

YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: scott@bigga.co.uk.

Dear Sir,

I would like, through the pages of the BIGGA magazine, to thank Rigby Taylor for the recent trip to Angers, France and the 'Top Green' seed research station at Les Alluar. Myself, along with a good cross-section of other turf professionals, enjoyed a well organised, informative and thoroughly enjoyable excursion across the channel. The proficiency of the RT representatives was only 'topped' by the enthusiastic and passionate presentations, tours and talks by Brian and Stephen which managed to keep us all highly interested even in temperatures of 30 degrees plus.

It was genuinely pleasing to learn new things both in the classroom situation and out on the various sites, literally, in the field. Although a golf greenkeeper myself, I found it a huge benefit conversing with other colleagues from football, turf producers, landscape designers etc. One sometimes forgets just how important the humble grass plant is and equally how those of us who are in the industry of growing it, usually in the most difficult of circumstances, are just as important. An observation

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that was not lost on these astute seeds men and a real ego booster to those who were sat around the table listening to them tell us. Which, I feel, needs to be passed on to everyone who reads the pages of this magazine, especially for those who are suffering from low self esteem because of some mad golf club policy or green chairman/captain's vindictiveness. You're damn clever at what you do!

Anyway, stepping down from my soapbox. I would like to thank Rigby Taylor and their representatives, once again, for an extremely educational trip and for looking after us so well. Should anyone else get the opportunity to venture out to this incredible place, then I suggest you grasp it with both hands.

Ian Lavelle
Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper
Whitby Golf club

As Easy as ABC



You never stop learning so, in conjunction with the GTC and lecturers from some of the UK's top greenkeeping colleges, GI has launched a new series which gives the developing greenkeeper the chance to add to their knowledge with some useful advice.



Ian Butcher - International Development Officer

BUNKER RAKING - A CHORE?



Why is it that apprentice greenkeepers in our classes at Elmwood, regard bunker raking as somehow a poorer quality job than say mowing fairways, and as a result take less job satisfaction from it?

Bunker sand is as much a playing surface as any other part of the golf course. And what do greenkeepers do for a living? Prepare a playing surface for golf! Now there are many sand raking techniques employed for different effects and I haven't space to explain them all. Rough or flat raked is the current debate, and Jack Nicklaus took enough of an interest in course set up at the Memorial Tournament at Muirfield, Ohio, deliberately to take a tine out of each rake to create an unpredictable lie. Suffice to say the Head Greenkeeper will dictate how the bunkers are to be prepared on a daily basis. What I want to highlight here is that it is about perspective and attitude. If you see a job as a chore, so it will be. But if you can see each task on the golf course as equal in value in terms of contributing to the whole then a proper sense of job satisfaction is more likely to occur.

Approach each bunker as you would a putting green: ensure that the sand is at a consistent depth in the playing area, 150 mm consolidated is a rough guide, and that as much as possible each bunker plays like another. Rake slowly, concentrating on smoothing out any ruts, avoid contamination from soil or grass and before leaving the bunker check there are no leaves, stones, litter or weeds and be aware of the rule concerning "loose impediments". Ensure each bunker has a rake for the golfer positioned as per instruction. If you haven't got enough rakes you've got too many bunkers.

If you are interested in developing your career at an early stage as an apprentice you can demonstrate the ability to take responsibility by involving yourself in ensuring high standards are met everyday. Think about how the job can be made more time efficient, can the equipment be improved, is the sand of the right grade, how can re-occurring problems such as leaves, poor etiquette be resolved?

Once you are in the habit of seeing every task from tee to green indistinguishable from any other, and deserving of your full attention, then through teamwork and attention to detail a good golf course can be elevated into a great golfing experience.



Ian faces up to the biggest bunker challenge in golf - Hell Bunker on The Old Course