

TALKING

Six of the country's top men talk about the grasses on their courses and plans for the future...

Grasses

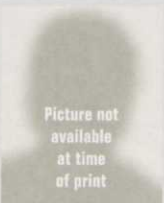
Compiled by Malcolm Huntington MBE



Name: Ian Menzies
Region: Scotland
Course: Drumoig Hotel and Golf Resort, Leuchers, near St Andrews.
Course Type: Parkland (18 holes plus Scottish National Golf Centre, approx 12 holes)



Name: Richard Hollingworth
Region: Northern
Course: Ridding Park, Follifoot, Harrogate
Course Type: Parkland
Staff: Head greenkeeper plus five, plus casuals



Picture not available at time of print

Name: Kenny Mackay
Region: Midland
Course: Merriott Forest of Arden, Meriden, nr Coventry
Course Type: Parkland (36 holes)
Staff: Course manager plus 23, plus mechanic



Name: Don Wilson
Region: South East
Course: Dyrham Park, Galley Lane, Barnet, Herts
Course Type: Parkland
Staff: Course manager plus six



Name: Steve Evans
Region: SouthWest & South Wales
Course: Yelverton Golf Club, Devon
Course Type: Moorland
Staff: Head greenkeeper plus 4



Name: Emmett Curran
Region: Northern Ireland
Course: Downpatrick Golf Club, Northern Ireland
Course Type: Parkland
Staff: Course manager plus two, plus mechanic

1

What grasses do you have on your course - greens, tees and fairways?

On greens, tees and fairways we have 40 per cent slender creeping red fescue, 40 per cent chewing fescue, 20 per cent tenuis bent (Highland browntop bent on fairways).

Fescue, and bent on greens, plus a lot of natural grasses still there including 50 per cent meadow grass. Tees are predominantly rye grass with some smooth stalked meadow grass. Fairways are a mixture of fescue, predominant rye grass, plus smooth stalked meadow grass.

Our greens are a mixture of poa annua and bent, the tees are dwarf rye grass and the fairways a mixture of bent, rye grass and poa annua.

A mixture of bent and poa annua on greens, though I try to eradicate poa as much as possible; dwarf rye on tees natural rye on fairways which was originally agricultural land.

Bent and annual meadow grass on the greens and we have oversown with fescue in recent years. Tees - dwarf rye grass, natural bent. Fairways are natural moorland with bent, fescue and annual meadow grass.

On greens we have meadow grass and a little bent. Tees meadow grass and rye grass and fairways meadow grass and bent.

HEADS

2

What would be the ideal grass types you would include in your course?

Our course is only five-years-old and as I was involved with the construction I am very happy with the existing grasses.

I would have a mixture of fescues and bent for the greens, dwarf rye grass and smooth stalked meadow grass for the tees, with dwarf rye grass and smooth stalked meadow grass for the fairways.

Bent on greens, rye on tees and the fairways a mixture of rye grass, fescue and bent.

Predominantly bent on greens with a touch of fescue, dwarf rye grass on tees as it is hard wearing with a quick recovery and bent fescue on fairways.

Ideally I would like bent and fescue only on greens. Tees as they are at the moment and fairways would be bent and fescue in an ideal situation.

On greens I would like creeping bent and the rest of the course dwarf rye grass with a little fescue in the rough.

3

What attempts are you making to change the grass type profile on your course?

None whatsoever as we have had excellent results with the mix we originally decided on, supplied by Barenbrug.

I believe in leaving well alone, because you would be fighting a losing battle as there are so many grasses in the air alone. Meadow grass is too strong, to eradicate. You put up with it otherwise you would have a bald golf course.

On the fairways I am trying to get a more evensward with rye grass, fescue and bent. I have a lot of poa anna on the back nine of the Arden course and so I am hopeful the introduction of the others will do the trick.

We have spent a lot of time on this. Greens are overseeded with bent twice a year and tees overseeded with dwarf rye once a year. Fairways are overseeded with dwarf rye and smooth stalked meadow grass once a year.

We overseed tees each year with sand and soil mix and dwarf rye grass. On fairways we overseed with bent and fescue each year and greens are overseeded twice a year with bent and fescue mix. We have 50 ponies on the course who eat the greens which we top dress 20 times a year because of this problem.

None, we are quite happy to live with what we've got. It would cost a lot of money to change things and finance wouldn't allow it.

4

What are your views on poa annua - learn to live with it or try to eradicate it?

I would learn to live with it. Poa annua is kept at an absolute minimum on our course by verti-cutting as often as we can.

We must learn to live with poa annua, especially in this country where there are ideal growing conditions for meadow grass in autumn and spring.

We can't eradicate it. If I tried to do this on the greens the overall quality would drop. I believe in trying to manage what you have and make the best of what you have got.

I would say on our soil type learn to live with it. I produce the course as good as I can and if I eradicated poa annua I wouldn't have much left!

It is impossible to eradicate poa annua in my opinion, but we overseed with bent and fescue coupled with aeration and verti-cutting. There is no irrigation on the course and I think our greens are better for that.

Definitely learn to live with it. If your management programme is dedicated to meadow grass your course will be fine.

5

What qualities would you like to see from new grasses which are currently in development?

I believe that the grasses currently on the market are excellent when it comes to the battle against disease. Perhaps for sand based greens like ours there will be a development with resistance against drought and close mowing - we are cutting at 4mm.

Finer grasses to have better winter tolerance and also grass to have better recovery.

Research has been very good over the years and I have tried a number of new grasses. I am not looking for anything special in the future.

Greens - quick recovery and less susceptible to disease and drought. Tees - hard wearing and quick recovery. Fairways - hard wearing, quick to recover and cope with wet conditions.

Some which resist disease, particularly fusarium. Someone will make a fortune if they can do that!. Also one which is drought resistant.

Disease resistant and compact growth. I can't remember any drought - we have more water than most!. I would also like to see a grass developed which is more tolerant to close mowing. We cut at 4mm on our greens.