



Dr Mike Canaway Chief Executive of the STRI, reports on the World Scientific Congress which took place at St Andrews just after The Open

Talking golf

Beyond the R&A Clubhouse young children play on the putting green enjoying their first golfing experience.

Further away, just past the superb new practice facilities, somewhat older children and keen parents play the 9-hole, par 60, Balgove course while the more serious play the Old, New, Eden, Jubilee or Strathtyrum courses. Together with the ancient University buildings, the sea and sand all make a visit to St. Andrews an uplifting experience for all interested in golf and its history. Where better a venue therefore for the World Scientific Congress of Golf held earlier this summer which attracted approaching 300 delegates from all over the world. Started tentatively by the University of St Andrews in 1990, the Congress has now established itself as a regular four-yearly gathering of individuals with widely disparate interests but all concerned with the science of golf, 1998 being the third Congress. The creation of the World Scientific Congress of Golf Trust, with support from the R & A and USGA, has given core funding to continue the Congress on a financially secure basis.

The Congress comprised three main themes: The Golfer, Golf Equipment and The Golf Course. With a keynote speaker for each main theme, then dividing into parallel sessions so that around 100 speakers could all be allocated time for their presentations. Papers concerning The Golfer covered a wide range of subjects from the psychol-

ogy of putting, putting performance, issues concerned with women's golf, age and performance of golfers, fitness and conditioning, injuries, coaching, swing mechanics and finally a seminar entitled "The older I get, the better I was"! The sessions on equipment started with papers on the effects of golf ball construction on putting, ground reaction forces in golf shoes using regular and alternative spikes and a number of papers on golf ball spin and flight. However, the highlight of the equipment section was the keynote address by Walley Uihlein who is Chief Executive Officer of the Acushnet Company, the parent company of Titleist, Foot-Joy World-wide and Cobra Golf. This is a company, with a billion dollar turnover, and his presentation company was flown over from America to manage the slides! His subject was "Tradition and Technology - Preserving the Balance". This comprised a very interesting historical overview of the development of clubs and balls in relation to course design taking us through to modern oversized heads and graphite shafts etc. He was able to demonstrate that although the longest hitters are getting longer, part of this was due to increasing size and strength of professional golfers together with increased training and conditioning. He was also able to show that analysis of the figures from the PGA Tour over the last 20 years, had shown that although players may be hitting further and more accurately onto fairways the figures for greens in regulation had

changed little. Similarly average round scores on a USPGA Tour over the last 20 years had also barely changed. The cynic might suggest that, as the ball and equipment manufacturer, there might be some vested interest in preserving the status quo and it also does not take into account the ability to set up courses in a more difficult way which offsets the advantage gained by longer hitters. However, there is much truth in Lee Trevino's observation which Walley Uihlein concluded with where he said "Believe me when I tell you it is not the bow, it is not the arrow. It is the Indian." For those of us who have, for once, hit a nice long tee shot only to see it sneak into the rough we know exactly what he means.

There were three sessions on golf course agronomy, two of which I chaired and the third by Dr James Beard together with a session on golf course design and provision chaired by Howard Swan. STRI's Dr Amanda Cook and Dr Stephen Baker presented papers on results of two R & A funded projects at STRI - Organic Amendments for Sand-Dominated Golf Green Rootzones and The Effects of Soil Acidification and Pesticide Application to Control Earthworm Casting on Golf Courses. Some of our American colleagues presented papers on annual meadow grass control using growth regulators, effect of soft spikes, use of water release curves for evaluating golf green construction materials, long-term effects of different aeration methods and a study on American

GREEN-RELEAF™ APOLOGY

Green-Releaf wishes to apologise unreservedly to the STRI for the advert which appeared on page 67 of last month's Greenkeeper International which mistakenly claimed the Green-Releaf products were STRI approved in addition to being tested.

This is not the case and Green-Releaf now accepts that the STRI does not approve specific products and apologises for making this erroneous claim.



golfers passion for green. David Stubbs, of the European Golf Association Ecology Unit, chaired a workshop on the golfing environment at which he, Jonathan Smith (Scotland's Golf Course Wildlife Adviser) and Alan Gange (Royal Holloway, University of London) put forward various aspects of the environmental management of golf courses for general debate.

One of the highlights of the golf course session was the keynote address by American Golf Course Architect Michael Hurdzan. He introduced a subject with a short overview of golf course architecture to date stating that the original game of golf was affordable, accessible and sustainable. He showed how, that as golf developed with the advent of the motor car, it became less accessible and started to depend on car access and during what he described as the "Robert Trent Jones era" from about 1940 to 1980, golf courses became viewed as landscapes and architects lost the whole plot. Where there was enough money and water it was possible to produce golf courses anywhere and the original concepts were lost. Within the last 20 years we had experienced what he described as the "celebrity designer era" with money no object and the main purpose was to gain worldwide recognition for a particular course. He again felt that architects or celebrities had lost the plot. This type of course created the impression that golf provided a playground for the idle rich, and created a bad impression to the environ-

mentalists leading, in some parts of the world, to pickets outside golf courses and environmental opposition. His main message was that the very science that allowed us to develop courses anywhere will allow us to get back to affordable accessible and sustainable golf courses once more. Despite this central message, which much of the audience found sympathy with, his talk also included what might be described as slightly unusual ideas for example having completed the construction of a golf course with six push up greens, six pure sand greens and six USGA construction greens. This might be an interesting experiment but I feel sorry for the poor superintendent who has to maintain them all. It will be interesting to see if they reconstruct them or rather when they reconstruct some of them!

As well as the scientific programme there was a well organised programme of social activities in the evenings including golf for those who wished to participate and some golf clinics conducted by a local professional.

Overall, I felt that the Congress was a successful event in bringing together people from different parts of the golf industry and promoting communications between them. If only for this aspect the R & A and the USGA should be commended for their continuing support of the Congress together with all the hard work put in by Congress Director Martin Farrally, the organising committee and their helpers and volunteers.

Kawasaki

POWER PRODUCTS



ENGINEERED FOR PROFESSIONALS

Now joining the established range of Kawasaki Brushcutters are Hedge Trimmers, Water Pumps and a Leaf Blower. All powered by world-class Kawasaki engines. Engineered to deliver the performance and reliability true professionals demand.

Kawasaki POWER PRODUCTS

Call free for a brochure
0800 500245

Ad Ref 544