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Let the only news be good news

As I write the television is on in the background and Italy are playing Cameroon. Yes, there's no getting away from it, the World Cup features in the Editor's Column.

The reason I've picked this as my topic for the month is not the quality of the play, excellent though it has been - particularly from my countrymen who despite this will no doubt have long since returned to these shores - but the quality of the playing surfaces.

Although it is the end of football season in France, and you might expect the pitches to look a little tired, they have been universally excellent.

But this is the one skill on display during the greatest show on earth which is taken for granted. There are no pundit's plaudits for, or special profiles on, the people who ensure that the best players in the world have the stage to perform their tricks.

How different it would be had the pitches not been up to standard. Managers, players, television experts and Prime Ministers would no doubt have lined up to give the benefit of their agronomic expertise. The poor groundsmen would have been lambasted.

It is exactly the same for the Course Managers at the top golf events. Heaven forbid if a big name player finds a bad lie or misses a putt. The papers would be full of it and a greenkeeper's professional reputation casually smeared.

For groundsmen and greenkeepers you can fully understand it when they say, "No news is good news".

In many ways you can equate the job of groundsman and greenkeeper with that of the goalkeeper. The last line of defence can produce miracles, mopping up the mistakes of others, and keeping a clean sheet but as soon as he makes one mistake and the ball ends up in the net all the good that has gone before is forgotten and he's the villain.

You don't know it before you start but one of the prerequisites of the job of greenkeeper, groundsman or goalkeeper is to have no desire to be credited for all the great work you might do, and a thick skin to cope with the flak when it occasionally goes wrong.

One man hoping not to be in the news this month is Chris Whittle, who becomes the first man to prepare two different Open venues. He says in The Open preview in this magazine that he hopes all the headlines are made by the golf rather than the golf course.

Surely, however, he and his team, deserve credit for the outstanding job they have done at Birkdale, and a comforting silence is the very least they should expect for the miracles they have routinely carried out.

Let's all hope for the sake of the World Cup groundsmen, and Chris Whittle and his team at Royal Birkdale, that there is a slight change and "The Only News is Good News".

They should be recognised for the great work they do.

Editor:
Scott MacCallum

Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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Photography by Brian Morgan, 0141 221 6296



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