



"The truth is now we make it very clear that we are removing the thatch. We never turn off the water – we may use judicious amounts of water but we do not turn it off and we rarely cut below 3.5 mil."

John reinforces that view by saying the Tour is very much of the opinion that they don't want a greenkeeper to kill his course.

"Our main priority is to provide a fair golfing test. We want the greens smooth and if that means 9.5 on the stimpmeter instead of 10 we'd say to the players 'That's it guys. That's the best we could get' We will get the maximum speed provided it doesn't affect the smoothness of the putting surface," explained John.

What is achieved is often a revelation to the Course Manager himself.

"I'd say that at 60% of events, at some stage during the week, they come along and say this is fantastic how can we keep it like this," said Richard. "They could, the greens would have to come up a bit but from tee to green it could be. 'Most people could do what we do if they used the correct technique and managed their man power to the best of their ability.'"

From his position John is well placed to comment on greenkeeping and greenkeepers.

"I get very frustrated when I see the Chairman of Green at private member clubs, without any formal training in soil, grass or irrigation, trying to tell someone who has spent his life learning the job what to do. Somewhere along the line that is not right," said John. "I like to think that where we go we try to raise the profile of that greenkeeper," he added.

While the quality of greenkeeping has improved over the last few years so has the interest level and knowledge of the players.

"The average member plays something like 25 tournaments on Tour but taking in the other courses he plays and other events in the rest of the world he plays a great many courses.

"He wants to learn why he putts better on certain greens. Is it the speed, the smoothness, the climatic conditions or the grass plant?" said John.

Richard added, "I worked for a year on the Tour and no-one knew who I was. Now the players just love sitting down and talking with me in the evenings. A lot of players are getting involved in the business and I know Rodger Davis, for example, has his own turf nursery."

The downside is that detrimental comments occasionally appear from disgruntled players in the press.

"I do feel that the players are put on pedestals nowadays. Some generally believe that it must be the golf course's fault if they miss a putt and unfortunately they say it to the press and get headlines for it," commented John.

What advice would the Tour give to a BIGGA member who learns that his course is to host a European Tour event next year?

"I'd say to the greenkeeper enjoy it and I know that he will enjoy it. He'll meet a whole lot of new people and everyone is extremely friendly," said Richard, who added that it was normal practice to invite a greenkeeper to another event before his own so he can learn how things operated.

"He'll also come out of the event with an awful lot more than he went in whether that be more machinery or a better watering system. Personally they also benefit. There is a Spanish greenkeeper who has written a book on how to prepare a course for a tournament and now works for the King in his botanical garden as a sideline," revealed Richard.

The Tour also holds a Greenkeeping Conference in Penina, Portugal every other year.

"It is a way of getting all our tournament greenkeepers and some club officials together and getting them to communicate in a social atmosphere.

"There is a universal language of greenkeeping and this is tremendous because as well as the formal lectures much of the information is exchanged in the bar afterwards," said Richard.

"It is the brotherhood thing as they are all in the same boat – in charge of tournament venues," he added.

CD REVIEW

Into the computer age

The management of turfgrass diseases has entered the computer age with the arrival, on the market, of a Compact Disk ROM which can help you to identify diseases, determine causes, discover cures and introduce management techniques to prevent further attacks. Details of the package are:

CD ROM

Turfgrass Diseases, Diagnosis and Management

by Gail L Shumann and James D McDonald

Published by the American Phytopathological Society

Cost \$310 (single user), \$410 local network

Hardware Required (PC)

486 processor or higher

8Mb RAM minimum

VGA colour monitor

Double speed CD ROM Drive

Mouse

with Windows 3.1 or Windows 95

Hardware Required (Mac)

68030/25 Mhz processor or faster

8Mb RAM minimum

VGA colour monitor

Double speed CD ROM Drive

Mouse

with system 7.0.1 or higher

The hardest part of using this programme is the meaning of *Phytopathological** but once I had looked that up in the dictionary, the rest was simple. The CD looks like any other and has a title sheet which gives instructions on how to install it. I used a Macintosh Powerbook running system 7.5.0 but PC operation is also straightforward. Once the disk was in, I double clicked on Main menu and I was presented with the Introductory page. This page gives access to all parts of the package, simply by clicking buttons and lets you select a number of options. Clicking on the Non Infectious diseases button gives you access to two other buttons, Biotic Agents ie Algae, Black Layer, Insects and Moss and Non Biotic Agents. Clicking on Non Biotic Agents gives access to three more buttons, Chemical, Mechanical and Physical. Clicking on the chemical button lets you select more options ie Pesticides, Animal urine/salts, Fertilisers etc. Each selection gives you access to the identification, control and prevention of each type of agent. The final button in the Main Menu list is Other Diseases and Disorders. This button gives access to Endophytic Fungi, Mycorrhizae, Primitive Organisms, Bacterial Diseases, Nematodes and Viral Diseases. Further buttons give access to identification aids, disease development information and references for each disease/disorder.

The second part of the main menu is titled Short Cuts. This section is sub-divided into: Diagnostic Guide to diseases, Diseases of Specific Grasses, including Annual Bluegrass, Bentgrass, Fine Fescue, Ryegrass etc and a Turf Grass Identification Guide. For each grass selected, either from the Specific Grasses Menu or through the Turfgrass Identification Menu, you can view a calendar, which shows when various diseases may be present, you can then take a closer look at the various diseases, see how the diseases develop and look at suggested management techniques.

Despite some American spellings and a few American terms eg Annual Bluegrass (Meadowgrass), this is a very useful guide for anyone wanting to learn about diseases or needs to identify a particular disease. It contains some very clear pictures (most of which may be enlarged) and allows fast and easy access to a wide range of information. The disk would be a very useful asset for colleges and for any golf course manager with access to a computer which has a CD ROM drive.

* *Phytopathology* – the study of plant diseases

■ The CD is available from APS Press Europe Branch Office, Broekstraat 47, B-3001, Heverlee, Belgium Tel: 32 16204035 Fax: 32 16202535. E-mail apspress@pophost.eunet.be

■ Ken Richardson at BIGGA HQ, Tel: 01347 838581, can be contacted for further information on the CD.

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