

It never rains – it pours!

Last year, the Greenkeeping Support Team at the PGA Volvo Championship really earned their free shirt and cap in 2001 by slog-ging it out in 80 degrees plus. This year they were warm enough but mainly because they carried out their duties (as well as a rake and a squeegee) wearing waterproofs. It precipitated down!

Saturday wasn't too bad, pretty wet but interspersed with sunny spells, but Sunday. Let me tell you about Sunday. The first ominous sign was when Craig Small, from Chris Kennedy's Greenkeeping Team, delivered 30 squeegees to our tent.

At first it seemed that Chris had been over cautious, early matches were returning with the squeegee being reported as "something extra to be carried and never to be used".

Wishful thinking if ever I heard it! Sure enough it rained steadily for a while and then came the first down-pour. Not too bad, just a hailstorm turning nicely to torrential rain. The greens however were up to it and only minimal work with the squeegees was needed. Play continued without a problem for about half an hour or so and then came the second tremen-

dous downpour. Greens started to be awash, bunkers started to flood. Chris Kennedy and his Staff were magnificent. And so were the Support Team, no panic, just hard work at a speed. All available Members (those who had finished their matches) and anyone else available in our tent was armed with a squeegee and dispatched to distant parts of the course to drain bunkers and to keep the greens playable. I would add at this point that there wasn't one single moan, even though wives and girlfriends were abandoned and everyone got on with it and helped.

The results stand for themselves, despite such rain the Championship finished more or less on time and the viewing public were hardly aware that there had been such problems. A brilliant achievement all round and I know that the PGA European Tour Tournament Director, David Garland, as well as Course Manager, Chris Kennedy, would like to use these columns to pass on their appreciation to the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team. Well Done!

Derek Farrington, South East RA

In agreement with Ronnie

Having read Ronnie Bunting's article on environmental management in the April issue of Greenkeeper International I felt compelled to put pen to paper. I was particularly interested in Ronnie's comments about fusarium and that "leaving it alone" may be an option. I would like to say that leaving it alone is indeed a very good option. I have not sprayed fungicide on my greens for five years on the basis that it is a very expensive, harmful to the essential and beneficial micro organisms and labour intensive.

Ronnie is spot on in pointing these aspects out.

Once the decision to spray no fungicide had been made my club committee were informed and since then support has come from the club's agronomy advisor. What I have observed is that when fusarium attacks come they have become less damaging with every passing year. I believe a sensible maintenance programme has had a strong impact, however, I also believe that the turf on my greens is fighting back and its natural immune system is getting stronger each year. What I do know is that, yes, my greens are left scarred but no more scarred than had I sprayed fungicide upon noticing the first disease patch. Because, as most of us know, if you haven't sprayed before you see the first few patches

you're only going to spray a curative treatment on your attack and this will not prevent scarring.

You can argue that your scarring will not be so widespread, but maybe, if you leave the disease alone and let the green's natural defences work it may become strong enough not to need chemical support. It is an important point to remember, you can only prevent scarring if you apply preventative treatments and this means spraying well before any sign of disease.

Don't be frightened of fusarium, leave it alone and be assured, greens do recover on their own and a sound maintenance programme does ensure as quick a return as possible to full grass coverage.

Andrew Phillips, Head Greenkeeper,
Glynhir GC

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