

Address your letters to the Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Aine, York YO61 1UF. You can also fax them to 01347 833801, or e-mail them to reception@bigga.co.uk

## Expanding horizons through the Dreer award

My name is Mieke Darnaske, a Senior Plant Science Major at Cornell University.

My field of interest is Golf Course Management. Currently, I am in the process of applying for the Dreer Scholarship for students in any Horticulture field of study.

The Dreer Award allows for one student from Cornell University to spend at least one year in a foreign country, studying a field of interest to them. The student must design a programme citing work or internship arrangements, travel expenses and most importantly the reason for travelling to the intended country(s).

Travelling to the United Kingdom to study the different aspects of Golf Course Management will allow me to have a better understanding

of the history of golf. As my family recently built an 18 hole course in Upstate New York, it is important to develop a strong appreciation for management in foreign countries, as well as in the United States.

I have worked on all aspects of golf course construction, as well as standard mowing operations, flower garden design and installation and have acted as assistant club house manager. The Dreer Award will give me the opportunity to enhance my knowledge and experience upon returning to my family's course.

Along with my academic studies, this spring I will be working to certify the Cornell University Golf Course with the International Audubon Society. The certification process will be a learning experience not only for me, but also for the

Superintendent, David Hicks, and the University.

This will not be the first time I have spent time in a foreign country. During 1994-1995, I spent one year in Wageningen, the Netherlands as a Rotary Foreign Exchange Student. I believe my language skills and international experience will be an asset to me if I am awarded this scholarship. I feel my experiences both on and off the golf course will also benefit you and your course.

The interests which I seek to expand on through this scholarship are:

- Clubhouse management
- Golf course maintenance and restoration
- Golf course horticulture and flower bed designs

I seek both paid and non-paid internships at up to four courses over the period of one year. If there is interest from your course to work together with me, or if you may know of a interested course or company, contact me at:

Mieke A. Damaske 7067 Boughton Rd. Victor NY 14564 United States  
 Tel:-1(716)-657-7867 Fax-1(716)-657-6735  
 e-mail-damgolf@hotmail.com

Thank you for your time.

Mieke Damaske,  
 Victor, New York

## McDivot 1



As a member in good standing of BIGGA, I take exception to the article in the January issue of Greenkeeper International entitled "Sand Green Destruction" by "Sandy McDivot".

I have always enjoyed the author's articles in the past. He has an admirable flair for the written word, and his astute observations on the state of our industry and outspoken opinions (albeit under a pseudonym) are a much desired breath of fresh air in the otherwise stifled atmosphere of golf politics.

In his past articles, Sandy McDivot always had a firm grasp of his subject matter, and seemed to me to be someone speaking from an informed position. In the case of "Sand Green Destruction" however I can forthrightly state that any demonstrable knowledge of sand green maintenance is sadly lacking. I base this on my own 15 years of building and managing sand based greens.

To begin, McDivot complains of greens that puddle up and a "huge splat of a pitch mark". The only way that happens on a USGA green is if you are throwing out way too much water. Likewise the Poa annua infestation, excessive spiking, black layer and Fusarium that McDivot describes in the article are all symptoms of chronic over watering. Any turf school graduate could point that out.

Try field capacity, Sandy, and not saturation.

McDivot would do well to read the USGA literature on the desired level of irrigation.

Then the author says he was forced to apply "obscene quantities of fertiliser", and even worse - he had to do it in the autumn! Well, when exactly do you fertilise bentgrass? High summer? And just what is an "obscene" amount? A half an ounce a thousand? Two tons an acre? Further, what fertiliser is he applying? Ammonium nitrate? Cow manure? We are left to wonder.

Regarding fertility levels, one constructive suggestion I could make to anyone with sand greens is to "spoon feed", applying small amounts, (ie 0.5oz N/M, depending on soil analysis) at frequent intervals, even weekly. This will avoid nitrogen-induced disease incidence and the surge of green growth McDivot describes.

I have never seen a case of the described thatch build up when the correct management procedures of aeration, verticutting and top dressing were applied. This latter practice isn't mentioned at all in the article. Here's a clue, Sandy: Regular, light top dressing has been proven to reduce thatch, improve disease resistance, improve ball holding capability, reduce grain and smooth those old spike and ball marks. Try it!

If it's Take All Patch that you're worried about. I've obtained 100% control with alternating applications of Bayleton (2.5

kg/ha) and Rubigan (3.0 l/ha) supplemented with ammonium sulphate at 30.0 kg/ha, all on seven day intervals. It took about three months to disappear completely, not so many years as McDivot says, and the total cost didn't exceed £2,000, hardly exorbitant in this day and age. This may not work in all situations, but it certainly cleared up the problem for me.

Speaking of heavy play, we are presently doing over 200 rounds a day on a public course where the soft spike policy is cheerfully ignored and no golfer takes particular care to pick up his feet or repair his pitch marks. We change holes three times a week, or about every 450 golfers on average. This is on sand greens which don't even meet USGA specifications, and they remain both playable and attractive.

We are managing "Pennlinks" creeping bentgrass in a sub-tropical climate for which the species is entirely unsuited. We mow at five mm, the greens roll nine feet on the Stimpmeter and, oh yes, they are absolutely free of Poa (which does grow here) or any other weeds for that matter without an ounce of herbicide.

For decades the USGA Green Section has worked diligently through scientific research to develop the best possible growing medium for golf greens. This is meant to benefit both the Course Manager and the golfer. I spend a

considerable amount of time and effort to convince the powers that be to the necessary expense in constructing USGA greens, and it dismays me to see my arguments undermined by ignorance.

I believe it is irresponsible to publish articles, which contradict the fundamentals of sound agronomic principles by an individual who is either uninformed or incompetent. I find it distressing that a professional and reputable publication would carry such misinformation. Printing anecdotal evidence - moreover from an anonymous source - that flies in the face of proven industry standards is a disservice to this organisation.

I understand why the author wishes to remain anonymous, but he could do himself and everyone else in golf a favour by consulting with someone who truly understands USGA golf greens. I am acquainted with several knowledgeable people in the UK who I would be happy to recommend.

Alternatively, I invite the author to visit us here in the Canaries, to observe first hand, the successful management of sand based bentgrass greens.

After all, it's better to light a candle than curse the darkness.

Stephen Okula  
 Golf Course Superintendent,  
 Golf Las Americas, Tenerife,  
 Spain

## McDivot 2

I refer to the article in January edition of Greenkeeper International, Sand Green Destruction, by Mr Sandy McDivot. I would like now to make a few comments of my own about his views.

My first point is Mr McDivot. I don't understand why you have to be anonymous when writing in a magazine such as ours. Is it that you feel more secure and therefore more able to criticise your fellow colleagues in greenkeeping? I am unclear as to the intention of your article. Is it that you hate all modern constructed greens and therefore

you would have us all revert back to the old turn of the century standards?

Your comments were not without some merit as you did your best to highlight some of the problems that the modern day greenkeeper has to contend with but I am of the opinion that your condescending style of communication was ill thought out and unhelpful. This was the case particularly with your recommendations, however lighthearted, about the use of illegal mercury based fungicide and alcohol.

To Scott and the team. We have an

excellent magazine so let's keep its content at the fore front of our industry and not resort to this kind of destructive unnamed twaddle.

I have a final message to Mr McDivot.

You had a golden opportunity to teach us something and therefore enrich our life as a greenkeeper, but you missed the mark by a mile.

**Billy McMillan**  
 (and proud to say it)  
 Wildwood Country Club

## McDivot 3

After reading "Sandy McDivot's" hatchet job on sand based greens, I felt I had to write to level things up.

After all it is only right to read both sides of the story, especially when one side is so full of generalisations. It makes me think that "Sandy" is no greenkeeper but a fully paid up member of the tabloid press.

I am the first to admit that there are many sand based greens in the UK which have failed for many reasons;

1. Poor quality root zone.
2. The incompatibility of root zone/blinding layer.
3. The incompatibility of blinding layer/drainage carpet.
4. Greens constructed with improper machinery.
5. Greens constructed during difficult weather conditions.

Many of these can be put down to a dilution of specification, for whatever reason (usually financial).

We then move on to management practices. We as Course Managers/Greenkeepers have always had to be adaptable and never more so with the maintenance of free-draining sand based greens.

Fertiliser applications should be little and often. The same can be said for Verti-cutting, top-dressing. A sympathetic cutting height (5/16") should be used for a full season at least, after all we are dealing with a young plant. The use of triple greens mowers should be avoided at all costs due to the weight of these machines and the quick appearance of

triplex rings.

Communication with the members/players is vital to educate the golfers as to why you are doing these things.

Aeration should be carried out as normal but a move to micro-tining would be of great benefit. Over-seeding should be carried out as normal to re-introduce the original seed/turf cultivars.

Pin positions should be changed more often to limit wear. Fertiliser selection is crucial.

No Phosphates and regular use of organic liquids or seaweed from day one should be a matter of course.

Fungicide use should be strictly limited or better still don't use them at all. Why kill millions of useful bacteria when you have spent time and effort building them up. I have not used fungicide for nine years.

It can be done with careful/thoughtful management.

As for spike/divot marks, if you reach a situation where your sward has thinned out these blemishes will obviously become more noticeable.

The STRI uses a wear machine to imitate spike marks, so the league tables for cultivars do reflect a grasses resistance to wear and tear. There are many courses who are thinking of reconstruction due to drainage limitation, small putting surfaces or just plain bad greens.

So why should they re-build and use the old turf as a putting surface when better species are available. True, the old turf will get up to speed quicker but we

shouldn't be looking short term, after all the greens will still be there in 50/60 years if built properly in the first place.

At the moment there are many Greenkeepers who are in the process of trying to persuade their Golf club/committee to start a reconstruction programme. "Sandy McDivot's" (his real name would have been nice) article will have made their job even harder or maybe impossible.

I talk from personal experience when I say sand based greens can be a great success. They have to be constructed using the finest consistent materials available, (not built down to a price) when weather conditions are favourable.

The golfers/members must understand the task that lies ahead and must not pressure the greenkeeper for a quick fix. Finally the greenkeeper/manager must be able to adapt his management practices from green to green.

After all he may end up with 12 soil/6 sand greens and they will never behave the same way. This is something "Sandy McDivot" is obviously incapable of doing.

Maybe he should move aside and let the "village idiot" take over.

**Mark Jones**  
 (real name)  
 Preston Golf Club  
 (real golf club)

## McDivot 4

I am writing to ask you to pass on my heartiest congratulations to Sandy McDivot, of Sludgecombe Pay and Play, on his superb article in the January edition of Greenkeeper International.

I am sure anyone who has had anything to do with sand greens will have had similar experiences and will find it very easy to relate to.

Sandy seems to have this ability to weigh these situations up and when putting pen to paper his thoughts hit the bullseye.

**Richard Heaslip**  
 Chigwell, Essex

## Help needed with wind information

To all Scottish members. If you have any stories or photographs of damage caused during the January 1999 storms that hit the U.K. please let me hear about them, as I think there will be some interesting bits of information to tell our members. So if you have got anything to tell, drop me a line and any photographs. This would be much appreciated and we could put them in a future issue of Greenkeeper International.

**Chris Yeaman**  
 Scottish Region Magazine  
 Liaison Officer, 74 Muirfield  
 Drive, Gullane, East Lothian,  
 EH31 2HJ

## Congrats to the mighty Quinn

I write in a personal capacity to congratulate John Quinn, Course Manager at Elmwood for his recent achievements of being runner up in the Toro Excellence in Greenkeeping Award, together, with gaining Master Greenkeeper status. John is an enthusiast and an inspiration to all of us who work with him.

**Colin Mackay**  
 Assistant Course Manager,  
 Elmwood GC, Cupar