

## CANADIAN GOLF CONFERENCE 2008

My week started by meeting with John Pemberton at Heathrow airport before boarding a flight to Calgary to attend the Canadian Golf Superintendents Conference and arrived at the hotel, extremely tired and feeling the very cold temperatures, -10.

I met up with Tommy Witt, Jay Leach and Jim Paton on Thursday and discussed some of the issues the week had in store for us.

On Friday there were some pre-Conference seminars. 'Enhancing Your Values As Golf Course Superintendent', Additional choices included, 'Preparing Your Golf Course For Winter'; 'Golf Course Techniques and Management'; 'Bentgrass Management and Rootzone Maintenance', and 'Solving Your Drainage Problems'. A wealth of choice for attendees and some great material.

The second day started with Dr Joe Vargas, 'Physiology and Culture From Annual Bluegrass'; 'Managing People'; 'Managing Today's Generation'; 'Wetting Agent and Localised Wet Spots'; 'Managing Root Systems' and 'What Do Operators Expect From Their Superintendents?'

On Saturday we attended the 18th International Summit for all Greenkeeping Associations, hosted by the Canadian Association where we joined our American, Canadian, Australian, European counterparts, along with the R&A. It was a great forum with everyone putting their heads together for a collective opinion, with education and environmental issues the hot topics. We all agreed there was much room for improvement in the way that we communicate with each other. We felt that we needed to take the issues to a wider audience including Governments, Club Owners, R&A, USGA, and other major golfing influences in a bid to increase exposure and achieve our objectives. In the evening we attended the Summit Dinner held at Calgary Golf Club, which had had a covering of snow for many months and was just beginning to melt.

Sunday 8am, and we were already up and attending the keynote address, given by Steve Donahue. His talk, 'Follow a compass not a map' was a fantastic, inspiring workshop on Steve's trek across the Sahara Desert and



all that he encountered. A truly great start to the day.

We then attended the Canadian awards, CGSA Awards Luncheon, where the Certified Superintendents were honoured - Trainee Superintendent, Trevor Anderson, and, Blake McMaster, as Superintendent of the Year.

Sunday evening we attended the President's Welcome Banquet, where we dined and networked with colleagues.

On Monday there was a British feel to the conference with the R&A's Steve Isaacs and his presentation 'Sustainability In Action' was well received. As controversial as this subject may be, there is much merit in the issues being discussed, in terms of European Greenkeeping, and water resources and its management, grass species and overall sustainability of golf.

Monday night we had a reception at the Calgary Flames Ice Hockey Supporters' Club. It was an interesting venue and a good night where the passion for ice hockey from the locals shone through.

On Tuesday, the environmental theme continued with Ken Siems, from Loch Lomond, giving a presentation on Environmental Movement in Europe and its impact on golf courses. Ken gave a great insight into the work being carried out at Loch Lomond. The golf club is also situated in a National Park, which was quite interesting as Canadian Club, Banff, is also being a National Park, so it tied in with Steve's sustainability in golf nicely.

My turn had come around and I had decided my presentation would also focus on sustainability

in golf - 'Is it possible at a commercial venue?' - The feasibility of implementing Steve and Ken's goals, as a Course Manager at a commercial venue. I suggested that trying to go down this route is a long term project and not to be taken lightly. You need your club support and I suggested that as long as we greenkeepers employ good practices we should be ok. I call it good greenkeeping practice, sensible management and achieving the very best at our venues with the resources available.

The Canadian audience received the talks very well. The issue and the impact a golf course's presence has on it is also filtering into their subject matter.

Closing keynote address speech on rankings, 'The top 100 golf clubs in Canada' and issues relating to that within the industry. It was another interesting presentation with background on how the course rankings are put together over there. Very similar to the UK and some of the pressures and issues clubs have with how they are rated.

As the week drew to its close, with its impressive dinner, I felt the environment, coupled with maintaining a high standard at our golf clubs, is an issue set to continue through 2008 and is a challenge that faces us all.

To conclude, the Conference was a great experience and an event to which I would not hesitate in returning. I could sense from my visit the high regard in which BIGGA is held and the Canadians were fantastic hosts. On a professional level I took a lot away from the week.

Back home, we have had a good end to February weather-wise and a dry, cold start to March, although as I write we are experiencing some of worst winds and storms of the winter. The rest of March forecast is unsettled but hopefully we will be able to finish our work programmes. Although with a very early Easter weekend, and two Bank Holidays, we will feel the impact of this in terms of staff holidays. If we get some good, dry weather, golfer expectations will be high and maybe a good month in front of our expectations for turf conditions.



Your next issue of GI will be with you by May 7th  
Visit our website for a full archive of BIGGA magazine issues at [www.bigga.co.uk](http://www.bigga.co.uk)