

An argument? Define your terms

I always read your publication from cover to cover and it is with great interest that I read the letters, sometimes with great frustration. Often when reading or listening to other peoples views and opinions I am reminded of my high school physics teacher who quoted a famous philosopher who once said, "Define your terms, then we will argue." All too often we are guilty of speaking in gross and often misleading generalities. We have come to accept this with our politicians, but we should not accept it within our industry if we are hoping to gain the respect of our peers, our employers and the public at large.

How often do we hear people talk about "soil greens", "sand greens", "U.S.G.A. type greens" or the one that as an American drives me mad "American type greens"! These generalisations conjure up all sorts of thoughts and images, but they mean absolutely nothing!

I have been maintaining golf courses for the past 32 years - 18 years in America and 14 years in the U.K. and I know that greenkeeping is an art. But as an agronomist, I know that science is there to "define

our terms". The art lies in how best to apply scientifically proven principles to your specific and unique problems.

The USGA Greens Section has been providing our industry with scientific data from its research for over 75 years. Of all their research, their recommendation for a method of putting green construction - the "U.S.G.A. Green" - is arguably their single most important contribution to our industry worldwide and definitely its most talked or "argued" about. If I may be so bold as to borrow a phrase from Jim Arthur's last letter where he talks of advising the use of fensoil and fenpeat "with invariably excellent results, provided all other management was equally correct". Excellent results can be achieved with most things including USGA greens "provided all other management is equally correct".

Mr Fletcher failed to "define his terms" in his letter in the October issue. He said that "a high percentage of the expensive fertilisers will find its way very quickly into the drains from where it goes into the stream or pond or even nearby lake. Times this by 18 or even more

greens and I think you must agree the amount of fertiliser finding its way into our waterways is frightening". He is of course referring to that well "defined term" - American type green!

Well, Mr. Fletcher, what you say is frightening - frightening in its bias, its ignorance and in its potential damage to our industry if believed by the wrong people. I am not advocating that everyone rush out and rebuild their greens according to the USGA recommendations - build what you like - I am just asking for reasoned "argument" based on fact.

The art of greenkeeping is alive and well and practised better in the UK than anywhere else in the world and you have taught me a great deal in the last 14 years. But art and science must work in harmony. Let us stop this narrow minded "gossip" and work together toward the common good of our great industry.

Debate and 'argument' can be healthy and good for any organisation or industry, but let us first remember to "define our terms".

Joseph E. Paulin
 Club Secretary, London GC

Fensoil update, Fensoil update, Fensoil update

I write with reference to the recent dialogue within your magazine in relation to the relative use of fensoil.

While many of the issues raised are legitimate, we believe there are several factual inaccuracies contained within the comments made by the correspondent Mr Arthur, a former consultant to Whitbread, which we would wish to address.

It is firstly important to recognise that the Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel & Country Club has successfully staged six European Tour events in its six years of life, four English Opens and two British Masters. As a consequence of this, its course management has been agreed jointly each year by Whitbread, the PGA European Tour and our own agronomist.

Secondly, in response to the statement by the correspondent that gross overwatering was practised, we

write our greens independently of our green surrounds and therefore green watering does not impact on greenside bunkers.

Thirdly, it is quite untrue to claim that "management banned routine aeration" at any time. In fact hollow coring has taken place on at least four occasions during the summer months, supplemented by intensive slitting at all other times.

Finally, our current top dressing policy is based on decisions taken between ourselves and our own accredited agronomist.

In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to update your readers about recent and current developments at the Marriott Forest of Arden. Over the last 12 months Whitbread has continued to invest significantly in our golf courses, improve drainage with a considerable new system, installing a quality

irrigation system and rebuilding and relocating three new greens with a fourth now being planned for this winter. All of this action has taken place in six years after the original rebuild back in 1992.

This course of action has been taken because we are running a commercial concern and have over the last six years, succeeded in satisfying the expectations of our members, visitors and guests and Europe's premier professional golfers.

In order to succeed in the modern golfing world, the modern manager and business has to move with the times, something all of our best agronomists surely also practice.

Raymond Hunt
 Golf Estates Manager
 Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel
 and Country Club

Before I comment on three letters published recently in Greenkeeper International, I must draw your attention to the fact that I was not given a chance to see the article entitled "Hey Big Spender" prior to its publication - and by the way you misspelt my name.

Had I been given the opportunity to read the article prior to publication I would have only made minor changes. These minor changes would have made

clear the points which Messrs Arthur, Banks and Steel do not seem to acknowledge.

Bunkers which do not drain, usually mean that no drainage is installed or it is blocked. In the case of the Forest of Arden, it was the former. Our strategy for top-dressing has proved successful, the delivery of successful tournament putting surfaces and an overall improvement in the condition of our greens across the

Whitbread estate, has been seen as a result of our policies. Our decisions are all based on the advice of our agronomist, and the expertise and experience of our ten golf Course Managers, who rate among the best in the UK.

It is interesting to read that Mr Arthur feels that my opinion is dogmatic, as opposed to encouraging open discussion on a subject which any client or customer is entitled to, before deciding how to

Ghostly problem at Nuneaton

I wish to write regarding a disorder that appears to be affecting Poa Annua greens during this very damp and humid season.

The only way to describe this disorder is to say that it looks like Ghost Grass. White or yellow etiolated shoots that do not seem to contain any chlorophyll. It grows a centimetre in one night and the condition is worst after a heavy downpour.

I actually experienced this condition seven years ago in Switzerland and an agronomist thought that it might be a Magnesium deficiency.

On a recent trip to Switzerland I talked to a plant pathologist about this disorder and he asked me if I had been applying Potash to my greens.

I replied that I had, as I took over the greens at Nuneaton only 12 months ago and found them to be lacking nutrients.

He explained that there is a four to one ratio between Potash and Magnesium.

Outside of this ratio and the Magnesium could be blocked so the plant cannot take this up although there may be sufficient reserves in the soil.

Thinking this could be a problem I had some soil tests done only to discover that I was low on Potash and that Magnesium levels were correct.

That blew my theory out of the window.

I have talked with an agronomist from the STRI about this disorder and unfortunately they cannot throw any light on it at the moment.

Through talking with other Course Managers some thought it was an excessive take up of nutrients while others who spoon feed their greens were experiencing the same Ghost Grass disorder.

I would very much like to hear from anybody who has come across this disorder and if they have found a solution to it.

Ian Tomlinson
 Course Manager, Nuneaton GC

plan, design, construct and maintain their golf course.

As a developer of golf courses, I am entitled to court the views of as many designer, constructors, greenkeepers and agronomists as I chose. I expect a free choice based upon, impartial, practical and contemporary best practices within the industry.

Steve Clement, Golf Development
 Manager, Whitbread Hotel Company