



Welcome

DON'T LET YOUR CLUB BECOME GREEN WITH ENVY

There are times when you really wonder if banging your head against a wall is a pastime worth continuing.

I say that after listening to a national sports radio channel when a former European Tour pro turned pundit, announced to the listening nation that he'd never seen Wentworth in better condition. "I've never seen it greener" were the exact words chosen by Talk Sport's Robert Lee.

Now, I'm a huge fan of Wentworth. I was based there for a time in the early 90s and it was a real privilege to drive across the 18th fairway on the way to the office every morning. I've seen the superb work of Chris Kennedy and his team first hand and peaking a course twice a year is a skill for which Chris has no equal. So I would use many measures to praise Wentworth, but I certainly wouldn't use the "greenness scale".

Of course, you could argue that Robert's crime is minor and the fact that golf is even being reported on a predominately football station is a plus, but for greenkeepers attempting to do the job to the best of their abilities it is yet another blow.

The fact is that too many golfers equate "greenness" with quality. With the splendour of Augusta laid before the television watching nation every April I suppose it is an understandable conclusion for the club member to reach, but long term sustainability is something which doesn't enter the equation of members dazzled by the azaleas.

Unfortunately, through a quirk of members' club constitutions, those members have the power to influence agronomic decisions at their own clubs and pressure to become "greener" is becoming increasingly intense. Highly trained greenkeepers are often risking employment stability if they attempt to steer down the path of traditional British greenkeeping.

There are two examples in this month's magazine. The new Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year lost his job a year ago after attempting to adopt sound agronomic practices at a club which lost patience, made him redundant and headed off on their own search for "greenness". Fortunately he is now at another club. At Temple Golf Club Martin Gunn and Malcolm Peake are strong upholders of traditional greenkeeping but even they have come under pressure. They've also seen many quality greenkeepers lost to the industry and courses fall by the wayside.

"If courses don't follow best management practices we could be in danger of losing the character of all our priceless national heritage courses - heathland, links and downland and this would change forever the way we play traditional British golf," says Malcolm, in the article.

The "We Know Better" brigade is a strong lobby in many, if not all, British golf clubs and their case is helped when someone announces on air that a course has never looked better because it is so green.

The sad unpalatable truth is that golfers, and some supposed golfing experts, don't know what is best for golf courses.

The long term consequences should be of concern to everyone.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

AN AMAZING MAN

Eric Barber was not the type of person to yearn for his pipe and slippers when he retired from greenkeeping eight years ago.

Eric, who was Course Manager at Teign Valley Golf Club, in Exeter, has just become World Champion in the gruelling sport of Duathlon which involved him running 10 kilometres, cycling 150 kilometres and rounding off with another 30 kilometre run, all on a mountainous course in Switzerland.

"It was the toughest event I've ever done," said the newly crowned 67 year-old 65-69 age category winner.

To put it in perspective the winning time of nine hours, 29 minutes and 19.9 second included Eric running 25 miles in three hours 41 minutes, virtually a marathon with a 94 mile cycle race sandwiched in between.

The race didn't go completely to plan and at one point Eric, whose strength lies in the running elements, was 15 minutes behind a youthful 65 year-old Italian with the prospect of falling further behind on the bike.

"But I clawed my way back into it and was 11 minutes behind at the start of the final run and caught him after 10 kilometres of the race," said Eric, who also won the 60-64 category in 2000.

Along with the better known Triathlon - which also incorporates swimming - Duathlon is a growing sport and the fittest man Eric knows is the five time world Champion, Benny Vansteelant, of Belgium, who is virtually unbeatable at the shorter Duathlon distance, but who was pipped for the gold this year in the open category

Fitter, and with more stamina, than ever, Eric hopes to defend his title in Denmark next year and



also has some other mind boggling objectives before then.

"I want to run the 93 mile West Highland Way; complete a stage in the Tour de France and run the Jungfrau Marathon in Switzerland which starts at 2000 feet above sea level and rises to 7,000 above sea level," said Eric, who added that it would be ideal training for the defence of his title.

Eric has to fund his own trips and would be extremely grateful if anyone decided to sponsor one of Britain's toughest and most dedicated pensioners.

Eric's exploits were featured in the Devon paper The Herald Express.

Anyone who wishes to assist should contact Scott MacCallum at BIGGA HOUSE.

TOP MAN

With the Rugby World Cup going strong in Australia it is nice to see some recognition for BIGGA's own rugby internationalist.

The day after England's match against South Africa The Sunday Times highlighted the team which played South Africa in 1972 which included Regional Administrator, Peter Larter. Peter won 24 caps for England and also represented the British Lions. A lock forward, he scored a long distance

penalty against New Zealand and a try against South African in 1969 which sealed an 11-8 win.

Peter is pictured as number five between Mike Burton, now a well known sporting ticket agent and Frank Cotton, now Managing Director of Cotton Traders. Directly below Peter is Andy Ripley, who became a star in the BBC's Superstars which has been relaunched recently.

