

# DISEASE MANAGEMENT DIFFICULTIES IN SWEDEN AND THE NETHERLANDS

Greenkeepers realise that fusarium patch is one of the most common diseases on north European golf courses and that a severe attack can leave disfiguring scars which will affect the quality of putting surfaces. They are also well aware that of the common grasses found on greens, annual meadow-grass (*Poa annua*) is the most susceptible to this disease.

The vast majority of golf greens in northern Europe contain a significant proportion of annual meadow-grass, even though most will have originally been established with bent (browntop or creeping) and fescue grasses. This reversion has often been due to a combination of mismanagement at some point in their history (often forced on greenkeepers by the habit of golfers interfering directly with management of courses, the pressure from ignorant committees with their constant demands for greens that are soft and green), local environment influences (e.g. shade and drainage) and increased playing pressure.

Over the years, fungicides have provided a safety net for greenkeepers but recent EU Directives have placed far more stringent controls on their employment and in certain countries these Directives have been interpreted in such a way that the use of fungicides on golf courses has been effectively banned, eg. as is the case in the Netherlands, to public places in Denmark (on which approximately 50% of their golf courses are

situated) and in Sweden where courses fall into special environmental designations.

Earlier this year Tim Taylor and Nick Park of the R&A's Golf Course Committee went on a brief fact finding tour of Sweden and the Netherlands to see examples of what can happen to annual meadow-grass dominated greens hit by disease on sites where the use of fungicides is totally prohibited. The images arising from this trip should focus the attention of everyone involved in golf course management, including golfers who utilise courses, and make us all realise that without the back up of fungicides, alternative strategies will have to be adopted to provide sustainable golf green management.

The consequence of this damage is more anguish for greenkeepers and golfers, an even shorter playing season in situations where this is already an issue and, more worrying, the temptation to bring about a more rapid recovery through the application of extra fertiliser and water, which will undoubtedly exacerbate the diseased incidence the following autumn and winter.

The R&A Golf Course Committee are in the process of developing best practice guidelines and a research strategy, involving consultation throughout Europe, in an attempt to provide answers to problems such as these which will be facing greenkeepers worldwide in years to come. Regular updates on their progress can be found on the Course Management pages of the R&A website, [www.randa.org](http://www.randa.org).



## RESTRICTIONS LIFTED

As part of BIGGA's ongoing commitment to Employers throughout the UK we can now inform you of recent Immigration law changes effecting UK employers and adding to the depth and breadth of the labour market.

Over 40,000 Antipodeans, (Australians and New Zealanders), enter the UK each year on a Working Holiday Scheme. This scheme traditionally allowed people under the age of 28 to enter the UK and work to supplement their incomes.

Until now this scheme was restrictive to people wishing to pursue a long term career path. From today these restrictions have been lifted on the type of work that can be undertaken, allowing people to

follow their chosen career path and work for the full two years of their visa. Also, the age limit has been raised to 30.

The changes create more flexibility for employers to retain these workers. After working in the UK for 12 months with a company, this experience can count towards to a UK work permit.

A work permit is issued to allow an individual to stay with an employer and reside in the UK for a period of four years, and can lead on to residency.

The bottom line: UK employers will now be able to secure a long term commitment from antipodean staff, and invest in their development.

## LAST CHANCE

Anyone who has not yet entered this year's National Championship, sponsored by the Greenkeeping Supply Company, to take place at Coxmoor and Hollinwell Golf Clubs on 6 & 7 October, and who wishes to do so should contact BIGGA HOUSE as soon as possible to request an entry form. Entries are strictly limited to 100 and places are allocated on a first come first served basis.

## MIDLAND SNOOKER

"The Nigel Tyler, of Alpha Amenity, Snooker Evening" run by the Midland Section was held at that infamous venue, "The Perfection Snooker Club", at Stirchley, in Birmingham. Not only did Alpha Amenity stand the players an extensive buffet, they were also gracious enough to afford the Lights, and prizes to boot. On the evening there were 17 players of which was eventually, after some fiercely contested battles, whittled down to two for the final: Robert and John Tomlin with John emerging the victor.

## Royal Inverdivot GC...

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