

A true International feel to Association

In recent editions of 'Greenkeeper' we have noticed that you have been mentioning international members more and more, so we thought that it was long overdue that we introduced ourselves as two of probably very few members currently working in Nigeria.

The golf course is an 18 Hole Championship course situated in the new capital Abuja. It has been named IBB Golf and Country Club, named after the former president Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB), who initiated the idea. The course was opened in 1984 and since then it has developed into a very challenging and beautiful course, which could easily be compared to any of the better courses in the hotter parts of Europe or America. The course also serves as a nature reserve providing a home for many types of tropical wildlife including crocodiles and dangerous snakes (so be careful in the rough).

The greens are 100% Tifdwarf which after several attempts was found to be the most appropriate grass to suit the conditions found in this part of the world, as such extreme temperatures which can reach 40°C coupled with six months of drought and six months of heavy rain. The fairways and tees are made up of native grasses such as Kikoji and common Bermuda, which generally provide a good playing surface.

At present we have a staff of 45 but not all are working on the course. We have four mechanics, store keeper, timekeeper and cleaners. During the rainy season the remaining staff spend 90% of their 10 hour day just keeping up with the course cutting on this 101 hectare site, bearing in mind that the grass here grows at three times the normal rate found in Europe. Providing it gets irrigated during the dry season it never stops growing as the coolest experienced is 21°C so it's like growing your grass in a heated greenhouse with no shortage of moisture all year round.

With the exception of the rough the whole course is irrigated. During the dry season we would normally irrigate with 1,000,000 litres of water per day. All valves are operated by hand which requires a team of four working 24 hours per day to ensure enough water is applied.



Our machinery is made of 95% Textron equipment and the remaining 5% being the Kubota compact tractor range. These machines have proved very reliable in these conditions, although we are forever changing rubber components such as hydraulic hoses and tyres. This is due to the constant exposure to extreme heat and sunlight which softens the rubber, causing it to wear prematurely. We would normally change the tyres on the drive wheels every four weeks, so, as you can imagine, with over 100 tyres on the course daily we get through quite a few.

We enjoyed reading a letter from one of your readers in which he complained about waiting 33 days for spare parts for an Iseki tractor. As I'm sure you realise we do not have the luxury of a local dealer so everything is shipped in from Europe. The normal delivery time (without expensive air freight charges) is three months. We keep a large stock which probably compares to a small dealers stock but sometimes we do get caught short - for example, an engine for one of our bat wing mowers developed a major fault which required a new engine. It was ordered in January 2000 and after shipping and customs problems did not arrive at the golf course until seven months later. A long time to be without such

an important machine but as with all greenkeepers we just have to find a way to manage this kind of situation and still present our course in the best possible condition no matter what. We all know excuses do not make any difference when the chairman of the greens committee is stuck in the rough up to his waist on the 18th hole and, as a result, loses the monthly medal by one shot.

On saying that, it's not a bad job really turning up for work every day in a pair of shorts, tee shirt and sunglasses. Yes we can remember that wet and cold February morning huddled together in the shed thinking of the summer months which seem a lifetime away.

On a final note we hope you enjoyed a look into greenkeeping in Africa. We could go on to tell you about greens disappearing overnight due to insect attack and the problems of filling the accident book after scorpion and mamba bites, but instead would like to thank BIGGA for its splendid publication which brings us a much needed look at what's going on back in Europe every month.

Robert Bell and Paul Evans
Golf Course Superintendents,
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Sad passing of Fred Hawtree

BIGGA Honorary Member, Fred Hawtree, has died after a long illness. Fred, a world renowned golf course architect, was presented with his Honorary Membership certificate at his home in Oxfordshire by his long time friend and then BIGGA Chairman, Gordon Child, last year.

Gordon will write his own tribute to Fred in next month's magazine.

Drainage Seminar

A Sports Turf Drainage Seminar will be held at Newbury Racecourse on November 16. Further details can be obtained from the Land Drainage Contractors Association Tel: 01327 263264 Fax: 01327 263264.

Positive feedback after Deere trip

Alan Sampson, of Wortley Golf Club, reports on the latest John Deere Feedback trip

In September, approximately 90 people from the UK, mainly greenkeepers and sales representatives, travelled to Moline in Chicago, the headquarters of John Deere, for Feedback 2000.

For nine years John Deere have been listening to comments made from feedback stations and then re-designing machines to suit greenkeepers needs. This year, as in previous years, feedback was held at the Pinnacle Country Club where various new and hybrid versions of John Deere equipment were there for us to put to the test and then give feedback on whether it meets the needs and demands of greenkeepers and golf courses back in the UK.

There is without doubt some excellent machinery in its final stages of production and who knows, we may even see some launched at our very own BTME show.

Although feedback was the main reason for the journey to Chicago we were treated to many more features of the trip. On the second day we were given the opportunity to play golf at the new TPC golf course Deere Run, a PGA tour course and host to the recent John Deere Classic. This, for a golf course in its first playing year, was very impressive. For those not golf minded was a trip to Grand Detour to visit the historical site and home of the influential figure John Deere himself.

Day three was a trip to see the production of John Deere combine harvesters followed by an introduction programme at the auditorium and dinner at the John Deere headquarters.

Day four started with customer evaluation field stations (feedback) followed by a short trip to the 41 acre under cover parts department. Day five was back in down town Chicago for a guided tour of some of the city's most famous landmarks.

This trip, apart from being a chance of a lifetime, was an opportunity for greenkeepers to say what they really want out of machinery from a company whose aim is to provide excellent equipment. I would like to say a big thank you to Richard Tyas, of Bob Wilds Grass Machinery, to James Morley, of John Deere, and to John Deere themselves for their hospitality and generosity on this trip was first class from start to finish.

Royal Inverdivot GC...

by Tony Husband

