

Following his recent accreditation of Master Greenkeeper status from BIGGA, Amy Bird asks Stuart Cagle how he manages to accomplish so much...

A greenkeeping Master

Stuart Cagle, MG, CGCS at Old Oakland Golf Club in Indianapolis, works hard. For the last 14 years, Stuart has gone to work early, stayed late and sacrificed weekends to ensure that Old Oakland's golf course is in the best possible shape for its members. So, after Old Oakland members learned that Stuart had earned his Master Greenkeeper's certificate from the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, they took the opportunity to show him their thanks.

"We (recognised Stuart) in our newsletter, and members got excited, as much from the fact that Stuart has been such a strong superintendent for the 14 years he has been with us, as for the certificate," says Larry Dawson, Vice President of Old Oakland.

"They wanted to thank him in some way, beyond just talking about it."

Proving good on their word, Dawson says that a group of members approached management last autumn about hosting a tournament on Stuart's behalf.

"They came to us, through the pro shop, and asked if they could set a tournament up. We said 'absolutely' and approved it," Dawson recalls.

Personal challenge

Oct. 1, 2000, Stuart's 14-year anniversary with Old Oakland, members held a tournament for Stuart that raised more than \$6,000 to send him and his family to England to accept his Master Greenkeeper certificate.

"I think that primarily it came from wanting to say, 'Stuart, you've done the club a great service over the last

14 years...' It's their way of giving back," Dawson notes.

"The quality of his work shows. A lot of our members play other clubs, so they recognise his attention to detail - it shows. That is why they stay here. They can see the difference."

Although the tournament was

"I take a lot of pride in my work, but I like to be behind the scenes. I do my job and do the best I can, and I want people to enjoy the course and my staff's efforts.

"We have so many good, quality people here at Old Oakland," he continues.

"I've always been interested in how (the British) maintain courses. I love to watch the British Open... I wanted to get a better grasp of how they managed courses in the U.K., how it was different from here. It's fascinating." After joining, Stuart learned about BIGGA's Master Greenkeeper certificate and, again, attracted to the challenge, decided to pursue his second professional distinction.

organised for Stuart, Dawson points out that it made a positive impact on the club, as well.

"This was a first-time situation. Nothing like this has ever been done in the 14 years we've owned the club. The members did this together, on their own."

Stuart says the fact that members also raised money for his family, showed their appreciation for the sacrifices his family has made over the years, as well.

"I was overwhelmed to the point of tears, and I still get choked up," says Stuart, a 19-year member of GCSAA.

"I was overwhelmed that (members) would want to do that, and by the warmth they showed me for receiving certification and for the 14 years I've worked to make this a good course."

Whereas normal club tournaments at Old Oakland draw around 20 to 30 pairs/couples, the tournament for Stuart attracted 96 individuals (48 twosomes). Moreover, many who couldn't participate responded with donations.

"People who said they couldn't play would drop checks off. One member walked by and threw a \$100 bill down and said, 'I can't play, but I

Neil Thomas reports on how the event planning for BTME2002 is going, and urges prospective exhibitors to book their stand space fast!

BTME 2002

CONFIRMED EXHIBITORS

Confirmed Exhibitors

Right: Stuart Cagle (center) received his Master Greenkeeper award from BIGGA President Sir Michael Banallack (left) and 2000 BIGGA Chairman Elliott Small (right) during BIGGA's National Education Conference, in January at Harrogate



want you to have a good time.' It was then that I started realising that people really appreciated my efforts," Stuart reveals.

Following the tournament, the club had a cocktail reception for Stuart, his family and the tournament participants. During the reception, the club presented Stuart with a golf bag, a plaque for his efforts and a poster with the tournament name and date that all of the participants had signed. He was also presented with a cigar box containing \$6,000.

As if their efforts weren't enough, Stuart says that several members also gave him their gift certificates from the tournament closest to the pin contests, instructing him to use the restaurant certificates to take his wife, Joni, to dinner.

"I was absolutely overwhelmed. I will never forget all they did," he exclaims, noting that he, Joni, their oldest son, Taylor, and his mother, were able to spend eight days in England in January as a result of the club's efforts. They travelled to Harrogate, January 22-23, to attend the BIGGA National Education Conference and spent the rest of their vacation around London.

Lessons learned, taught

For Stuart, the trip to BIGGA's conference was the realisation of a goal set four years earlier.

"I became certified through GCSAA in 1996 at Orlando (conference and show). That was a personal goal and challenge I had set for myself to learn more and see if I could do it," Stuart offers, explaining the natural progression of his membership, beginning with the desire to increase his knowl-

edge and network with peers.

"It was a personal challenge to become a CGCS."

The following year, at GCSAA's conference and show in Las Vegas in 1997, Stuart visited the BIGGA booth and, intrigued by European golf course maintenance, decided to join. "I've always been interested in how (the British) maintain courses. I love to watch the British Open... I wanted to get a better grasp of how they managed courses in the U.K., how it was different from here. It's fascinating." After joining, Stuart learned about BIGGA's Master Greenkeeper certificate and, again, attracted to the challenge, decided to pursue his second professional distinction.

"The MG certification process is a little different (than GCSAA's). They use different technologies, the education is a little different and there weren't too many people from the United States who had accomplished it," he acknowledges.

"At the time, there were only five individuals from the United States and 22 individuals worldwide who had earned the certificate."

After documenting everything he had done, from his formal education at Purdue to GCSAA seminars, Stuart

began the certification process through BIGGA, which included having his course attested by a Master Greenkeeper from the United States - GCSAA board member Robert Maibusch, CGCS, MG, attested Stuart's course in 1999 - and taking a written exam.

"I received a letter of congratulations the first week of June (2000)," he remarks, crediting Joni, Taylor and his youngest son, Adrian, who is 5, for their support. He says his motivation comes from wanting to improve himself and to set an example for his sons.

"(Obtaining certification) was a personal challenge, but I also did it for my son, Taylor, who is 9 years old, to show him that if you set goals, you may not reach everything, but you are on the right path and that, even as you get older, education is still important."

So, beyond feeling satisfaction in having achieved his latest goal, Stuart says he cherishes his son's reaction to the news. "When I got the letter from BIGGA, I showed it to Taylor, and he read it and said, 'Dad, that is a good job.'"

Our thanks go to the GCSAA for their permission in allowing us to reprint this article, which was first published in the May edition of Golf Course Management

If you are interested in enrolling in the BIGGA Master Greenkeeper Certificate programme, you can obtain further information and a brochure from Ken Richardson, BIGGA's Education and Training Manager. Just call 01347 833800 or email: ken@bigga.co.uk

Additional information can be found on the BIGGA website at

www.bigga.org.uk