

Sandy McDivot takes puts his own inimitable slant on the Golf Club Committee

Committee'd FOR LIFE

Intelligence is a hard commodity to measure. They say that Einstein for all his wisdom did not possess the mental faculties necessary to boil an egg, or change his clothes. This is quite understandable when you come to think of it. How often have we come across people with an abundance of brainpower but no actual ability to think? Why only today I was listening to our venerable Home Secretary on the radio comment on the nations latest crime figures. "They are lower" he stated, "but not low enough". Brilliant, and at what stage are the crime figures deemed to be "low enough". Then there was that unfortunate contestant on Mastermind who could cope with Magnus Magnusson's first question as to what his name was but when asked to divulge his occupation, was totally stumped.

The measurement of intelligence, it is said, can be used to categorise the hierarchy of life forms, while intelligence itself, can be described as degrees of consciousness. Let me explain. The more conscious one is, the more intelligent one becomes. So at the lower end of the scale of life, we have single celled organisms and

surroundings but are unable to experience the process of thought and simply utilise the limited information gathered about their environment, as a survival means. Some of those old golf club secretaries, would be the equivalent in our particular world. Then we come to the slightly higher forms of life to be found in the animal kingdom. These have all the senses intact and are able to gather information on their surroundings and carry out a degree of conscious thought, although often lack the faculties for emotional response. They are also remarkably adept at learning patterns of behaviour and of coming to intelligent conclusions based on incoming information. Therefore a cow will sit in the shade on a hot day, or a cat will hide itself in the undergrowth ready to pounce on its unsuspecting prey.

Unfortunately, experience has taught me that the average golf club committee does not always attain such levels of consciousness. Correct conclusion based on gathered data, is not something that is automatically arrived at. Now I know this is a horribly condescending statement to make and I do recognise that some

reason for crowned holes is that when the turf is wet and soft in the winter, golfers will all step approximately six inches away from the hole to retrieve their ball and the subsequent compression of several such golfers, causes the hole to stand proud above the adjacent area. We can reach this conclusion by using such things as our eyes. I have on many occasions explained the correct cause of the crowned hole malady but each winter the complaint goes up that we never use a board to change the holes.

I even remember one committee man, congratulating me on finally learning how to change the holes properly, when he followed me around straight after I had moved them. Even after explaining it to him yet again, he appeared not to grasp the fact that the cause of the holes being flat on that occasion, was that he was the first person to play on them. I have now resolved the issue in true traditional greenkeeping fashion, by the deployment of many years of near zero fertiliser input. This has had the effect of eliminating all thatch from the soil surface and firming up the greens considerably. I now get a flood of complaints each sum-

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such like, that have no actual consciousness or awareness but are simply programmed to search for food and engage in reproduction. Replace food with alcohol and it's a bit like myself as an apprentice greenkeeper. Of course the consumption of alcohol was necessary because of its ability to make unwelcome sights considerably more pleasing to the eye and thus aid the fruitless search for the reproductive division of my mental programming.

Moving up the scale, we have other simple creatures such as insects. These have a vague awareness of their

committees are highly proficient, but I will endeavour to back this statement with some of my own evidence gathered in a lifetime of working among them.

Take the crowned hole syndrome so popular among committee men as an excuse for their missed three foot putts, even though their putting strokes often involve a twitch of such horrific violence that divot replacement is required. The crowned hole phenomenon is, they assure us, due to our inability to use a board to change the holes.

Now we all know that the real rea-

son that the greens are like "bleedin' concrete" but rarely about our inability to change the holes correctly.

"You're following us around on purpose aren't you?" is another cry that goes up when we unfortunately meet up with the same group of golfers, on more than one occasion, when engaged in the execution of our duties. Now the logic behind this accusation is somewhat bewildering to us, but a colleague of mine once enlightened me on how his lady golfers became convinced that all greenkeepers were guilty of making this their sole objective in life.



Amazingly they passed a resolution at their AGM that on ladies' days, the greenkeepers had to mow the greens by starting at the 18th hole and then work their way back to the 1st. This, they concluded, would result in ground staff never interrupting their game. With the full backing of the secretary, I am delighted to say that my colleague did indeed carry out the ladies' wishes to the letter of their law. Predictably enough, the result was utter chaos and apparently the embarrassment of the ladies was something to be treasured. Needless to say the lessons in communication have been well and truly learnt.

Actually the aforementioned colleague of mine, told me of another classic example of golfing lack of consciousness. He was one morning checking the irrigation system, by putting the full greens pop-ups on a two-minute cycle and then racing around the course, taking note of any faults in the system. He got to one green just before the sprinklers were due up, only to find that a two ball was putting out. He rushed onto the green and politely informed them that they needed to vacate the area immediately, or they would get very wet indeed. They completely and utterly ignored him. He repeated the warning but one particular golfer simply looked up at him with a look of contempt and then proceeded to stand back over his putt. At this point the sprinklers came on with one of them aimed directly at the golfer. With true British stiff upper lip, he stood up, stared at my colleague and slowly walked over to him, only for the sprinkler to follow his every move. He eventually arrived at his destination in a condition of complete saturation at which point the sprinkler shut down. "What's your name?" asked

the sodden golfer through clenched teeth. My friend found it difficult to reply due to the fact that he was focusing all of his attention in the avoidance of wetting his own underpants, albeit via uncontrolled laughter.

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Finally, let me relay to you, a story that came from a Course Manager friend of mine, who has plied his trade in a particular coastal resort that will remain nameless for reasons of possible litigation. Now several of the golf clubs in this place, let me tell you, have the absolute worst committees and members the world has ever known. If they had been working for the Spanish inquisition, half of them would have been thrown out for unreasonable behaviour. In fact if you accused them of being a bunch of Hitlers, they would take it as a complement. One of these clubs - and this is entirely true - once placed an advert for a club secretary/manager that stated that the applicant "must have the ability to manage 800 members, all of whom are experts in golf club management".

This

particular Course Manager, was working away with the rest of his team on a hole, when he noticed someone observing them from up in the woods. He thought nothing of it but the next day, the same person was once more gazing down upon them. This continued for a week or so, before curiosity finally got the better of the Course Manager and he made his way up the hill to confront this strange human being.

"Can I help you" he asked. The reply, when it came was somewhat disconcerting.

"I'm the new Green Chairman. I've been watching you and there are going to be a few changes around here". With this thought in his mind, my friend made his way back down to the rest of his staff to inform them of the distressing news. The Green Chairman continued to observe them for quite a few days after this, until finally the day

arrived when he made his way down the hill to make his pronouncement to the Course Manager.

What awful observations had he made, thought my friend, as he saw him marching towards him. Would this be cards on the table time, had he made a fiendish discovery that would prove incompetence, would there be some impossible demand made, would he harass them all with the results of this despicable time and motion study. No, instead the Green Chairman asked, "How do you cut the greens?" "What do you mean?" asked the Course Manager. "Well, when you cut them, do you go up and down, or around and around?"

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