, measurable, justifiable yardstick for determining an NVQ pass.

I share Steve Jones' comment that a London Club apprenticeship may well not be equitable with an NVQ in years to come – but NVQs are supposed to be work based and there must be more liaison between clubs and colleges who should essentially be considered as the major provider of underpinning knowledge if the whole ethos of NVQs is to have a standing in the industry by the year 2000, if not before

**David Blackmuir**  
**Head of Horticulture**  
**Plumpton College**