

Alick moves to lead team at Hotchkin

Alick Mackay has been appointed Head Greenkeeper on the Hotchkin Course at The National Golf Centre at Woodhall Spa. He arrives in Lincolnshire from Machrihanish Golf Club having previously worked at Skibo Castle, Boat of Garten, Worthing and Royal Dornoch.

He will head at team of seven on the Hotchkin Course with another seven, under Head Greenkeeper, David Horsey, working on the new Bracken course.

"We are all excited by the potential of The National Golf Centre with one course already world renowned and the other, due to open next year, that will not be long in making its mark on the British golf scene," said Course Manager, Peter Wisbey.

"We are all pleased that such a well respected greenkeeper has joined our team," he added.

Don't be snookered by your bunkers

"We have had problems with our bunkers in the past," says David Gower, Course Manager at the Oxfordshire Golf Club, "But the problems are all behind us. The Programme which we are well on the way to completing will ensure that there are no further problems."

David Gower has only been in charge of this prestigious course since June 1 this year, having been the deputy for the previous five years. He puts the bunker problem; which elicited some unfavourable comments from a certain senior member of the European Tour during the Benson & Hedges Trophy, which has been played in May at the Oxfordshire for the past three years, down to the fact that the sub soil is a soft clay. We simply could not get a firm base and the sand we were using did not hold enough moisture. It quickly became mixed with the sub soil and we had the double problem of the ball plug-

ging and a very insecure foothold."

A programme was started to empty the problem bunkers and provide a firm base by putting down a two to four inch layer of broken stone and laying upturned turf on top of the stone before refilling with sand. "I wanted a sand which would hold some moisture and would be firm underfoot and in which the ball would not plug. The grain structure of a good bunker sand must be sharp and it must contain a good proportion of medium size grains. I was given a sample of HMC's ProSport Bunker Sand from the Leighton Buzzard quarry. We did a trial on a range bunker to compare it with what we were using and it was just what I had been looking for. It performed better than anything I had seen previously and that it was also very similar in colour."

There are 137 bunkers on the Oxfordshire course, some of them very big indeed. One is called

'Hell's Half Acre' and another is over 11/2 acres in area and has seven grass islands. "Bunkers should be designed to penalise the player not the greenkeeper." Says David: "None of ours have steep walls and that helps to make them maintainable. Having the right sand is very important. If it doesn't hold some moisture, irrigating can be a major problem."

The Oxfordshire will host the Benson & Hedges in May 1998 and the year after. "Hopefully, there will be no complaints about the course, especially the bunkers," says David Gower, "We have already renovated over half of the bunkers, and that includes all those which had to be due out to put in a firm base. There are about 45 still to be sorted out and they will be done over the winter. It will take about another 300 tonnes of ProSport bunker sand from Leighton Buzzard and that should complete the programme."

High on a hill

Midland Regional Administrator, Peter Larter's, walking trip in Austria nearly turned into a Busman's Holiday when he found himself on a golf course.

I've just had a holiday with friends at Ischgl in the Austrian Alps and, after three hard days mountain walking, we decided to have an easy day in the car. We had just survived some 25 hairpin bends descending from the Silvretta Lake, close to the Swiss border, when to our surprise just around the last bend we came upon Hochmontafon Golf Club on the outskirts of the small town of Partenen.

We just had to stop because the location was quite spectacular. We were given a warm welcome by the club management, and learned that the club was owned by four local men and was just coming to the end of its second season. The 9 hole fairly short (3 par fours and 6 par threes) but tricky course is at 1115 metres, and is surrounded by mountains reaching 2400 metres above sea level. The land for the course, became available when the previous owner, a farmer, passed away leaving the land intestate. The local mayor was sympathetic to the idea of a golf course and the project was launched.

We were shown around the course

by a proud Herbert Berger, one of the co-owners, and experienced some breathtaking outlooks when standing on the tees. Major hazards, apart from some outstanding rock formations, are cows who roam freely. Although the greens were small they were in very good condition, considering they spend five months under deep snow each year; the course is part of a downhill ski piste during the Winter! The land was natural terrain for a golf course and there were many interesting and challenging uphill, sidehill and downhill lies, the course would be a tough challenge to all standards of golfer, particularly challenging on the lungs! There are 120 members of the Golf Club, and the course is open to all who want to play.

The fairways are natural grass from when the area was farmland but the greens were laid with turf and withstand some very hard conditions. The tees, however, are constructed with astroturf, but future grass tees are planned. The day we visited it rained for the first time in six weeks, but they have plenty of water which is applied to the greens manually.

Our only regret was that we didn't have time to play, but a warm welcome and a schnapps would be waiting in the friendly clubhouse for any golfer who just happens to be passing!



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