

# Accidents do happen

Elsewhere in this issue you can read about Dougal Duguid who has just emerged from a six year nightmare which began when a golf ball bounced up and into the face of a lady member causing her to lose an eye. She claimed it was caused by her ball rebounding from a stone negligently left on the golf course and sued.

It was a horrible accident and our heart goes out to the woman, who by cruel fate already had limited sight in her other eye. What could be worse than suffering such a horrific injury playing the game we all love?

But it was an accident, pure and simple, as decided by the Sheriff who heard the case, and said that Dougal had done all that could have been asked of him and could not be held responsible.

Had the decision gone the other way the implications for the game, and all greenkeepers were wide ranging. Read some of the comments made by Dougal and then make up your own mind. It would be good to hear from you on the matter.

There is an increasing trend, which appears to be American led, to go to the courts and target someone for blame. And you can see why.

Around the time Dougal's case was resolved another golfer went through the US courts and successfully sued a golf course after he fell down a hole and broke his leg on some jagged rocks. He claimed the club was negligent for not putting up a guard rail and won his case. He was awarded substantial damages, including £866,000 for "pain and suffering".

McDonald's prints the warning - "Beware. These cups contain hot liquid" on its coffee cups to cover it from anyone who feels the company would otherwise be negligent in not ensuring customers were made aware of such a fact.

What really amazed me though was the recent news that a deaf person was suing the American version of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" because he was, in effect, excluded from the show because he couldn't phone a friend. Let's ask the audience. Is that, or is it not, plain daft?

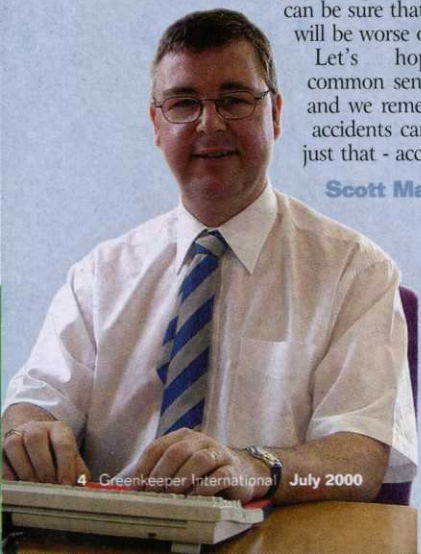
Golf has shown restraint in the past. You may recall Greg Norman, spraining a wrist when he hit a submerged stone and had to pull out of many potentially lucrative tournaments. He accepted it as the "rub of the green" and his own bad luck. He didn't look for anyone to blame.

Of course we can all understand the Westhill lady member's desire to go to court, particularly as she can no longer work, but it must be hoped that golf can steer clear of such cases in future.

If golf does become a target for "no win no fee" lawyers and the unfortunate few who do suffer injury on golf courses you can be sure that the game will be worse off for it.

Let's hope that common sense prevails and we remember that accidents can often be just that - accidents.

**Scott MacCallum**  
Editor



# Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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