



Bernhard Delegation to San Diego

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all involved in making this year's delegation to the GCSAA Show such a memorable experience.

I would like to thank Stephen Bernhard for again supporting the trip and all the Bernhard's staff, but particularly Sam and Kim, for their hard work in making the trip a success. I would also like to thank John and Sami for their support.

I would encourage all BIGGA members to support this annual trip. The experience is defiantly one not to miss. Finally, I would like to say a big thanks to the other nine delegates who made the trip such an enjoyable one. I hope to meet up with you all soon.

Peter W. Cross, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Woolton Golf Club

It's not only the weather we greenkeepers are up against...

The popular perception of the golf course greenkeeper – that of the laid back gentle countryman who is responsible for both the long and short term condition of the golf course – has changed, and not for the better.

Many of these individuals, who are highly qualified, are now of a frame of mind that given the opportunity to change career direction, they would gladly do so.

One main reason, for this can be identified – “television” is responsible for the ultra high expectations of the ordinary member summer and winter – the use of frost holes or temporary greens is seen by many as what kind of mood the greenkeepers is in rather than the conditions that prevail on the day.

There is also the aggression of some members who believe their opinion is unchallengeable. These bullies dominate today's committees to the extent that the committed individuals who once filled the main positions within the structure are becoming fewer and fewer resulting in “mob rule OK”.

Working for a committee which has very little or no continuity, can be very frustrating. All too often there are serious clashes of personalities, often caused by strong willed, misinformed, yet well-intentioned individuals, who believe they know better than the professionals – unfortunately this is sometimes true – and expect Loch Lomond standards for a fraction of the cost.

All too often they instigate serious mistakes and very seldom are they around to answer for them when the errors come to the surface.

This can only result in a downward spiral of morale and attitude that will affect all staff and which may lead to poorer performance. Ultimately it is the course that suffers.

What can be done to rectify the situation? The problem is too complex for individual committees to solve! I believe the governing bodies (the R&A, BIGGA and the home golf unions) need to address and stipulate the roles and thresholds of personnel who have been trained as well as those who are elected.

We also need direction for clubs on the changes required to their constitution to allow the business of a golf club to be run on a more professional basis.

How can club staff be expected to have respect for their employers if every year we have to answer to a different Captain, Vice Captain, Greens Convenor etc, who are often elected for their social standing rather than for their business credentials?

Indeed, in many cases the Secretary or the Club Manager has no idea of the complexity of the position. Often after two or three years, of jumping through hoops to please those who will never be pleased they vacate their position, only for a different committee to employ someone else who will again need to be replaced within a relatively short period of time.

So the same negative circle starts again. Allowing interested, caring man managers to remain in position longer can only improve the situation.

I also believe that the tiny percentage of members who are not happy, and will never be, and who cause constant major disharmony, should be invited to attend a committee meeting and asked to explain their reasoning or actions.

If rational explanations are not accepted and the same scenario continues, some kind of discipline should be imposed. I believe only this type of positive management can address the growing problem of dissent amongst the rank and file.

Strong and positively directed committees instructed by a professional administrator who consults with the relative line managers of the club to make knowledgeable and common sense decisions could achieve this.

In this day and age, a Golf Course Manager must be a golfer, self-motivated, trainer, scientist, agronomist, economist, diplomat, administrator, book-keeper, mechanic, communicator, environmentalist, and a good man manager with a proven track record.

If you put all this together with the love for his course, nature and the game, then you have a good Golf Course Manager, worthy of an employer's concern. The best wages and conditions of employment should be made available to them.

It is heartening that the R&A now recognises the problem and through their new Best Practice website have set about offering solutions to golf clubs who might not be operating in the most effective manner. Interested parties should check out the R&A Course Management Best Practices, website on, www.bestcourseforgolf.org

Name and Address withheld