



Welcome

A POSITIVE MONTH FOR GREENKEEPING

It's not often that greenkeeping is in the news for positive reasons but the praise which filled the newspapers and television screens for Royal St George's during the Open Championship was genuine and a real credit to Head Greenkeeper, Neil Metcalf, and his hard working team.

The course was firm and fast running and looked as you would hope a links course would look. The hard bounces, some cruel, some occasionally kind, presented golfers, more used to golf of the target variety, with all sorts of conundrums. Despite this players expressed their admiration for the course... if not always the pin placements.

This was even more of a surprise as players love to make birdies and most loathe grinding out the pars and only one player, Ben Curtis, managed to better Mr Par and then only by a single shot.

Speaking of Ben Curtis, whose father incidentally is a Golf Course Superintendent, he reminded me a little of Tom Watson in 1975 who was a virtual unknown when he arrived at Carnoustie and defeated Jack Newton in a play-off before going on to have a spectacular career. It would be fair to say that Curtis wasn't merely a virtual unknown, he was a complete unknown playing in his first ever Major and odds of 80-1 could still be snapped up on Sunday morning but I don't suppose the bookies were swamped. However he appeared to have some of Watson's unassuming demeanour and unflappable approach to the game.

Whatever, I'm sure there is a Hollywood producer even now looking at turning it into the latest golfing movie to join the illustrious list of Follow the Sun, Caddie Shack, Tin Cup and Happy Gilmore.

The fact that Curtis was a long shot winner is certainly not a reflection of the golf course. Davis Love said of Paul Lawrie and Carnoustie that the 1999 Open got the Champion it deserved. He was wrong in every respect. Lawrie has won two big tournaments since and Carnoustie is proud of its position as the toughest course on the Open rota, if not the planet.

Using Davis' logic, Royal St George's didn't identify the best player but the long list of superb players, including himself and Tiger Woods, who could and perhaps should have won defeats that argument.

It was also a great week for the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team which each year is becoming a more integral element in the Championship. This year an advanced party went out at 4am to rake bunkers before the start of play each day taking pressure off both the home team and the R&A who knew the job would be done to the highest standard.

On a final note it was great to see the aforementioned Tom Watson winning the British Seniors Open at George Brown's Turnberry to rekindle memories of his epic Open win over Jack Nicklaus in 1977.

Who says golf can't produce fairy stories?

Scott MacCallum, Editor

LONG SERVICE



George Newson

George Newson, Head Greenkeeper at Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club, retires this month after 41 and a half years service with the same club.

As you might imagine George has thoroughly enjoyed his time at Felixstowe and hands over to John Houston, who has been working in harness with George for the past couple of months.

"Felixstowe has been a good club to work for and when they could afford it, they looked after us proudly. Now Felixstowe has got some of the best facilities in the country," he told the local paper, in a full page feature it did on his impending retirement.

"It's always been a friendly club and I've always been welcome in the clubhouse just like any other member."

George got the job in 1962 by chance when he was in the local pub listening to the club pro and the steward commenting on the state of the course.

"I'd had a few beers and I told them I could do the greenkeeper's job with my hands tied behind my back. Three days later I received a letter asking me to go for an interview and afterwards I was offered the job," said George who had worked on a farm prior to moving into greenkeeping.

"It's been a labour of love," said the man who played for 30 years off a handicap of five.

John Houston began his career at Ratho Park near Edinburgh and worked for Jack McMillan at Bush Hill Park before moving to Dorking GC as Head Greenkeeper. He has since been head man at a number of clubs including Addington Palace, Royal Blackheath, Fulwell and Dore and Totley.



John Houston

NATIONAL TURFGRASS FOUNDATION CONFERENCE

Following the success of last November's National Turfgrass Foundation Conference at Southport, the Foundation have again joined forces with Cranfield University at Silsoe to produce an even bigger event with a greater diversity of topics and speakers. This year's 'In Pursuit of Excellence' Conference will again be held at the Southport Theatre and Floral Hall Complex, and will run from November 3-6.

Martyn Jones and Louise Clegg, founders of the NTF and organisers of the Conference, said that the Conference has been designed as two programmes running in parallel to each other and delegates are free to move between the two depending on the topic selection of their choice.

This is the largest programme to date and will feature 38 speakers, sharing their vast knowledge and experience on 43 topics. Something for everyone and at an affordable price is definitely the theme for the event. With an impressive line up of speakers from a range of European countries and the USA, the conference should prove to be a winner with a wide range of turf managers.

Appearing alongside some of the most revered professors, researchers, and agronomists will be a number of notable BIGGA members. Duncan McGillvray, Potters Bar GC; Kerran Daly, MG, Gog Magog GC; Ian McMillan, Queenwood GC; Stuart McColm, Kingsbarn GC, and Wendy O'Brien, Carden Park Golf Resort, will be sharing their knowledge for the benefit of delegates. BIGGA Vice-Chairman, Andy Campbell, MG, CGCS; Walter Woods, BEM, and Jack McMillan, OBE., will also be inputting their

style and experience to the proceedings in their capacities of Session Chairmen.

Presentations cover a diverse range of subjects, including recent research conducted at Newcastle upon Tyne University into enhancing drainage rates by the use of electrokinetic geosynthetics, and details of a UK golf green construction specification. The effects of biostimulants on soil microbiology and composting as a management tool are other highly topical subjects. Maximising green speed while minimising damage, and rootzone/topdressing compatibility will be of particular interest to some greenkeepers.

"Those who have attended similar programmes will be aware of the tremendous knowledge that can be gained, not only directly from the presentations but also from socialising with the speakers and fellow delegates during out-of-conference hours. Greenkeepers will also have a marvellous opportunity to discuss aspects of 'Golf Greenkeeping throughout the World'. A panel of Course Managers, Superintendents and greenkeepers from numerous countries in Europe and North America will be talking of their experiences in different climatic zones; with contrasting budgets, and varying legislative constraints," said Martyn.

For further details of the Conference and accommodation contact Martyn Jones on Tel. +44 (0)1995 670675 or Louise Clegg on +44 (0)7879015921 or email NTFoundation@aol.com.

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