

Your Letters...continued

“It is no-ones fault but ours”

I am compelled to reply to your contributor's letter entitled "It's not only the weather we greenkeepers are up against" published in the April edition.

This was an excellent letter and brings up the very real problems associated with the job we are trying to do.

Every Course Manager can relate to many of the points raised and I would like to offer some of my experiences which may help everyone when they find perceived insurmountable problems of this nature.

Unfortunately the problems we have are very much of our own making (conscious or otherwise) and I believe if we do not accept that, we might as well give up now!

Training is the answer (which is easily accessed through BIGGA and the GTC) - it furnishes us with the necessary skills so we may portray ourselves as professional, well organised, competent individuals where officials within golf clubs, whether proprietary or private members, will accept what we tell them.

I take this opportunity to relay a recent personal professional problem to illustrate the point.....

We have just started an unsuitable tree/scrub removal and restocking programme as part of our recently completed tree/ecology policy, in line with our overall golf course policy.

We had been some two to three years in the planning stages and those who know me know that I leave no stone unturned in the quest to inform everyone about what is going on and what is planned for the future - but I did not do it well enough.

The work (planned 1st phase of three) which commenced during March 2004 caused quite "a stir" (that is an understatement - to some tune!!) as it can appear to be devastating - the average person's perception on trees is that all trees, of whatever species, are good for nature - which we know to be far from the truth.

My immediate reaction was to hide until the heat died down or shrink behind officialdom - but through experience I know that this only delays the inevitable.

My response was therefore to make myself available in the clubhouse during Saturday and Sunday, when members come off the course, to answer any questions and concerns.

To help I surrounded myself with information from experts in the areas concerned and tried to placate the vociferous and simply get the message across - I cannot say it was easy but the response from the vast majority of the membership, and particularly the support I received from the Board of Directors, was exceptional.

Following that enlightening experience, though difficult, was that all the club are fully supportive of what we are trying to achieve and we can look forward to phases two and three of the programme in 2004/5 and 2005/6, resources permitting.

None of this would have been achieved if I did not...

- Take responsibility for the situation - training gave me the confidence.
- Possess the necessary skills, received from training, to handle the situation and use it to gain respect and professional kudos.

The benefits to the golf course and the surrounding area in ecology, landscape, and arboriculture in future will be immense.

So if you do have problems, like those mentioned in the letter, seek out the training required (specifically personal presentation training - it is not for public speaking - just necessary for us to do our job properly) and we, but more importantly our employer, will not regret it.

Your contributor also mentioned continuity within the committee structure - this type of structure is not going to go away, so we have to learn to live and work with it, and training gives us the skills.

The solution to continuity, or lack of it, is policy - policy ensures continuity of management, no matter who the personnel/officialdom is, and it is the course manager who must instigate policy for the benefit of the golf course in the long term.

The Course Manager must also demonstrate professionalism through attitude, commitment and enthusiasm/disposition - no-one, not even the Royal & Ancient, national golf unions etc. can do that for us.

And just to add another positive note - at no time in the past has the communication between the various golfing bodies been greater, and BIGGA can be proud of their increasing importance in the discussions taking place at this time - my thoughts for the future are therefore very exciting and positive.

We have an opportunity to go from strength to strength in the jobs we do, but only through taking responsibility for ourselves and our profession and not blaming everything and/or everyone else for the slightest problem which comes along.

Duncan McGilvray, Course Manager, Potters Bar Golf Club

YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

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