

# Jazzing It Up

With places now to be won on the 2006 BIGGA Delegation to New Orleans, USA, GI tracked down three of the 2005 party, which travelled to Orlando, to find out what they gained from their once in a lifetime experience.

Less than a month after the UK's leading Golf and Turf Management Show, BTME & ClubHouse, the GCSAA Golf Industry Show will be held in New Orleans, USA. Taking place February 7-12 2006 in the Big Easy, the BIGGA Delegation, sponsored by Bernhard, is again offering the chance for 10 greenkeepers to win a trip of a lifetime to the American Show.

Previous BIGGA Delegates have been delighted with the chance to find out what life is like for US Superintendents. As well as visiting the week long GCSAA event, which includes seminars and workshops, the 10 greenkeepers have the opportunity to visit numerous leading American golf clubs to see first hand how the Americans cope with the demands for ever higher turf presentation standards.

GI tracked down three of the 10 greenkeepers who went to the Show, which was held in Orlando in February 2005, to discover their experiences and views on the greenkeeping profession both sides of the pond.



L-R: Terry Crawford, Tim Rockey, golfing legend Jack Nicklaus and Robert Needham

Tim Rockey, greenkeeper at Parkstone Golf Club, Dorest, discovered from his involvement in the BIGGA Delegation that Superintendents in the US have massive operational budgets and staffing levels, compared to the UK.

"What absolutely amazed me was the amount of machinery and the standard of workshops and maintenance facilities, where everything looked brand new," said Tim.

The Delegation trip involves visits to some of the leading golf courses in the US, with one of these trips, to the Ritz Carlton Golf Resort, leaving Tim stunned by the amount of money spent on bedding and pot plants alone.

"Planting schemes were changed five times a year and they employed 30 staff just to maintain this aspect. The total operational budget for the course was in excess of \$3,000,000, which was divided into budgets for the exterior planting, interior planting and on the golf course itself.

"Their style of management is quite different. Generally a course has a Superintendent, his Deputy and an Irrigation Technician with the remaining staff, mainly Mexican, trained up for just one job. With our courses everyone needs to be versatile and we are definitely more multi skilled," concluded Tim.

Terry Crawford, who is Course Manager at Clondeboye Golf Club, Northern Ireland, also had his eyes opened by the BIGGA Delegation. The trip confirmed the Course Manager's views on certain aspects of greenkeeping, while leaving him surprised at other elements.

"One thing that is the same for superintendents in the US and greenkeepers in the UK is that we all face tremendous demands from members. We can go under stress just like the grass plant," said Terry.

A dedicated greenkeeper for 25 years, Terry has tended the Clondeboye course for the last 15 years, but the greenkeeper's visit to the states courtesy of BIGGA and Bernhard has led to a major change in his course management at Clondeboye, namely a lighter top dressing programme, after all these years.

"I had been dressing the greens heavily twice a month but since my trip, to get a truer, faster, cutting surface with the same cutting height, I apply a lighter application once a week. Obviously we have far less staff than in the US but it must take a US Superintendent with more than 40 staff a lot of organisation to achieve good end results".

Head Greenkeeper at Hickleton Golf Club, Doncaster, Robert Needham was another one of the 10 BIGGA members who benefited greatly from his time in the States on the Delegation.



The 2005 BIGGA Delegation - You could be one of the 2006 party heading to New Orleans

"The main thing I noticed was the weather was a lot warmer than it is in Yorkshire," joked Robert when recalling his trip. "However this does create problems as we learnt from Champions Gate Golf Club. In Florida the snow birds, visitors from abroad and Americans from the north, want bright green courses to play on. This is not necessarily conducive to good greenkeeping but in spite of this they do manage to create excellent courses throughout the year.

"With 60,000 rounds of golf at Champions Gate two-thirds of play takes place in the first three months, so this puts tremendous demands on the course. The US throws much more money at golf, whereas we have to be very careful with our budgets, which are well structured," stated the Headman, who has been in the profession for 28 years.

One of the major elements that hit home on the trip was the superb greenkeeping facilities at most US courses. This is a fact not lost on Robert as Hickleton are currently in the process of building new, better facilities for their greens teams. Measuring 30m by 15m, dedicated new buildings have been created with the old shed being used as a maintenance facility.

**To apply for one of 10 places on the BIGGA Delegation, sponsored by Bernhard, contact BIGGA HOUSE on 01347 833800 for an application form. Entry is open to all BIGGA Greenkeeping members. Closing date for completed entry forms is September 9 2005.**